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THE PATH OF WAGNER'S WOTAN: GERMAN IDEALISM, WAGNER'S PROSE  
WRITINGS, AND THE IDEA OF MORAL PROGRESS

by

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## ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

The Path of Wagner's Wotan: German Idealism, Wagner's Prose Writings, and the  
Idea of Moral Progress

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One central question which has plagued studies of Wagner's *Ring* for over a century is "What philosophy does the *Ring* espouse?" "Is the *Ring* Feuerbachian or Schopenhauerian?" is a question that has been echoed in works by some of the most famous scholars of Wagner, including Theodor Adorno and Carl Dahlhaus. But by searching for the philosophy only in the different versions of Brünnhilde's farewell we ignore the overall moral-philosophical progression which leads to their respective endpoints, espoused not only by both philosophers but by their predecessors as well. Rather than asking the either/or question, this study examines the philosophical tradition of the Enlightenment and German Idealism to identify a moral-philosophical progression that was common to the writings of Feuerbach, Schopenhauer, and ultimately, Wagner. The first part of this study elucidates the four stages of this progression (leading from selfish living to self-sacrifice) and describes its various manifestations prior to Wagner. The remaining parts of the study examine Wagner's own presentation of this "Moral Progression" (as I shall call it). The second part analyzes his prose writings up to and through the composition of the *Ring* libretti. The final part deals with his use of the progression in the *Ring* libretti and the music of the *Ring* with a particular focus on the

character of Wotan and the music associated with him. Prior to my analysis of the *Ring* itself, the final part traces the shifts in Wotan's character from the early drafts of *Das Rheingold* and *Die Walküre* to the final version of the *Ring*, showing his development from Byronic hero, to Faustian figure, and finally, to embodying the four stages of the Moral Progression itself through his character development over the course of the four *Ring* operas. If the *Ring* has a central message, then, it is to be found in Wotan's re-enactment of the moral life advocated by Wagner and his philosophical predecessors.

## DEDICATION AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To my ever-supportive and invaluable parents  
and my ever-inspiring wife and son.

Alison, David, Regina, Richard,

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract.....	ii
Acknowledgements and Dedication.....	iv
General Introduction.....	1
The Moral Progression-Outline.....	19
Arthur Schopenhauer.....	21
Part I – The Moral Progression.....	35
Chapter 1. David Hume.....	36
Chapter 2. Benedict de Spinoza.....	47
Chapter 3. Jean Jacques Rousseau.....	57
Chapter 4. Immanuel Kant.....	63
Chapter 5. Friedrich Schiller.....	75
Chapter 6. Johann Gottlieb Fichte.....	98
Chapter 7. Friedrich Wilhelm Schelling.....	117
Chapter 8. Georg Friedrich Hegel.....	139
Chapter 9. Goethe’s <i>Faust</i> .....	156
Chapter 10. Ludwig Feuerbach.....	172
Chapter 11. Conclusion – Summary of the Moral Progression.....	189
Part II – Wagner and the Moral Progression.....	207
Introduction. The Problems of Wagner’s Prose	
Wagner in Translation.....	208
Wagner’s (Lack of) Clarity.....	211
Chapter 1. Wagner’s Writings before the Revolution of 1848.....	217
A. Vacillating between Revolution and Conservatism.....	217
B. The Moral Progression in the Early Writings.....	224
C. The Role of Fearlessness in His Writings and Early Operas	227
D. <i>Friedrich I</i> , Germanness, Return to a Revolutionary	
Ideology.....	231
Chapter 2. Morals and Revolutionary Message in the Artistic Projects	
<i>Friedrich I</i> , <i>Die Wibelungen</i> , the <i>Nibelung Sketch</i> , and	
<i>Jesus von Nazareth</i> .....	238
A. <i>Friedrich I</i> .....	238
B. Early <i>Die Wibelungen</i> .....	242
C. <i>Nibelung Sketch</i> and some aspects of <i>Siegfrieds Tod</i> .....	248
D. Early <i>Jesus von Nazareth</i> .....	263
Chapter 3. The Revolutionary and His Writings.....	267
A. <i>Volksblätter</i> articles.....	267
B. <i>Art and Revolution</i> .....	275
C. Revisions of <i>Die Wibelungen</i> and <i>Jesus von Nazareth</i> .....	284

D. Wagner’s Moral Progression Variants from <i>Artwork of the Future</i> through the Failure of the Revolution in Paris, and to his Discovery of Schopenhauer...	298
Chapter 4. Characteristics of the Drama of the Future and its Role in Bringing about Revolution .....	309
A. <i>Artwork of the Future</i> .....	309
i. The Faculties Involved in the Artwork of the Future.....	310
ii. The Artwork of the Future is Myth.....	313
iii. The Subject of the Artwork.....	314
iv. The Artwork of the Future and What it Achieves	316
v. Afterward: The Audience and the Seed of a Problem.....	318
B. <i>Opera and Drama</i> .....	323
i. The Faculties Involved in the Artwork of the Future.....	323
ii. The Audience of the Artwork of the Future: Now Possible in the Present.....	325
iii. The Subject of the Artwork of the Future.....	327
iv. The Artwork of the Future as Myth and its Revolutionary Purpose.....	332
C. <i>Der junge Siegfried</i> : the application of <i>Opera and Drama</i> ’s ‘Hauptmomente in the Artwork of the Future to Better Achieve the Artwork’s Purpose.....	336
i. The Story of Young Siegfried and the “Hauptmoment” of the Defeat of Age by Youth.....	336
ii. The First Expansion of the Wanderer-Wotan as an Independent, Central Character.....	343
D. <i>A Communication to My Friends</i> and the Letters up to 1853: The Four-Part <i>Ring</i> .....	353
Chapter 5. A Summary of Wagner’s Philosophical and Aesthetic Thinking Leading up to and at the Completion of the <i>Ring</i> Text.....	365
Part III – Wotan and the Moral Progression.....	370
Chapter 1. Wotan’s Metamorphosis from the Earliest Sketches of <i>Das Rheingold</i> and <i>Die Walküre</i> to their Verse Drafts.	371
A. A Preference for Byronic Model over Zeitgeist model for Wotan, in the <i>Das Rheingold</i> and <i>Die Walküre</i> Initial Summary-Sketches.....	371
B. The Faustian Wotan in the Later Sketches.....	381
C. Solidification of Wotan as Faust in the Prose Drafts.....	387
D. Wagner’s Instinctive New Course for Wotan: The Moral Progression in the Verse Drafts.....	406
Chapter 2. Wotan Embodies the Moral Progression: <i>The Ring of the Nibelung</i> .....	413

<i>Précis</i> .....	413
A. <i>Das Rheingold</i> .....	416
i. Scene 1.....	416
ii. Scene 2.....	435
iii. Scene 3 and Scene 4 until Erda’s Warning.....	453
iv. Scene 4 from Erda’s warning to the end.....	456
v. Motives of Wotan and Fricka: A Post-Script to <i>Das Rheingold</i> .....	466
B. <i>Die Walküre</i> .....	469
i. Preliminaries.....	469
ii. Wotan and the Law of the Heart: The Text.....	474
iii. Wotan and the Law of the Heart: The Music.....	486
iv. Wotan and Fricka: The Last Stand of the Law of the Heart.....	495
v. Wotan: The “Unhappy Consciousness” and the “Way of the World”.....	499
vi. Wotan’s Transition from the “Way of the World” to the Third Stage of the Moral Progression.....	510
C. The Wanderer in <i>Siegfried</i> : Five Dialogues.....	539
i. Preliminaries.....	539
ii. The Wanderer and Mime.....	544
iii. The Wanderer and Alberich; The Wanderer and Fafner.....	552
iv. The Wanderer and Erda.....	557
v. The Wanderer and Siegfried.....	567
Chapter 3. <i>Götterdämmerung</i> and General Conclusion.....	576
Appendices – Wagner and French Socialism.....	590
Appendix A. The Doctrine of Saint-Simon: An Exposition (First Year 1828-1829).....	592
Appendix B. P.J. Proudhon’s “What is Property?”.....	600
Bibliography.....	634
Curriculum Vitae.....	646

## General Introduction

Richard Wagner's affinity for the philosophy of Arthur Schopenhauer is well known. It has been said that after he read *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* in the fall of 1854, Schopenhauer's ideas appeared in almost everything he presented for publication.<sup>1</sup> What is remarkable, however, is that Wagner's writings, and *Der Ring des Nibelungen* in particular, apparently channelled Schopenhauerian thought before he had read Schopenhauer, at least if we are to believe Wagner on the subject. In his letter to his friend August Röckel of August 23, 1856 he wrote:

I must confess that only now have I really understood my own works of art (i.e. grasped them conceptually and explained them rationally to myself), and I have done so with the help of another person [Schopenhauer], who has furnished me with conceptions which are perfectly congruent to my own intuitions.<sup>2</sup>

Gutman corroborates this sentiment: "Many of Wagner's characters were disciples of Schopenhauer before their creator grasped the doctrine guiding their steps."<sup>3</sup> On the subject of the *Ring*, Wagner described Schopenhauer as the "keystone" for the proper understanding of his poem. What was this "keystone"; i.e., what was the central point of Schopenhauer's philosophy for Wagner that convinced him that he had always been a Schopenhauerian and had intuitively been writing the *Ring* according to this precept? In Wagner's letter to Liszt of December 16, 1854, he describes it as "the final denial of the will-to-live." "[Schopenhauer's] principal idea, the final denial of

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<sup>1</sup> Among other places: Bryan Magee. *The Tristan Chord*. (New York: Henry Holt, 2000), 138.

<sup>2</sup> *Selected Letters of Richard Wagner*. trans. and ed. Stewart Spencer and Barry Millington. (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1988), 358.

<sup>3</sup> Robert Gutman. *Richard Wagner: Man, Mind, Music*. (New York: Harcourt Brace Janovich Inc, 1968), 117. see also: Ronald Taylor. *Richard Wagner: His Life Art and Thought*. (New York: Taplinger Publishing Company, 1979), 125. "Schopenhauer gave him the intellectual key to an understanding of his emotional and spiritual situation."

the will-to-live, is of terrible seriousness, but it is uniquely redeeming.”<sup>4</sup> Perhaps it is this idea, according to Wagner Schopenhauer’s “principal idea,” that corresponds to the keystone of which he spoke.

But, then, whose will-to-live is denied in the *Ring*? This question is also easily answered. In the March 29, 1878 entry in Cosima’s diary, she quotes Wagner lamenting Schopenhauer’s lack of interest in his work saying:

It does not say much for Schopenhauer that he did not pay more attention to my *Ring des Nibelungen*. I know of no other work in which the breaking of a will (and what a will, which delighted in the creation of a world!) is shown as being accomplished through the individual strength of a proud nature *without the intervention of a higher grace*, as it is in Wotan. Almost obliterated by the separation from Brünnhilde, this will rears up once again, bursts into flame in the meeting with Siegfried, flickers in the dispatching of Waltraute, until we see it entirely extinguished at the end in Valhalla.<sup>5</sup>

Recollecting the time soon after his first reading of Schopenhauer in his *Mein Leben* he described himself as being “greatly shaken” upon rereading his poem after reading Schopenhauer, and finding that “Only now did I understand my own Wotan.”<sup>6</sup>

Clearly, it was in Wotan’s denial of the will-to-live where he found the similarity between his and Schopenhauer’s thinking.

But is this enough to be “greatly shaken”? Or was it merely in the end of *Götterdämmerung* where Wagner saw a similarity between Schopenhauer’s thinking and his own? The Dutchman, after all, also desires his own end, and yet Wagner does not seem to have been “greatly shaken” over the connection between the Dutchman and Schopenhauer’s philosophy, or at least does not write with the same shock on the

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<sup>4</sup> *Selected Letters of Richard Wagner*, 323. See also: Robert Donington *Wagner’s Ring and its Symbols*. (New York: St. Martins Press, 1974), 102. “Wagner believed that he had found, in Schopenhauer, a philosophy to fit his intuitions. Schopenhauer’s ‘explanation of the universe’ is summed up by Wagner in this letter [to Röckel of 23<sup>rd</sup> August, 1856] as depending on ‘the high tragedy of renunciation, the deliberate, reasoned, ultimately necessary negation of the will, in which alone is salvation.’ Wagner felt that he had always intuitively ‘discerned the nature of the universe itself in all its conceivable phases and had recognized its nothingness’ ... The ‘necessary negation of the will’ is indeed the main intuitive theme of the *Ring*.”

<sup>5</sup> *Cosima Wagner’s Diaries*. ed. Martin Gregor-Dellin and Dietrich Mack. trans. Geoffrey Skelton. (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Inc, 1980), II 52.

<sup>6</sup> Richard Wagner. *My Life*. trans. Andrew Gray. (New York: Da Capo Press, 1992), 510.

subject of the connection; so this shock must have stemmed from more than a similarity of his characters in their end results. What is special about Wotan?

Before we can answer this question we should consider the words of another writer, who after reading Schopenhauer's *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*<sup>7</sup> found that he was brought to "a more meaningful understanding of himself." That man was Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. Upon receiving a copy of the book from Schopenhauer, Goethe read it "with an intensity Ottlie had never seen in her father"; telling her that many of its ideas were ones he had felt and shared and that the work "brought him to a more meaningful understanding of himself."<sup>8</sup> Now the problem of Schopenhauerian thought in reference to his time makes itself apparent. Despite the fact that Wagner and Goethe were living in the same Germany at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, nearly a century divides the beginning of Goethe's writing his first sketches for *Faust* from Wagner's completion of his *Ring*, and yet they both had similar reactions upon reading Schopenhauer. Even Feuerbach, who in Wagner scholarship is usually put in opposition to Schopenhauer in the role of optimist, is complimentary towards Schopenhauer's philosophy in a posthumously published fragment, *Zur Moralphilosophie*, and after writing it, he too dons the mantle of pessimist along with Schopenhauer.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> In general, in Part I of this study I will be using the English translations of philosophical works except in specific cases of terminological usage such as *Notwendigkeit* in Chapter 11 "Summary of the Zeitgeist", and so shall be referring to this work of Schopenhauer's by its English title *The World as Will and Representation* [Bd. 1, 1818/19. Bd. 2, 1844] and citing it from the translation by E.F.J. Payne in two volumes. (New York: Dover Publications, 1969). The issues behind meaning and translation that are ever-present in Wagner studies thanks to both Wagner and Ellis (See Part II, Introduction) are not nearly as present in the translations of the works discussed in Part I. Though there certainly are questions of meaning, I feel confident that using the English translations in this section will not detract from the overall comprehensibility of the subject, and that including the German, Latin, or French, as the case may be, would not add, in most cases, any meaningful degree of comprehensibility. For better or worse, I have included the capitalizations of nouns when quoting the translations of others, though I will abstain from that practice in my own writing.

<sup>8</sup> Wolfgang Wittkowski. "Goethe, Schopenhauer, und Fausts Schlußvision" *Goethe Yearbook* 5 (1990): 233-268, 233.

<sup>9</sup> Houston Stewart Chamberlain. *Richard Wagner*. [1895] trans. G. Ainslie Hight. (Philadelphia: J.P. Lippincott Company, 1897), 150.

Schopenhauer, who is distinguished from all German speculative philosophers by his directness, clearness, and preciseness, rejects the empty moral principles of other philosophers, and has designated sympathy as the foundation of morality.<sup>10</sup>

It must not merely be the concept of “negation of the will” that drew these two artists to Schopenhauer’s thinking, but rather the latter’s ability to summarize the thought of the time, possibly even to simplify it to its most transparent core, through clear and comprehensible writing. Wagner, along with Feuerbach and others, cited and praised the clarity of Schopenhauer’s writing. In his *Mein Leben*, Wagner paraphrased the English critic John Oxenford’s experience with German philosophy both before and after reading Schopenhauer as a typical reaction and one with which he had sympathy:

[H]is [Oxenford’s] obscure but unconvinced respect for German philosophy had been attributed to its utter incomprehensibility, as represented most recently by the works of Hegel. In reading Schopenhauer, on the other hand, he had suddenly realized that it had not been his dim-wittedness but rather the intentional turgidity in the treatment of philosophical theories which had caused his bafflement.<sup>11</sup>

So the key point is not necessarily that Schopenhauer’s work was vastly different from that which had come before – the doctrine of the negation of the will, as Schopenhauer duly noted, goes back to antiquity<sup>12</sup> – but that Schopenhauer was able to typify some basic aspect of the post-Enlightenment *Zeitgeist* present in writings on philosophy; or to put it another way, he offered a clear representation of the thinking behind the post-Enlightenment philosophical ‘horizon of expectations.’ The opposing viewpoint on the influence of Schopenhauer on Wagner becomes clearer: it is not that Wagner was channelling Schopenhauer or necessarily became a convert to

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<sup>10</sup> Carl Grün. *Ludwig Feuerbach in seinem Briefwechsel und Nachlass: so wie in seiner Philosophischen Charakterentwicklung* (Heidelberg: C.F. Winter’sche Verlagsbandlung, 1874), 294.

<sup>11</sup> *My Life*, 509.

<sup>12</sup> Others like Roger Hausheer date Schopenhauer’s ideas from the more recent tradition. “In the entirety of his [Schopenhauer’s] writings there is arguably not a single substantial idea that is not derived from, directly or indirectly, Fichte and Schelling.” See: Roger Hausheer. “Fichte and Schelling” in *German Philosophy Since Kant*. ed. Anthony O’Hear. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 2.

Schopenhauer's philosophy, but that Schopenhauer became a vessel or a title for a philosophy that Wagner had held all along; as he did also for Goethe.<sup>13</sup> What are the characteristics of this philosophical *Zeitgeist* which John Oxenford, Wagner, and Goethe felt that Schopenhauer was able to elucidate and clarify?

One of the earliest attempts to summarize the philosophical *Zeitgeist* of the time in question was made by Friedrich Nietzsche and is simultaneously invaluable and questionable. Nietzsche held not only that the philosophy of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but all of Western moral philosophy, was based on the principle of the negation of selfishness or luxury, what Nietzsche termed: *décadence*. His premise was that Western thought since antiquity has been based on the notion of binary oppositions. The least moral was associated with the concept of *décadence*; therefore, to find the most moral one must examine the concept of *décadence* in order to discover its opposite: not-*décadence*, or self-renunciation which is now, as the opposite of selfish *décadence*, equated with morality.<sup>14</sup> So then to discover the

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<sup>13</sup> See among others: Hugo Dinger. *Richard Wagners Geistige Entwicklung*. (Leipzig: Verlag von E. W. Fritsch, 1892), 331. "Der Pessimismus und Individualismus, den er von Schopenhauer empfang, war ihm nur ein Mittel ethischer Einsicht, mit demselben vollzog er nur eine Korrektur seiner Anschauungen und deren Methode." Or Ernest Newman. *A Study of Wagner*. (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1899), 222. "For surely one has only to read that poem with one's eye open to be convinced that Wagner was labouring under the most pathetic delusion when he thought that he was contributing anything of the slightest value to the store of the race. It is quite unnecessary for his disciples to take such infinite pains to prove that he was a Schopenhauerite before he ever read a line of Schopenhauer. That is just the trouble; he had already certain vague innate notions as to renunciation and redemption, and Schopenhauer, so far as Wagner could understand him, simply gave a support to these notions. He took the philosopher up not because of his own interest in philosophy, but because of his interest in his own ideas." Or for a similar but more recent sentiment see: Joachim Köhler. *Richard Wagner: The Last of the Titans*. trans. Stewart Spencer. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 420 "Wagner, too, continued to appeal to Schopenhauer as his authority right up to the end of his life. But there remains the question whether he really meant Schopenhauer whenever he referred to the philosopher by name. Inasmuch as no other contemporary was as showered with praise as Schopenhauer, doubts seem to be in order. Why did Wagner appeal to him so often when he normally concealed the source for his ideas? What is the significance of the fact that, unlike other writers, he lauded Schopenhauer to the skies? Why, in this one particular case, did he renounce his claim to absolute originality and independence, a claim on whose altar he otherwise sacrificed every other victim? The reason why he proclaimed his dependence from the rooftops lies in the simple fact that no such dependence existed. Wagner had not helped himself to another's ideas, as was generally the case, but had merely poured the wine of his own ideas into new bottles. It was his own thoughts that seethed beneath the Schopenhauerian label."

<sup>14</sup> Jonathan Dollimore. *Death, Desire, and Loss in Western Culture*. (New York: Routledge, 1998), 231.

characteristics of morality, one had simply to reverse all of the characteristics of *décadence*. But as Nietzsche noted, this does not discover what is moral, but only illustrates further characteristics of *décadence*:

It is a self-deception on the part of philosophers and moralists to imagine that by making war on *décadence* they therewith elude *décadence* themselves. This is beyond their powers: what they select as an expedient, as a deliverance is itself only another expression of *décadence* – they alter its expression, they do not abolish the thing itself.<sup>15</sup>

In other words, nothing, including morality, can exist as a mere negation of a thing, but must exist as an affirmation, a notion which would be taken up by the modernists and post-modernists of the twentieth century to come, most clearly perhaps in Bertrand Russell's critique of language.

The result is that Nietzsche holds the "Schopenhauerian" concept of self-renunciation to be a central tenet of Western moral philosophy. But he did not always feel this way. While he was still under the influence of Schopenhauer and Wagner he wrote his third *Untimely Meditation* "Schopenhauer as Educator." This work separates philosophy as a whole from Schopenhauer's philosophy by giving Schopenhauer sole credit for looking upon self-renunciation as an ideal state to be attained:

But there is a kind of denial and destruction that is the effect of that strong aspiration after holiness and deliverance, which Schopenhauer was the first philosopher to teach our profane and worldly generation. Everything that can be denied deserves to be denied; and real sincerity means the belief in a state of things which cannot be denied, or in which there is no lie.<sup>16</sup>

It is a follower and believer in Schopenhauer that is writing these words. In the context of this *Untimely Meditation*, we can see that when Nietzsche eventually rejected Schopenhauer along with his rejection of Wagner, he found that

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<sup>15</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche *Twilight of the Idols*. [1888] trans. R.J. Hollingdale. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968), 34. See also Jonathan Dollimore *Death, Desire, and Loss in Western Culture*. 231.

<sup>16</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche. *Untimely Meditations* "Schopenhauer as Educator" [1874] trans. R.J. Hollingdale. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 153. (slightly altered)

Schopenhauer's philosophy was ultimately no different from the rest of Western philosophy. Now he saw this basic tenet of self-renunciation, previously belonging to the great Schopenhauer alone, in all Western philosophy and so was able to reject Western philosophy as a whole via his rejection of Schopenhauer.

When Nietzsche abandoned the notion of dialectics, he revealed the predominance of binary oppositions as a flawed tool with which to reveal the nature of the world; a flawed tool whose use was rampant particularly in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. So Nietzsche revealed two elements of the *Zeitgeist*: the world is viewed in terms of binary oppositions, and the ultimate goal of morality is the negation of the will or self-renunciation.<sup>17</sup> We can observe the notion of the binary opposition between self-renunciation and selfishness appearing in moral philosophy

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<sup>17</sup> In *Nietzsche Contra Wagner* [1877-1888] he follows the position that the world cannot be reliably understood using binary opposition to the point where he rejects the possibility of knowing anything reliably at the present time and rejects the Enlightenment drive to know: "And as for the future, one will hardly find us again on the paths of those Egyptian youths who endanger temples by night, embrace statues, and want by all means to unveil, uncover, and put into bright light whatever is kept concealed for good reasons. No, this bad taste, this will-to-truth, to 'truth at any price' this youthful madness in the love of truth, have lost their charm for us: for that we are too experienced, too serious, too gay, too burned, too deep. We no longer believe that truth remains truth when the veils are withdrawn - we have lived enough not to believe this. Today we consider it a matter of decency not to see everything naked, or to be present at everything, or to understand and 'know' everything. Tout comprendre - c'est tout mépriser. (To understand all is to despise all)." (taken from: *The Portable Nietzsche*, trans. Walter Kaufmann. (New York: The Viking Press, 1968), 682.) The irony is that this notion of not being able to know everything was common in the eighteenth and nineteenth century at the height of the Enlightenment. So Nietzsche was not the only one to assume that his age was beyond the naive idea that it was possible to know and define everything. Thomas Mann speaks of the nineteenth century in similar terms. "We of today, preoccupied as we are with tasks that are uniquely new and challenging, have no time and little inclination to deal justly with the epoch that is fading into history behind us (the so-called 'bourgeois' epoch); we look upon the nineteenth century as sons look upon their fathers - full of criticism: and this is as it should be. We shrug our shoulders both at its belief - which was a belief in ideas - and at its unbelief, which is to say its melancholy brand of relativism. Its liberal faith in reason and progress strikes us as faintly amusing, its materialism all too neat and clear-cut, while its confidently monistic view of the world now seems extraordinarily shallow." Thomas Mann. "The Sorrows and Grandeur of Richard Wagner" [1933] in *Pro et Contra Wagner*, trans. Alan Blunden. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 92. In fact, a belief in "being beyond the naive notion, held by the previous generation, that all things were knowable", is another common element of the *Zeitgeist*. Hume was rebelling against the same 'knowability' in this regard as Nietzsche and Mann, and his *Treatise*, which will be discussed in the following section, shows that rebellion. In fact though, Nietzsche, Mann and Adorno were themselves trapped in the same set of ideas they believed they were breaking away from, and the problem was they did not realize it.

and most critiques of the *Ring* from Wagner's own to the present.<sup>18</sup> That being said, Nietzsche avoids discussing a specific path from one to the other that typifies this age, though he does offer the bookends of the path by revealing the opposition between them.

Adorno and Horkheimer take Nietzsche's critique of Enlightenment in a different direction in their joint venture *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Like Nietzsche, they take several aspects of Schopenhauer's philosophy to typify all Enlightenment thinking, e.g., "Happiness contains in itself truth. It is essentially an outcome. It reveals itself in transfigured suffering."<sup>19</sup> This notion of finding happiness, or at least contentment, through suffering reminds us particularly of Schopenhauer.

But the problem with looking to this work for a definitive outline of the Enlightenment period and its *Zeitgeist* is it takes as a given that Enlightenment philosophy was not only the source of Totalitarianism, but that Totalitarianism was its inevitable necessary result, and thus that the ideas behind it *must*, by definition, be fundamentally flawed. Like Nietzsche before them, they explain how the view of the world and the self through the lens of binary opposition instilled false knowledge and further selfishness rather than true self renunciation. Rather than starting from antiquity, they lay the blame for no longer considering the world in green but in black and white, to paraphrase Goethe, on Fichte's shoulders. He was the one who first abandoned the notion of the completely unknowable noumena, which Kant was

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<sup>18</sup> Edouard Sans describes the contradiction in the heart of Wotan as symbolic of the contradiction present in the heart of the world as "this combat without mercy between the two essential tendencies: selfishness and renunciation." Edouard Sans. *Richard Wagner et la Pensée Schopenhauerienne*. (Paris: Éditions Klincksieck, 1969), 148. Ronald Grey's chapter "The German Intellectual Background" from *The Wagner Companion*. ed. Peter Burbidge and Richard Sutton. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 34-59 through his analysis of Kant, Hegel, and Feuerbach explains that the philosophy of the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries centers around binary oppositions.

<sup>19</sup> Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer. *Dialektik der Aufklärung* in Theodor W. Adorno: *Gesammelte Schriften*. ed. Rolf Tiedemann (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag Frankfurt am Main, 1986), III, 81. "Glück aber enthält Wahrheit in sich. Es ist wesentlich ein Resultat. Es entfaltet sich am aufgehobenen Leid."

hesitant to do, and simply divided the world into a binary opposition of black and white mathematical clarity into I and not-I:

Enlightenment has put aside the classic requirement of thinking about thought – Fichte is its extreme manifestation – because it wants to avoid the precept of dictating practice that Fichte himself wished to obey. Mathematical procedure became, so to speak, the ritual of thinking.<sup>20</sup>

Ultimately, despite some excellent analysis on the subject of mythology and the role of knowledge and enlightenment in the self's coming-to-be,<sup>21</sup> theirs is a flawed search in that, like Nietzsche and Mann before them, they look on philosophy of the nineteenth century as the previous generation which needs to be corrected, not as a period of thought *per se*. They cannot escape their connection to this period and do not try to do so. Their analysis, then, ends up being a critique rather than an objective outline of the common thoughts of this period; the basic necessity in forming an “horizon of expectations.” As Mann said, “we look upon the nineteenth century as sons look upon their fathers – full of criticism: and this is as it should be.”<sup>22</sup> This intimate connection, accompanied by the desire to correct rather than elucidate that embodies the early twentieth-century discussions on nineteenth-century thinking, is too subjective to be the basis of anything approaching an objective analysis of the philosophy of the period. The search for a *Zeitgeist*—“horizon of expectations” rather than focusing on the faults of the systems of philosophy, must bypass these analyses and focus as objectively as possible on the period, or at very least, as Dahlhaus said in

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<sup>20</sup> Adorno and Horkheimer. *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. trans. John Cumming (New York: Continuum Publishing Company, 1972), 25. See Note 17 above for the similarity with Mann and Nietzsche in the idea of the failure of dialectic-based knowledge to hold any truth.

<sup>21</sup> One particularly useful notion is that fear is a catalyst for searching for knowledge or enlightenment which finds its way into Jungian psychology among other places and plays a role in the forthcoming analysis. Peter Ackermann offers a thorough study of Enlightenment from the perspective of Adorno's and Horkheimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment* and the *Ring* in his *Richard Wagners "Ring des Nibelungen" und die Dialektik der Aufklärung* that goes into further detail regarding Adorno's conception of Enlightenment and the influence of that conception. See: Peter Ackerman. *Richard Wagners "Ring des Nibelungen" und die Dialektik der Aufklärung* (Frankfurt am Main: Verlegt bei Hans Schneider, 1981).

<sup>22</sup> See: Note 17 above.

speaking of the time distance which enables scholarship of Wagner to look beyond the for and against dichotomy of the early twentieth century, “with the historian’s detachment.”

One of the first studies to attempt this kind of analysis was Jacques Barzun’s *Wagner, Darwin, and Marx*. Barzun was searching for just this commonality in the nineteenth century and found it in the notion or process of becoming. He noted that:

To the Germans particularly – Hegel, Schopenhauer, Schelling, and Fichte – we owe the establishment of the basic evolutionary notion that Being is Becoming and that fixity is an abstraction or an illusion.<sup>23</sup>

The acceptance of change is the crucial common point. It might seem overly general, but with this examination of the period we have the first detached objective analyses of the principles behind eighteenth- and nineteenth-century philosophy. From this first step others follow, and expand on this notion of change.

Mark Roberts shows that the age could be viewed in terms of a renewed stoicism.<sup>24</sup> The modern age, by which is meant the Enlightenment, involved a shift, probably due to the ever-increasing middle class and technological advancements, from changing the will to adapt to the situation, to adapting the situation at the behest of the will or for individual happiness. The post-Enlightenment reaction, based primarily on the failures of the previous generation to achieve their aims, could be viewed then as a movement against this futile self-centered thinking or as a return to stoicism. Roberts highlights certain elements of stoicism which apply to this new age: 1. There is a seeming impossibility of happiness when the supply of goods is less than the demand for them. This brings competition with others, and leads only to “disastrous conflicts.” 2. The realization of this truth, that the hope for fixed happiness, to use Barzun’s terminology, upon obtaining goods is impossible, leads to an altering of the will not for new wants, but for what is immediately present; in other words: “We are living in the best of all possible worlds”; Voltaire’s Pangloss is justified. This enables one to have a detachment from the concerns of the world and treat every

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<sup>23</sup> Jacques Barzun. *Darwin, Wagner, Marx: Critique of a Heritage*. (New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1958), 52.

<sup>24</sup> Mark Roberts. *The Tradition of Romantic Morality*. (New York: The Macmillan Press, 1973), 63. In this context he is speaking primarily of British and not specifically German philosophy, but this notion is applicable.

event equally. 3. As the will only wills for what already exists, the will in fact can be viewed as no longer functioning or willing for nothing: thus, want is abandoned.<sup>25</sup>

Meyer Abrams bases his view of the progression inherent in the *Zeitgeist* in the terms of German philosophical *Universalgeschichte*, primarily focussing on Schiller, Hegel, Hölderin, and Goethe, which he views as mimicking the cyclic path of man seen in the Bible. He outlines a three-stage process where man leaves and then returns to nature/God, but with an understanding and appreciation for it [nature/God] that would have been lost to him had he never left in the first place:

A number of these thinkers [German philosophers of eighteenth and nineteenth centuries] adapted the Christian fable of a lost and future paradise into a theory which neatly fused the alternative views of human history as either decline or progress. This they accomplished by representing man's fall from happy unity into the evil of an increasing division and suffering as an indispensable stage on his route back toward the lost unity and happiness of his origin, but along an ascending plane that will leave him immeasurably better off at the end than he was in the distant beginning.<sup>26</sup>

His three stages then include 1. unity with nature/God followed by 2. independence, though suffering from the lack of union with something greater, and then completed by 3. reunion with nature/God, but this time it is a willed reuniting on the part of man with the higher power, as opposed to the unification with nature/God felt in the distant beginning but which was present without his choice. This last stage is described by Abrams very loosely as a sublime state of happiness, but he does not offer a means to achieve this state.

Frederick Beiser in his work *The Romantic Imperative* offers a more specific look at the period Abrams discusses, the *Frühromantik*, paying closer attention to what these authors assumed would be necessary in order to achieve the final fusion with nature/God, that being first and foremost the achievement of an ideal society according to Aristotle's definition, a community of equals aiming at the best possible life. [Politics VII] Such a society would be bound by a universal love of mankind and

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<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 37-8.

<sup>26</sup> Meyer Abrams. *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature*. (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1971), 201.

all of nature alike. But the failure of the revolutionaries in France offered a lesson to their German counterparts: the mob is incapable of achieving this type of state. So rather than aim at political revolution, their goal became to enlighten the people or *Volk*, and prepare them for this ideal state. The answer lay in aesthetics.

The events in France made them [the young Romantics including Schelling, Schlegel, Novalis etc...] fear that a revolution would result in incurable anarchy and strife, and hence they insisted on the need for gradual evolutionary change from above... it was not possible to expect these [high ideals of the Republic] in Germany, given the low level of education and the slow progress of the enlightenment in most territories of the empire. The fundamental political problem facing the young romantics was therefore plain: to prepare the German people for the high ideals of a republic by giving them a moral, political and aesthetic education... It is in the context of this reformism that we must place the young romantics' aestheticism. They gave such enormous importance to art mainly because they saw it as the chief instrument of *Bildung*, and hence as the key to social and political reform. If the people were to be prepared for the high moral ideals of a republic, then it would be through an aesthetic education, which would be the spearhead of the new social and political order.<sup>27</sup>

Three influential sources for the young Romantics were: Aristotle, particularly his conception of aesthetics and drama as seen in the *Poetics*; Lessing, who Heinrich Heine viewed as the “literary Arminius who liberated our theater from foreign domination” and whose commentary on Aristotle’s *Poetics* found in his *Hamburg Dramaturgy* is one of the central works for the romantic school;<sup>28</sup> and by extension Schiller, especially his *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man* which elucidated these ideas of Lessing.

The central difference between the young Romantics and the traditional followers of the Enlightenment is their stances on the employment of feeling vs. reason in creating a moral being. The young Romantics felt that passion or the faculty of feeling was the way moral behavior is learned or instilled via an aesthetic education,

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<sup>27</sup> Frederick Beiser. *The Romantic Imperative: The Concept of Early German Romanticism*. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2003), 49.

<sup>28</sup> Heinrich Heine. *The Romantic School and Other Essays* “The Romantic School” [1836] *The German Library* 33 ed. Jost Hermand and Robert Holub (New York: Continuum, 1985), 13-4.

while the Enlightenment thinkers believed morality was achieved through suppressing feeling in favor of the faculty of reason. Aristotle opened the path to viewing feeling as something necessary in his discussion of apprehending drama in the *Poetics*. Both he and Lessing offer a binary opposition in drama between narrative and dramatic action. Narrative is the tool of history and one of the tools of the chorus in Greek tragedy. By its nature, it appeals to reflective reason, while dramatic action, as seen in tragedy, is meant to arouse the feelings – particularly pity and fear – through its action “wherewith to accomplish its catharsis of such emotions.”<sup>29</sup> Aristotle specifically alludes to this hegemony of the faculty of feeling in his discussion of drama towards the end of the *Poetics*: “Its [Drama’s] reality of presentation is felt in the play as read, as well as in the play as acted.”<sup>30</sup> These lines of Aristotle which explain both a catharsis that takes place in the audience or reader upon experiencing the drama, and the general appeal of drama to a specific faculty of feeling are in essence the notions behind the Romantic Movement.

But it was left to Lessing to clarify Aristotle’s catharsis. To Lessing, a dramatic performance is now a moral education, something by which, through observation, the passions are purified into virtuous habits. He elaborates:

And since according to our philosopher [Aristotle] each virtue has two extremes between which it rests, it follows that if tragedy is to change our pity into virtue it must also be able to purify us from the two extremes of pity, and the same is to be understood of fear. Tragic pity must not only purify the soul of him who has too much pity, but also of him who has too little; tragic fear must not simply purify the soul of him who does not fear any manner of misfortune but also of him who is terrified by every misfortune, even the

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<sup>29</sup> Aristotle. “Poetics” *The Complete Works of Aristotle* ed. Jonathan Barnes (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), II. 2320 Ch.6 1449 b1 24-28 and “Hamburg Dramaturgy” [1767] from *Selected Prose Works of G. E. Lessing* edited by Edward Bell. trans. H.C. Beasley and Helen Zimmern (London: George Bell and Sons, 1890), 416. (Torquato Tasso in his *Discourses on the Art of Poetry* also addresses this difference, deriving from Aristotle, between narrative poetry and dramatic action i.e. heroic poems, and how the sublime work of art will include minimal narrative poetry while allowing the audience to experience the dramatic action. For this reason he is critical of Ariosto in his Third Discourse, among other places in the work, for including too many passages of Narration in his dramatic works.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 2340 Ch. 26 1462 a1 16-17.

most distant and most improbable... Tragedy is intended to nourish and strengthen the feelings of humanity; it is to produce a love of virtue, a hatred for vice[.]<sup>31</sup>

Further, Lessing explains that this education is intended for even the basest, least educated audience and so offers the hope for the *Frühromantiks* of an artwork that can educate humanity as a whole.

Even the dramatic author, if he lowers himself to the mob, lowers himself only in order that he may enlighten and improve the mass and not to confirm them in their prejudices or in their ignoble mode of thought.<sup>32</sup>

Schiller furthers many of the concepts discussed here by Lessing but fuses them with Kantian philosophy. His work will be discussed in detail in Chapter 5 below.

The hope the *Frühromantiks* nourished for obtaining an aesthetically educated populace was that a great work of art will one day come along which will bring the people out of their stupor and make them ready for a new age.<sup>33</sup> It should be a work of art that mythologizes the plight of man in the modern age, and leads him, and vicariously humanity as a whole, to a better moral existence. Beiser summarizes this as follows:

What had been given to early man on a naive level – moral and religious belief, unity with nature and society – had been destroyed by the corrosive powers of criticism; the task now was to recreate it on a self-conscious level through the powers of art. Art could restore moral and religious belief

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<sup>31</sup> Gotthold Ephraim Lessing. “Hamburg Dramaturgy” *Selected Prose Works of G. E. Lessing* ed. Edward Bell. trans. H.C. Beasley and Helen Zimmern (London: George Bell and Sons, 1890), 421-2.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 236.

<sup>33</sup> This notion is looked down upon in Thomas Mann’s essay in *Pro et Contra Wagner*, “The Sorrows and Grandeur of Richard Wagner” 92. “Yes indeed: grandeur that is at once sceptical and passionate – fanatical even – in its pursuit of truth, and that can find a fleeting happiness, without creed or religion, in surrender to the transient moment of consuming beauty; and a statue to the moral exertions of the age would need the physique of an Atlas, tense and straining in every muscle, like a figure by Michelangelo. What enormous burdens they bore in those days, *epic* burdens in the ultimate sense of that momentous word – which is why one should think not of Balzac and Tolstoy, but of Wagner too. When the latter wrote to his friend Liszt in 1851, solemnly outlining his plans for the *Ring*, Liszt replies from Weimar in these terms: ‘Go to work and apply yourself with utter singleness of mind to your task. If you need a brief, let it be the one that the cathedral chapter of Seville gave to the architect commissioned to build their new cathedral: “Build us a temple such that future generations will say the canons were mad ever to undertake such an extraordinary work” Yet there the cathedral stands!’ Now *that* is the nineteenth century!”

through the creation of a new mythology.<sup>34</sup> It could regenerate unity with nature by ‘romanticizing’ it, that is, by restoring its old mystery, magic, and beauty. And it could re-establish community by expressing and arousing the feeling of love, which is the basis of all social bonds, the natural feeling joining all free and equal persons.<sup>35</sup>

Beiser here uses “naive” in the sense of immediate, instinctive, and natural as we find the word used in Schiller’s *Über Naive und Sentimental Dichtung*, and so this ideal community which was lost and needs to be reattained is an appeal to a concept popularized by the *Frühromantiks*: the *Volk*. As Taylor explains:

*Volk* means ‘people,’ but the German word has an emotive, almost mystical overtone of national identity, a quality far more evocative than anything that the passionless word ‘people’ can command, and more self-consciously nationalistic than the slightly precocious notion of the ‘folk’ from whom folk-tale and folk-song spring. Herder coined the word *Volkslied* in 1771, and the

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<sup>34</sup> See: Schlegel, “Gespräche über die Poesie,” Novalis, “Fragmente und Studien,” and the Anonymous Bamberg Treatise “Systemprogramm des deutschen Idealismus”. Paul Loos’s 1943 study *Richard Wagner: Vollendung und Tragik der deutschen Romantik*. (Munich: Leo Lehnen Verlag, 1952), examines Wagner’s works, including the *Ring* through the lens of the *Frühromantik*, bringing up many of the same points in speaking of the period as Beiser does. It is an informative study which deserves more attention in Wagner studies than it has so far received, but it too focuses for the most part not on a progression, but just on particular elements employed by the *Frühromantik* poets, such as water and fire as tools for rebirth, the longing for death-redemption, the importance of nature, the importance of love in redemption and its partnership with death, and the education of the *Volk* and the *Volk*’s contribution to an ideal art; and their use by Wagner in his operas. And when it does focus on “progression” it is either as in the case of Abrams, as a circle of progression beginning and ending with nature, or in a broad overall description for all of Wagner’s operas of the progression that takes place in the closing moment of each opera, which can be likened to Barzun’s concept of change, but with a more heavily Christian message focusing on redemption-transcendence through death-suffering. He summarizes the common theme of Wagner’s operas as follows: “The inherent process in Wagnerian drama is in essence after the Novalisian word “*Verwandlung*” [Conversion or Transformation], a refining and reducing process on the way back to a state of transcendence brought on through transfiguration. The ‘Moment of Ascension’ primarily a Christian form of resolution (as it was not yet employed in Greek drama) dominates all of Wagner’s dramas as an ending ‘Gloria,’ physically through the stage direction in *Dutchman*, symbolically in the transfiguration of Elisabeth and Isolde in *Tannhäuser* and *Tristan*; and so it is with all of Wagner’s heroes and heroines that their deaths always function as a transfiguration after worldly suffering. It is the same whether they enter Valhalla, they experience the ‘universal stream of the world’s breath’ [‘Weltatems wehendes All’ from the end of *Tristan*] or enter into the kingdom of heaven. In summary, the act of transcendence is overall found in bodily self-negation, and so the self-negating play becomes the redemption play.” (214) As Loos explains it, the process of moral progression from beginning to end of change is less important than its culmination, which gets the lion’s share of Loos’s attention.

<sup>35</sup> Beiser, *The Romantic Imperative*, 53-4. The importance of this artwork which was meant to educate humanity, and the descriptions of it offered by Schlegel and Novalis are obviously important when considering Wagner’s purpose *behind* the *Ring* dramas. Some of this will be discussed in reference to Wagner’s prose writings in Part II of this study, but only as it fits into the larger philosophical Zeitgeist as described in Part I, and so not with the kind of detail and attention the subject deserves. The latter would include not only a look at Wagner in the context of the *Frühromantiks* as Loos has done, but a formal explanation of Wagner’s writings in the context of the history of aesthetics. In Part II of this study no such thorough treatment is given – as such a theme deserves a book of its own – but the kernel of such a study is present.

concept of *Volk* quickly became invested, above all through the activities of the Romantics, with a mystical aura of nostalgia for a pristine national unity that was now lost.<sup>36</sup>

Kant gave more credence to this term in his 1793 article “On the Common Saying: ‘This May be True in Theory, but it does not Apply in Practice’” by referring to the international law under which humanity was meant to be guided as the “*Volksrecht*” which stemmed from human nature “which is still animated with respect for right and duty.”<sup>37</sup> So it is this *Volk*, a reattainable piece of human nature, basic to that nature that believes in right and duty, which is appealed to by both the *Frühromantiks* and their successors in their hope to be able to reawaken this fundamental aspect of humanity, by means of an educating artwork. Perhaps, then, in terms of the other summaries of the *Zeitgeist*, the attainment of the *Frühromantiks*’ aesthetic goals could be placed between Abrams’s second stage, and his return to God/nature in his third stage, or between Roberts’s first and second highlighted points.

Jean-Jacques Nattiez, in his book *Wagner Androgyne* takes a more secular approach. Citing examples in philosophy from Plato, through Rousseau and Kant on to Hegel, Feuerbach, and others, he explains that the ultimate goal of this process of becoming, iterated to some extent by generations of philosophers, is the fusion of the feminine and the masculine. Looking at the *Ring* with an eye to Brünnhilde, specifically the fusion of Siegfried with Brünnhilde, his analysis makes a great deal of sense. But when examining the *Ring* with an eye toward Wotan in which Wotan is the embodiment of this process of becoming, made clear by Schopenhauer, as Wagner clearly believed, his analysis is less instructive.<sup>38</sup> If Schopenhauer is to be the

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<sup>36</sup> Ronald Taylor, *Richard Wagner: His Life Art and Thought*, 102.

<sup>37</sup> *Kant’s Political Writings*. ed. H. S. Reiss. trans. H.B. Nisbet. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 92. Hegel also used it in this sense in his *Philosophy of History*. See note 310 below.

<sup>38</sup> Jean-Jacques Nattiez. *Wagner Androgyne*. trans. Stewart Spencer (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993) Wotan does not have a second half in a feminine up to which he can give himself, and in turn, she to him. The choices for such a partner for Wotan would be: Erda, Fricka, or Brünnhilde, but

keystone to our understanding of the *Ring*, as well as the model for the process of becoming as a whole cited by Oxenford and Barzun as a common Zeitgeist element in the philosophy of the time, and is to make clear what Wagner, echoing John Oxenford, characterized as “utter incomprehensibility” in German philosophy, then how can Schopenhauer be mentioned only in Nattiez’s analysis regarding the particular philosophical outcome in *Tristan*, in that man and woman are united in death with each other? <sup>39</sup> This is no keystone, and Nattiez’s conclusion, “the fusion of the man and woman,” cannot be the final destination.

That being said, Nattiez offers a blueprint for building a philosophical Zeitgeist when he calls upon an assortment of philosophers in order to prove that the idea of androgyny was in the air at the time of Wagner’s writing of the *Ring*. But the blueprint is about androgyny as an ending or a resolution to this process, and not, as will be explained below, the process itself. Could it be shown that ultimately, in this particular “horizon of expectations” or aspect of the philosophical Zeitgeist, that the *path of change itself*, recommended for individuals as well as humanity as a whole, is almost always the same, whether in Hume or Kant or Feuerbach or Schopenhauer to name a few, despite the varieties of ultimate destination described by the different philosophers? <sup>40</sup>

I believe that this end can be portrayed through an analysis of the processes or paths leading to a higher moral life employed by Schopenhauer, in *The World as Will and Representation*, and by Wagner, in his character Wotan, as well as by the philosophers who contributed to the formation of the post-Enlightenment philosophical Zeitgeist, including Hume, Spinoza, Rousseau, Schiller, Goethe, Kant,

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in each case it is clear that none of these characters have the same mutually self-sacrificial relationship between themselves and Wotan as Brünnhilde has with Siegfried or Siegmund has with Sieglinde.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 276-7.

<sup>40</sup> The most obvious of these being the Feuerbachian optimistic outlook compared to the Schopenhauerian pessimistic outlook.

Fichte, Schelling and – most importantly for Wagner during the period of his writing of the *Ring* – Hegel and Feuerbach. Not only will these findings show a more specific kinship between the post-Enlightenment thinkers and their predecessors than has been discussed up to this point (on the question of morality and where humanity should be going) but it will elucidate the problem of the Gods' end in *Götterdämmerung*. Up until now the problem has been taken as: “which of the two philosophers, Feuerbach or Schopenhauer, was closer to Wagner's intention for Wotan at the end of *Götterdämmerung*?” The blame for this pigeon-holing lies mostly with Wagner, for often citing Schopenhauer's conclusion as the great praiseworthy idea in his philosophy, a limited view of Schopenhauer which was ultimately picked up and expanded upon by later scholarship. It will be clear that the problem is less of an either/or or as a fusion of elements of the two regarding the meaning of the ending,<sup>41</sup> than a culmination of a moral path whose ending was meant to be open, and moreover, that Wagner designed to be open-ended, and thus able to offer as diverse a range of possibilities regarding the meaning of the ending as the possibilities elucidated by the philosophers in question.

The path itself is what we are concerned with, more than the destination, and those asking about the meaning of the end of the *Ring* who do not beforehand examine the path as a whole may be asking the right question but are asking it in the wrong way, and will not get a complete answer. To this end, after deciphering the proposed moral path to be referred to throughout this study as the “Moral Progression,” the next step will be to clearly outline both Wagner's moral/philosophical perspective regarding the ultimate purpose of the drama, which was laid out in his prose works and letters, as well as the character of Wotan's

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<sup>41</sup> See for example Adorno or Darcy for a more Schopenhauerian view, Dahlhaus for a more Feuerbachian view, and more recently Kitcher and Schacht for a fusion of Schopenhauer and Feuerbach.

development throughout various drafts from 1848 on. This is no light task, but it will be shown that the path itself mentioned by Wagner leading to the ideal, as well as the description of what should be contained in and brought forth by the perfect work of art – which he meant to be his *Ring* opera(s) – is the same as the path discussed by the Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment thinkers. Further, it will be shown that Wagner made a conscious effort to have Wotan’s development over the course of the cycle embody this path. With each new sketch and draft, with every rewrite, he incorporated a greater and greater number of the philosophical ideas outlined in his prose works, and as such, the Moral Progression, until he arrived at the complete poem. This analysis will then be supplemented by an examination of the music associated with Wotan/Wanderer.

#### The Moral Progression-Outline

Before beginning our analysis of Schopenhauer’s philosophy and his version of the Moral Progression, as per his role as “keystone” to the Zeitgeist, there should be a short excursus describing this progression for the sake of future comparison. As the purpose of Part I as a whole is to outline how each philosopher employs some variant of this progression, there is no reason to get into specific details about the Moral Progression at this time. A detailed summary will take place in Chapter 11 at which point the subtle differences within each philosopher’s system will be explored. It only remains to offer a brief outline of the Moral Progression so as to offer a basic guideline for the analyses in Part I.

Stage one: Abrams’s Eden. A person’s life is made up of cycles of desire and satisfaction. These desires are always fulfilled and never denied. Existence is viewed

through objects, specifically how the objects relate to us and satisfy our desires. Life is viewed only in terms of the present. One lives instinctually with no concern for the future. Change from this state is brought about only by the denial of a desired object, and thus, the first time a being feels fear.

Stage two: From this denial, care springs forth on the back of a basic understanding of the natural environment that spurs on planning for future events, and as such extends the view of the world from the present tense to include the past and the future.

Striving for mastery over the environment, and a certainty of continued satisfaction of desires into the infinite future creates religion and error in judgement. All desire is geared toward the preservation of the self. Conflicting desires and the realization that one cannot achieve every aim or desire of the will cause sorrow and depression, and break the will, which can be likened to Abrams's separation from Eden. This begins the individual's next stage of development.

Stage three: After the breaking of the will, the individual no longer views objects by their reference to his own will, but in and of themselves, purely objectively or stoically. One views other people objectively whether they are or are not one's enemies and wishes them well. One desires only to alleviate their suffering. One feels the pity which Lessing wanted to bring about through an aesthetic education. One becomes a pure will-less subject of nature. This is in line with Roberts's renewed stoicism.

Stage four: As we will see, the specifics of this stage differ widely among the philosophers to be discussed, but at its core this stage embodies the willing self-

sacrifice by the will-less person who wishes well to all, ideally for the betterment of others, of his individuality and existence. Depending on the philosopher, one does this for the benefit of the lives of the community, to join with some superworldly being or concept, or both. When this is complete, one's individuality becomes one with the universe as a whole, or one returns, following Abrams's model, to Eden.

### Arthur Schopenhauer

Much has been made of this moral/philosophical path; let us now take a first step toward examining this path using Schopenhauer as our keystone. First, some basic information regarding *The World as Will and Representation* is required. Despite its being published in 1818, it was, as Wagner noted in his 1848 letter to Liszt, initially ignored, with some exceptions, by the philosophical community which was feverishly Hegelian. Schopenhauer's greatest Western influences were Plato, Hume, Kant, Spinoza, and Schelling, all of which he read while attending school in England at the end of the eighteenth century. This first edition is divided into four sections concluding with a commentary on Kantian philosophy: first, "The Object of Experience and Science"; second, "The Objectification of the Will"; third, "The Platonic Idea"; and fourth, "With the Attainment of Self-Knowledge, the Assertion and Self-Denial of the Will." These four sections represent phases of understanding and moral development, the ultimate purpose being the "Assertion and Self-Denial of the Will." Schopenhauer breaks down his conception of moral progress, into four

phases of development which the reader should observe and follow to attain the appropriate moral end.<sup>42</sup>

Like Descartes, Hume, and Kant before him, Schopenhauer begins his philosophical exploration with the question of how can anything be known, and comes to the same answer as the others: through experience. We cannot know an object in and of itself; we can only know an object through our experience of it. With this sentiment in mind Schopenhauer says at the beginning of his treatise, “he [Man] does not know a sun and an earth, but only an eye that sees a sun, and a hand that feels an earth”;<sup>43</sup> one only knows objects through the way they are perceived by oneself. The first part of his treatise primarily discusses the qualities of causal relationships and experience. It is in the second part of his treatise where, once the foundations of knowing have been laid, the process of becoming begins. The above view, and the inability to move beyond this type of thinking to reflective abstract consciousness in the early stages of development, places humans in what one might call an animalistic view of the world. Life is experienced solely through desiring of objects or feelings, and the satisfactions of those desires. Schopenhauer describes the beginning of willing as follows: “Here we see at the very lowest grade the will manifesting itself as a blind impulse, an obscure, dull urge, remote from all direct

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<sup>42</sup> Again, the purpose of this section is not to summarize the philosophy of Schopenhauer, nor do I intend to produce a comprehensive summary of any of the works which contribute to the proposed “Zeitgeist.” My purpose is specifically to follow the moral developmental path outlined by the philosophers without a great deal of concentration on the how or why. Such explanations would extend the scope of this work to the level of absurdity, nor would I claim to be able to summarize in a few pages the only important thoughts of the philosophers in question. I do not wish for my audacity to be comparable to or confused with Wagner’s.

<sup>43</sup> *The World as Will and Representation*, I. 3. Though this idea is present as early as the fragments attributed to Xenophanes, “And the clear truth no man has seen nor will anyone know concerning the gods and about all the things of which I speak; for even if he should actually manage to say what was indeed the case, nevertheless he himself does not know it; but belief is found overall.” (Quote attributed to Xenophanes in Sextus Empiricus *Against the Mathematicians* VII 49; see also Jonathan Barnes. *Early Greek Philosophy* (London: Penguin Books, 1987), 94); we will observe the same general position in the work of every philosopher discussed below.

knowableness. It is the simplest and feeblest mode of objectification.”<sup>44</sup> Willing begins with a “dull urge,” until a more advanced version is found in the desire for an object. Schopenhauer contends that this desire for an object is at its most basic level a desire for a relinquishment from suffering.

All willing springs from lack, from deficiency, and thus from suffering. Fulfillment brings this to an end: yet for one wish that is fulfilled there remain at least ten that are denied. Further, desiring lasts a long time, demands and requests go on to infinity: fulfillment is short and meted out sparingly... No attained object of willing can give a satisfaction that lasts and no longer declines; but it is always like the alms thrown to a beggar, which relieves him today so that his misery may be prolonged till tomorrow.<sup>45</sup>

This passage describes the cycle of desires that make up the early human condition, which are considered in reference to one’s wants and the alleviation of pain.

However, without self-knowledge one will only be able to view oneself in terms of these objects and wants, and so the objects themselves will define one. This is the crucial starting point of consciousness: the feeling of want and relieve from a desire that will never find rest. But this condition is missing the ability to reason, as Schopenhauer notes:

Animals are already exposed to illusion, to deception; they however, have merely representations from perception, no concepts [*Begriffe*], no reflection; they are therefore bound to the present, and cannot take the future into consideration.<sup>46</sup>

In short, this type of thinking is incapable of considering long-term goals, or for that matter, long-term consequences to actions. In order to do that there must be conceptual thinking, and since, as was noted, the present alone is considered, thinking only in the present tense is thinking devoid of concepts. But when “the light of

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<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, I. 149. The description of the will being at its earliest stage a “dull urge” has often been misinterpreted by numerous scholars of both Wagner and Schopenhauer as being an omnibus description of the will; not at its earliest stage, but overall. This view of the will minimalizes its role in a moral growth, as will be shown below.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, I. 196.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, I. 151.

knowledge” penetrates into the mode of comprehension, as it does in humanity, a new mode of thinking becomes available. This is the true beginning of human thinking, the differentiation between the animals and humanity.

That complicated, many sided, flexible being, man, who is extremely needy and exposed to innumerable shocks and injuries, had to be illuminated by a two-fold knowledge in order to be able to exist. A higher power of knowledge of perception, so to speak, had to be added to this, a reflection of that knowledge of perception, namely reason as the faculty for forming abstract concepts. With this there came into existence thoughtfulness, surveying the past and the future, and as a consequence thereof, deliberation, care, ability for premeditated action independent of the present, and finally the fully distinct consciousness of the decisions of one’s own will as such.<sup>47</sup>

So we observe that the human consciousness, the next stage in development, is capable of putting off fulfillment in a way that consciousness without understanding abstractions cannot. This consciousness is capable of sacrificing the moment, being content with the pain of the moment, for a better tomorrow. But perhaps more importantly, premeditated action is now taken partially because the consciousness is now aware of care or fear [*Sorge*] for the future. With knowledge of the concepts of past and future, the consciousness now becomes aware of its finitude. It is this fear of a future where desires can no longer be met that causes this change and brings about the broadening of human consciousness.<sup>48</sup> The consciousness at this stage wishes to continue to exist into the future, and to this end, “care and deliberation” are taken to ensure this continued existence.

Because humans are fallible and reason is imperfect, we cannot always know that the path we laid out in order to achieve our goal or, in the long term, our grand design is the right one. So it is at this stage in development where error can first occur. Schopenhauer continues:

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<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, I. 151.

<sup>48</sup> See: Note 21 above.

Now with the mere knowledge of perception [in this case, despite the advancement of perception from the initial stage, Schopenhauer still refers to this as ‘mere’ knowledge, indicating that there are still a few steps remaining along this process of becoming] there arises the possibility of illusion and deception, whereby the previous infallibility of the will acting without knowledge is abolished... Error becomes possible and in many cases obstructs the adequate objectification of the will through actions. For although the will has already taken in the character its definite and unalterable course, in accordance with which the willing itself invariably occurs on the occasion of motives, error can still falsify the manifestations of the will, since delusive motives, resembling the real ones, slip in and abolish these. For example when superstitions foist onto a man imaginary motives that compel him to a course of action directly opposed to the way in which his will would otherwise manifest itself in the existing circumstances.<sup>49</sup>

This final thought on superstition foisting on a man its imaginary motives that contradict what his motives should be is an obvious swipe at Western religion.

This is the stage at which religion would come into being. The idea of a power that would enable the permanent attainment of all goals, is, for Schopenhauer, enough to convince mankind that if it obeys these “superstitions” in the present time, it may attain the greater goal in the hereafter. But this is to the detriment of the present life. Schopenhauer elaborates on this idea:

Man creates for himself in his own image demons, gods, and saints; then to these must be incessantly offered sacrifices, prayers, temple decorations, vows and their fulfilments, pilgrimages, salutations, adornment of images and so on. Their service is everywhere closely interwoven with reality, and indeed obscures it. Every event in life is then accepted as the counter-effect of these beings. Intercourse with them fills up half the time, constantly sustains hope, and by the charm of delusion, often becomes more interesting than intercourse with real beings.<sup>50</sup>

So religion deludes man into having false hope, takes them out of society as a whole by causing them to fill their time in pursuit of what they and others believe the demons and gods and saints would like achieved by them in this life, so that they may get their reward in the next. The will is simultaneously entirely in pursuit of one’s own interests, and entirely in pursuit of these illusory others’ interests. Though the

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<sup>49</sup> WWR I. 151-2.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, I. 323.

ability to plan for the future is a step ahead of the pure desire requiring immediate satisfaction which began Schopenhauer's process, one is still solely concerned with one's own wants and desires and their satisfaction, whether that satisfaction is delayed or not. And, in the end, these desires can never be fully satisfied. Repeating what was said above: "Fulfillment brings this [suffering] to an end; yet for one wish that is fulfilled there remain at least ten that are denied. Further, desiring lasts a long time, demands and requests go on to infinity."<sup>51</sup>

When the impossibility of the attainability of every wish – because of their often contradictory natures – is realized, the first step on the path to renunciation is made. This change brings about in the will a new mode of life which quiets the will's own desires: in other words, Roberts's renewed stoicism. This circumstance is described by Schopenhauer as *the* great moment of suffering:

[I]n most cases the Will must be broken by the greatest personal suffering before its self-denial appears. We then see the man suddenly retire into himself, after he is brought to the verge of despair through all the stages of increasing affliction with the most violent resistance. We see him know himself and the world, change his whole nature, rise above himself and above all suffering, as if purified and sanctified by it, in inviolable peace, bliss, and sublimity, [and] willingly renounce everything he formerly desired with the greatest vehemence...<sup>52</sup>

This represents the end of the second and the beginning of the third stage of Schopenhauer's moral-human development: the act of moving beyond the individual will, usually brought on by some tragic event.

The next stage, exemplified by the third section of his book, "The Platonic Idea," represents a state of being free from will and exists only in/through others.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, I. 196.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, I. 392. This sentence ends with "and gladly welcomes death," but we will go into more detail on this notion of welcoming death in the discussion of Schopenhauer's final stage of development.

<sup>53</sup> Schopenhauer, towards the end of his second book explains the way the books are organized regarding this moral path. "We shall see in the third book how, in the case of individual persons,

After the personal tragedy which brings about this new state, the life of the aesthetic begins. One no longer views people and objects in terms of personal will, or how these people and objects effect this will, but, as much as possible, solely in and of themselves. Losing the will, this person will become a “clear mirror of the world.”

Nothing can distress or alarm him anymore; nothing can any longer move him; for he has cut all the thousand threads of willing which hold us bound to the world, and which as craving, fear, envy, and anger drag us here and there in constant pain. He now looks back calmly and with a smile on the phantasmagoria of this world which was once able to move and agonize even his mind, but now stands before him as indifferently as chess-men at the end of a game, or as fancy dress cast off in the morning, the form and figure of which taunted and disquieted us on the carnival night. Life and its forms merely float before him as a fleeting phenomenon, as a light morning dream to one half-awake, through which reality already shines, and which can no longer deceive; and, like this morning dream, they too vanish without any violent transition.<sup>54</sup>

This is the more common of two ways to achieve this change. The second way is in the person of sublime character described as follows:

[This character] springs from the fact that the will is not excited here by objects certainly well calculated to excite it, but that knowledge retains the upper hand. Such a character will accordingly consider men in a purely objective way, and not according to the relations they might have to his will. For example he will observe their faults, and even their hatred and injustice to himself, without being thereby stirred to hatred on his own part. He will contemplate their happiness without feeling envy, recognize their good qualities without desiring closer association with them, perceive the beauty of women without hankering after them. His personal happiness or unhappiness will not violently affect him; he will be rather as Hamlet describes Horatio: ‘for thou hast been as one, in suffering all, that suffers nothing; a man, that fortune’s buffets and rewards hast ta’en with equal thanks’. For in the course of his own life and in its misfortunes, he will look less at his own individual lot than at the lot of mankind as a whole.<sup>55</sup>

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knowledge can withdraw from this subjection, throw off its yoke, and, free from all the aims of the will, exist purely for itself, simply as a clear mirror of the world; and this is the source of art. Finally, in the fourth book we shall see how, if this kind of knowledge reacts on the will, it can bring about the will’s self-elimination or resignation. This is the ultimate goal, and indeed the innermost nature of all virtue and holiness, and is salvation from the world.” *Ibid.*, I. 152.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, I. 390-1.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, I. 206-7. Schopenhauer’s description of the sublime character bears a strong similarity to Roberts’s description of the stoic life.

Both of Schopenhauer's paths ultimately end up in the same place and represent a selfless compassionate and sympathetic love for all others. One only wishes to appreciate works and others for their own qualities. This is why Schopenhauer includes in this section his discussion of the arts. The arts can now be appreciated for themselves without the personal will intruding.<sup>56</sup> Individuality is lost in the contemplation of the artwork – a concept indebted to the *Frühromantik* school of thinking in which the appreciation of the arts along with universal love of mankind will lead to a higher state of society and being. As one of the learned behaviors from this third aesthetic stage of Schopenhauer is the ability to recognize the suffering of the world, through the artwork, and take it onto himself, i.e. to experience *Mitleid*, Schopenhauer seems in favor of aesthetic education and its role in creating a moral being. The last characteristic of this stage is that the religion discovered in the second stage of development is rejected, in that the desiring, or more specifically the desiring for a hereafter, is stilled. Without fear, there is no need of a higher power to quell the fear.<sup>57</sup>

The final stage concentrates on the notion of self-sacrifice. It is the natural extension of the third stage. The ideal sublime third-stage being expands his “perfect

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<sup>56</sup> This is also the time when Schopenhauer discusses music as the highest of all the arts. Obviously, such a sentiment was appreciated by Wagner, as he makes clear in his 1854 letter to Liszt and in his 1856 letter to Röckel among other places. One might find it suspicious that I have not hitherto mentioned Schopenhauer's metaphysics of music up until this point, but I do not believe it has anything to do with Wagner's mode of composition for the *Ring*. Schopenhauer appreciates the works of Rossini and Mozart because of what he perceives as the non-descript nature of their work; Wackenroder and Hanslick, among others, had similar notions of sublime music. The fact that a picture does not come immediately to mind is the very reason why music has this highest place among the arts. Leitmotivic writing, which immediately brings to mind pictures, events, and experiences that are meant to be understood in the same way by all involved, is antithetical to this very appreciation. As such, these aesthetic considerations of Schopenhauer's do not find their place in this discussion. An examination of this issue in aesthetics is discussed in Part II Chapter 1.

<sup>57</sup> See: WWR. I. 280. “[W]hoever is satisfied with life as it is, whoever affirms it in every way, can confidently regard it as endless, and can banish the fear of death as a delusion. This delusion [fear of death] inspires him with the foolish dread that he can ever be deprived of the present, and deceives him of a time without a present in it [a place outside of time, i.e. Heaven].”

goodness of disposition” into a “universal love of mankind” which will ultimately enable him to recognize as his own “all the sufferings of the world”:

[F]rom the same source from which all goodness, affection, virtue, and nobility of character spring, there ultimately arises also what I call denial of the will-to-live. Just as previously we saw hatred and wickedness conditioned by egoism, and this depending on knowledge being entangled in the *principium individuationis*, so we found as the source and essence of justice, and when carried farther to the highest degrees, of love and magnanimity, that penetration of the *principium individuationis*. This penetration alone, by abolishing the distinction between our own individuality and that of others, makes possible and explains perfect goodness of disposition, extending to the most disinterested love, and the most generous self-sacrifice for others.<sup>58</sup>

While the third stage stresses the elimination of personal desire in favor of sympathy for others, the fourth stage completes this notion by saying that the will-to-live itself should be eliminated – not through suicide, but through a life spent in the pursuit of the nullification of individuality in favor of the betterment of others until finally death naturally comes as a culmination of this pursuit. Schopenhauer gives examples of this type of ideal death as the culmination of disinterested love toward others:

[It] becomes complete, the individuality and fate of others are treated entirely like one’s own. It can never go farther, for no reason exists for preferring another’s individuality to one’s own. Yet the great number of the other individuals whose whole well-being or life is in danger can outweigh the regard for one’s own particular well-being. In such a case, the character that has reached the highest goodness and perfect magnanimity will sacrifice its well-being and its life completely for the well-being of many others. So died Codrus, Leonidas, Regulus, Decius Mus, and Arnold von Winkelreid; so does everyone die who voluntarily and consciously goes to certain death for his friends or for his native land. And everyone also stands at this level who willingly takes suffering and death upon himself for the maintenance of what conduces and rightfully belongs to the welfare of all mankind, in other words, for universal, important truths, and for the eradication of great errors.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, I. 378. See also WWR I. 392 stressing the rarity of the person of sublime character who does not need “the great moment of suffering to bring about the third and fourth stages: “For only in the case of a few is mere knowledge sufficient to bring about the denial of the will, the knowledge namely that sees through the *principium individuationis*, first producing perfect goodness of disposition and universal love of mankind, and finally enabling them to recognize as their own all the sufferings of the world.” The connection to this sublime character and Christ is abundantly clear.

<sup>59</sup> WWR. I. 375.

Schopenhauer praises the Christian tragedy particularly in this regard noting that it depicts the renouncing of the whole will-to-live, cheerful abandonment of the world in the consciousness of its worthlessness and vanity.<sup>60</sup> It is this cheerfulness in the end that Schopenhauer praises and prizes in the sublime character.

This represents one, possibly the best, of all possible ends for Schopenhauer, the sacrifice of the self for the betterment of others. Another way, represented by Gretchen in the first part of *Faust*, is the denial of worldly hope, or continued suffering, because of the “excessive personal tragedies” felt in her life.<sup>61</sup> She rejects a life with Faust and the devil, here the personification of continued existence and suffering, and embraces her end, an existence free from suffering. After drawing this analogy, Schopenhauer adds: “no description known to me brings to us the essential point of that conversion so distinctly and so free from everything extraneous as the one mentioned in *Faust*.”<sup>62</sup>

For the ascetic or the sublime character, this renunciation is a constant battle, as Schopenhauer explains:

We must not imagine that, after the denial of the will-to-live has once appeared through knowledge that has become a quieter of the will, such denial no longer wavers or falters, and that we can rest on it as inherited property. On the contrary, it must always be achieved afresh through constant struggle. For as the body is the will itself only in the form of objectivity, or as phenomenon in the world as representation, that whole will-to-live exists potentially so long as the body lives, and is always striving to reach actuality and to burn afresh with all its intensity. We therefore find in the lives of saintly persons that peace and bliss we have described, only as the blossom resulting from the constant overcoming of the will; and we still the constant struggle with the will-to-live as the soil from which it shoots up; for on earth no one can have lasting peace... Therefore we see also those who have once attained to denial of the will, strive with all their might to keep to this path by self-imposed renunciations of every kind, by a penitent and hard

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<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, II. 434; See also: Mark Berry. *Treacherous Bonds*. (Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2006), 246. Berry notes this in connection with Wotan giving up the world in *Siegfried* in “gladness and joy.”

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, I. 393.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, I. 393.

way of life, and by looking for what is disagreeable to them; all this in order to suppress the will that is constantly springing up afresh.<sup>63</sup>

Clearly, the idea Schopenhauer stresses is that of constant struggle rather than clear victory. Everything possible to humble the sublime character, he does to himself; though his egoism is especially difficult to quell.

In the end, the will is quieted, individuality is rejected to the point where there is but one spark of egoism left in the corporeal existence of the sublime person, which is finally extinguished by death. Schopenhauer stresses that death should not be looked at as something to fight against out of a sense of fear, which he likens to the sun being afraid of setting at night. Death is actually the light itself, “the source of all light, burns without intermission, brings new days to new worlds, and is always rising and always setting.”<sup>64</sup> Later, however, he likens death to reabsorption into Brahma, or entering into Nirvana, though he states that all of these things are nothingness. All that remains of the individual after death is nothingness. He concludes the fourth part of his work with “to those in whom the will has turned and denied itself, this very real world of ours with all its suns and galaxies, is – nothing.”<sup>65</sup> These thoughts might seem to be contradictory, but they are not. Death is the source of all striving, all change, and in death we are united again with the universe. This is the final goal for Schopenhauer along his moral path.

In this description of Schopenhauer’s moral path, as noted earlier, little has been said of Schopenhauer’s sense of necessity regarding these stages: in other words why, for Schopenhauer, each stage must follow from the previous one, and most importantly, why nothingness must be the ultimate goal of this progression. This claim, of the final notion of death being nothingness, is one that few philosophers

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<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, I. 391-2.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, I. 366.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, I. 412.

were willing to make, as this knowledge lies outside of the experiential (Schopenhauer himself took up this position from his assimilation of Vedic and Eastern philosophy). For the same reason, there is a similar hesitance to take up Schopenhauer's notion that all existence is suffering, and that it is through the realization of this truth and the desire for an escape from suffering that further moral progress is made. The point stressed in the above description has been the "what" or the description of the characteristics of that stage. It is in this "what" that the Moral Progression will make itself present. So Schopenhauer's final stage here is described as dying for the benefit of others – as he explained in the ideal deaths of Leonidas, Gretchen et al. – and to be assimilated into the all, or the world, despite the fact that, according to Schopenhauer's definition, neither, strictly speaking exist.<sup>66</sup> The assimilation itself is the end of the progression, the metaphysical nature of this end aside.

Now it is clear why Schopenhauer can be so easily used as a keystone for the Moral Progression. The neatness with which his four books lend themselves to four different stages of moral development obviously was able to catch the eye of Oxenford, Goethe, Feuerbach, and Wagner. Now that the keystone is present through an analysis of the work of Schopenhauer, we can now begin our survey of philosophers who contribute to the Zeitgeist as a whole. Obviously, most do not include a clear four-staged process laid out in the four parts of a book as Schopenhauer does. The works which shall be discussed often take a journey into political matters, both the ideal state/government as well as failed and improper states. The closest Schopenhauer comes to this is in his third stage, where the will is quieted for the benefit of the many. This type of proto-socialistic idea is present in every one

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<sup>66</sup> I believe Schopenhauer's last sentence of part four makes clear that the concept of joining the universe in non-existence, and returning to one-ness with the universe [Brahma, Nirvana] are exactly the same.

of the philosophers' systems discussed below. But Schopenhauer does not weigh himself down with details of politics, he just states the ideal, and leaves it at that.<sup>67</sup>

Depending on the vicinity to the French Revolution (whether that of 1789 or 1848 hardly matters), the writers will be more revolutionary in their politics, or more defeatist, after the eventual let-down when humanity does not become a happy union speaking through one voice overnight. Or to put it another way, some view the ideal world as “right around the corner” whereas others view it as an impossible dream. It is important to note that both types believe in the same progression, but view the end point as either achievable or not.<sup>68</sup> The political ideals will be discussed, but only in reference to the general moral development of the person/species with which they are often associated. Although it is tempting to move backward in time from Schopenhauer for continuity, we will instead begin by discussing Hume, Kant, and Spinoza, the earliest among the contributing philosophers, and then move forward in time ending with Hegel and Feuerbach, the authors of Wagner's philosophical reading before and during the writing of the *Ring*, so that we may examine the origins and the development of the ethical/moral principles which make up the Moral Progression.

In order to avoid the misunderstandings that have arisen in other analyses like this as a result of taking a single sentence from these philosophers or Wagner out of context, it has been necessary to quote from their works extensively, and to analyze

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<sup>67</sup> In Chapter 47 “On Ethics” in *The World as Will and Representation II*. 591 Schopenhauer says the following concerning the state versus the individual “Nations are in reality mere abstractions; only individuals actually exist.” And earlier, concerning the moral development of states versus that of individuals, he notes “What is decided morally is not the fate of nations, which exists only in the phenomenon, but that of the individual.” And on pg. 594, he describes the state as nothing more than an “institute of protection.” If, he notes, (595) “...other aims besides that of protection, here discussed, are ascribed to the State, this can easily endanger its true aim.” Clearly, the state itself and its destiny do not concern Schopenhauer nearly as much as the concept of *Mitleid* functioning on an individual basis. The state to Schopenhauer is no more or less than a construct that is ideally used solely for protection, but ethical change comes to and from individuals, not constructs.

<sup>68</sup> More will be made of this when Wagner's writings are discussed, but it is the view of this author that the great change that took place in Wagner from Utopian optimistic dreamer to pessimist, a change that some have associated with the shift from Feuerbach to Schopenhauer, has more to do with his changed view of the achievability of the end goal than with which philosopher he was taking seriously at the time. As we will see, both Schopenhauer and Feuerbach employ the same Moral Progression.

their work using their own terminology. It is often the case that when these men attempt to make an important point, it is not made in a single sentence, nor can it be easily summarized or stated as such. Otherwise, they would have done so. So in order to understand exactly what they are trying to say, we need the context in which they are saying it. The inclusion of extensive quotes below is intended for this purpose, to make certain that what they are writing is what they mean, and so thus avoid as many misinterpretations as possible.

**Part I – The Moral Progression**

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## Chapter 1. David Hume

In philosophy, as in most other liberal arts, when one is looking for precedents one can easily find oneself on a slippery slope sliding inexorably in the direction of Ancient Greece,<sup>69</sup> only to find that it becomes literally a Sisyphean task to attempt to return to the top of the slope. For this study I have elected to begin neither in Ancient Greece, nor with Kant, who is usually considered the father of German Idealism. Rather, I have elected to begin with David Hume, because he is so central both to Kant's critical writings<sup>70</sup> and to the philosophy of Schopenhauer, who once considered that philosophy in Germany would best be served by a translation of Hume's *Treatise of Human Nature* into German.<sup>71</sup>

Nearly a century separates Hume's *Treatise of Human Nature* from Schopenhauer's *The World as Will and Representation*. In 1739, when Hume was in his late 20's, he published his *Treatise of Human Nature*. The work was completed as the culmination of his pilgrimage to La Flèche, France, the birthplace of Descartes. It is one of the first works of philosophy to offer a comprehensive examination, beginning from experience, of all that is knowable. It is itself divided into three sections, the first being "Of the Understanding," the second "Of the Passions," and the

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<sup>69</sup> For example Barzun's notion of being as continuous becoming that he believes is an important piece of the philosophical Zeitgeist of this age is really Neo-Heracliteanism. Heraclitus having penned it around 500 BCE

<sup>70</sup> Kant begins his analysis of what is knowable in his *Critique of Pure Reason* with Hume's statement that all knowledge is experiential, and as such, a priori knowledge is impossible. Kant famously expands the possible a priori knowledge from Hume's "nothing" to "conceptions of both space and time."

<sup>71</sup> We could also easily look beyond Schopenhauer and Feuerbach and still find the notion of relinquishing one's self for the betterment of another – an important aspect of the Moral Progression – playing a prominent part in moral philosophy of later generations. To name two of many, this notion can be found in the works of Nietzsche (See: Jonathan Dollimore. *Death Desire and Loss in Western Culture*, 237) and in the final Ekstasis of Sartre in *Being and Nothingness*: the "being-for-others" which he views as the resolution lying beyond the dichotomy of mere "being-in-itself" and "being-for-itself". To chronicle the history of the Moral Progression in its entirety, despite Dollimore's effort, will, without a work of encyclopaedic length, remain a subject whose depths may never be fully plumbed.

last “Of morals.” Like Schopenhauer, Hume begins his discussion with the knowability of things and ends with his conception of ideal moral living. Many of the notions included in this work fit into the realm of what would be called common sense: i.e., he defines feelings such as jealousy, pride and anger in terms of our experience of them and the inner passions which arouse these feelings. That being said, without these essential building blocks we will not be able to understand his more complicated moral notions.

Hume begins his work with the famous/infamous idea that nothing can be known outside of experience, so we “know” everything in terms of ourselves. Each person sees a different version of objects and people, and has a different conception of space and time as a whole. Therefore, people and objects can only be known in terms of our perception of them, not in and of themselves. “We have no idea of any quality in an object, which does not agree to, and may not represent a quality in an impression; and that because all our ideas are deriv’d from our impressions.”<sup>72</sup> This experience is used in the world of personal perception for our own wants and need. “We have our knowledge of how to fulfil primary desires, self-preservation, obtaining pleasure, avoiding pain, from experience.”<sup>73</sup> This is the first step and requirement of reason: to fulfil our primary desires. To this end experience teaches us, through the study of cause and effect, to reason. From here Hume begins a lengthy analysis of cause and effect. He notes that before scientific analysis, or perhaps more clearly, before looking at a cause and effect scientifically to discover the nature of the cause, we assume that a cause is related to an effect by the frequency with which the effect is found in conjunction with the cause. “Our reasoning concerning cause and effect is derived from nothing but custom; and that belief is more properly an act of the

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<sup>72</sup> David Hume. *Treatise of Human Nature*. Reprint from the original 1739 edition. (Amherst, New York: Prometheus Books, 1992), 243.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 178.

sensitive [perception] than of the cognitive part of our natures.” Perceiving cause and effect is then the foundation of reason. “[A]ll reasonings are nothing but the effect of custom.”<sup>74</sup>

From this background Hume is able to conclude that individuality is made up from the memory of a chain of causes and effects experienced by the self over the course of a life.

One thought chases another, and draws after it a third, by which it is expel’d in its turn... Whatever changes he endures, his several parts are still connected by the relation of causation... As memory alone acquaints us with the continuance and extent of this succession of perceptions, ’tis to be consider’d, upon that account chiefly, as the source of personal identity. Had we no memory, we never shou’d have any notion of causation, nor consequently of that chain of causes and effects that constitute our self or person.<sup>75</sup>

So a person is made up of, essentially, the series of causes and effects associated with the fulfilling of his primary needs, or the chain of events describing his wants and desires, or more simply, successive desires. But the problem with forming anything definitive with this background of wants and desires is that the passions that bring on these desires are fickle: “There is inconstancy of cause of these passions, and from the short duration of its connection with ourselves. The thing itself brings little satisfaction.”<sup>76</sup> In this sense Hume is consistent with Schopenhauer’s first stage of being, as well as his description of desires which bring little true satisfaction.

If we were to follow the Schopenhauerian keystone to the second stage, we would look for a discussion of the individual gaining the ability to create new ideas/long term planning, as well as developing a desire to control the environment around him. Hume moves on to discuss both of these points. Although reason is a useful tool, it cannot create anything new, as it is solely based on custom via

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<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 148.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 261-2.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 293.

experienced causes and effects. The individual can do nothing original with reason alone. “Reason alone can never give rise to any original idea.”<sup>77</sup> Reason is unreliable. Since we are only capable of perceiving cause and effect from our own point of view, and we only perceive objects from our own point of view, in every relationship we see, we find only ourselves reflected back at us, not the causal relationship or the things in the relationship themselves. So despite the enlightenment drive to strive for knowledge and original causes, nothing can ultimately be known, only our perceived version of events. The first cause is unknowable.

Nothing is more curiously enquir’d after by the mind of man, than the causes of every phenomenon; nor are we content with knowing the immediate causes, but push on our enquiries, till we arrive at the original ultimate principle. We wou’d not willingly stop before we are acquainted with that energy in the cause, by which it operates on its effect; that tie, which connects them together; and that efficacious quality, on which the tie depends. This is our aim in all our studies and reflections: And how must we be disappointed, when we learn, that this connexion, tie, or energy lies merely in ourselves, and is nothing but the determination of the mind, which is acquir’d by custom, and causes us to make a transition from an object to its usual attendant, and from the impression of one to the lively idea of the other?<sup>78</sup>

This is the first frustration of the will; knowledge itself cannot be attained with any reliability.

What can give rise to an original idea is the imagination which is spurred on by the passions.<sup>79</sup> The imagination, or the fancy, is used to make unprovable axioms from which one can base a larger system. This sounds more judgmental than it is as mathematics, arguably the most objective science humanity possesses, is founded upon unprovable axioms. So the imagination allows humans to create systems of thought, and make comparisons which would be impossible if limited to provable reason alone. Whether these systems are accurate or are capable of fulfilling the

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<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 157.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 266.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 276-7.

ultimate goals for which they are designed is another question. The problem is, as Hume notes, that as soon as the imagination becomes involved, human error and contrasting views also become possible.

If one were to assent to every trivial suggestion of the fancy; beside that these suggestions are often contrary to each other, they lead us into such errors absurdities and obscurities, that we must at least become ashamed of our credulity. *Nothing is more dangerous to reason than the flights of imagination.* And nothing has been the occasion of more mistakes among philosophers. But if we reject all trivial suggestions of the fancy and adhere to the understanding, that is the general and more established properties of imagination, this too is dangerous. When it acts alone, it entirely subverts itself, and leaves not the lowest degree of evidence in any proposition. We save ourselves from this total scepticism only by bringing back a property of fancy.<sup>80</sup>

This is the second frustration of the will: it is impossible to be sure that any plan will ultimately solve your problem without infracting upon another desire or need.

As soon as the imagination becomes involved with reason and the passions, there exists the possibility for expanding past simply satisfying the primary needs and into secondary needs which involve planning for the future. The imagination is capable of sustaining a person who is in the process of obtaining a goal or fulfilling a desire until that satisfaction is felt by attainment. It is only with the picture in the mind of the attainment of the goal, that humans are capable of waiting for the physical attainment.<sup>81</sup> Without the imagination, long-term goals become impossible. Humans would refuse to wait for fulfillment. Just because the passions working with the imagination can offer this fulfillment through planning, however, does not mean that they do. Hume explains that often when there is a choice between satisfying a desire for an object that is close and one that is farther away, even if the object which is

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<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 267.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 314.

farther away is more appealing to us, we will often choose the object of desire that requires less planning and waiting on our part, often to our detriment.

Humans cannot look far beyond their own interests, we may be fully convinced that a better object at a great distance excels a close object that is not as good as the former, but we are not able to regulate our actions by this judgment; but yield to the solicitations of our passions, which always plead in favor of whatever is near and contiguous. This is why men often act in contradiction to their own interests, and why they prefer any trivial advantage that is present to the maintenance and order of society, which depends on the observance of justice.<sup>82</sup>

The above citation also includes another idea noted in the transition between Schopenhauer's stages two and three, namely, that as humans err they often work in contradiction with their own wants, though Hume waits to describe a solution to this problem.

It has been shown that Hume's second stage ends with a frustration brought on by contradictory wants. He continues with a way out of this "melancholy." After realizing that neither the systems brought about by the imagination nor those brought about by reason alone offer any answers, he explains that:

[S]ince reason is incapable of dispelling these clouds *Nature herself suffices to that purpose, and cures me of that melancholy.* Here then I find myself absolutely and necessarily determined to live and talk and act like other people in the common affairs of life.<sup>83</sup>

So, the solution is to follow the society as a whole or to follow nature – nearly a direct parallel to Schopenhauer's solution from the confusion brought about by contradictory desires.

As Hume restricts himself to the realm of the known, he does not concern himself to the same extent with ideal states, as in Schopenhauer's third and fourth stages, as Rousseau and Kant and the proceeding generations do. Hume is more

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<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 535.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 267.

interested in the practical. One example of this notion is the following: “It is rare to see someone who loves another more than himself. It is just as rare to meet someone in whom all kind affections taken together do not overbalance the selfish ones.”<sup>84</sup>

This quote is almost dismissive of what would be Schopenhauer’s third stage thinking, yet includes an insight into his own thinking concerning the ideal: a degree of selflessness. He noted that self-love is “the source of all injustice and violence; nor can a man ever correct those vices without correcting and restraining the *natural* movements of that appetite.”<sup>85</sup> So although he is not specific, he does allude to certain possibilities which resemble the ideas of the later generations of philosophers, particularly, the quieting of the passions or will.

After we realize that an idea is based on false pretences:

[O]ur passions yield to our reason without any opposition. I may desire any fruit as of an excellent relish; but whenever you convince me of my mistake, my longing ceases. I may will the performance of certain actions as means of obtaining any desir’d good; but as my willing of these actions is only secondary, and founded on the supposition, that they are causes of the propos’d effect; as soon as I discover the falsehood of that supposition, they must become indifferent to me.<sup>86</sup>

This includes the ability to quiet the passions through reason, and moreover, the requirement to do such a thing if the reasoning used was faulty. Hume offers another way to quiet the will earlier in his work – as well as the ultimate result of such a quieting – “To excite any passion, and at the same time raise an equal share of its antagonist is to undo what was done and must leave the mind at last perfectly calm and indifferent.”<sup>87</sup> “Calm and indifferent” certainly could be a description of Schopenhauer’s third stage. Hume follows this notion with a question posed to the world as a whole:

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<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 487.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 480.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 416-7.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 278.

Can we imagine it possible that while human nature remains the same, men will ever become entirely indifferent to their power, riches, beauty, or personal merit and that their pride and vanity will not be affected by these advantages?<sup>88</sup>

Clearly, he does not yet believe in the practicality of this, as he claims that:

[S]trength of mind is the ability to will the calm passions within yourself above the violent ones. Though there is no man so constantly possessed of virtue, as never on any occasion to yield to the solicitations of passion and desire.<sup>89</sup>

But if we examine this sentiment in reverse, we see that if a man were possessed of this much virtue, he would never yield to passion or desire, an ideal beyond the current world, all consistent with Schopenhauer's third stage.

One notion foreshadows the *Frühromantik* political ideas on the subject of what would be entailed in a universal love of humanity. Hume begins with his experiential disclaimer that:

Public interest is a motive too remote and too sublime to affect the generality of mankind and operate with any force in actions so contrary to private interest as are frequently those of justice and common honesty.<sup>90</sup>

But he continues by describing how the universal love would come about.

In general, it may be affirmed, that there is no such passion in human minds, as the love of mankind, merely as such, independent of personal qualities, of service, or of relation to our self. 'Tis true, there is no human, and indeed no sensible, creature, whose happiness or misery does not, in some measure, affect us, when brought near to us and represented in lively colors: But this proceeds merely from sympathy, and is no proof of such an universal affection to mankind, since this concern extends itself beyond our own species. An affection betwixt the sexes is a passion evidently implanted in human nature; and this passion not only appears in its peculiar symptoms, but also in inflaming every other principle of affection, and raising a stronger love from beauty, wit, kindness, than wou'd otherwise flow from them. Were there a universal love among all human creatures it would appear after the same manner. Any degree of a good quality wou'd cause a stronger affection than

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<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 278.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 418.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 481.

the same degree of a bad quality would cause hatred; contrary to what we find in experience.<sup>91</sup>

We can observe in Hume the notion of sympathetic love for all humanity, much like Schopenhauer and others describe, as well as the notion of this love coming from and behaving like the love between a man and a woman. Feuerbach and Wagner, and others, similarly hold that selfless love stems from this love between a man and a woman.

Schopenhauer's third stage thinking may be considered too vague and unknowable from Hume's point of view. The fourth stage then, the ideal death, is removed from Hume's main argument and moral progression entirely. Yet it is, to an extent, found in some of his peripheral comments. Hume offers two interesting maxims, each somewhat removed from the writing found around it, which offer impressions as to his moral thinking which border on the metaphysical. First:

It is not contrary to reason to prefer the destruction of the world or my own ruin to prevent harm from coming to someone we don't know or the scratching of a finger. A trivial good may in some circumstances produce a desire superior to what arises from the greatest and most valuable enjoyment.<sup>92</sup>

Although it is not elaborated upon, this is reminiscent of Schopenhauer's disinterested sacrifice for others found in the fourth stage. So Hume is not entirely devoid of this type of thinking. Second, in another work of his, the *Dialogue Concerning Natural Religion*, Hume discusses what might be entailed in the ideal worshipping of God: "Our most perfect worship of the deity is not in veneration, reverence, or gratitude; but in a certain mysterious self-annihilation or total extraction of all of our faculties."<sup>93</sup> This is reminiscent of Schopenhauer's quieting of the will to

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<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 481.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 416.

<sup>93</sup> David Hume. *Dialogue Concerning Natural Religion*. [1779] (London : William Blackwood and Sons, 1907), 57. Much of Hume's discussion here is a back and forth between the relative worths of

nonexistence, the word “self-annihilation” in this context extremely so. The full process made clear by Schopenhauer can be seen, admittedly to a lesser extent, but still clearly seen, in the work of Hume.

Before departing from Hume entirely, there are two ideas associated with self-love which will be important in the coming chapters: pride<sup>94</sup> and government. Hume notes:

If pride and humility is placed in another person, nothing more readily produces kindness and affection than his approbation of our conduct and character and nothing inspires us with a stronger hate than his blame or contempt.<sup>95</sup>

In this vein: “Proud men are most shocked by contempt.”<sup>96</sup> And finally,

Nothing is more evident than that any person acquires our kindness or is exposed to our ill-will in proportion to the pleasure or uneasiness we receive from him and that the passions keep pace exactly with the sensations. Whoever can find the means either by his services his beauty, or his flattery to render himself useful or agreeable to us is sure of our affections, whoever harms or displeases us never fails to excite our hatred or anger.<sup>97</sup>

The important idea mentioned here is how people well disposed toward us, or like us, receive affection from us because in praising them, we praise ourselves, self-love.

Equally, when that affection is not returned, or contempt is given, it inspires as negative a feeling toward the person, as were previously positive.

But from self-love, according to Hume, comes the necessity for a state.

“Justice establishes itself by convention or agreement, a sense of interest supposed to

Christianity with its corporeal human god, and Platonism with its incorporeal god. In the back and forth he does refer to this “self-annihilation or total extraction of all of our faculties” which he gives to Plotinus and the Platonists as “possibly too far stretched.” But then rebuts this half-criticism with one more directed at the Christian god, and worship of him: “[I]t must be acknowledged that by representing the Deity as so intelligible, and comprehensible, and so similar to a human mind, we are guilty of the grossest and most narrow partiality, and make ourselves the model of the whole universe.” He clearly sides, in a choice between the two, with the Platonists and the passage quoted above.

<sup>94</sup> Particularly on the fight between Siegfried and Wotan, and the way Wotan views others.

<sup>95</sup> *Treatise of Human Nature*. 346.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 324.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 348.

be common to all. Self-interest is the original motive to the establishment of justice.”<sup>98</sup> Further:

There is something mutually engaged on the part of the magistrate, vis. protection and security; and ‘tis only by the hopes he affords of these advantages that he can ever persuade men to submit to him. But when instead of protection and security, they meet with tyranny and oppression; they are freed from their promises, (as happens in all conditional contracts) and return to that state of liberty which preceded the institution of government.<sup>99</sup>

So self-love and individual interest cause us to engage in a society, but they are also why we must reject such societies when they no longer will this criterion. But more important is the idea that there existed a state of liberty which preceded the institution of government. If we add to this what Hume said earlier on the subject of self-love being “the source of all injustice and violence,” then a picture emerges of the state being founded on an initial injustice and it is only in returning to the “state of liberty” that this injustice can be rectified.<sup>100</sup> These are revolutionary words considering he wrote them during the age of Louis XIV, long before the flood to revolution in Europe, and these sentiments would be repeated by many others in the years to come, particularly by revolutionary philosophers like Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

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<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 498.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 550.

<sup>100</sup> See Wagner’s *Die Wibelungen*, among other places for a similar notion of “smiting mankind’s rotting worm” and the single injustice that gave birth to a tyrannical world. It is difficult to avoid the similarity.

## Chapter 2. Benedict de Spinoza

Although Spinoza actually wrote in the century preceding Hume, he was probably not a direct influence on Hume. His works were resurrected by the early romantic poets and philosophers like Schiller and Schelling because of his pantheistic ideas as well as his revolutionary democratic ideas, though they were not so revolutionary to him and the republican Netherlands from which he came. It is difficult not to see the political impact these works had on the likes of Rousseau. For these reasons, he is placed here, as an introduction to Rousseau and romanticism.

Unlike Hume, Spinoza does not begin his search for truth by starting from nothing and trying to decipher what exactly is knowable using deductive reasoning. Spinoza instead puts Hume's question on its head. If experience is all that can be used to know anything, and experience is gained through the perception of causes and effects in nature, then the causes and effects in nature, the acts of nature itself, are then all that is knowable. Spinoza said that nature itself and these causes and effects were divine, and represented God's order on earth. This does away with several problems. Up until this point, i.e., the end of the seventeenth century, inductive reasoning was still used in the universities, with the power and wisdom of God's divine order being the point of origin to begin all examinations into the knowable. The natural order was viewed as lesser, the physical, rather than the more truthful metaphysical: nothing worth knowing could be learned from the beasts and the plants which have no conception of a savior, and no chance of seeing paradise. By combining the two together, as radical as it was, making something earthly out of the divine, Spinoza followed both the older generation of scholars by continuing to use the old methods of inductive reasoning; defining the world based on the existence of some form of supreme being-creator, and the deductive reasoning of the newer generation of Newtonians. Spinoza's nature functioned as both the Newtonian starting point of knowledge, and the supreme being from which knowledge begins and which is the starting point for metaphysical arguments which follow inductive reasoning. The premise of these Newtonians and their successors, that objects can be known in and of themselves, was what Hume railed against in his *Treatise*, because he

viewed this premise as faulty.<sup>101</sup> Spinoza seems to have known that an objection like that would eventually come, and so critiqued it himself:

Nature is not bounded by the laws of human reason, which aims only at man's true benefit and preservation; her limits are infinitely wider, and have reference to the eternal order of nature, wherein man is but a speck; it is by the necessity of this alone that all individuals are conditioned for living and acting in a particular way. If anything, therefore, in nature seems ridiculous, absurd, or evil, it is because we only know in part, and are almost entirely ignorant of the order and interdependence of nature as a whole, and also because we want everything to be arranged according to the dictates of our human reason; in reality that which reason considers evil, is not evil in respect to the order and laws of nature as a whole, but only in respect to the laws of our reason.<sup>102</sup>

The quote is veiled with quasi-religious language, but it comes down to this basic point: we cannot understand objects and relationships in the world because we cannot understand them in any other way than from our own perspective or experience, i.e., Hume's premise. Nature in this way is double-sided: it is the source of instinct and reason, and it is the goal of reason. This is Spinoza's contribution to philosophy.

Spinoza's path of moral development begins from this first side of nature.

Before reason, that quality unique to humans, became available, all people lived under the instinctual rule of nature.

It is the sovereign law and right of nature that each individual should endeavour to preserve itself as it is, without regard to anything but itself... The natural right of the individual man is thus determined, not by sound reason, but by desire and power. All are not naturally conditioned so as to act according to the laws and rules of reason; nay, on the contrary, all men are born ignorant, and before they can learn the right way of life and acquire the habit of virtue, the greater part of their life, even if they have been well brought up, has passed away. Nevertheless, they are in the meanwhile bound

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<sup>101</sup> This is a pattern that appears repeatedly throughout the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The idea of being able to know objects as anything more than our perceptions of them is criticized by scholars of every generation, and is always used to distinguish the author from the lowly naive thinkers of the age. Thus the perception turns out to be a stereotype that perhaps never existed in real scientific discourse and was in fact an intangible shadow that could be easily fought and mocked: a 'straw man'. We have seen this in the critiques of Mann and Adorno of the "naive" nineteenth century – this time not in the Schillerian sense – which makes their comments distinguishing themselves from the previous age particularly ironic.

<sup>102</sup> Benedict de Spinoza. *Theologico-Political Treatise and A Political Treatise*. trans. R.H.M. Elwes. (New York: Dover Publications Inc, 1951), from the *Theologico-Political Treatise*, [1670] 202.

to live and preserve themselves as far as they can by the unaided impulses of desire.<sup>103</sup>

So again, the first stage of living is based on desire. The means to gain these desired objects are accordingly “whatever it takes.”

Whatsoever, therefore, an individual (considered as under the sway of nature) thinks useful for him, whether led by sound reason or impelled by the passions, that he has a sovereign right to seek and to take for himself as he best can, whether by force, cunning, entreaty, or any other means; consequently he may regard as an enemy anyone who hinders the accomplishment of his purpose.<sup>104</sup>

This leaves a limitless range of possible objects to be attained unhampered by morality. In this sense the natural order is forbidding and Smithian. Everyone is concerned only with his own interests and the achievement of his own desires. Further, one can observe that reason, to a certain extent, comes into play in the naturalistic stage, as the objects which are useful to him can be taken by cunning, and planning; so to an extent there is long-term planning available to sate these desires.

However, Spinoza breaks us away from this naturalistic “utopia” to remind us that in such a scenario, everyone would be living in fear of his neighbor, and no one would be able to achieve his wants. So it is to alleviate fear that man must switch from living his life according to natural instinct, to living it instead through reason:

No one can doubt that it is much better for us to live according to the laws and assured dictates of reason, for, as we said, they have men’s true good for their objects. Moreover everyone wishes to live as far as possible securely beyond the reach of fear, and this would be quite impossible so long as everyone did everything he liked, and reason’s claim was lowered to a par with those of hatred and anger.

and he concludes by saying that in order to live by reason, men must live together in a group or society-government:

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<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 200-1.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 201-2.

[T]heir life should be no more conditioned by the force and desire of individuals, but by the power and will of the whole body. This end they will be unable to attain if desire be their only guide (for by the laws of desire each man is drawn in a different direction); they must, therefore, most firmly decree and establish that they will be guided in everything by reason (which nobody will dare openly repudiate lest he should be taken for a madman), and will restrain any desire which is injurious to a man's fellows, that they will do to all as they would be done by, and that they will defend their neighbors rights as their own.<sup>105</sup>

This is Spinoza's ideal state of being as well as government. It seems as if he has skipped right from stage one to stage three, according to Schopenhauer's system, but he only discusses this ideal state here as a preface to a discussion of different types of living situations that represent steps in between stages one and three. For example, one can see two important similarities in how humanity employs logic among Spinoza's, Hume's, and Schopenhauer's perspectives: that humans are incapable of knowing what is best for themselves and that it is only through hope of something greater and fear of something worse that we will reject a desired object, two feelings which play an important part in stage two thinking.

It is a universal law of human nature that no one ever neglects anything which he judges to be good, except with the hope of gaining a greater good, or from the fear of a greater evil; nor does anyone endure an evil except for the sake of avoiding a greater evil, or gaining a greater good. That is, everyone will, of two goods, choose that which he thinks the greatest; and, of two evils, that which he thinks the least. I say advisedly that which he thinks the greatest or the least, for it does not necessarily follow that he judges right.<sup>106</sup>

Both of these notions rely on a perception of future joy or pain which requires a type of thinking, as with Schopenhauer and Hume, beyond instinct and desire; however, this type of thinking, as is explained above, is fallible. Spinoza continues on the system's possibility for error:

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<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 202-3.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 203.

How subjects ought to be guided so as best to preserve their fidelity and virtue is not so obvious. Both rulers and ruled are men and prone to follow after their lusts. The fickle disposition of the multitude almost reduces those who have experience of it to despair, for it is governed solely by emotions, not reason: it rushes headlong into every enterprise, and is easily corrupted either by avarice or luxury: everyone thinks himself omniscient and wishes to fashion all things to his liking, judging a thing to be just or unjust, lawful or unlawful, according as he thinks it will bring him profit or loss: vanity leads him to despise his equals, and refuse their guidance: envy of superior fame and fortune (for such gifts are never evenly distributed) leads him to desire and rejoice in his neighbor's downfall. I need not go through the whole list, everyone knows already how much crime results from disgust of the present – desire for change, headlong anger, and contempt for poverty, and how men's minds are engrossed and kept in turmoil thereby.<sup>107</sup>

In other words, error springs from luxury, avarice – in short; self-love – and viewing the world through the convenience and the glory of the individual. This is not the ideal state of people living through reason of which Spinoza spoke. This is closer to monarchy. The problems arise when we realize that our desires and the feeling of good that comes from their fulfillment are impermanent.

On the subject of viewing good and evil in terms of individual advantage in his posthumously published work *The Ethics*, Spinoza argued that we are incapable of knowing what is best for us, and it is the imperfect image of imagined idealized future objects and satisfaction that is partially to blame for this.

We can have but a very inadequate knowledge of the duration of things; and the periods of their existence we can only determine by imagination, which is not so powerfully affected by the future as the present. Hence such true knowledge of good and evil as we possess is merely abstract or general, and the judgment which we pass on the order of things and the connection of causes, with a view to determining what is good or bad for us in the present is rather imaginary than real.<sup>108</sup>

Moving to the next phase of development, we see that in the ideal state we would realize the impermanence of our desires, and the pain associated with the losing of the feeling of satisfaction or the desired object would be nil. As soon as we

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<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 216-7.

<sup>108</sup> Benedict de Spinoza. *On the Improvement of the Understanding – The Ethics – Correspondence*. trans. R.H.M. Elwes. (New York: Dover Publications Inc, 1955), from *The Ethics* [1677] 230.

realize that the preservation of these feelings is impossible, a man becomes free from fear. Spinoza discusses such an idealized “free individual’s” knowledge of impermanence:

The more this knowledge, that things are necessary, is applied to particular things, which we conceive more distinctly and vividly, the greater is the power of the mind over the emotions, as experience also testifies. For we see, that the pain arising from the loss of any good is mitigated, as soon as the man who has lost it perceives, that it could not by any means have been preserved.<sup>109</sup>

This comes somewhat close to Schopenhauer’s conception of becoming free when one realizes that life is made up entirely of pain, and trying to stop the pain only makes it more painful. Reason can be used as a tool for the realization of the fruitlessness in attempting to attain a desire: “experience teaches all the usual surroundings of social life are vain and futile.”<sup>110</sup>

Hand in hand with this notion is that reason can assist in informing us of our own incorrect decisions, i.e., our goals which cannot be met by the method we use.

[W]hen the mind devotes itself to any thought, so as to examine it, and to deduce therefrom in due order all the legitimate conclusions possible, any falsehoods which may lurk in the thought will be detected; but if the thought be true, the mind will readily proceed...[This] is necessary for our purpose, for our thoughts may be brought to a close by the absence of a foundation...[The] foundation which must direct our thoughts can be nothing else than the knowledge of that which constitutes the reality of truth, and knowledge of the understanding, its properties, and powers.<sup>111</sup>

In other words, we must reject the thinking which does not stand up to reason. If we are incapable of doing this, and incapable of moving beyond our own point of view and recognizing others in common fellowship the end result will be the same, but it will be a more painful realisation; what Spinoza calls a “spiritual conflict”:

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<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 250.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 3. from *Of the Improvement of the Understanding* [1662].

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

If we keep also in readiness the notion of our true advantage, and of the good which follows from mutual friendships, and common fellowships; further, if we remember that complete acquiescence is the result of the right way of life, and that men no less than anyone else act by the necessity of their nature: in such case I say the wrong, or the hatred, which commonly arises therefrom, will engross a very small part of our imagination and will be easily overcome; or, if the anger which springs from a grievous wrong be not overcome easily it will nevertheless be overcome, though not without a spiritual conflict.<sup>112</sup>

So Spinoza makes clear that either a harsh realization or a relinquishing of the self-centered point of view in favor of the community – reason – is a necessary stage along the way to the ideal which Spinoza later calls the “free man.” This is the same notion that is found in Schopenhauer and Hume.

For Spinoza, the “free man” is the goal of mankind, freedom from fear and freedom from desire in a life led by reason. Such an individual does not view people in their relation to his/her will “with knowledge we learn to be equal minded to fortunes smiles and frowns.”<sup>113</sup> Also, “he who lives under the guidance of reason endeavors to render back love or kindness for other men’s hatred, anger, contempt towards him.”<sup>114</sup> And:

He who would govern his emotions and appetite solely by the love of freedom, strives to gain knowledge of the virtues and their causes to fill his spirit with the joy that arises with true knowledge of them, he will not desire to dwell on men’s faults, or to carp at his fellows, or revel in a false show of freedom.<sup>115</sup>

This person is also willing to give up his own will for the betterment of humanity. “Men who are governed by reason desire for themselves nothing which they do not also desire for the rest of mankind; and consequently are just faithful and honorable in their conduct.”<sup>116</sup> These lines could have been written by Schopenhauer representing

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<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 253. from *The Ethics*.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 122.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 220.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 254.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 202.

his own third-stage thinking in his third book of *The World as Will and Representation*.

Before approaching the fourth stage, as was done in the description of Hume's thinking, Spinoza's political thoughts should be noted. As mentioned above, he stresses in his *Political Treatise* the negative aspects of the monarchy, where primarily second-stage thinking is stressed, and how this system should become more natural, ultimately with a democracy. Like Hume, Spinoza thinks that being a citizen of a state is like being in any other contract: if the citizen receives tyranny and oppression then the citizens should return "to that state of liberty which preceded the establishment of a government":

The contract of a commonwealth remains so long unmoved as the motive for entering into it, that is, fear of hurt or hope of gain subsists. But take away either and it is left independent (true for agreements within a commonwealth and between commonwealths).<sup>117</sup>

When this fear returns and hope ceases to subsist change is required.

It is sometimes necessary for something occasional to occur to bring back the dominion to that first principle on which it was in the beginning established, and if this does not take place within the necessary time, its blemishes will go on increasing, till they can't be removed but with the dominion itself.<sup>118</sup>

This according to Spinoza is always the case with monarchy because the king is only interested in ruling for his own self-interest:

The king... will look to his own safety and not try and consult his subjects' interests, but to plot against them, especially against those who are renowned for learning, or have influence through wealth.<sup>119</sup>

As a result the only proper action that will return law and reason to the society is the death of the king.

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<sup>117</sup> See Note 102 above. *A Political Treatise* [1675/1676], 307.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 378.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 318.

By the death of the king, the commonwealth is in effect dead and the civil state returns to the state of nature, supreme authority transferred to the multitude, which can lay down new and abolish old laws.<sup>120</sup>

So the state of nature, Hume's original state of freedom, is democracy, where everyone sacrifices their individual will for the benefit of everyone else or the state as a whole. This is one of the two crucial ideas in Schopenhauer's fourth-stage thinking here present in Spinoza: the sacrifice of the one for the many in the state itself, and the sacrifice of the monarch himself for the betterment of the state.

The other idea is the acceptance of death. The last concept in Spinoza's *The Ethics* is that of the "highest type of love" or the intellectual love of God. This type of love is all that remains of a person after the passing of earthly desire and the body itself; it is divine. From the knowledge and experience of this type of love comes a fearless regard for death; "Death becomes less hurtful as the minds clear and distinct knowledge becomes greater."<sup>121</sup> Now if God is nature, as in Spinoza's central premise, then this becomes a love for all of nature, the world itself or the inhabitants of the world itself that is the sole remnant of the individual after his will has been extinguished. So love for fellow beings is the one eternal element in each of us after our wills, and desires, and finally bodies themselves have dissipated. This is not exactly Schopenhauerian – as we will see it is Fichtean and ultimately Feuerbachian – but it offers an explanation for why we should avoid the fear of death: for the benefit of love, and the world as a whole.

The four-stage process is clearly visible in the works of Spinoza. It passes from desire, through long-range planning still based on desire and partially inspired by fear. Then Spinoza believes there is an event, brought on by force or by reason, which makes one abandon individual desire in favor of reason and so brings one

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<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 339-40.

<sup>121</sup> See Note 108 above. *The Ethics*, 266.

toward the ideal of the life of the “free man,” who gives freely of himself to others and attempts to live selflessly. Finally, the extension of this living is achieved in a society where the free man can sacrifice his will, or the monarch his life, for the greater good: love. Again, it is worth noting that Spinoza was writing these seemingly revolutionary ideas in the republican Netherlands, and was always proud of his nation not having a king. In addition, many of his works were not published or were not translated into the vernacular until after his lifetime, following their author’s wishes. He never sought nor desired the title of revolutionary. The same cannot be said for Rousseau who wrote in French, the language of one of the most authoritarian regimes in Europe in the mid-eighteenth century.

### Chapter 3. Jean-Jacques Rousseau

Rousseau wrote his revolutionary works a generation after Hume's *Treatise on Human Nature*, in the 1750's and 60's. Though these works are primarily of a political nature, he still includes a number of concepts important for our discussion of moral direction. Primarily, he is famous for his conception of the nature-man, the idealized pre-societal, primarily pre-monarchical, human state.

Simon Williams, in his work, *Wagner and the Romantic Hero*, notes that Rousseau believed that we should all strive after nature:

[I]f we return to nature we will be happy. Such happiness arises when isolated individuals are entirely sufficient to themselves, and they can cultivate the inner world of the mind and imagination until it acquires a reality more complete than that of the objective world.<sup>122</sup>

This conception is one shared with Spinoza, who believed that turning to nature would answer all questions because it was a model for government and living, and ultimately because it was equivalent to God. Like many others,<sup>123</sup> however, Williams espoused a conception of Rousseau which is closer to Thoreau and escapism – creating your own reality away from the common reality – rather than using knowledge gleaned from nature to shape the common reality. This attitude is incorrect, and not exactly what Rousseau had in mind. But this does not prevent the idea of the nature-man from being one of his major claims to fame.

Rousseau gives the following as a description of his nature-man or brute in his 1754 essay "Discourse on Inequality," viewing such a figure as being without fear and living entirely for his primary needs on the land itself. "I see him satisfying his

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<sup>122</sup> Simon Williams. *Wagner and the Romantic Hero*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 8.

<sup>123</sup> See also Frederick Beiser. *Schiller as Philosopher*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 158.

hunger at the first oak, slaking his thirst at the first brook, finding his bed at the foot of a tree which afforded him a repast; and, with that, all his wants supplied.”<sup>124</sup> He does not consider the future, another side-effect of not knowing fear, “[H]is soul, which nothing disturbs, is wholly wrapped up in the feeling of its present existence, [and] without any idea of the future, his projects hardly extend to the close of the day.”<sup>125</sup> Now although this description has been viewed as an idealized state of being, and good for those who can act on it, Rousseau notes that neither he, nor anyone else who wishes to grow, learn, and live their lives in a moral way could live like this.

O you, who have never heard the voice of heaven, who think man is destined only to live this little life and die in peace; you who can resign in the midst of populous cities your fatal acquisitions, your restless spirits, your corrupt hearts and endless desires; resume, since it depends entirely on yourselves, your ancient and primitive innocence: retire to the woods, there to lose the sight and remembrance of the crimes of your contemporaries; and be not apprehensive of degrading your species, by renouncing its advances in order to renounce its vices. As for men like me, whose passions have destroyed their original simplicity, who can no longer subsist on plants and acorns or live without laws or magistrates...those who discover, in the design of giving human actions at the start a morality which they must otherwise have been so long in acquiring...those, in short, who are persuaded that the Divine Being has called all mankind to be the partakers in the happiness and perfection of celestial intelligences, all these will endeavor to merit the eternal prize they are to expect from the practice of those virtues, which they make themselves follow in learning to know them. They will respect the sacred bonds of their respective communities; they will love their fellow citizens and serve them with all their might; they will scrupulously obey the laws and all those who make or administer them [celestial intelligences]...but they will not have less contempt for a constitution that cannot support itself without the aid of so many splendid characters, much oftener wished for than found; and from which...there always arise more real calamities than even apparent advantages.<sup>126</sup>

So despite the Thoreauian attraction possessed by the idea of the independent nature-man, Rousseau believes in a society of loving equals sacrificing equally for each other, living morally and searching for divine goodness which can only be attained in such a

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<sup>124</sup> J.J. Rousseau, “The Social Contract” [1762] *The Social Contract and Other Writings*. (New York: Barnes and Noble Books, 1995), 164.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 175.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, 230-1.

society and not alone. In short, Rousseau rejects such a primitive state in favor of a moral progression toward an ideal free democratic state.

But this state is the goal, and does not immediately follow from the primitive state. After all, as is mentioned above, morality in individual actions takes a long time to acquire. The ideal moral state is the result of moral living and a free government, which in turn is a result of a rejection of contemporary society, particularly monarchy and avarice. The altering of a government from a state with the power in the hands of the few to the power being in the hands of the multitude is the subject on which Rousseau spent most of his literary energy.

To this end, in his essays he usually begins his discussions with monarchy and its problems. Any society in which there is a leader who receives all the benefits while the populace receives little in return is not a moral state, yet this is the case with monarchy. He offers the following explanation of the creation of such a society founded on property i.e. self-interest:

The first man who, having enclosed a piece of ground, bethought himself of saying ‘This is Mine,’ and found people simple enough to believe him was the real founder of civil society. From how many crimes, wars and murders from how many horrors and misfortunes might not anyone have saved mankind, by pulling up the stakes, or filling up the ditch, and crying to his fellows, ‘Beware of listening to this impostor; you are undone if you once forget that the fruits of the earth belong to us all, and the earth itself to nobody.’<sup>127</sup>

So it is essentially from this first act of selfishness, in which one places himself above others for his interests alone that society was founded. Such a system lacks the natural foundation that the brute or nature-man has.

At the same time, Rousseau foreshadows Proudhon in his case against property. He himself cites John Locke’s maxim “There can be no injury where there is no property” on the subject, concluding from it that:

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<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, 193. from “Discourse on Inequality” [1754]

The more we reflect on it [the property-less state] the more we shall find that this state was the least subject to revolutions, and altogether the very best man could experience; so that he can have departed from it only through some fatal accident, which, for the public good, should never have happened. The example of savages, most of whom have been found in this state, seems to prove that men were meant to remain in it, that it is the real youth of the world, and that all subsequent advances have been apparently so many steps towards the perfection of the individual, but in reality towards the decrepitude of the species.<sup>128</sup>

It is then in the accumulation of objects and land for self-betterment and not for the people as a whole on which a society was founded. The leadership in such cases is based on inflexible laws, and passion leading the will rather than reason.

Instead of a being, acting constantly from fixed and invariable principles, instead of that celestial and majestic simplicity impressed on it by its divine author, we find in it only the frightful contrast of passion mistaking itself for reason and of understanding grown delirious.<sup>129</sup>

Passion mistaking itself for reason can be understood as faulty reasoning for personal benefit. This is a sentiment echoed by the previous thinkers: that humans are incapable of judging the correct path. As Rousseau says: “Men always love what is good or what they find good, it is in judging what is good that they go wrong.”<sup>130</sup>

These circumstances, the unmalleability of the laws, and the power being in the hands of the few for their personal benefit, if unchecked will lead to the state’s end:

The inflexibility of the laws, which prevents them from adapting themselves to circumstances, may in certain cases render them disastrous and may bring about at a time of crisis the ruin of the state.<sup>131</sup>

Further:

When the social bond [in a state by a government] begins to be relaxed and the state to grow weak, when particular interests begin to make themselves

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<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 200.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, 157.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, 105. from “Social Contract”.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, 102.

felt and smaller societies to exercise influence over the larger, the common interest changes and finds opponents; opinion is no longer unanimous, the general will ceases to be the will of all, debate arises and the best advice is not taken without question. Finally, when the state, on the eve of ruin, maintains only a vain illusory, formal existence...all men, guided by secret motives, no more give their views as citizens than if the State had never been; and iniquitous decrees directed solely to private interest get passed under the name of laws.<sup>132</sup>

The ideal method to alter this fate is to have laws made not by a man, but by something free from personal passion and interested only in the betterment of others.

In order to discover the rules of society best suited to nations, a superior intelligence beholding all the passions of men without experiencing them would be needed. This intelligence would have to be wholly unrelated to our nature, while knowing it through and through; its happiness would be independent of us, and yet ready to occupy itself with ours; and lastly, it would have, in the march of time, to look forward to a distant glory, and, working in one century, to be able to enjoy the next.<sup>133</sup>

Such a being requires nothing in return from others and is only interested in the happiness of the people. The nature of the people in this context would be a drive for self-interest, so this being in comparison would be self-less and occupy itself with the best way to keep the people content not merely in the present, but also in the future. One such example of a leader of this type is found in the Cincinnatus of Livy who gave up the position of Dictator in Rome after fighting the Gauls. After the crisis was over, he returned to his farm. So he put the will of the people first over his personal ambition. But in most cases, such a being, as it may be in the case of Livy's Cincinnatus, is fictional, and the way to come closer to assuring that the will of the people becomes the goal of the government is to have a democracy in which the government is devoted entirely to the general will.<sup>134</sup>

Two final considerations will be taken into account regarding the philosophy of Rousseau. Like Hume and Spinoza, he does not specifically say that the ideal life

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<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, 85.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, 240. from "Discourse on Political Economy". [1755]

should be spent in sacrifice to the state or the many, as Schopenhauer does, but he does note that such an idea is admirable. “It may be said that it is good that one should perish for all. I am ready to admire such a saying when it comes from the lips of a virtuous and worthy patriot, voluntarily and dutifully sacrificing himself for the good of his country.”<sup>135</sup> However, as far as a metaphysical path is concerned, he notes that it is in the will of the people that God can be heard, “The voice of the people is in fact the voice of God.”<sup>136</sup> So as far as a final goal is concerned – though as mentioned above Rousseau tries to stay within the realm of the material rather than straying into the metaphysical – when a state exists that is solely for the will of the people in the state, and those serving the state give themselves up to that will, such a state is natural and divine, and the ideal society for those who, like Rousseau, cannot go back to nature. In either case, the death of the state not focused on the will of the people, and the silencing of the individual will for the state, the state/will-of-the-people is still the most important step.

We can observe, again, a specific path, beginning with the satiation of an individual’s simple desire for survival, and developing into the more complex desires for power and the strengthening of the individual will over that of others, and finally to the surrendering of that will in favor of the will of the people as a whole.

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<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, 249.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, 240.

## Chapter 4. Immanuel Kant

Although Kant began writing philosophical treatises as early as 1755, most of the material from which our discussion will be taken is to be found in his critical and post-critical writings from the 1780's up until his *Metaphysics of Morals* written in 1797. These works themselves can be divided into two categories: the writings which center around what is knowable in the Humean vein and the quasi-political writings in the vein of Rousseau which would eventually lead to Hegelian *Geschichtsphilosophie*. These works can, in Kant, unlike in Hume, Spinoza, and Rousseau, be dealt with simultaneously as Kant treats the two very similarly.

His most famous work, the *Critique of Pure Reason*, begins in much the same way as Hume's *Treatise on Human Nature* with the idea that all knowledge comes from experience. This notion of Hume's, picked up by Kant, was what Kant said "woke him up from his dogmatic slumbers, i.e., rationalist faith in metaphysical absolutes."<sup>137</sup> Kant however takes a crucial step forward. Hume believes nothing can be known outside of experience, i.e. phenomena, and that therefore there is no *a priori* knowledge. By contrast, Kant explains that although this is true in most cases, our perceptions of space and time are all the same and are therefore a special category of pseudo-*a priori* knowledge forged, through a combination of our two main faculties, sense perception and understanding, into something called the "Transcendental Aesthetic". He searches, given those two pieces of what is close to *a priori* knowledge gained by the Transcendental Aesthetic, for the possibility of knowing objects in and of themselves, which Hume noted was a futile search, and ultimately

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<sup>137</sup> John Tietz. *Redemption or Annihilation: Love Versus Power in Wagner's 'Ring'*. (New York: Peter Lang Publishing Inc, 1999), 166.

discovers that the closest we can come to this type of knowledge is through morality.<sup>138</sup> So rather than, as is the case of Hume, having a documented series of experiences with additional notions on ideal states of being along the lines of Spinoza, with Kant we are now able to see a deductive path emerging towards a notion of moral behavior as the final goal.

Like Hume, Kant begins his *Critique of Pure Reason* with the subject of what is knowable, and begins with experience. He disavows knowledge of objects in and of themselves, noting, familiarly, that whenever we observe any people or objects we are experiencing only our perception of these objects.

We need to regard all perceptions, whether internal or external, as a mere consciousness of what belongs to our sensibility, and to regard the external objects of our sensibility not as things in themselves, but only as representations.<sup>139</sup>

He further decries those who believe they have found truth in their objects:

Everybody either pretends to know something about objects, about which nobody has any concept, or he turns his own representations into objects in this way being caught up in an eternal circle of ambiguities and contradictions.<sup>140</sup>

This sentiment bears a striking resemblance to Hume:

If one were to assent to every trivial suggestion of the fancy; beside that these suggestions are often contrary to each other, they lead us into such errors absurdities and obscurities, that we must at least become ashamed of our credulity. Nothing is more dangerous to reason than the flights of imagination. And nothing has been the occasion of more mistakes among philosophers. But if we reject all trivial suggestions of the fancy and adhere to the understanding, that is the general and more established properties of imagination, this too is dangerous. When it acts alone, it entirely subverts itself, and leaves not the lowest degree of evidence in any proposition.<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> After Kant, there is a general shift in vocabulary from the *a priori* / *a posteriori* dichotomy of possible knowledge to the intuitional (*Anschauung*) and experiential (usually *Erfahrung*). As such the change in vocabulary has been made here.

<sup>139</sup> Immanuel Kant. *Critique of Pure Reason* [1781]: *A Revised and Expanded Translation Based on Meiklejohn*. ed. Vasilis Politis. (London: Everyman's Library, 1934), 292.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, 301.

<sup>141</sup> Hume, *Treatise of Human Nature*, 267.

“[T]urning their own representations into objects” for Kant is equivalent to the imagination or the fancy for Hume. In short, we cannot know the world except through our perception of it.

In this case, as with the other thinkers discussed, the first view of the world before the moral stage, or the unconditional good<sup>142</sup>, as Kant occasionally calls it, is viewed through personal desire or private happiness.<sup>143</sup> Kant makes a point of separating the pre-moral life into two phases. The first of these is represented by the animal will, the *arbitrium brutum*, the will which lives under the law of nature alone “determined by sensible impulses or instinct.”<sup>144</sup> This might be considered a combination of the nature man of Rousseau and an infant looking out for himself alone, living free from fear, and operating only through instinct, not reason. The second phase involves a variation of Hume’s doctrine. The will becomes independent of instinct alone, but continues to live for the sensible, and begins to use reason; through an act of freedom, i.e., a volitional act independent of instinct, he begins the second state or free will, *arbitrium liberum*. This freedom, as opposed to nature, functions as Hume’s “imagination” in that it is capable of creating something new or an “original idea” in a way that for Hume “reason,” and for Kant the “phenomenal knowledge found in nature,” i.e., observable causes and effects cannot. Ultimately, the addition of the free will only changes the means at the disposal of a person, not his inclinations, which still remain directed entirely towards himself.

Everything that presents itself as an object of the will prior to the moral law is excluded from the determining principle of the will called the unconditional good. However we find that our nature as sensible beings is such that the matter of desire (objects of inclination), whether hope or fear first presents itself to us and our pathologically affected self, although it is in its maxims

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<sup>142</sup> More on this in the third stage.

<sup>143</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*. [1788] trans. T.K. Abbott (Amherst, New York: Prometheus Books, 1996), 51.

<sup>144</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 516.

unfit for universal legislation, yet just as if it constituted our entire self, strives to put its pretensions forward first and to have them acknowledged as the first and original. This propensity to make ourselves in the subjective determining principles of our choice seems as the objective determining principle of the will generally to be called self-love. And if it pretends to be legislative as an unconditional practical principle it may be called self-conceit.<sup>145</sup>

The free will's first purpose was to be able to put off the attainment of a desire, or sacrifice, against pure instinct's propensity, the wants of the now being abrogated in favor of the wants of the future. In the moment of this denial was the potential for reason and a new way of thinking.

But as with Hume's imagination, the free will, or freedom, often does not have the desired effect in arriving at ultimate wants. We have the ability to will what we wish, and create what we wish, but in doing so we are "relinquishing the guidance of the rules of nature,"<sup>146</sup> and humans are unclear about what they exactly want and how to get it, which may cause their free will to make them unfree.

But it is a misfortune that the concept of happiness is such an indeterminate concept that, although every human being wishes to attain it, he can still never say determinately and consequently with himself what he really wishes and wills. The cause of this is that all the elements that belong to the concept of happiness are without exception empirical, that is, they must be borrowed from experience, and that nevertheless for the idea of happiness there is required an absolute whole, a maximum of well-being in my present condition and in every future condition. Now it is impossible for the most insightful and at the same time most powerful but still finite being to frame for himself a determinate concept of what he really wills here. If he wills riches, how much anxiety, envy and intrigue might he not bring upon himself in this way! If he wills a great deal of cognition and insight, that might become only an eye all the more acute to show him, as all the more dreadful, ills that are now concealed from him and that cannot be avoided, or to burden his desires [*Begierden*], which already give him enough to do, with still more needs. If he wills a long life, who would guarantee him that it would not be a long misery? If he at least wills health, how often has not bodily discomfort kept someone from excesses into which unlimited health would have let him fall, and so forth. In short, he is not capable of any principle by which to determine with complete certainty what would make him truly happy.<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 94.

<sup>146</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 330-1.

<sup>147</sup> Immanuel Kant. *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*. [1785] trans. Mary Gregor. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 28-9.

This moment of realization, when man sees that his will and creating power is ultimately for naught and unable to get him what he desires has been found in each thinker mentioned above. Again, the notion of fear for the future combined with individual want creates a vacuum into which happiness cannot stay long. This idea is mentioned again in the third Critique:

[T]he inconsistency of his [man's] own *natural dispositions* drives him into self-devised torments, and also reduces others of his own race to misery, by the oppression of lordship, the barbarism of war, and so forth; he, himself, as far as in him lies, works for the destruction of his own race; so that even with the most beneficent external nature, its purpose, if it were directed to the happiness of our species, would not be attained in an earthly system, because our nature is not susceptible of it.<sup>148</sup>

Before moving into the solution to this impossibility, let us take a side glance into Kant's political thinking.

In his proto-*Geschichtsphilosophie* works *Conjectures on the Beginning of Human History* and *Universal History* his thinking leans towards Rousseau, and Kant acknowledges that debt. Particularly erudite is Kant's description, found in his *Conjectures on the Beginning of Human History*, of the evolution undertaken by man from his beginnings. It is worth noting here in its entirety, as the path mentioned in the first two stages of Schopenhauer's keystone is made extremely clear, from the beginnings in desire, first through instinct and then through planning and volition tempered by fear and planning for the future. It also clarifies many of the ideas mentioned above.

Initially, the newcomer must have been solely guided by instinct, that *voice of God* which all animals obey...So long as inexperienced man obeyed this call of nature, his lot was a happy one. But *reason* soon made its presence felt and sought to extend his knowledge of foodstuffs beyond the bounds of instinct; it

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<sup>148</sup> Immanuel Kant. *Critique of Judgment*. [1790] trans. J. H. Bernard. (Amherst, New York: Prometheus Books, 2000), 354.

did so by comparing his usual diet with anything which a sense other than that to which his instinct was tied – for example the sense of sight – represented as similar in character. Even if instinct did not recommend it, this experiment had a chance of succeeding so long as instinct did not contradict it. But it is a peculiarity of reason that it is able, with the help of imagination, to invent desires which not only *lack* any corresponding natural impulse, but are even *at variance* with the latter. Such desires, which are known primarily as *lasciviousness*, gradually engender a whole host of superfluous or even unnatural inclinations to which the term *luxuriousness* applies. The initial incentive to abandon natural impulses may have been quite trivial. But the outcome of that first experiment whereby man became conscious of his reason as a faculty which can extend beyond the limits to which all animals are confined was of great importance, and it influenced his way of life decisively. Thus it may have been only a fruit which, because it looked similar to other agreeable fruits which he had previously tasted, encouraged him to make the experiment... Nevertheless, this was enough to give reason the initial inducement to quibble with the voice of nature, and despite the latter's objections, to make the first experiment in free choice – an experiment which, since it was the first, probably did not turn out as expected. No matter how trivial the harm it did may have been, it was nevertheless enough to open man's eyes. He discovered in himself an ability to choose his own way of life without being tied to any single one like the other animals. But the momentary gratification which this realization of his superiority may have afforded him was inevitably followed at once by anxiety and fear as to how he should employ his newly discovered ability, given that he did not yet know the hidden properties or remote effects of anything. He stood, as it were, on the edge of an abyss. For whereas instinct had hitherto directed him towards individual objects of his desire, an infinite range of objects now opened up, and he did not yet know how to choose between them. Yet now that he had tasted this state of freedom, it was impossible for him to return to a state of servitude under the rule of instinct... *Refusal* was the device which invested purely sensuous stimuli with an ideal quality, and which gradually showed the way from purely animal desire to love, and so also from a feeling for the merely agreeable to a taste for beauty (initially only in human form, but subsequently also in nature)... The third step which reason took after its intervention in man's basic and immediately felt needs was to reflect in *anticipation of the future*. This ability not just to enjoy the present moment in life, but also to visualize what is yet to come, often in the distant future, is the most decisive proof of man's advantage, in that he is able to prepare for remote objectives in keeping with his destiny. But this same ability is also the most inexhaustible source of cares and worries which an uncertain future evokes and from which all animals are exempt.<sup>149</sup>

Kant begins with Rousseau and the happy natural state based on instinct, and moves to the first act of free choice against instinct, by which man for the first time

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<sup>149</sup> Kant. *Political Writings*. "Conjectures on the Beginning of Human History". [1786] ed. Hans Reiss. trans. H.B. Nisbet (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 223-5.

takes control of his own destiny. But with this move, and with the first refusal of his wants, despite the fact that this enables long term planning and reasoning in man, begins fear and care and fruitless attempts to control his environment. Elsewhere, Kant elaborates on this attempt founded in man's desire to control not just the events around him but others as well. Borrowing the idea of Rousseau that culture is founded in property and control, he explains that, as we do not get everything our own way and neither does everyone else, it is in finally submitting to this fact and treating others socially that culture and as such moral living outside of nature begins.

[Man] encounters in himself the unsocial characteristic of wanting to direct everything in accordance with his own ideas. He therefore expects resistance all around just as he knows of himself that he is in turn inclined to offer resistance to others. It is this very resistance which awakens all man's powers, and induces him to overcome his tendency to laziness. Through the desire for honor, power or property, it drives him to seek status among his fellows, whom he cannot bear yet cannot bear to leave. Then the first true steps are taken from barbarism to culture, which in fact consists in the social worthiness of man. All man's talents are now gradually developed, his taste cultivated, and by a continued process of enlightenment, a beginning is made towards establishing a way of thinking which can with time transform the primitive natural capacity for moral discrimination into definite practical principles; and thus a *pathologically* enforced social union is transformed into a *moral* whole.<sup>150</sup>

Kant takes Rousseau's notion of the powerful man who creates slaves in others, and adapts it to explain how the fear and anger first found in his opinion of others turns to mutual cooperation. This is the beginning of third-stage thinking.

Breaking away from the cares and fears of success, the besting of others and fulfilling of desires, Kant explains that the type of knowledge that comes closest to the noumenal or supersensible which is possible to know, aside from that of time and space, is morality. This knowledge is gained through an altering of the direction of free will. Up until this point, free will has been something which, although it made

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<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, "Idea for a Universal History" [1784], 44-45.

man capable of creating and planning, was against the rule of nature, as free will was, at least in its first manifestation, something in contrast to the natural. However, when we consider the character of free will, namely that it concerns itself with what might be in the future, as opposed to what is, one can idealize it and say that free will in its most perfect state deals with what should or ought to be, and not with what is – the ideal future. It is in this way that the noumenal becomes supposable.<sup>151</sup> The transition for Kant will be familiar to us. It is the failure of the imagination in its vain pursuit of infinity to achieve its goal that awakens the supersensible faculty in us.<sup>152</sup> Needless to say, this is a step which Hume refused to make except in the most couched terms, as noumenal knowledge was out of bounds.

Not surprisingly the first attribute Kant associates with the moral law is selflessness.

The moral law excludes the influence of self-love on the supreme practical reason and it checks the self-conceit that prescribes the subjective conditions of the former as laws. Whatever checks self-conceit humiliates and therefore the moral law inevitably humbles every man (endows him with self-knowledge). The moral law excludes the inclinations and propensities of self-love.<sup>153</sup>

Kant describes here the same depression that is mentioned by Schopenhauer that must occur before a person can enter the third stage of being. He later refers to this painful change through the guise of “the pupil” as moving from the world of phenomena, in terms of sensual wants and needs, to the noumenal world. The pupil first feels joy in making moral judgments but does not yet live morally:

Now, however, the second exercise comes in, the living exhibition of morality of character by examples, in which attention is directed to purity of will, first only as a negative perfection, in so far as in an action done from duty no motives of inclination have any influence in determining it. By this the

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<sup>151</sup> *Critique of Pure Reason*, 517.

<sup>152</sup> *Critique of Judgment*, 109-10.

<sup>153</sup> *Critique of Practical Reason*, 94.

pupil's attention is fixed upon the consciousness of his *freedom*, and although this renunciation at first excites a feeling of pain, nevertheless, by its withdrawing the pupil from the constraint of real wants there is proclaimed to him at the same time a deliverance from the manifold dissatisfaction in which all these wants entangle him, and the mind is made capable of receiving the sensation of satisfaction from other sources. The heart is freed and lightened of a burden that always secretly presses on it, when instances of pure moral resolutions reveal to the man an inner faculty of which otherwise he has no right knowledge, *the inward freedom* to release himself from the boisterous importunity of inclinations, to such a degree that none of them, not even the dearest, shall have any influence on a resolution, for which we are now to employ our reason.<sup>154</sup>

The noumenal world, it seems, frees us from looking at objects in reference to our desires, much as Schopenhauer explains. And equally, as with Schopenhauer, joy does not come from moral behavior. These deeds are performed from duty without reference to our desires.

[A]n action done from duty is to put aside entirely the influence of inclination and with it every object of the will; hence there is left nothing for the will that could determine it except objectively the *law*, and subjectively *pure respect* for this practical law, and so the maxim [subjective principle of volition] of complying with such a law even if it infringes upon all my inclinations.<sup>155</sup>

And what are the duties for which man ought to strive? "The perfection of himself and the happiness of others...He has a duty to raise himself from the crude state of his nature, from his animality toward humanity, he has a duty to diminish his ignorance by instruction and to correct his errors."<sup>156</sup>

Kant concludes that one must make the happiness of others one's concern; not one's own happiness, as that could not, by definition, be a duty. Overall, Kant stresses a social ideal of working together combined with the individual selflessness leading to the improvement of the state. His political and epistemological ideas join together in that the highest knowledge necessary for our self-improvement cannot be attained

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<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, 189-90.

<sup>155</sup> *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, 13-4.

<sup>156</sup> Immanuel Kant. *Metaphysics of Morals*. [1797] trans. Mary Gregor (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 150.

unless we are in a community. “In man the natural capacities which are directed only toward the use of his reason are such that they could be fully developed only in the species, not in the individual.”<sup>157</sup> In a more revolutionary turn, he even declares that the King does not rule by his own authority but only in that he is able to unite the collective will of the people with his own. So though Kant is not against a monarch ruling *per se*, the desired method of monarchical rule is a relinquishing of selfishness and a taking up of the communal will.<sup>158</sup> So he fuses the two elements of the ideal state discussed separately by Hume and Rousseau into one utopian vision.

Then Kant fuses this with a third element: Spinoza’s concept of “Nature.” In the first *Critique*, one of Kant’s final thoughts is that the free will is able to lead toward the ideal, moral law, the “what ought I to do” as compared to the natural law or “what is.” However, he admits that there is a possibility that the free will’s “ought” and the reason derived therefrom fit into the order of nature and will lead to no reliable answer.

Whether reason is not itself, in the actual delivery of these [moral] laws, determined in its turn by other influences, and whether the action which, in relation to sensible impulses, we call free, may not, in relation to higher and more remote operative causes, really form a part of nature - these are questions which do not concern us here. They are purely speculative questions.<sup>159</sup>

But in his *Conjectures on the Beginning of Human History* he opines in the affirmative on this speculative question. In response to culture’s dichotomic battle between moral and personal development which Rousseau attempts to solve in the *Social Contract*, Kant posits a solution to the problem.

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<sup>157</sup> *Political Writings* “Universal History”, 16.

<sup>158</sup> *Political Writings* “What is Enlightenment”[1784], 59. This view of kingship is surprisingly similar to Wagner’s in the *Vaterlandsverein* speech and Proudhon’s conception of kingship in the original state of negative communism. See: Appendix pgs 614-629.

<sup>159</sup> *Critique of Pure Reason*, 517.

He [Rousseau] attempts in turn to solve the more difficult problem of what course culture should take in order to ensure the proper development, in keeping with their destiny, of man's capacities as a moral species, so that this [moral] destiny will no longer conflict with his character as a natural species. Since culture has not yet really begun – let alone completed – its development in accordance with the true principles of man's education as a human being and citizen, the above conflict is the source of all the genuine evils which oppress human life, and of all the vices which dishonor it. At the same time, the very impulses which are blamed as the cause of vice are good in themselves, fulfilling their function as abilities implanted in nature. But since these abilities are adapted to the state of nature, they are undermined by the advance of culture and themselves undermine the latter in turn, until art, when it reaches perfection, once more becomes nature - and this is the ultimate goal of man's moral destiny.<sup>160</sup>

In short, what is natural is moral, and being able to live in nature according to our “ought to do” free will is the goal of mankind. Thus with the fusion of these three elements Kant offers the ultimate way to live in his categorical imperative: “Act as if the maxim of thy action were to become by thy will a universal law of nature.”

Kant's progression ends here, he does not look beyond death, or at physical death as an ideal as does Schopenhauer, but does view a sacrificial death for the benefit of others approvingly, as do the philosophers discussed above. “Better for one man to die than for an entire people to perish. For if justice goes there is no longer any value in human beings living on earth.”<sup>161</sup> But Kant does move closer to a foreshadowing of Schopenhauer's position than does any other philosopher discussed to this point, as we find in Kant Schopenhauer's fourth-stage thought that the manner of life before the ultimate goal of death should be lived without happiness, and as will-lessly as possible:

This consolation [that comes from doing the moral thing] is not happiness, it is not even the smallest part of it, for no one would wish to have occasion for it, or would perhaps even desire a life in such circumstances... This inward peace is therefore merely negative as regards what can make life pleasant; it is, in fact, only the escaping [of] the danger of sinking in personal worth, after

<sup>160</sup> *Political Writings* “Conjectures” 227-8. Abrams also noted this passage as an example of his progression from and back to nature. See: Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism*, 206.

<sup>161</sup> *Metaphysics of Morals*, 105.

everything else that is valuable has been lost. It is the effect of a respect for something quite different from life, something in comparison and contrast with which life with all its enjoyments has no value. He still lives only because it is his duty, not because he finds anything pleasant in life.<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>162</sup> *Critique of Practical Reason*, 109-110.

## Chapter 5. Friedrich Schiller

Schiller's philosophical writings from his time teaching at the University of Jena owe a large debt to the works of Kant, particularly regarding the nature of free will and its role in bringing about a moral existence.<sup>163</sup> What they do not owe to Kant and to the previous generation is the means by which this is attained. For Hume, the passions must be permanently quieted in favor of reason. In Kant it is moral duty, which by its definition excludes sensuous pleasure and enjoyment. Schiller believed that one could enjoy being moral, and not have to cut off sensuous feeling in order to achieve a practical ideal existence. This is the premise behind much of the *Frühromantik* movement. That being said, Schiller is at times inconsistent on this point. As we shall see, there are times when he views a fusion between the sensuous and the reasoned as the ideal, as in his conception of the 'beautiful soul' which seems to take Kant's conception of the Transcendental Aesthetic – which for Kant was only a means to know anything and not an end in itself – as the end goal of morality; and there are other times when he follows Kant's views on duty from the later *Critiques* and the *Metaphysics of Morals* in which the end goal is the complete relinquishment of the sensuous. Ultimately, we will view the fusion of the two elements – for which Schiller and the *Frühromantik* movement are so famous – as a phase in the overall progression leading to the same point: selflessness.<sup>164</sup> But this is not to understate the impact or the importance of Schiller's innovative notion that the moral ideal could be found in a fusion of the sensuous and the reasoned.

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<sup>163</sup> "Letters on the Aesthetical Education of Man" [1795], III, 7. Most quotes from this section will be taken from: *Aesthetic Letters, Essays, and the Philosophical Letters of Schiller*. trans. J. Weiss (Boston: Little and Brown, 1845) Volume I, unless otherwise noted.

<sup>164</sup> Beiser offers a varying opinion on this issue in his *Schiller as Philosopher*.

Before Schiller and the *Frühromantik* movement, it was generally felt that a man's conscious was considered to be divided into two parts, that relating to the body or the sensuous part, and that relating to the mind or the moral and spiritual part, and that the former had to be cut off from the latter in order to achieve a moral and spiritual existence. Schiller thought that this was impossible, as a person cannot exist if there is only one side to him. "For as long as he only feels, his absolute personality and existence remain a mystery to him, and as long as he only thinks, his condition or existence in time escapes him."<sup>165</sup> The *Frühromantiks* believed that the sensuous should not be cut off, but that through an aesthetic education and moral thinking we should learn to enjoy what is moral and, in later *Frühromantik* writing built upon by Hegel, spiritual. This idea, and the notion that the education of even the lowest masses could be achieved through drama is partially garnered from Lessing's *Hamburg Dramaturgy*, but it took Schiller to codify this idea and ground it in his own mixture of pseudo-Kantian philosophical language. So for Schiller in his use of this new language the aim becomes that of aligning the sensuous part of man with the spiritual part. This is achieved after a brief withdrawal from the sensuous so that the aim of sensuous desire can be aligned with the moral. As a result they work together for the same goal, and there is no permanent relinquishing of the sensuous part of ourselves. The sensuous "I" was no longer something to be overcome by the moral "I," but to be combined with and enhanced by it. Schiller defines this as acting with "grace" [*Anmut*], and also describes a person acting in such a way as representing the "beautiful soul." In other respects, the progression found in Schiller is taken from Kant.

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<sup>165</sup> "Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man" XIV, 64-5.

Of course this does not work in the case of the tragic hero. Schiller advises in his essay “On Grace and Dignity” that there is a moral point past which this balance between the moral and the sensuous becomes impossible. The hero who sacrifices himself in favor of others does not take true joy in his act. It is done through duty, which is a return to the Kantian conception of quieting the sensuous in favor of the moral. Such an act represents not grace [*Anmut*] but dignity [*Würde*]. For this, Schiller has an axiom: “we must do everything with grace that can be achieved within humanity; and everything with dignity that demands going beyond our humanity.”<sup>166</sup>

This describes two notions of living. In everyday life, we must strive to achieve grace in our actions, a balance between reason or morality and the sensuous as represented by the beautiful soul; but for the extraordinary cases when life is on the line, events which require more from us, a sacrifice for the greater good, or a higher level of humanity than we might expect from the everyday, this requires dignity or the Kantian duty. Schiller alternates between these two notions, citing both as goals at different times depending on his argument, which makes navigating his works and thoughts on the ‘end goal’ of existence at times confusing.

The logic behind the present view that grace is a step on the path to duty or selfless behavior is derived from his twenty-fourth letter of his *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man*. This letter summarizes the progress of man, both the individual and the species as a whole, in three phases: a physical state in which man and the species are under the control of nature and desire or as Schiller says “suffer the power of nature,” an aesthetic state in which man and the species begin to free themselves from these influences, and a moral state in which man and the species are

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<sup>166</sup> Beiser, *Schiller as Philosopher*, 115. (Taken from Schiller’s “On Grace and Dignity”)

in control of nature and their desires.<sup>167</sup> From this we will be able to observe Schiller's idea of the progression of the species. It is also from this description that we will view the discrepancy embedded within the notion of the end goal. We can view the aesthetic state as that which induces man to act with grace representing the fusion of the two governing principles – the natural and the moral – combined in his description of the beautiful soul, and the moral state as that which induces man to act with dignity.<sup>168</sup> This way the two end goals are not merely that, but are now successive phases of development, and the aesthetic is now a midpoint incorporating both sensuousness and morality which will then lead into the purely moral stage. But before addressing the final two stages outlined by Schiller, the first stage must be discussed.

The first stage, in which man “suffers only the power of nature”, is divided by Schiller into two phases corresponding to Kant's *arbitrium brutum* and *arbitrium liberum*. In the first, he explains that “the natural character of man is selfish and violent.”<sup>169</sup> Man is incapable of acting for himself without being led by natural instinct and is only interested in his immediate survival needs. He is what Schiller refers to as the “material being” in which man bases his wants on individual instinct alone guided by the world. There is no reason behind these desires, nor is there any control on his own part; nature is his only guide, however he does not yet represent nature as a guide or anything other than the environment in which his desires can be

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<sup>167</sup> “Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man” XXIV, 115.

<sup>168</sup> Schiller does note that these three stages do not necessarily have to be gone through successively, but at the same time includes a description of the way in which one passes into each phase. So for better or worse, we will view these three as successive stages

<sup>169</sup> “Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man” III, 9.

satisfied.<sup>170</sup> These sentiments are reminiscent of other first stages previously discussed, particularly Rousseau's.

Further characteristics of this phase include material man's inability to look beyond the immediate, so he has no conception of the past or the future. "[T]he sensuous instinct issues from the physical existence of man, or from sensuous nature; and it is this instinct which tends to enclose him in the limits of time, and to make of him a material being."<sup>171</sup> The tools man needs in order to pass beyond this state into the second phase of this initial stage or Kant's *arbitrium liberum* are the will and reason. Schiller excellently elucidates this transition and the first use of reason in forming the will:

[T]he first appearance of reason in man is not the beginning of humanity. This is first decided by his freedom, and reason begins first by making his sensuous dependence boundless... We know that the reason makes itself known to man by the demand for the absolute – the self-dependent and necessary. But as this want of the reason cannot be satisfied in any separate or single state of his physical life, he is obliged to leave the physical entirely and to rise from a limited reality to ideas. *But although the true meaning of that demand of the reason is to withdraw him from the limits of time and to lead him from the world of sense to an ideal world, yet this same demand of reason, by misapplication – scarcely to be avoided in this life, prone to sensuousness – can direct him to physical life, and, instead of making man free, plunge him in the most terrible slavery.* Facts verify this supposition. Man raised on the wings of imagination leaves the narrow limits of the present, in which mere animality is enclosed, in order to strive on to an unlimited future. But while the limitless is unfolded to his dazed imagination, his heart has not ceased to

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<sup>170</sup> Schiller's detailed description of the first-stage "material being" runs as follows: "Eternally uniform in his aims, eternally changing in his judgments, self-seeking without being himself, unfettered without being free, a slave without serving any rule. At this period, the world is to him only destiny, not yet an object; all has existence for him only in as far as it procures existence to him; a thing that neither seeks from nor gives to him is non-existent. Every phenomenon stands out before him separate and cut off, as he finds himself in the series of beings. All that is, is to him through the bias of the moment; every change is to him an entirely fresh creation, because with the necessary in him, the necessary out of him is wanting, which binds together all the changing forms in the universe, and which holds fast the law on the theatre of his action, while the individual departs. It is in vain that nature lets the rich variety of her forms pass before him; he sees in her glorious fulness nothing but his prey, in her power and greatness nothing but his enemy. Either he encounters objects and wishes to draw them to himself in desire, or the objects press in a destructive manner upon him, and he thrusts them away in dismay and terror. In both cases his relation to the world of sense is immediate contact; and perpetually anxious through its pressure, restless and plagued by imperious wants, he nowhere finds rest except in enervation, and nowhere limits save in exhausted desire." *Ibid.*, XXIV, 116

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, XII, 53.

live in the separate, and to serve the moment. The impulse towards the absolute seizes him suddenly in the midst of his animality, and as in this cloddish condition all his efforts aim only at the material and temporal, and are limited by his individuality, he is only led by that demand of the reason to extend his individuality into the infinite, instead of to abstract from it. He will be led to seek instead of form an inexhaustible matter, instead of the unchangeable an everlasting change and an absolute securing of his temporal existence. The same impulse which, directed to his thought and action, ought to lead to truth and morality, now directed to his passion and emotional state, produces nothing but an unlimited desire and an absolute want.<sup>172</sup>

Here Schiller explains how reason's initial use was not to bring man closer to morality but to extend happiness through the planning of gains for future/eternal happiness. The personal desire and ultimate aims have not changed, but the means of achieving goals, particularly through future planning, have been expanded from the simple earlier stage. It is the tool of imagination which again, as for Hume and others, makes the individual adjust his reason and objectivity for personal gain, imagining a world where he can be limitless, and most important, without fear.

It will come as no surprise to see that care and fear [*Sorge*] again are the initial products of man's new ability to plan into the future. Fearing his own end, or as he understands it, the end to his potential happiness, he does all he can to postpone/forestall the inevitable. Schiller continues:

The first fruits, therefore, that he reaps in the world of spirits are cares and fear – both operations of the reason; not of sensuousness, but of a reason that mistakes its object and applies its categorical imperative to matter. All unconditional systems of happiness are fruits of this tree, whether they have for their object the present day or the whole of life, or what does not make them any more respectable, the whole of eternity, for their object. An unlimited duration of existence and of well-being is only an ideal of the desires; hence a demand which can only be put forth by an animality striving up to the absolute. Man, therefore, without gaining anything for his humanity by a rational expression of this sort, loses the happy limitation of the animal, over which he now only possesses the unenviable superiority of losing the present for an endeavor after what is remote, yet without seeking in the limitless future anything but the present. But even if the reason does not go astray in its object, or err in the question, sensuousness will continue to falsify

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<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIV, 117-8. (Italics mine)

the answer for a long time. As soon as man has begun to use his understanding and to knit together phenomena in cause and effect, the reason, according to its conception, presses on to an absolute knitting together and to an unconditional basis. In order, merely, to be able to put forward this demand, man must already have stepped beyond the sensuous, but the sensuous uses this very demand to bring back the fugitive.<sup>173</sup>

In this sense, sensual desires will cause an inconsistency in his ability to reason, and it is from the desire to avoid the end that reason moves against itself; taking, as was noted above, Kant's categorical imperative to refer not to the ideal moral law, but only to matter or the material, for sensual gain.

It is with this fear in mind, as in Schopenhauer, that religion comes about. In much the same language as Schopenhauer will use, Schiller describes the formation of religion as an act of a still sensuous-minded being who has not yet abandoned self-love. The God of this religion is not to be strived after but is rather an ultimate problem-solver. Rather than recognizing his own ability to recognize moral behavior and reason, man places these things outside of himself, and stunts further growth until this can be ultimately overcome.

Even the divine part in man, the moral law, in its first manifestation in the sensuous cannot avoid this perversion [self-interest]. As this moral law is only prohibited, and combats in man the interest of sensuous egotism, it must appear to him as something strange until he has come to consider this self-love as the stranger, and the voice of reason as his true self. Therefore he confines himself to feeling the fetters which the latter imposes on him, without having the consciousness of the infinite emancipation which it procures for him. Without suspecting in himself the dignity of lawgiver, he only experiences the constraint and the impotent revolt of a subject fretting under the yoke, because in this experience the sensuous impulsion precedes the moral impulsion, he gives to the law of necessity a beginning in him, a positive origin, and by the most unfortunate of all mistakes he converts the immutable and the eternal in himself into a transitory accident. He makes up his mind to consider the notions of the just and the unjust as statutes which have been introduced by a will, and not as having in themselves an eternal value. Just as in the explanation of certain natural phenomena he goes beyond nature and seeks out of her what can only be found in her, in her own laws; so also in the explanation of moral phenomena he goes beyond reason and makes

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<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIV, 119.

light of his humanity, seeking a god in this way. It is not wonderful that a religion which he has purchased at the cost of his humanity shows itself worthy of this origin, and that he only considers as absolute and eternally binding laws that have never been binding from all eternity. He has placed himself in relation with, not a holy being, but a powerful one. Therefore the spirit of his religion, of the homage that he gives to God, is a fear that abases him, and not a veneration that elevates him in his own esteem.<sup>174</sup>

In addition to fearing his own end, man also fears others as they and their happiness are in competition with him and his.

Ignorant of his own human dignity, he is far removed from honoring it in others, and conscious of his own savage greed, he fears it in every creature that he sees like himself. He never sees others in himself, only himself in others, and human society, instead of enlarging him to the race, only shuts him up continually closer in his individuality.<sup>175</sup>

This sentiment is reminiscent of a few notions we have encountered: Hume's discussion of viewing others only in terms of ourselves, to name one.

When the individual is filled with inconsistency of desires, both in terms of the competition among other men which stops everyone's desires from being fulfilled in the process of trying to stop others and succeed oneself, and the inner conflict of contrary desires present in the same person, is when the aesthetic education should take over. Rather than completely nullifying the sensuous instinct, Schiller describes a middle ground between the sensuousness and reason called the "instinct of play" which fuses the sensuous and formal impulses. The instinct of play combines the creativity inherent in the imagination and planning for the future for the purpose of extending personal dominion or control over surroundings with the ability to reflect upon the objects and laws of nature independent of the subject. In this way man is able to create using the tools of nature, which no longer control his actions and wants, but can be used and reflected upon for enjoyment and pleasure.

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<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIV, 120-1.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIV, 116.

As long as man derives sensations from a contact with nature, he is her slave; but as soon as he begins to reflect upon her objects and laws he becomes her lawgiver. Nature, which previously ruled him as a power, now expands before him as an object. What is objective to him can have no power over him, for in order to become objective it has to experience his own power. As far and as long as he impresses a form upon matter, he cannot be injured by its effect; for a spirit can only be injured by that which deprives it of its freedom. Whereas he proves his own freedom by giving a form to the formless; where the mass rules heavily and without shape, and its undefined outlines are for ever fluctuating between uncertain boundaries, fear takes up its abode; but man rises above any natural terror as soon as he knows how to mould it, and transform it into an object of his art.<sup>176</sup>

This is the beginning of Schiller's second stage, the aesthetic, and the Moral Progression's third stage, where man is able to look on objects *per se*, and those objects give him pleasure not for how they can help him to achieve the goals of the will, but in and of themselves. However, this is not the case at first. Schiller gives a description of the instinct of play's first appearance in consciousness:

It will be also troublesome to recognize the instinct of play [*Spieltrieb*] in its first trials, seeing that the sensuous impulsion constantly crosses with its capricious humor and its violent appetites. It is on that account that we see the taste, still coarse, seize that which is new and startling, the disordered, the adventurous and the strange, the violent and the savage, and fly from nothing so much as from calm and simplicity. It invents grotesque figures, it likes rapid transitions, luxurious forms, sharply-marked changes, acute tones, a pathetic song. That which man calls beautiful at this time is that which excites him, that which gives him matter; but that which excites him to give his personality to the object, that which gives matter to a possible plastic operation, for otherwise it would not be the beautiful for him.<sup>177</sup>

One can easily see the remnants of the sensual desire still present. But in the pure aesthetic state we rid ourselves of our subjective view of the world by removing our will and desires from our conception of our surroundings, viewing the world objectively and contemplatively, and objects only in and of themselves.

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<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, XXV, 124.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVII, 142.

When he begins in his aesthetic state of mind to regard the world objectively, then only is his personality severed from it, and the world appears to him an objective reality, for the simple reason that he has ceased to form an identical portion of it. That which first connects man with the surrounding universe is the power of reflective contemplation. Whereas desire seizes at once its object, reflection removes it to a distance and renders it inalienably her own by saving it from the greed of passion. The necessity of sense which he obeyed during the period of mere sensations lessens during the period of reflection; the senses are for the time in abeyance; even ever-fleeting time stands still whilst the scattered rays of consciousness are gathering and shape themselves; an image of the infinite is reflected upon the perishable ground. As soon as light dawns in man, there is no longer night outside of him; as soon as there is peace within him the storm lulls throughout the universe, and the contending forces of nature find rest within prescribed limits.<sup>178</sup>

This is the first conception of beauty, contemplation and reflection away from sensual urges.

Beauty is indeed the sphere of unfettered contemplation and reflection; beauty conducts us into the world of ideas, without however taking us from the world of sense, as occurs when a truth is perceived and acknowledged. This is the pure product of a process of abstraction from everything material and accidental, a pure object free from every subjective barrier, a pure state of self-activity without any admixture of passive sensations.<sup>179</sup>

As such he outlines his definition of beauty, and the first part of the aesthetic stage. The second part involves substituting the other for the self, in man's urge to satisfy desires. Schiller explains that it will no longer be enough to experience objects for what they can offer the individual, but for how they can help the individual give to others. This is where the aesthetic education comes into play. We have seen the first trace of the shift from the sensual to the aesthetic in appreciation of objects in and of themselves, rather than in relation to a goal of the will. But the aesthetic education truly begins when we learn to prize morality as beautiful, and this is best done through proper observation and enjoyment of tragedy. Beiser explains Schiller's reasoning behind finding pleasure in tragedy by saying that tragedy makes us prize as beautiful

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<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*, XXV, 123-4.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.* XXV, 125.

the self-sacrificial duty of the hero, and we learn to emulate moral behavior through this example.

Such pleasure seems paradoxical because it arises from the sight of suffering, which is usually the source of displeasure yet in tragedy we still feel pleasure because we see that our rational nature stands above our sensible nature, which alone suffers displeasure. What we see in tragedy is the sublime struggle between duty and inclination, where the hero acts on his duty at the cost of his self-interest and physical pleasure. We take pleasure in his struggle because it affirms our own power of will, the capacity of a human being to rise above all the pleasures and pains of the natural world. It is especially in tragedy, therefore, that we become aware of our moral vocation.<sup>180</sup>

The act of observing someone moving against self-interest in favor of duty in tragedy is pleasurable to see, and is the ideal aesthetic education.

One of the prime examples of this is the story of Leonidas.<sup>181</sup> We take pleasure in the story of Leonidas, according to Schiller, due to the combination of two factors. First, morally we approve of Leonidas's action, saving Greece at the cost of his own life. But it is not possible to *enjoy* this action; it is merely an exercise of the Kantian duty which we can admire, but not take pleasure in. The key is the second factor: the fact that Leonidas is able to use his freedom in this way, going against the sensual and the instinctive urges, represents something sublime to the imagination. So an act such as this is appealing both morally and aesthetically.

Judged from the moral point of view, this action represents to me the moral law carried out notwithstanding all the repugnance of instinct. Judged from the aesthetic point of view, it gives me the idea of the moral faculty, independent of every constraint of instinct. The act of Leonidas satisfies the moral sense; the reason: it enraptures the aesthetical sense, the imagination... Thus an act of virtue judged by the moral sense – by reason – will give us as its only satisfaction the feeling of approbation, because reason can never find more, and seldom finds as much as it requires. This same act, judged, on the contrary, by the aesthetic sense – by imagination – will give us a positive pleasure, because the imagination, never requiring the end to agree with the

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<sup>180</sup> Beiser, *Schiller as Philosopher*, 204. Schiller is here clearly in line with Aristotle's and Lessing's notions of education through the feelings of pity and fear observed in tragedy

<sup>181</sup> Interestingly, Leonidas was also used by Schopenhauer as someone worthy of emulation in the moral sphere.

demand, must be surprised, enraptured, at the real satisfaction of this demand as at a happy chance. Our reason will merely approve, and only approve, of Leonidas actually taking this heroic resolution; but that he could take this resolution is what delights and enraptures us.<sup>182</sup>

Now a Leonidas or a Laocoön might be an ideal character for observing morality, but an ideal drama which would instill a proper aesthetic education must be more. It must in fact be the story of such a soul, beginning with a description of its sensuousness, followed by its overcoming of these selfish desires. In other words, the hero must start in the sensuous stage before reaching the moral stage, so he does not have to be morally superior and sublime at first, but can begin as an ordinary sensuous person, or even a villain. This is at least a large elaboration and detour from, and at most a major break with, the traditional conception of Tragedy going back to Aristotle.<sup>183</sup>

Accordingly it will not be possible to represent moral freedom, except by expressing passion, or suffering nature, with the greatest vividness; and the hero of tragedy must first have justified his claim to be a sensuous being before aspiring to our homage as a reasonable being, and making us believe in his strength of mind.<sup>184</sup>

Then before achieving the moral state, the hero must go through a “terrible trial” by which his selfishness is replaced by selflessness. For the moral soul this can be done easily, but for the sensuous soul it is a terrible trial of suffering that seems without respite. But as Schopenhauer would later say, suffering is the key to moral living.

In the truly moral soul the terrible trial (of the imagination) passes quickly and readily into the sublime. In proportion as imagination loses its liberty, reason makes its own prevail, and the soul ceases not to enlarge within when it thus finds outward limits... But precisely because it was necessary to have arrived at the physical oppression before having recourse to the assistance of our moral nature, we can only buy this high sentiment of our liberty through

<sup>182</sup> See: Note 165. “The Pathetic” [1793-1794], 227.

<sup>183</sup> Beiser. *Schiller as Philosopher*, 247.

<sup>184</sup> See: Note 165, “The Pathetic,” 202.

suffering. An ordinary soul confines itself entirely to this suffering, and never comprehends in the sublime or the pathetic anything beyond the terrible. An independent soul, on the contrary, precisely seizes this occasion to rise to the feeling of his moral force, in all that is most magnificent in this force, and from every terrible object knows how to draw out the sublime.<sup>185</sup>

As was mentioned above, where Schiller really separated himself is in the conception of a hero who could begin as a villain. As Schiller explained:

Regret and despair over a crime show the power of the moral law only later, [than it might appear in the story of a tragic moral hero] but not weaker... There is indeed nothing more tragically sublime than when a person suffering from a guilty conscience punishes himself with his own suicide.<sup>186</sup>

This is one of Schiller's more Schopenhauerian moments. He is saying that one can achieve sublimity either through an act of duty, i.e., self-sacrifice for the greater good or an act of repentance, i.e., self-sacrifice to atone for an early sin. Perhaps Goethe had this idea in mind when he portrayed the end of Gretchen; overcome by guilt over the death of her child she chooses death and paying for her crime over joining Faust and the devil and so avoiding her just punishment. It is this very act, this choice of death over life, that saves her.

Either way the paths to the sublimely moral that are espoused in Schiller's conception of drama, when appreciated in the preceding way, lead to the aesthetic education and a general raising of the soul from the sensuous to the moral, by means of the aesthetic experience. We are meant to come out of the aesthetic education, as we would come out of the "terrible trial of suffering," ready for self-sacrificial moral living. It is worth stressing the word "living": Schiller does not describe an ideal state of duty here after the aesthetic education, but the state of grace mentioned above which combines the sensible with the moral, and is meant to be the ideal state for living life. Duty on the other hand is best exemplified by the way one ends one's life

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<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*, 219-20.

<sup>186</sup> Beiser, *Schiller as Philosopher*, 247. (Taken from Schiller's essay "Of the Cause of Pleasure we Derive from Tragic Objects" [1792]).

and can thus characteristically be revealed in the final act of the moral person. But first let us discuss the state of grace that comes after the aesthetic education: a desire to please others becomes instilled.

A remarkable change has therefore taken place in the form of his judgments; he searches for these objects, not because they affect him, but because they furnish him with the occasion of acting; they please him, not because they answer to a want, but because they satisfy a law which speaks in his breast, although quite low as yet. Soon it will not be sufficient for things to please him; he will wish to please: in the first place, it is true, only by that which belongs to him; afterwards by that which he is. That which he possesses, that which he produces, ought not merely to bear any more the traces of servitude, nor to mark out the end, simply and scrupulously, by the form. Independently of the use to which it is destined, the object ought also to reflect the enlightened intelligence which imagines it, the hand which shaped it with affection, the mind free and serene which chose it and exposed it to view.<sup>187</sup>

It will come as no surprise that the first object which he wishes to please is that of his sexual desire and in order to do this he must take the crucial logical step that he is more likely to get what we wants by pleasing than by coercion. He must give of himself in order to receive. What happens between sexual partners then becomes the model for all society.<sup>188</sup> This is not the first time that the notion of the giving relationship between lovers or family has been described as the basis for societal norms. We have seen it as early as in the writings of Spinoza, and on into Hume and Rousseau. That being said, Schiller, like the others, warns against love being the sole determinant of morality as although it can inspire moral action it can also be self-deceptive. Self-love is after all a type of love, and we may find that the love we feel toward another is merely an affirmation of our own self-love. So it is the love experienced outside of self-love, or the desire for another's happiness trumping your own happiness, that is to be emulated and is one of the factors, though not the only

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<sup>187</sup> "Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man" XXVII, 142-3.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVII, 144; Beiser, *Schiller as Philosopher*, 160.

factor, that lead to moral living. This type of love is no longer sensuous but stems from our “divine nature.”

With love alone is sentiment free, because it is pure in its principle, and because it draws its source from the seat of liberty, from the breast of our divine nature. Here, it is not the weak and base part of our nature that measures itself with the greater and more noble part; it is not the sensibility, a prey to vertigo, which gazes up at the law of reason. It is absolute greatness which is reflected in beauty and in grace, and satisfied in morality; it becomes the legislator even, the god in us who plays with his own image in the world of sense.<sup>189</sup>

But to be sure that this love does not fall into desire or self-love, this love must be accompanied by the moral “dignity”. “Dignity prevents love from degenerating into desire, and grace [prevents], esteem from turning into fear. True beauty, true grace, ought never to cause desire.”<sup>190</sup> So divine love is the highest point humans can attain, and they can only attain it through Kantian dignity, and so the moral state must be present before it is possible to experience divine love.<sup>191</sup>

But divine love is the last form of love and a long way from its starting point: sexual desire. So the “remarkable change” that takes place which pushes man to please others, an intermediary stage of love between sexual desire and divine love, is the first step toward moral living: the sacrifice of self-interest. Schiller describes this as a change brought on by a man's reason when he is capable of understanding an ideal reality which ought to be, as opposed to the one which is. When this occurs, reason, according to Schiller, temporarily suppresses the will, and substitutes it for the moral will.

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<sup>189</sup> See: Note 165 “On Dignity” [1793], 226.

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*, 228.

<sup>191</sup> The mention of “divine love” by Schiller as an ideal state to be attained will be repeated by his successors and all those philosophers who follow him in this outline of the Moral Progression, though they will place more and more importance on love as a means of achieving morality, the sight of it in the distance inspiring moral progress.

Therefore when the reason suppresses the natural condition, as she must if she wishes to substitute her own, she weighs the real physical man against the problematical moral man, she weighs the existence of society against a possible, though morally necessary, ideal of society. She takes from man something which he really possesses, and without which he possesses nothing, and refers him as a substitute to something that he ought to possess and might possess.<sup>192</sup>

Or elsewhere:

There is a moment, in fact, when the instinct of life, not yet opposed to the instinct of form, acts as nature and as necessity; when the sensuous is a power because man has not begun; for even in man there can be no other power than his will. But when man shall have attained to the power of thought, reason, on the contrary, will be a power, and moral or logical necessity will take the place of physical necessity. Sensuous power must then be annihilated before the law which must govern it can be established. It is not enough that something shall begin which as yet was not; previously something must end which had begun. Man cannot pass immediately from sensuousness to thought. He must step backwards, for it is only when one determination is suppressed that the contrary determination can take place.<sup>193</sup>

This language comes close to the concept of the quieting of the will. Schiller later describes this as a process of ‘recovering childhood through an artificial process’ which sounds a great deal like Abrams’s return to nature and Kant’s purification of art leading back to nature.

Thus, when arrived at maturity, he recovers his childhood by an artificial process, he finds a state of nature in his ideas, not given him by any experience, but established by the necessary laws and conditions of his reason, and he attributes to this ideal condition an object, an aim, of which he was not cognizant in the actual reality of nature. He gives himself a choice of which he was not capable before, and sets to work just as if he were beginning anew, and were exchanging his original state of bondage for one of complete independence, doing this with complete insight and of his free decision.<sup>194</sup>

Or as he put it in the sixth of his *Letters*: “[A]ll, without exception, have fallen off from nature by the abuse of reason, before they can return to it through reason.”<sup>195</sup>

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<sup>192</sup> “Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man” III, 8-9.

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*, XX, 94-5.

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 8.

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.*, VI, 19.

So this second state of nature is the fusion of the rational and the sensible, the phenomenal and the noumenal, following reason to such an extent that it has become internalized and becomes what we are now inclined to do. Reason and personal sensible inclination become one. Man follows his own nature entirely and does not have to alter himself because he is in contradiction with his own will or the wills of others. This second nature, is Schiller's purest form of freedom. "Considered thus, nature is for us nothing but existence in all its freedom; it is the constitution of things taken in themselves; it is existence itself according to its proper and immutable laws."<sup>196</sup> Now this is emblematic of the aesthetic state of grace; a combination of the sense and reason in the ideal human existence. And although this state is a perfectly acceptable final state for humanity over the course of everyday existence, according to Schiller, the extraordinary events require duty, not merely grace, which returns us to the Kantian concept of dignity which has already been discussed.

One will have noticed the absence of politics in this discussion, and it is because Schiller prefers to discuss how individuals can grow and become moral souls as a microcosm of society's own moral progression. Schiller believed in the power of the aesthetic education to change not just the individual but the world as a whole, but he believed the individual had to be made moral first before society could become moral.

All improvement in the political sphere must proceed from the ennobling of the character. But, subject to the influence of a social constitution still barbarous, how can character become ennobled? It would then be necessary to seek for this end an instrument that the state does not furnish, and to open sources that would have preserved themselves pure in the midst of political corruption. I have now reached the point to which all the considerations tended that have engaged me up to the present time. This instrument is the art

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<sup>196</sup> See: Note 165, "On Simple and Sentimental Poetry" [1795], 279.

of the beautiful; these sources are open to us in its immortal models [Greek Tragedy].<sup>197</sup>

In addition, when he first elucidates his three stage process of growth (sensual – aesthetic – moral) he describes it in terms of both individual and societal growth.

Schiller observed first-hand what revolution without morality had done, and one can view his whole philosophy in terms of that reaction: what he thought went wrong.

The violent regime could never be morally successful, and so for Schiller military might and aesthetic might are inversely related in civilizations. Only when might begins to decline do the arts begin to rise.<sup>198</sup>

For Schiller, the end of the aesthetic education coincides with the beginning of this intuitive ‘second nature’ in the form of the sublime experience. It takes place at the theatre, through art; the sublime experience can only be felt, not understood, and when it is felt, it is in the form of two contradictory feelings experienced by the moral part and the sensuous part of a person.<sup>199</sup>

The feeling of the sublime is a mixed feeling. It is at once a painful state, which in its paroxysm is manifested by a kind of shudder, and a joyous state, that may rise to rapture, and which, without being properly a pleasure, is greatly preferred to every kind of pleasure by delicate souls. This union of two contrary sensations in one and the same feeling proves in a peremptory manner our moral independence. For as it is absolutely impossible that the same object should be with us in two opposite relations, it follows that it is we ourselves who sustain two different relations with the object.<sup>200</sup>

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<sup>197</sup> “Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man” IX, 35.

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*, X, 45.

<sup>199</sup> See: Note 165. “On the Sublime” [1801], 131-2. “The sublime, like the beautiful, is spread profusely throughout nature, and the faculty to feel both one and the other has been given to all men; but the germ does not develop equally; it is necessary that art should lend its aid. The aim of nature supposes already that we ought spontaneously to advance toward the beautiful, although we still avoid the sublime: for the beautiful is like the nurse of our childhood, and it is for her to refine our soul in withdrawing it from the rude state of nature. But though she is our first affection, and our faculty of feeling is first developed for her, nature has so provided, nevertheless, that this faculty ripens slowly and awaits its full development until the understanding and the heart are formed. If taste attains its full maturity before truth and morality have been established in our heart by a better road than that which taste would take, the sensuous world would remain the limit of our aspirations.”

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.*, 127.

As was mentioned, the experience of a Leonidas or a Laocoön, in other words a tragic, sacrificial hero making his last act one of duty, instills opposing feelings in us from opposing sides of our being. This feeling of being drawn in two directions is a moment of sublimity. The reasoning portion of ourselves wishes to make sense of the experience, but if that were entirely possible it would not be sublime. As Schiller says:

In the same manner as for the observant traveller the strange wildness of nature is so attractive in physical nature—thus, and for the same reason, every soul capable of enthusiasm finds even in the regrettable anarchy found in the moral world a source of singular pleasure. Without doubt he who sees the grand economy of nature only from the impoverished light of the understanding, he who has never any other thought than to reform its defiant disorder and to substitute harmony, such a one could not find pleasure in a world which seems given up to the caprice of chance rather than governed according to a wise ordination, and where merit and fortune are for the most part in opposition.<sup>201</sup>

As soon as one tries to understand the sublime moment as opposed to feel the moment, it is no longer sublime. But sublimity can only take place in the faculty of feeling of a person who has already incorporated the beautiful, i.e., appreciation of objects *per se*, into himself. Without this characteristic, the person merely has a faculty of feeling devoted to self-interest, and in such a case the sublime cannot be experienced or felt either.<sup>202</sup> The sublime moment takes place as the culmination of the aesthetic education.

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<sup>201</sup> *Ibid.*, 134-5. This notion of morally educating art appealing to the feeling and not the understanding is given here perhaps for the first time in German philosophy, not merely in aesthetics as per Lessing, or as a nod by Kant in *Critique of Judgment* to “an imaginative faculty” (89) which helps to understand the beautiful or sublime object, or the aesthetic judgment, for which “the feeling of the subject, and not a concept of the Object, is its determining ground.” (84) but as a necessary stage in moral development. (Also see “On Simple and Sentimental Poetry” where Schiller explains that ancient Greek society and drama also appealed to the faculty of feeling and not to the understanding. Concerning the Greeks he says “The entire structure of their social life reposed on feelings, and not on a factitious conception, on a work of art. Their very theology was the inspiration of a simple spirit, the fruit of a joyous imagination, and not, like the ecclesiastical dogmas of modern nations, subtle combinations of the understanding.” (*Ibid.*, 298.)

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*, 138. “As all sublimity and beauty consists in the appearance, and not in the value of the object, it follows that art has all the advantages of nature without her shackles.” That being said, this is

The capacity of the sublime is one of the noblest aptitudes of man. Beauty is useful, but does not go beyond man. The sublime applies to the pure spirit. The sublime must be joined to the beautiful to complete the *aesthetic education*, and to enlarge man's heart beyond the sensuous world. Without the beautiful there would be an eternal strife between our natural and rational destiny. If we only thought of our vocation as spirits we should be strangers to this sphere of life. Without the sublime, beauty would make us forget our dignity. Enervated —wedded to this transient state, we should lose sight of our true country. We are only perfect citizens of nature when the sublime is wedded to the beautiful.<sup>203</sup>

Those already familiar with the writings of Wagner perhaps see more of Schiller in them than of the previous writers discussed. If not, there are two final concepts of Schiller regarding art that are worth noting which make the connection even clearer. The following example taken from the twenty-second of his *Letters* describes the different arts and how through a fusion of each other's elements they can better ennoble the human spirit.

We leave a grand musical performance with our feelings excited, the reading of a noble poem with a quickened imagination, a beautiful statue or building with an awakened understanding; but a man would not choose an opportune moment who attempted to invite us to abstract thinking after a high musical enjoyment, or to attend to a prosaic affair of common life after a high poetical enjoyment, or to kindle our imagination and astonish our feelings directly after inspecting a fine statue or edifice. The reason of this is, that music, by its matter, even when most spiritual, presents a greater affinity with the senses than is permitted by aesthetic liberty; it is because even the most happy poetry, having for its medium the arbitrary and contingent play of the imagination, always shares in it more than the intimate necessity of the really beautiful

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another point on which Schiller shows that the difference between grace, aligning the sensuous side with the moral side, and dignity, extinguishing the sensuous side, is still inconsistent and unclear in his own mind. Up until this point it seems as if both faculties are needed to experience the sublime, but he notes: "Thus the sublime opens to us a road to overstep the limits of the world of sense, in which the feeling of the beautiful would for ever imprison us. It is not little by little (for between absolute dependence and absolute liberty there is no possible transition), it is suddenly and by a shock that the sublime wrenches our spiritual and independent nature away from the net which feeling has spun round us, and which enchains the soul the more tightly because of its subtle texture. Whatever may be the extent to which feeling has gained a mastery over men by the latent influence of a softening taste, when even it should have succeeded in penetrating into the most secret recesses of moral jurisdiction under the deceptive envelope of spiritual beauty, and there poisoning the holiness of principle at its source—one single sublime emotion often suffices to break all this tissue of imposture, at one blow to give freedom to the fettered elasticity of spiritual nature, to reveal its true destination, and to oblige it to conceive, for one instant at least, the feeling of its liberty." This statement implies that the moment of sublimity is the last moment of feeling before the complete takeover of the moral understanding.<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.*, 137.

allows; it is because the best sculpture touches on severe science by what is determinate in its conception. However, these particular affinities are lost in proportion as the works of these three kinds of art rise to a greater elevation, and it is a natural and necessary consequence of their perfection, that, without confounding their objective limits, the different arts come to resemble each other more and more, in the action which they exercise on the mind. At its highest degree of ennobling, music ought to become a form, and act on us with the calm power of an antique statue; in its most elevated perfection, the plastic art ought to become music and move us by the immediate action exercised on the mind by the senses; in its most complete development, poetry ought both to stir us powerfully like music and like plastic art to surround us with a peaceful light. In each art, the perfect style consists exactly in knowing how to remove specific limits, while sacrificing at the same time the particular advantages of the art, and to give it by a wise use of what belongs to it specially a more general character.<sup>204</sup>

Clearly we have here in Schiller an Ur-Gesamtkunstwerk conception of the ideal art. The second concept is perhaps less well known but more apropos for our purpose. It has already been established that Schiller's aesthetically-morally educational artwork completes its education of the audience by means of the hero's sublime moment of duty which is observable only through the faculty of feeling. Wagner also believes that it is through the faculty of feeling alone that drama can be taken in by the audience. But along with art being expressed to the faculty of feeling they both believe that art created by the genius should be directed to the simple common elements in the audience so that they may get drawn into the material without necessitating the use of the understanding and reflective faculties: it is clear upon the first look. Newman paraphrases a portion of *Opera and Drama*, saying that

Man, conceiving the external world, is impelled to reproduce his conceptions in art in a mode that shall be intelligible to others. This has only once been done thoroughly – in the expression of the Greek world-view in the Greek drama. The material of this drama was the myth – the *Volk's* mode of condensation of the phenomena of life – ‘the poem of a life-view in common.’<sup>205</sup>

While Schiller says the following:

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<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*, XXII, 104-5.

<sup>205</sup> Ernest Newman. *Wagner as Man and Artist*. (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1924), 200.

Genius expresses its most sublime and its deepest thoughts with this simple grace; they are the divine oracles that issue from the lips of a child; while the scholastic spirit, always anxious to avoid error, tortures all its words, all its ideas, and makes them pass through the crucible of grammar and logic, hard and rigid, in order to keep from vagueness, and uses few words in order not to say too much, enervates and blunts thought in order not to wound the reader who is not on his guard—genius gives to its expression, with a single and happy stroke of the brush, a precise, firm, and yet perfectly free form. In the case of grammar and logic, the sign and the thing signified are always heterogenous and strangers to each other: with genius, on the contrary, the expression gushes forth spontaneously from the idea, the language and the thought are one and the same, so that even though the expression thus gives it a body the spirit appears as if disclosed in a nude state. This fashion of expression, when the sign disappears entirely in the thing signified, when the tongue, so to speak, leaves the thought it translates naked, whilst the other mode of expression cannot represent thought without veiling it at the same time: this is what is called originality and inspiration in style.<sup>206</sup>

Although both of these ideas spring from Lessing's notion of the possible education of the basest elements of the public through drama, the closer connection between the two elaborations of that idea by Schiller and Wagner is clear. This is not the place for a comparison between Wagner and Schiller, but a cursory glance at the final section of *Opera and Drama* or *Judaism in Music* would be all that it would take to see the similarities.

Overall, Schiller describes two nearly identical paths: the tragic path, and the real life path. The tragic path, necessary for the aesthetic education, describes the events in a work of drama meant to elevate the soul centered around a hero or villain who moves from sensuousness to selflessness, in one way or another, passing through a terrible trial of personal suffering in order to arrive at moral living, and finally ending with his sublime dutiful death. The real life path describes in more detail the earlier stages of sensuous being, living for the moment moving to grand plans for the future brought on by a fear of suffering and death. Then through the aesthetic education we learn to value objects in and of themselves, and displace our sensual

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<sup>206</sup> See: Note 165 "On Simple and Sentimental Poetry", 291-2.

will with the moral will so that we may enjoy being moral or act with grace [*Anmut*]. This moral behavior becomes so instinctual that it becomes our second nature; a return to instinctual natural living in an Abramsian sense. Finally, only at the necessary time must one follow the example of the tragedy and act in accordance with the Kantian duty or for Schiller, sublime dignity [*erhabene Würde*].<sup>207</sup>

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<sup>207</sup> One could and hopefully in the future someone will write a real comparison between Schiller and Schopenhauer, as well as one between Schiller and Wagner. So much of Wagner's and Schopenhauer's thoughts are found very neatly in the Jena writings of Schiller. But such a study is beyond the scope of this work.

## Chapter 6. Johann Gottlieb Fichte

Much of Fichte will sound familiar to us from Schiller. The Jena writings such as *Scholar's Vocation* and *Science of Knowledge*, both first appearing in 1794, were written at approximately the same time as Schiller's own Jena writings and include many similar ideas, such as the idea that the sensuous aspect of man should be displaced by the moral rather than cut off in favor of the moral.<sup>208</sup> Fichte thought of himself as primarily a Kantian and often included ideas from the Critical philosophy in his own work. For Fichte, just as for Kant and everyone discussed above, knowledge begins from experience. However, Fichte wished to expand upon the limited approach of the Critical philosophy by making a step that Kant was unprepared to make: a discussion of the characteristics of noumenal knowledge. As a result he, unlike the relative empiricists discussed above, begins to discuss the spiritual element in man and in society as a whole.

Fichte declared that Kant's rarely knowable noumena could be found in one side of the two-sided man. In his *Scholar's Vocation* of 1794 he explains that man is composed of two I's. The first is the pure I, "all that a person is should be related to this pure I."<sup>209</sup> It is the genuinely spiritual element in man. This I never contradicts itself. In short, this I represents the moral ideal of man, making spirit/noumena a quasi-religious but knowable possibility. The second I is the I on which Hume and Kant focus: the empirical I. This I is "determined and determinable by external things

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<sup>208</sup> For this purpose it is unimportant which of the two men came up with this notion first, though as Beiser notes it was probably Fichte (Beiser, *Schiller as Philosopher*, 145.) as they diverge in enough other places.

<sup>209</sup> J.G. Fichte *Scholar's Vocation* [1794] trans. by Daniel Breazeale. in *German Idealism. The German Library v. XXIII*. ed. Ernst Behler. (New York: Continuum, 1987), 6.

[desires for objects]”<sup>210</sup> and so is often self-contradictory, as we have seen in previous explanations. Fichte begins with this notion of the two-sided man, and explains that man ought to unite these two sides of himself under the rule of the pure I. He says:

If the empirical I contradicts itself, it is a sure sign that it is not determined and in accordance with the pure I, and thus is not determined by itself but by external things... Man is supposed to determine himself and not permit himself to be determined by something foreign... The ultimate characteristic feature of all rational beings is, accordingly, absolute unity, constant self-identity, complete agreement with oneself. The absolute identity is the form of the pure I and is its only true form, or rather, in the conceivability of identity we recognize the expression of the purer form of the I.<sup>211</sup>

This is a new way of saying essentially the same thing. The moral goal is the same, and the coming together of the sensuous I and the pure I by the conversion of the sensuous I is familiar to us from Schiller. What is new and unfortunately confusing is Fichte’s conception of the pure I. It seems at first that Fichte’s pure I was the ideal self which exists from the time of birth and which is ever present, but must be found again and attained by the sensuous self, which would seem to be a conscious return by Fichte to the ideal forms of Plato, those forms used epistemologically to explain noumena.<sup>212</sup> However, in his argument with Schelling he would later spurn this notion of a pre-existing pure I which must be reattained in favor of an ideal pure I which must be attained by the original empirical I. A probable reason for this shift was that if the pure I were the ideal self which existed first and must be reattained, then nature itself would also have to be an ideal to be reattained as per Spinoza and others, a model Fichte rejected, calling it dogmatism. Fichte made the departure from nature or sensibility the basis of his moral system, and in his view his system would

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<sup>210</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>212</sup> One sees an example of this Platonic thinking in *The Scholars Vocation* where he describes an original form of I to be returned to: “Mere will is not sufficient for removing these distortions and restoring the original pure shape [*die ursprüngliche reine Gestalt wiederzugeben*] of our I.” (*Ibid.*, 7.)

fall apart if ultimately at the end of the moral journey the destination turned out to be “immoral” nature.<sup>213</sup>

So he rejected this notion of the pre-existing pure I, and created for nature a parallel pure I goal to be attained called the spirit world. Nature *per se* or the forms of and in nature become those of the spirit world. Then the pure I of both the individual and the ideal society, i.e., the species as a whole, is no longer viewed in terms of platonic forms,<sup>214</sup> but rather in terms of a deep spiritual element within man and society as a whole which ever moves man and society forward in constant progress.<sup>215</sup>

This spiritual element is ultimately a version of reformed Christianity taken from, as Fichte says, John not Paul,<sup>216</sup> in which the specifics of Christ are less important than the idea of divine love which should penetrate the soul. Fichte describes this Christianity as abandoning the angry god in favor of one of love.

The dreadful phantom of a Deity hostile to Mankind has vanished, and the Human Race is now delivered from this horror, and enjoys tranquillity and freedom... but whence the great Founder first obtained courage boldly to confront the phantom which had been consecrated by the universal agreement of all former Ages, and the very thought of which had paralyzed every exertion, and to discover that it was not, but that instead of it there was only Happiness and Love: this was the miracle.<sup>217</sup>

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<sup>213</sup> Though in his later *Characteristics of the Present Age*, he would argue that humanity makes a complete Abramsian circle back to its natural beginning, so it seems he ultimately was a little more flexible on this point than he seemed to be in the argument with Schelling.

<sup>214</sup> He offers a weak rejection of the entire notion of platonic forms in his *An Attempt to Force the Reader to Understand* of 1801 noting that a picture of a clock cannot tell time. J.G. Fichte. *A Crystal Clear Report to the General Public Concerning the Actual Essence of the Newest Philosophy: An Attempt to Force the Reader to Understand*. In *German Idealism. The German Library* v. XXIII, 62.

<sup>215</sup> As the intention of this work is not to elucidate the changes made by each philosopher to his system, but to offer views based on their works as a whole of their metaphysical-ethical progression, it is unnecessary to go into lengthy detail with examples and counterexamples concerning this debate within Fichte scholarship. Those interested in the subject please see: *Fichte-Schelling Briefen*, Hegel's “Differenz des Fichte'schen und Schelling'schen Systems der Philosophie”, or more recently; Beiser. *German Idealism: The Struggle against Subjectivism, 1781-1801*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 491-505; or the article on Fichte in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* to name a few such examples among many.

<sup>216</sup> J.G. Fichte *Characteristics of Present Age* [1806] in *The Popular Works of Johann Gottlieb Fichte*. II. trans. William Smith (London: Trübner and Co., 1889), 104.

<sup>217</sup> *Ibid.*, 52-3.

This is the same divine love mentioned by Spinoza which was meant to be our ultimate goal.

This divine love is not the love which Kant and Schiller caution us against having as the basis for our moral system, but a refined version of Kantian duty. Fichte notes that while the moral man obeys the law of duty without understanding why, religious man understands why by recognizing his place in the grand scheme of the universe. The moral man is miserable and suffers; the religious man feels love and blessedness.

For the Religious Man this question has been once and forever solved. That which thus strives against our Will, and which cannot be crushed into nothingness, is imperfect Life; which, even because it is Life, struggles for continued existence, but must cease to be as soon as its place is occupied by a Higher and Nobler Life. Those desires which I must sacrifice, thinks the Religious Man, are not my desires, but they are desires which are directed against me and my Higher Existence; they are my foes, which cannot be destroyed too soon. The pain which they cause is not my pain, but the pain of a Nature which has conspired against me; it is not the agonies of Death, but the pangs of a New Birth, which will be glorious beyond all my expectations.<sup>218</sup>

What Fichte describes in the coming into being of the ideal religious man is the same process of removing sensuous desires as we have seen earlier. What is different is the way in which he, like Schiller, finds a way for his ideal to enjoy being moral.

Where Schiller adopted the Kantian idea of duty with his conception of grace [*Anmut*], Fichte also discovers a solution whereby moral behavior can be enjoyed. But Fichte goes further than Schiller. Schiller says that in the extreme case of the necessary self-sacrifice or act of dignity [*Würde*] it is impossible to enjoy oneself, and in this way he follows Kant. Fichte's solution and expansion of joy into acts of dignity comes from associating acts of dignity with the feeling of divine love which takes joy in the act of self-sacrifice. He employs the same concept of self-sacrifice for the

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<sup>218</sup> *Ibid.*, 48-9.

greater good, but in this case we enjoy it because we know that the self-sacrifice will lead both ourselves and the race as a whole to a higher state of being.

Nothing individual can live in itself or for itself, but all live in the Whole, and this Whole unceasingly dies for itself in unspeakable love, that it may rise again in new Life. This is the law of the spiritual world: all that comes into being falls sacrifice to an eternally increasing and ascending Life; and this law constantly rules over all, without waiting for the consent of any. Here alone lies the distinction: whether man allows himself to be led, with the halter round his head, like a beast, to the slaughter; or freely and nobly brings his life as a gift to the altar of the Eternal Life, in the full fore-enjoyment of the new Life which is to arise from his ashes.<sup>219</sup>

It is through his re-evaluation of the Kantian conception of noumena through reformed Christian spiritual principles alongside his notion of constant, eternal progress that separates Fichte from his predecessors. In Fichte for the first time, aside from Schopenhauer, self-sacrifice is not just something to be admired, but is a necessary part of the process of growth, which as noted above, will eventually unite all beings together into “the Whole” in a new life: the goal of the species.<sup>220</sup> Now let us take a step back and examine Fichte’s process of development.

In works such as the *Scholar’s Vocation* and *An Attempt to Force the Reader to Understand* and his magnum opus *The Science of Knowledge*, Fichte’s prime concern is to explain the path from our current moral/political state to the ideal moral/political state, or the process which most concerned the *Frühromantiks*, primarily concerning himself with the progression of the individual. He explains

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<sup>219</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.

<sup>220</sup> Most studies of ethics and morality going back to Aristotle explain a way for humans to be as good as they can be. Aristotle believed in balance, too much piety or on the other side of the spectrum, self-indulgence was considered a sin, and it is only in the balance where we can find morality. Hume agreed with the notion of balance, but not that piety or self-sacrifice in abundance was necessarily a sin, only that it could not be attained in abundance by normal men. Kant examined the notion of moral behavior and instructed us to strive after moral perfection in this life, in the same way as we strive after knowledge of the noumena. It is Fichte who examines morality both in terms of this life and any that are to follow. He expands the process of moral perfection and declares that it is something attainable, but only with a near infinite amount of time. In other words, normal men cannot achieve the perfection that Fichte explains, they can only get on the correct path towards it. These two ethical concepts, achievable and essentially unachievable / the forever striving, will become important in understanding Wagner’s different conceptions of the ending of the *Ring*.

The highest aim of my reflections and my teaching will be to contribute toward advancing culture and elevating humanity in you and with all those with whom you come into contact, and that I consider all philosophy and science which do not aim at this goal to be worthless.<sup>221</sup>

In these works he is less concerned – though he does speak of it – with the path humanity took to get to its present stage. However, in the later series of Lectures from 1805-6 called *Characteristics of the Present Age* he outlines the history, primarily of the state/race and secondarily of individual moral development, from the beginning to its ideal end in what he calls a “world plan” in five epochs which will sound extremely familiar to us, and includes another variant of the spiral path of Abrams from nature to a purer form of nature as well as the general progressions we have discussed up to this point.<sup>222</sup> His is the first, though not the last, example of a specific outline describing humanity’s phases of development akin to that which we have seen in Schopenhauer.

Fichte describes the five phases in the following way:

1<sup>st</sup>, The Epoch of the unlimited dominion of Reason as Instinct: the State of Innocence of the Human Race. 2<sup>nd</sup>, The Epoch in which Reason as Instinct is changed into an external ruling Authority; the Age of positive Systems of life and doctrine, which never go back to their ultimate foundations, and hence have no power to convince, but on the contrary merely desire to compel, and which demand blind faith and unconditional obedience : the State of progressive Sin. 3<sup>rd</sup>, The Epoch of Liberation, directly from the external ruling Authority indirectly from the power of Reason as Instinct, and generally from Reason in any form; the Age of absolute indifference towards all truth, and of entire and unrestrained licentiousness: the State of completed Sinfulness. 4<sup>th</sup>, The Epoch of Reason as Science; the Age in which Truth is looked upon as the highest, and loved before all other things: the State of progressive Justification. 5<sup>th</sup>, The Epoch of Reason as Art; the Age in which Humanity with a more sure and unerring hand builds itself up into a fitting image and representative of Reason: the State of completed Justification and Sanctification.<sup>223</sup>

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<sup>221</sup> *The Scholar’s Vocation*, 10.

<sup>222</sup> He explains at the beginning that these phases primarily concern the progress of the race and not the individual, however, he includes numerous discussions on consciousness which could only refer to the individual and his place in society.

<sup>223</sup> *Characteristics of the Present Age*, 9.

At a cursory and ultimately correct glance, the first two and the last two of the five epochs fall neatly into Schopenhauer's four-stage process with Fichte's third epoch representing in Schopenhauer's system the specific moment of crisis in which one realizes that one can neither achieve nor know with certainty what one wants which comes at the end of the second stage "Objectification of the Will," and precedes the third stage "The Platonic Idea."

Fichte follows this summary of the stages of development with a little commentary which will remind us of Abrams.

Thus, the whole progress which, upon this view, Humanity makes here below, is only a retrogression to the point on which it stood at first, and has nothing in view save that return to its original condition. But Humanity must make this journey on its own feet; by its own strength it must bring itself back to that state in which it was once before without its own cooperation, and which, for that very purpose, it must first of all leave.<sup>224</sup>

These works examined together will give a clear picture of his cyclic/spiral path concept of progression both in terms of the state/race, individual moral development, and how the two are entwined.

The first epoch can be equated with the idea that reason is instinct. Although Fichte follows Kant's conception of reason – something which employs our empirical knowledge along with our sense of free will to understand the world around us – in this context reason refers to what Fichte calls the "power of nature."

Reason cannot as yet work by Freedom... it acts as a law or power of Nature; and thus may be visibly present in consciousness and active there, only without insight into the grounds of its activity; or in other words, may exist as mere feeling, for so we call consciousness without insight. In short, to express this in common language: Reason acts as blind Instinct, where it cannot as yet act through Free Will... instinct is blind, a consciousness without insight.<sup>225</sup>

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<sup>224</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>225</sup> *Ibid.*, 6-7.

This conception of instinct, or the power of nature ruling over all action, is already familiar to us from the first stage of the other progressions discussed above. It becomes closer still when Fichte offers a more explicit account of the “power of nature.”

[Nature gives man] the impulse towards self-preservation and personal well-being; and Nature goes no further in Man than this impulse. She bestows upon the animals a special Instinct to guide them to the means of their preservation and well-being, but she sends forth Man almost wholly uninstructed on this point, and refers him for guidance to his Understanding and his Experience[.]<sup>226</sup>

So what at first appeared as an idealized instinct governed by the pure laws of nature, upon closer reflection is akin to Kant’s *arbitrium brutum*, Rousseau’s nature-man, and Schiller’s material being. Man is solely guided by the instinct for self-preservation. The world as a whole, then, according to Fichte, influences us unhindered, and this is the formation of the empirically determined I. It is the objects in the world which have the ability to satisfy and offer the feeling of satisfaction, not the individual alone. Man relies on the world and the objects in it to sate his desires.

Fichte’s main problem with this state was that since the goal of existence was, at least partially, to associate oneself with the self-determining free pure I, an empirical I which is based entirely upon outside objects is far removed from this ideal state.

The unhindered influence of things upon the empirically determinable I, an influence to which we naturally entrust ourselves so long as our reason has not yet been awakened, gives a particular bent to our empirically determinable I. And since this bent is derived from things outside of us, it is impossible for it to be in harmony with the form of our pure I.<sup>227</sup>

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<sup>226</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>227</sup> *Scholars Vocation*, 7.

Fichte's solution for getting away from the empirical I and coming toward the pure I will again sound familiar to us: removing false desires or "subordinating the irrational to the will." This cannot be done immediately of course; Fichte merely offers the direction in which consciousness should move, clearly the same direction as we have seen above.

While Kant said in his *Conjectures on Universal History* that it was through some experimentation on the part of the individual away from the instinct nature provided that the change from the state of nature came about, Fichte bases this change on Rousseau's conception of the powerful man who makes others his slaves. He believes it to be a natural extension of the state of nature that a self-interested person would view not just the objects in nature as capable of satiating his desires, but also other men, viewed as objects alone. This is the formation of the first society, based around an individual about whom Fichte says "Instinct speaks in its loudest and fullest tones."<sup>228</sup> This will has two possible reasons for taking control, either to elevate the whole human race to his greatness or to put himself and his needs in place of those of the race; but in either case this situation leads to what Fichte calls an "external ruling authority, upheld through outward constraint," and it is in reaction to this society that reason based on free will replaces instinct.

Fichte calls upon Rousseau to explain this strong will:

Such a person is a slave and wishes to have slaves. Rousseau has said that many a person who considers himself to be the master of others is actually more of a slave than they are. He might have said, with even more accuracy, that everyone who considers himself to be a master of others is himself a slave.<sup>229</sup>

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<sup>228</sup> *Characteristics of the Present Age*, 7-8.

<sup>229</sup> *Scholars Vocation*, 17.

This strong-willed person is incapable of viewing people in any other way than as means. He is incapable of experiencing self-reflection and is considered by Fichte to be still an animal, incapable of forming into a society with others and without a developed soul. Still, without such a person, progress could not take place. With this person and those like him dawns the second age, that of external ruling authority.

Fichte explains that after the strong will forces society to live according to his instinct or needs:

[A]mong other men Reason awakes... as the impulse towards Personal Freedom, which, although it never opposes the mild rule of the inward Instinct which it loves, yet rises in rebellion against the pressure of a stranger Instinct which has usurped its rights; and in this awakening it breaks the chains, not of Reason as Instinct itself, but of the Instinct of foreign natures clothed in the garb of external power. And thus the change of the individual Instinct into a compulsive Authority becomes the medium between the dominion of Reason as Instinct, and the liberation from that dominion.<sup>230</sup>

The servants of the strong-willed man are faced with two contrary commands, satisfy my desires and satisfy his desires; and ultimately they liberate themselves from his control, but at the cost of losing their connection to reason.

When they liberate themselves Fichte's third age begins. It is an age of chaos, where truth and untruth carry equal weight because of the rejection, not only of the former master, but of reason as well. This third age, which Fichte also describes as the "present age," is representative of his disappointment in the failed idealism of the French Revolution. It is through this lens that we can then view the second and third ages, the authoritarian society that existed before the revolution as the second age, and the chaotic society that existed thereafter. We will examine these two ages together.

The description above cites this age as:

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<sup>230</sup> *Characteristics of the Present Age*, 7-8.

[T]he Age of positive Systems of life and doctrine, which never go back to their ultimate foundations, and hence have no power to convince, but on the contrary merely desire to compel, and which demand blind faith and unconditional obedience.

Although the strong-willed person is not progressing, his servants are. They are forced through fear into a situation where they can no longer follow their natural instincts, but must accommodate themselves to the needs of their master. Fear once again is the motivator. It is fear of reprisal that causes men to become the servants of the powerful man, and it is fear of losing themselves that brings them out from under his wing. But before this revolution, their aspirations are limited to the immediate and the necessary with little thought to anything higher.

With respect to the influence which it exerts upon Nature and its employment of her powers and products, such an Age looks everywhere only to the immediately and materially useful, to that, namely, which is serviceable for dwelling, clothing, and food, to cheapness, convenience, and, where it attains its highest point, to fashion; but that higher dominion over Nature whereby the majestic image of Man as a Race is stamped upon its opposing forces, I mean the dominion of Ideas, in which the essential nature of Fine Art consists, this is wholly unknown to such an Age; and even when the occasional appearance of men of more spiritual nature may remind it of this higher sovereignty, it only laughs at such aspirations as mere visionary extravagance.<sup>231</sup>

The logical systems founded in this age are, as mentioned in the definition of the age, not designed to be logical, but only to be new, and to convince others through dogma. Many new ideas are founded in this age with no logical basis whatever, but that is less important than the fact that they are new and were created by people.

Let it be made manifest to a true son of this Age that what he has produced is absurd, ridiculous, immoral, and corrupt: That is nothing, he replies; I have thought it, of my own self I have created it, and thought of itself is always

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<sup>231</sup> *Ibid.*, 27-8.

some merit, for it costs some labour; and man must be at liberty to think what he pleases: and, truly, to this one has nothing further to say.<sup>232</sup>

Or elsewhere, speaking of false religion in terms of mysticism and mystics as those who push the false religious system on the masses:

Real Thought and Speculation are troublesome and unproductive; to learn anything here likewise demands an effort of attention and memory. Imagination steps in. Let a successful master once bring this power into play, and how can he fail to do so, if he be a Mystic, since Mysticism is always sure to lay hold of the unguarded and inexperienced? then Imagination pursues its way without farther trouble to its possessor, quickens into life, assumes new and varied forms, and thus creates the appearance of a vigorous activity, without exacting the smallest trouble on our part; bold and adventurous thoughts make their appearance in our minds, without we ourselves being compelled to think at all; and study is changed into the most pleasant business in the world.<sup>233</sup>

This notion is reminiscent of the grand ideas which are ultimately in conflict with universal rules as seen in Schopenhauer's second stage of development.

It is this second age of history that brought people under the wing of despots and what Fichte refers to as the angry God of Pauline Christianity. The grand plans of the few took advantage of the many, and the state that then existed was not serving its people. The state was in contradiction with itself. It was perhaps then inevitable that the people of the state turned against their leaders and destroyed their grand plans and began an age of chaos. According to Schopenhauer, before giving up the illusion of reality, the transition between the second and third stage, the will is confused because of its contradictory desires, and then gives up willing altogether. Here in Fichte, it is the state that is brought to a standstill because of its own contradictory desires between the rulers and the ruled, after which nothing can be achieved, as reason has also been wiped away. The same occurs for Fichte on the individual level. Once again the desire of the individual for something that he believes will satisfy him, or as

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<sup>232</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.

<sup>233</sup> *Ibid.*, 128.

Fichte says, something will give the individual pleasant feelings, can be contrary and deleterious to what is morally best for him as dictated by the spiritual I. When we only examine what offers a pleasant feeling, or what sates the empirical I alone, it is capable of contradiction. True happiness can only exist in moral behavior.

[W]e may note in passing that it is not true that the desire for happiness destines man for ethical goodness. It is rather the case that the concept of happiness itself and the desire for happiness first arise from man's moral nature. Not 'what makes us happy is good,' but rather, 'only what is good makes us happy.' No happiness is possible apart from morality. Of course, *pleasant feelings are possible without morality and even in opposition to it...* But pleasant feelings are not happiness; indeed, they often even *contradict* happiness.<sup>234</sup>

Once again we arrive at moral behavior as the source for happiness, and the next stage in Fichte's development.

For Schiller it was an aesthetic education that brought one out of the darkness of contradiction and into the light of reason; for Fichte it is the *Wissenschaftslehre* or *Science of Knowledge*.<sup>235</sup> Both are meant to educate the population at large and make them ready to participate in a moral society. The science of knowledge is for Fichte a way of looking at the world with reason; not the reason from his first age, the reason as instinct, but the reason that is never contradictory, the reason of the fourth age: "The Epoch of Reason as Science; the Age in which Truth is looked upon as the highest, and loved before all other things: the State of progressive Justification." It is a system of logic which has as its basis the abstract, not the experiential. In other

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<sup>234</sup> *Scholars Vocation*, 9. [Emphasis mine]

<sup>235</sup> This is not to say that art does not have its place in Fichte's process of moral development; it simply does not have the force it occupies in Schiller's. Fichte does say that in his fifth age "all the relations of the Race shall be directed and ordered by perfect Art and perfect Freedom according to Reason." (*Characteristics of the Present Age*, 7) Further, in an almost prophetic phrase that comes close to expounding Schiller's notion of the hope for a total work of art as well as being similar to the hopes of the other *Frühromantiks*, he comments: "Would that a man could be found who would work out this high advantage [the organic unity of art] for humanity, and thereby rekindle in young minds the almost extinguished sense of Art! Such an one, however, must not himself be a young mind, but a thoroughly tried and mature man." (*Characteristics of the Present Age*, 95.) However, the understanding of art is not as vital a stage in Fichte's process of moral development as it is in those of others from this period.

words, we examine the objects around us in the world without reference to our ego, but in and of themselves alone. Once we are capable of doing this, we also become capable of looking at other people, not as means to an end, but as individuals with their own needs and interests.<sup>236</sup> However, this notion also comes about slowly. Like Hume et al., Fichte holds that at first, “Everyone uses his own ideal to judge those whom he recognizes as men. Owing to the fundamental human drive, everyone wishes to find that everyone else resembles this ideal.”<sup>237</sup> This is the case until the science of knowledge is fully internalized, at which point self-importance dissipates, we become capable of judging others objectively and then, according to Fichte, we will have a society of equals.

When the science of knowledge then is fully internalized we cannot help but to sacrifice our personal interests at the expense of those of others, in favor of the universal interests of all. The science of knowledge then draws us away from the empirical I and toward the pure I.

The I of actual consciousness is particular and separate; it is one person among several people, each of whom, for himself and in the same way, calls himself I; and it is precisely to the consciousness of this personality that the Science of Knowledge pursues its deduction. The I from which the Science of Knowledge proceeds is something entirely different; it is absolutely nothing more than the identity of the conscious-being and the conscious; and for this distinction one must raise oneself by abstraction above all that remains in the personality.<sup>238</sup>

This idea of “raising oneself by abstraction above all that remains in the personality” is nothing less than the relinquishing of personal desires or those of the individual in favor of the universal will. Individuality is sacrificed to the life of the race as a whole.

Reason embraces only the ONE Life, which manifests itself as the Life of the Race. Were Reason taken away from human life, there would remain only

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<sup>236</sup> *Scholar's Vocation*, 14.

<sup>237</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>238</sup> *Attempt to Force the Reader to Understand*, 86.

Individuality and the love of Individuality. Hence the Life according to Reason consists herein, that the Individual forget himself in the Race, place his own life in the life of the Race, and dedicate it thereto; the Life opposed to Reason, on the contrary, consists in this, that the Individual think of nothing but himself, love nothing but himself and in relation to himself, and set his whole existence in his own personal well-being alone: and since we may briefly call that which is according to Reason good, and that which is opposed to Reason evil, so there is but One Virtue, to forget one's own personality; and but One Vice, to make self the object of our thoughts.<sup>239</sup>

Or as he neatly summarizes, “[T]he life ruled by reason loves humanity as a whole, the one not ruled by reason loves himself.”<sup>240</sup>

Once the science of knowledge takes over, one can no longer be led astray by false reasoning. The separation between pleasant thoughts and happiness is made plain.

Absolutely no overarching of reason, no foolish enthusiasm, no superstition can take root from the moment the Science of Knowledge becomes dominant; that is, after all those possess it who lead the great mass of people who can never possess it. All this [foolish enthusiasm and superstition] is attacked to the depths of its foundation and annihilated. Everyone who has undertaken that general measurement of finite reason with us knows at each moment to indicate the point where the unreasonable oversteps the bounds of reason and contradicts it. He knows how to bring to light the contradiction to everyone who only has sound understanding and the good will to be reasonable.<sup>241</sup>

The similarity to Schiller's aesthetic education is already apparent, but there is still one further point of commonality between the two. In Schiller, one of the main ideas of the aesthetic education was to unite the empirical I with the pure I, and inundating the empirical I so thoroughly with morality that the self would act ethically instinctually by the ingrained second nature. For Fichte this return is characterized by an intuition that comes about in the self after the science of knowledge becomes internalized.

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<sup>239</sup> *Characteristics of the Present Age*, 33.

<sup>240</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

<sup>241</sup> *Attempt to Force the Reader to Understand*, 104.

[T]here occurs no further dispute over particular points or propositions after all that is unthinkable is identified and determined in a scientific sequence of intuition. No longer is any error possible, because intuition never errs.<sup>242</sup>

This intuition functions like Schiller's internalized moral second nature. In this way we can observe Fichte's Abramsian spiral back to a type of idealized natural (i.e. spirit world) living, akin to what was observed in Schiller.<sup>243</sup>

When a community of individuals arises in which all individuals therein have internalized the science of knowledge, the perfect state will exist. The state's purpose will be to benefit its citizens, just as the citizens' purpose will be to benefit the state.

In a State so constituted, where all, as Individuals, are dedicated to the Race, it follows at the same time, that all without exception, with all the Rights which belong to them as component parts of the Race, are dedicated to all the other individual members of the State. For, to what are the powers of all directed? To the Race. But what does the State hold as the representative of the Race? All its Citizens, without a single exception. Were there some Individuals either not taken into account at all in the common purpose, or not taken into account with all their powers, while the rest were included, then the former would enjoy all the advantages of the union without bearing all the attendant burdens, and there would thus be inequality. Only where all without exception are taken into account, is equality the result. Consequently, in this constitution, the Individuality of each absolutely disappears in the community of All; and each one receives back his contribution to the common power, strengthened by the united powers of all the rest. The purpose of the isolated Individual is his own enjoyment; and he uses his power as the means of its attainment; the purpose of the Race is Culture, and the honourable subsistence which is the condition of Culture: in the State, each Individual employs his powers, not for his own immediate enjoyment, but for the purpose of the Race, and he receives in return the whole united Culture of the Race, and therewith his own honourable subsistence.<sup>244</sup>

As far as the individual in the state is concerned, his freedom is above all. The laws of the state have already been internalized and are present in his intuition so he acts

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<sup>242</sup> *Ibid.*, 104.

<sup>243</sup> The reader will note my careful wording here. Strictly speaking Fichte's view of progress was a constant struggle between the pure I and nature. However, the nature which Fichte is speaking against is the base nature symbolized by individual desire, and because he uses intuition (*Anschauung*) here to describe this new phase in the same sense that Schiller used "second nature", along with Spinoza's "nature" and Kant's final description of the noumena in nature in his *Conjectures*, I see no problem with describing his intuition in the same light as that of the others, as a type of return to nature. It was Schelling who first viewed Fichte's term as a return to some form of nature as we will see in the discussion of Schelling below.

<sup>244</sup> *Characteristics of the Present Age*, 151.

with complete reason and freedom. He, in his drive to eradicate his own desires in favor of the state, the race, or humanity as a whole, has adopted what Fichte refers to as the spiritual element or divine love, about which we have already spoken.

He in whose soul this flame of Heavenly Love is kindled, however hindered and bound down he may seem to mere outward appearance, yet in inward Freedom and independence rises even superior to the State; the State does not give a Law to his will, but its Law accidentally accords with his will, because it is a perfect Law. This Love, as it is the only imperishable Virtue, and the only Blessedness, so is it also the only True Freedom; and only through it can Man rise superior to the bondage of the State, as well as to all other bondage which oppresses and confines him here below. Happy is it for Mankind, that they have not to wait for the slowly advancing perfection of the State, in order to attain this Love; but that in all Ages, and under all circumstances, every Individual of our Race may freely raise himself to its possession!<sup>245</sup>

Finally, this connection between man and society is spiritualized so that man then becomes, through divine love, a part of the “mighty whole,” in platonic language the “one,” or in Christian language, “God.”<sup>246</sup> Fichte discusses in this final context a spirit-world, the pure I to nature’s empirical I, where everything is joined together through divine love in harmony. This spirit world draws the natural world to it just as the pure I drew the empirical I to it.

As when the breath of Spring enlivens the air, the strong and fixed ice, which but a few moments before imprisoned each atom within its own limits, and shut up each neighbouring atom in similar isolation, now no longer maintains its rigid bondage, but flows forth in one free, animated, and glowing flood; so does the Spirit-World ever flow at the breath of Love, and is and abides in eternal communion with the mighty Whole. Let us now add: This atmosphere of the Spirit-World, this creating and combining element, is LIGHT – this originally: Warmth, if it does not again evaporate, but bear within itself an element of duration, is but the first manifestation of this Light. In the Darkness of mere earthly vision, all things stand divided from each other; each individual thing isolated by means of the cold and unilluminated Matter in which it is embraced. But in this Darkness there is no Unity. The Light of Religion arises! And all things burst forth and rush towards each other in

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<sup>245</sup> *Ibid.*, 177-8.

<sup>246</sup> Though the Christian God was not specifically what Fichte had in mind with this notion, he did couch the noumena in Christian language to make it understandable to his audience. Fichte was a deist.

reciprocal order and dependence, and float on together, as a united Whole, in the One, Eternal, and All-embracing flood of Light.<sup>247</sup>

The spirit-world is the end goal, where all unite into one. In order to achieve this goal over infinite time, man must view himself as a tool of this final union and must realize that individual death, his death, ought to be the final contribution that he makes to ever-progressing society as he “freely and nobly bring[s] his life [as] a gift to the altar of the Eternal Life, in the full fore-enjoyment of the new Life which is to arise from his ashes.”<sup>248</sup> Death, then, becomes the last necessary stage of development in Fichte’s moral progression.

In summary, Fichte believes that man begins life living according to nature’s directives. As someone through selfishness takes control of the society of men, the others, fearful for their lives, become his servants and live for his will. This is a time of expanding imagination, grand plans, and absurd systems of knowledge with no basis in empirical truth. The servants, feeling the contradiction between the master’s desires and their own, eventually revolt against their master, as well as all systems of knowledge, both the false and the true. This is best represented in the individual by the clash among one’s own desires for pleasant feelings, which will often contradict each other, leaving continued dissatisfaction. The only way to remove the contradiction is to abandon the search for satisfaction or pleasant feelings and take up moral living. For Fichte this is done by internalizing the science of knowledge. One is able first to observe objects per se independent of their relationship to oneself, and then to view others of one’s race as equals. In the ideal mode of life man then relinquishes his individuality for the benefit of the race or society as a whole. Finally, man relinquishes the last part of his individuality, his life, for the spirit-world and the

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<sup>247</sup> *Characteristics of the Present Age*, 268.

<sup>248</sup> *Attempt to Force the Reader to Understand*, 62.

race, which shall be joined together in divine love under the guise of the “one,” the “all.” As noted above, this inclusion of death as a necessary stage in the Moral Progression aligns Fichte more closely with Schopenhauer than with his predecessors.

## Chapter 7. Friedrich Wilhelm Schelling

Generally speaking, Schelling is more limited in his discussion of the proposed Moral Progression than his contemporaries Fichte and Schiller, because he, like Schopenhauer, places very little emphasis on the origins of society and their relation to man's path of becoming.<sup>249</sup> He is far more interested in describing this becoming psychologically in terms of the individual and his awareness as a tool for understanding the nature of knowledge and the universe through his *Naturphilosophie*.

From the present perspective of Fichte which includes the discussion of spirit found in his late writings, Schelling's philosophy will seem similar in many respects. There is an empirical I based on desire which Schelling calls the self-will, and a pure I drawing the empirical to it morally, which Schelling calls the universal will. Pure love, as opposed to self love, is the same unifying factor: the highest ideal that brings matter together as we have seen in Fichte and all the philosophers discussed above.<sup>250</sup> But the strongest unifier between Fichte and Schelling is that Schelling, like Fichte, extended the Kantian system into discussions of the noumenal-spiritual.

The primary difference between the two is that although spirit holds the same place for Schelling and Fichte, Schelling is explicit in citing its connection to nature, famously saying; "Nature shall be visible spirit, and spirit invisible nature."<sup>251</sup> Schelling viewed the enlightened-aesthetic-intellectual intuition of Schiller and Fichte as another version of seemingly unconscious nature – aligning him with a more direct version of Kant's conception of nature from *Conjectures*. This means that Schelling's

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<sup>249</sup> Though, the goal of society in Schelling's system is a unification of man and nature which will then form God.

<sup>250</sup> Schelling rejects self love in a manner similar to that by which Fichte rejects it.

<sup>251</sup> F. W. Schelling. *Ideas on a Philosophy of Nature*. [1803] trans. Priscilla Hayden-Roy in *Philosophy of German Idealism*. ed. Ernst Behler. (New York: Continuum, 1987), 202.

nature and Fichte's Spirit are different aspects of the same substance. They are ideals to be striven after using intuition as a guide.

Schelling offers two different views of the way in which spirit differs from nature. In his 1803 essay *Ideas on a Philosophy of Nature as an Introduction to the Study of This Science* he concludes that it is not through any inherent characteristic of nature and spirit, but in the eye that is observing them that the difference is to be found. So long as man views nature as an other outside of himself, nature is viewed as unconscious, but when man views or – more properly – intuits nature and the self as a unity, then nature becomes spirit.<sup>252</sup> So in this 1803 essay, nature itself does not evolve, but the way of looking at nature changes depending on the stage of development of the person viewing it. This view differs slightly from Schelling's first conclusion in his *System of Transcendental Idealism* (1800), which is that not only is nature or the natural to be striven after as a goal, but that nature itself has a degree of consciousness that requires/wishes to engender self-reflection in its creations, something that it will achieve through the assistance of man:

The completed theory of nature would be that whereby the whole of nature was resolved into an intelligence. – The dead and unconscious products of nature are merely abortive attempts that she makes to reflect herself; inanimate nature so-called is actually as such an immature intelligence, so that in her phenomena the still unwitting character of intelligence is already peeping through. – Nature's highest goal, to become wholly an object to herself, is achieved only through the last and highest order of reflection, which is none other than man; or, more generally, it is what we call reason, whereby nature first completely returns into herself, and by which it becomes apparent that nature is identical from the first with what we recognize in ourselves as the intelligent and the conscious. This may be sufficient to show that natural science has a necessary tendency to render nature intelligent; through this very tendency it becomes *nature-philosophy*, which is one of the necessary basic sciences of philosophy.<sup>253</sup>

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<sup>252</sup> See: *Ibid.*, 196, 201, 202.

<sup>253</sup> F.W. Schelling. *System of Transcendental Idealism*. [1800] trans. Peter Heath. (Charlottesville, Virginia: University Press of Virginia, 1978), 6.

The reference to “inanimate nature” actually being “immature intelligence” is a critique of Fichte in that – for Schelling – nature is not inanimate as Fichte claims, but is an early form of intelligence. So Schelling actually takes up again the mantle of Spinozism in that nature, representing objective reality, and the self, representing subjective reality, come together in one moral whole, one consciousness. He then adds Fichte’s spirit into the mix and so gives nature-spirit itself its own conscious-unconscious dichotomy in which nature plays the part of unconsciousness or early consciousness, and spirit that of consciousness. The consciousness present in nature expands as nature moves toward spirit, just as the self expands as it moves toward morality or self-actualization. This symbiotic consciousness made of moral man and spirit then becomes the unity, or God. The 1803 solution is man-centered and focuses on the progression of man himself and his rising understanding. The 1800 solution is God-centered and focuses on the formation of God through active participation and cooperation between nature-spirit and man. In both cases nature is divine as it was for Spinoza and at the same time consistent with Kant’s view of nature from the *Conjectures*.

Schelling divides his two perceptions of nature into: (1) viewing nature with a regard to purpose and being confused by the seeming purposelessness that the understanding or our faculty of reason observes; i.e. nature as outside of ourselves; and (2) intuiting a purpose in nature: i.e. self and nature-spirit as unity. In Schelling’s view of the early stages of moral progression in man, as in the early stages – particularly the second – of the Moral Progression, nature is viewed in opposition to reflective, reasoning man, and so, not surprisingly, nature cannot be made sense of by reason. But when man returns to selfless, natural intuition, and there is no longer a subject (the self) viewing an object (nature); the subject instead becomes as

Schopenhauer would say “a clear mirror” of the object and so subject and object become united under a single guise. Schelling summarizes this notion in his 1803 essay *Ideas on a Philosophy of Nature* as follows:

Man saw himself constrained to seek the ground of things on the one hand in nature itself, and on the other hand in a principle higher than nature; and so very early on he came to think of spirit and nature as one. Here the ideal essence in which man thinks of concept and deed, a plan and its execution as one, first emerged from its holy darkness. Here man was first confronted with a presentiment of his own nature, in which intuition and concept, form and object, the ideal and the real are originally one and the same. Hence the peculiar aura surrounding this problem, an aura that mere reflective philosophy, being concerned only with *separation*, could never unfold, while pure intuition, or rather the creative imagination had long since found a symbolic language that one need only interpret to find that nature speaks the more intelligibly to us, the less we think merely reflectively about it... As long as I am *identical* to nature I understand what a living nature is as well as I understand my own life, I comprehend how general life in nature reveals itself in the most manifold forms, in hierarchical developments, gradually approximating freedom. But as soon as I separate myself from nature, and with myself all of the ideal, I am left with nothing but a dead object, and I cease to comprehend how *life* is possible *outside* myself.<sup>254</sup>

In this view, the understanding is a limited faculty which cannot see nature for its inherent purpose, and only intuition, i.e., the faculty of feeling, is capable of knowing how nature is and its purpose. Overall, despite this difference with Fichte,<sup>255</sup> the process employed by Schelling for the ethical growth of man is nearly identical to Fichte's.

Before outlining Schelling's variations of the Moral Progression, there is an important element central to Schelling's philosophy which is worth considering separately: the importance he gives to art and mythology; an importance centered around the instinctive-intuitional elements at play in the creation of art. Under Schelling, art's place in the ethical path which was found in Schiller is rescued from Fichte's relative apathy. Rather than observing a specific kind of art form that leads

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<sup>254</sup> *Ideas on a Philosophy of Nature*, 196.

<sup>255</sup> Which was the main cause of their separation.

one toward ethical action by emulation, Schelling takes the act of creation of any work of art as a means for explaining human development from a selfish subjective point of view to a selfless objective point of view.<sup>256</sup> He describes the creation of art as a combination of conscious and unconscious urgings resolving themselves upon completion of the work of art into a single pure harmony.

The product we postulate is none other than the product of genius, or, since genius is possible only in the arts, the product of art... Since this contradiction [between conscious and unconscious yearnings] sets in motion the whole man with all his forces, it is undoubtably one which strikes at the ultimate in him, the root of his whole being. It is as if, in the exceptional man (which artists above all are, in the highest sense of the word), that unalterable singularity, on which all existence is founded, had laid aside the veil wherewith it shrouds itself in other [men] and, just as it is directly affected by things, so also works directly upon everything. Thus it can only be the contradiction between conscious and unconscious in the free act which sets the artistic urge in motion; just as, conversely, it can be given to art alone to pacify our endless striving, and likewise to resolve the final and uttermost contradiction within us. Just as aesthetic production proceeds from the feeling of a seemingly irresolvable contradiction, so it ends likewise... in the feeling of an infinite harmony; and that this feeling which accompanies completion is at the same time a deep emotion, is itself enough to show that the artist attributes that total resolution of his conflict which he finds achieved in his work of art, not to himself [alone], but to a bounty freely granted by his own nature, which, however unrelentingly it set him in conflict with himself, is no less gracious in relieving him of the pain of this contradiction. For just as the artist is driven into production involuntarily and even in spite of himself, so likewise is his production endowed with objectivity as if by no help of his own, that is, itself in a purely objective manner. Just as the man of destiny does not execute what he wishes or intends, but rather what he is obliged to execute by an inscrutable fate which governs him, so the artist, however deliberate he may be, seems nonetheless to be governed, in regard to what is truly objective in his creation, by a power which separated him from all other men, and compels him to say or depict things which he does not fully understand himself, and whose meaning is infinite.<sup>257</sup>

The conscious urgings include the sensuous background of forming the artwork or the artist's practiced ability to mimic other sensuous objects in his work – that which “can

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<sup>256</sup> His only requirement as to the type of art-work which fulfills the function he discusses is that it must exhibit an infinite either directly or at least by reflection and not necessarily just preserve merely a momentary sensation or current impression as does the epigram. By adding this exception, Schelling brings the artwork more in line with Schiller's conception of the artwork meant to bring about the aesthetic education. See: *System of Transcendental Idealism*, 225-6.

<sup>257</sup> *System of Transcendental Idealism*, 222-3.

be taught and learnt and achieved through tradition and practice.” The unconscious urging, as Schelling goes on to explain, is the flash of inspiration that seems to come from outside oneself, “it can not be learned, nor attained by practice nor in any other way, but can only be inborn through the free bounty of nature.”<sup>258</sup> Schelling uses the “free bounty of nature” as the source for the unconscious element or something opposed to or outside of consciousness. In this free bounty of nature we find the divine spark of creativity which does not come from the sensuous nature of Fichte, but the spiritual conception of nature of Spinoza as well as that of Kant from his *Conjectures*.

When these two come together they form what Schelling, borrowing from Fichte, calls intellectual intuition, which he later renames aesthetic intuition. When sensuous knowledge of art is internalized, but the act of creation is performed as if by another hand, “involuntarily as if in spite of himself,”<sup>259</sup> the artist arrives at this second instinct: the second nature of Kant and Schiller, Schelling’s aesthetic intuition. The artist begins his work full of contradictions, but completes it free of them. All urgings and subjectivity are silenced at the completion of the work of art, and what remains is an objective moral being.

But it is the effect that the artwork has on the onlooker, according to Schelling, that is particularly striking. The onlooker also experiences the artwork through an aesthetic intuition, elicited by the artwork itself. In Schiller’s aesthetic education it takes a moment of sublimity, i.e., a combination of two contrary ideas worked out by the onlooker through feeling or intuition to create an objective moral being. Schelling employs this same idea. Like Schiller, Schelling differentiates between the beautiful – in which all contradiction has ceased in the object – and the sublime – in which the

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<sup>258</sup> *Ibid.*, 223.

<sup>259</sup> *Ibid.*, 223.

contradiction in the artwork requires an outside consciousness to be reconciled and so to be comprehended by an onlooker. In short, the act, on the part of the onlooker, of working out the contradictions in the sublime work of art, elevates the onlooker. He explains:

For the difference between the beautiful and the sublime work of art consists simply in this, that where beauty is present, the infinite contradiction is eliminated in the object itself; whereas when sublimity is present, the conflict is not reconciled in the object itself, but merely uplifted to a point at which it is involuntarily eliminated in the intuition; and this, then, is much as if it were to be eliminated in the object. It can also be shown very easily that sublimity rests upon the same contradiction as that on which beauty rests. For whenever an object is spoken of as sublime, a magnitude is admitted by an unconscious activity which it is impossible to accept into the conscious one: whereupon the self is thrown into a conflict with itself which can end only in an aesthetic intuition, whereby both activities are brought into unexpected harmony, save only that the intuition, which here lies not in the artist, but in the intuiting subject himself, is a wholly involuntary one, in that the sublime sets all the forces of the mind in motion, in order to resolve a contradiction which threatens our whole intellectual existence.<sup>260</sup>

The act of comprehending the sublime art brings the onlooker the same peace through his aesthetic intuition that the artist experienced at the completion of the work of art. This is familiar to us from Schiller's moral-aesthetic education as well as from Wagner's own writings.

But the parallels with Wagner continue with the fact that the art form which Schelling believed best encompassed the ideal aesthetic-moral experience was mythology: the poetry that gave birth to and nourished philosophy. Schelling viewed mythology as a community's intuited conception of its origin and culture. Although it is created by a particular culture there are elements of it that for Schelling seem to come, like art, from without, so that it combines conscious and unconscious elements like his aesthetic/intellectual intuition. This also gives mythology a degree of

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<sup>260</sup> *Ibid.*, 226.

naturality,<sup>261</sup> having its origins partly in the unconscious, which Schelling has elsewhere associated with objective nature. In the following analogy, mythology is the original, natural science from which all other knowledge sprang, and, as in his concept of nature itself which must be returned to through the intuition, all science will eventually return to mythology.

Philosophy was born and nourished by poetry in the infancy of knowledge, and with it all those sciences it has guided toward perfection; we may thus expect them, on completion, to flow back like so many individual streams into the universal ocean of poetry from which they took their source. Nor is it in general difficult to say what the medium for this return of science to poetry will be; for in mythology such a medium existed, before the occurrence of a breach now seemingly beyond repair.<sup>262</sup>

This original breach between mythology and science came when a culture began to determine itself by its art and its measurable history which eventually included all its deductive knowledge and science. However, Schelling believed that mythology, specifically a new universal mythology for all, would again be used to define a culture, but how this would be done would be left for some future date.

But how a new mythology is itself to arise, which shall be the creation, not of some individual author, but of a new race, personifying, as it were, one single poet – that is a problem whose solution can be looked for only in the future destinies of the world, and in the course of history to come.<sup>263</sup>

Schelling gives us a few hints with regard to this query, which it is difficult to imagine Wagner did not also observe in his early study of Schelling's *Transcendental Philosophy*.<sup>264</sup> Schelling placed great emphasis on the moment in Greek culture at which the works of Homer and Hesiod, in their conscious act of writing down the mythological tradition, were penned. This moment represented what he called the end

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<sup>261</sup> Schelling also calls the mythology, of the Greeks in particular, natural religion

<sup>262</sup> *System of Transcendental Idealism*, 232.

<sup>263</sup> *Ibid.*, 233.

<sup>264</sup> Richard Wagner. *My Life*, 39.

of mythology and the beginning of history and philosophy in Greek culture<sup>265</sup> and separated the age of myth from the age of history. A similar separation, then, would have to take place between the current age and the enlightened age to come, as if the new mythology were the artwork which for Schelling will be able to be used as a doorway to spirit or the Godhead, and the result of that artwork, or the new mythology, would thereby be a society living in the enlightened state of that spirit or Godhead. Such a mythology's purpose would then be to summarize the universal culture, telling its history leading to the present moment, and thus allowing society as a whole to take this work and move forward to the new age. The entire human race will be the artist who in the moment of creative completion of this artwork, the new mythology, will *en masse* experience this sublime moment of creation, and move together to objective morality, allowing the newly enlightened society to unite into the Godhead. This is Schelling's final stage: the unification of all in the single goal of mutual sacrifice into the Godhead through this final, all-encompassing work of art. Though the specifics of such a transformation in Schelling differ from those formulated by the philosophers who preceded him, the underlying notions of mutual sacrifice and unification are present in his predecessors and successors. The relationship of such models to Wagner's conception of the *Ring* is obvious.

Now that the important differences between Schelling and his precursors have been discussed, Schelling's particular paths can be examined. He offers two versions of the Moral Progression: the first in psychological language outlined in the early works (primarily his *System of Transcendental Idealism*), and the second in spiritual-mythological language outlined in his later works written after 1809. We will deal with each separately.

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<sup>265</sup> F. W. Schelling, *Historical-Critical Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology*. [Published posthumously in 1856] trans. Mason Richey and Markus Zisselsberger. (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 2007), 36.

Schelling explains, in his *System of Transcendental Idealism*, that self-consciousness follows a three-staged path toward self-reflection which becomes transformed into aesthetic intuition. The first stage is that of sense perception, the second that of time and causality, and the third of reflection. His predecessors, as we have observed, begin with consciousness itself, and then move to self-consciousness. Schelling is less concerned with mere consciousness, but when he speaks of it, it is in a conception similar to theirs.

The self simply has no existence, prior to that act whereby thinking becomes its own object, and is thus itself nothing other than thinking becoming its object, and hence absolutely nothing apart from the thought... we assuredly distinguish self-consciousness, *qua* act, from merely empirical consciousness; what we commonly term consciousness is something that merely continues along with presentations of objects, and maintains itself in the flux of presentations.<sup>266</sup>

This maintaining of the consciousness “in the flux of presentations” refers to temporary objects in the natural environment as being the basis for the self. As he explains, the self has no existence per se, only through these fleeting presentations. Clearly this outlines the main feature of the first stage in the Moral Progression.

Schelling’s transition into his version of the second stage of the Moral Progression begins with self-awareness. The self still does not view the world through the objects in it, but merely through the subjective self. The self does not yet consider itself one of or one with the objects in nature; it is only an object to itself in that it can think of how the observable objects in the world relate to it.

The self is indeed an object, but only for itself, and is thus not originally in the world of objects; it first becomes an object by making itself into an object, and does not become one for anything external, but always only for itself.<sup>267</sup>

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<sup>266</sup> *System of Transcendental Idealism*, 25.

<sup>267</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

And:

I am not a thing, not an object. I live in my own world, a being existing not for other beings, but for itself. Deed and action alone can be in me, effects alone can proceed from me. There can be no passivity in me, for passivity exists only where there is effect and counter-effect, and these exist only within the connection of things, above which I have raised myself.<sup>268</sup>

With this self-awareness exists the potential to posit existence in objects independent of the self. Schelling describes this self consciousness as a conflict between the natural subjective view of the world, typical of the first stage of the Moral Progression, and a budding objective view of the world, typical of the third stage of the Moral Progression. This objective perspective limits the size and relative importance of the self in the universe of the self when it admits the independent existence of objects. The subjective self becomes smaller, as the world or objective reality becomes larger, as Schelling curtly explains:

Self-consciousness (the self) is a conflict of absolutely opposed activities. The one that originally reaches out into infinity we shall call the real, objective, limitable activity; the other the tendency to intuit oneself in that infinity, is called the ideal, subjective, illimitable activity.<sup>269</sup>

As long as the objective and subjective elements within the self are in conflict, the self progresses or produces. The contrary forces working against each other push the self to produce or, in Fichteian terminology, to strive.

It is a primary opposition, whereby the essence and nature of intelligence are constituted. But now the self originally is a pure and absolute identity, to which it must constantly seek to return; yet the return to this identity is yoked to the original duality, as to a condition never wholly overcome. Now as soon as the condition of producing, namely duality, is given, the self must produce, and is compelled to do so, as surely as it is an original identity. So if there is a continual producing in the self, this is possible only in that the condition of all producing, that original conflict of opposing activities in the self, is re-established ad infinitum.<sup>270</sup>

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<sup>268</sup> *Ideas on a Philosophy of Nature*, 171-2.

<sup>269</sup> *System of Transcendental Idealism*, 49.

<sup>270</sup> *Ibid.*, 113. He concludes this passage saying that the opposing activities only cease through intuition when the self becomes completely objective. This is the same intuition that stills the conflicts

Schelling next discusses the role that time and causality play on a being of this second stage. He explains that once the self begins to produce, or experiences the duality between its objectivity and subjectivity,<sup>271</sup> it is, in a sense, no longer limited by the absolute as it is experiencing both objectivity and subjectivity even if they are not in balance.<sup>272</sup> What does limit the self in this stage is the recognition of corporeality; “[I]t is evident that in the present [second] stage of consciousness the intelligence is absorbed in its organism, which it intuits as wholly identical with itself.”<sup>273</sup> The self is limited by its corporeal body or organism, and its actions. There is a realization that the actions of the self necessarily lead to reactions: i.e., causality; and that the actions of the self are themselves based on previous actions of the self: i.e. time. The limit described here in this second stage is no less than the recognition of mortality, in other words fear, which is the crucial characteristic in the second stage of the Moral Progression, and present here as a crucial part of Schelling’s progression.

The third stage in Schelling’s system, self-reflection, puts an end to the conflict, but not all at once. This stage is divided into several parts. The first is the self-reflection which brings with it the will or “the act of self-determination by which the self rises forth as a self.”<sup>274</sup> This self-reflection still views the world in terms of itself as in the previous stage, so the contrast within the self has not yet settled into objectivity; however the will now has the power to create and to imagine,<sup>275</sup> which is a crucial aspect of the second stage of the Moral Progression. Free, supposedly undetermined action follows from the will and the spark of imagination. The problem

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within the artist, and brings him to the third stage of the Moral Progression as well as Schelling’s own third stage of development.

<sup>271</sup> Not “understands the duality” or “is conscious of the duality”; this would be categorized for Schelling as reflection, which is proper to his third stage.

<sup>272</sup> *System of Transcendental Idealism*, 131.

<sup>273</sup> *Ibid.*, 129.

<sup>274</sup> *Ibid.*, 162.

<sup>275</sup> *Ibid.*, 176.

is that even the will faces an opposition and thus cannot achieve what it wills because of foreign intelligences, or the wills of others. Schelling writes, in speaking of conscious, or free, acts,

[N]ow the intelligence is admittedly confined in its freedom by the objective world... but within this restriction it is again unrestricted so that its activity can, for example, be directed toward any object it pleases; now if we suppose that it begins to act, its activity will have to be directed toward some particular object, in such a way as to leave all other objects free and, as it were, undisturbed: but now there is no seeing how its originally quite indeterminate activity would restrict itself in this fashion unless the direction towards these other objects were somehow made impossible for it, which as far as we have seen hitherto, is possible only through intelligences outside it. It is thus a condition of self-consciousness that I intuit in general an activity of intelligences outside of me... Therefore other intelligences whereby I intuit myself as restricted in my free action, and hence also specific actions of these intelligences, are likewise already posited for me, without the need of any further special influence, on their part, upon myself.<sup>276</sup>

These other intelligences limit the actions and capabilities of the will to achieve its ends. But through the experience of the inability of the self to achieve its ends because of these outside wills the self then is raised to a new level of reflection. The “negation” of the will<sup>277</sup> in this context is the foiling of the will’s desires by outside wills.

It is only through negations of its own activity that the intelligence is exposed, and as it were opened, to alien influence as such... to will at all, I must will something determinate, but this I could never do if I could will everything; hence, by involuntary intuition it must already have been made impossible for me to will everything; but this is inconceivable unless already with my individuality, and hence my self-consciousness, so far as it is a thoroughly determinate one, limiting points have been set to my free activity, and such points can now be, not selfless objects, but only other free activities, that is actions of intelligences outside myself.<sup>278</sup>

This brings us to the second part of reflection: the ability to look at objects and the world as a whole objectively which can only be done when the will realizes that it

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<sup>276</sup> *Ibid.*, 165-6.

<sup>277</sup> Not to be confused with fourth stage “negation of the will.”

<sup>278</sup> *System of Transcendental Idealism*, 166-7.

cannot solely control the fate of its world, but is but another object in a world full of outside independent objects or wills. To this end, the individual abandons his own activity and goals and tries to align himself with the objective will or the will of the common world.

Only by the fact that there are intelligences outside of me, does the world as such become objective to me...The sole objectivity which the world can possess for the individual is the fact of its having been intuited by intelligences outside the self... The world, though it is posited solely through the self, is independent of me, since it resides for me in the intuition of other intelligences; their common world is the archetype, whose agreement with my own presentations is the sole criterion of truth.<sup>279</sup>

This truth is morality, and this stage, the abandonment of personal desires and the taking up of the desires of others or the world, is the third stage in the Moral Progression.

In order to fully enter the third stage the philosopher uses the work of art as a model, particularly the aesthetic intuition which comes from creating the work of art. In this intuition is a relinquishing of subjective desire and reason and a return to nature, while at the same time the work of art represents the singularity, i.e., unification or resolution, of subjectivity and objectivity and as such cannot be known through the faculty of understanding, i.e., cannot be explained through reason, but can only be intuited. Schelling here refers to the unified principle of subjective and objective, represented by the completed work of art, as the absolute singularity

[*absolut Identisches*]:

The whole of philosophy starts, and must start, from a principle which, as the absolute principle, is also at the same time the absolute singularity, the absolute simplicity. An absolute singularity cannot be grasped or communicated through description, not through concepts at all. It can only be intuited. Such an intuition is the organ of all philosophy. But this intuition, which is an intellectual rather than a sensory one, and has as its object neither

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<sup>279</sup> *Ibid.*, 173-4.

the objective nor the subjective, but the absolute singularity, in itself neither subjective nor objective, is itself merely an internal one, which cannot in turn become objective for itself: it can become objective only through a second intuition. This second intuition is the aesthetic... If aesthetic intuition is merely transcendental (intellectual) intuition become objective, it is self-evident that art is at once the only true and eternal organ and document of philosophy, which ever and again continues to speak to us of what philosophy cannot depict in external form, namely the unconscious element in acting and producing, and its original identity with the conscious. Art is paramount to the philosopher precisely because it opens to him, as it were, the holy of holies, where burns in eternal and original unity, as if in a single flame, that which in nature and history is rent asunder, and in life and action, no less than in thought, must forever fly apart. The view of nature, which the philosopher frames artificially, is for art the original and natural one.<sup>280</sup>

What Schelling describes is the faculty of feeling intuiting a work of art, and through that intuiting comprehending the necessary unification of all things embodied in that work of art. To be fulfilled is to experience that state whereby ultimately humanity as a whole joins together in common cause as one artist to create the new work of art which, upon its completion, will unify humanity and nature into the Godhead or spirit. It is through the intuiting of the artwork in Schelling's version of the third stage of the Moral Progression that the model for the fourth stage is made plain.

The principle which is meant to unite humanity is outlined as follows. The individual will is driven to achieve and progress. It still has that duality within it that forces this progression. But if no goal can be achieved that has its basis in the individual will, then it will be driven to adopt the will of the common world, which, as long as it is a common will, has no antinomy and can be achieved. If all wills then adopted this standpoint and the law by which life was lived was "Thou shalt will only what other intelligences are able to will,"<sup>281</sup> which Schelling viewed as a modernized version of Kant's categorical imperative, then this world will would will

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<sup>280</sup> *Ibid.*, 229, (This passage was not published in the original publication of the work, but was found in the author's corrected copy.) and 231. It is worth noting here that Schelling adopts Aristotle's and Lessing's notion of feeling as the faculty which comprehends art as opposed to the understanding or reason, though it is couched in Schelling's own language and ideas, partially lifted from Fichte and Schiller.

<sup>281</sup> *Ibid.*, 188.

a new moral order. In other words, by rejecting the natural inclination of the individual will and adopting the will of the world as a whole, the world as whole will be able to achieve moral living.

All my actions, in fact, proceed, as to their final goal, toward something that can be realized, not by the individual alone, but only by the entire species; at least all my actions ought to proceed towards this. The success of my actions is thus dependent not upon myself, but upon the willing of everyone else, and I can accomplish nothing toward such a goal unless everyone wills that goal.<sup>282</sup>

This ultimately leads to Schelling's ideal, final artwork in which all of humanity is the artist and which, through completion of its task, will push humanity on to the Godhead.

Schelling continues that this is nearly impossible as it has never occurred that everyone has the same will in mind, that all choose to will against their natural inclination and to view the world objectively, and finally, that a state will exist whereby the duality is brought together under one rule and the conflict between objectivity and subjectivity will no longer drive the self to produce. What is needed is a model by which the individual may silence this drive, and that is artistic intuition. Via the experience of this model, it is then possible to view the moral order as an artistic creation driven – intuited – by the individual will and the will of the world as a whole. In this artistic intuition and the eventual coming into being of the moral world order we have the third stage of the Moral Progression – the ability to observe objects per se and view them abstractly – and elements of the final stage as well: the negating of the individual will in favor of a universal will. This act he posits would lead inevitably to a universal world order, the last stage in the progression:

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<sup>282</sup> *Ibid.*, 205.

[The moral world-order] is the communal effect of all intelligences, so far, that is, as they all, directly or indirectly, will nothing else but an order of this very sort... Every individual intelligence can be regarded as a constitutive part of God, or of the moral world-order. Every rational being can say to himself: I too am entrusted with the execution of the law [lawfulness being found only in intuition], and the practice of righteousness within my sphere of influence; I too have assigned to me a portion of the moral government of the world... That order exists only insofar as all others think as I do.<sup>283</sup>

This is the completion of Schelling's first version of the Moral Progression outlined in his early works.

In his later works, such as his *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom and Related Matters* of 1809, and his incomplete *Ages of the World*, he alters his terminology from subject-object to the slightly more Schopenhauerian terminology of "willing." Subjectivity becomes individual will. But aside from the change of vocabulary, his outline of moral/spiritual development remains the same.<sup>284</sup>

The subjective-objective duality became not only a self-will / universal-will dichotomy, but it became a dark principle / light principle dichotomy. The unity from which this duality is derived became God or nature in Spinoza's sense, just as the moral order which the universal will ultimately willed was also this same God. The following is Schelling's Genesis story, which summarizes the separation from and the return to God using his new terminology:

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<sup>283</sup> *Ibid.*, 206.

<sup>284</sup> The relation to Schopenhauer in this case is maintained by the association of individual will with *wollen*, and universal will with *nicht-wollen*. If we view the universal will as something akin to Kantian duty or the similar conceptions of Schiller, Fichte, and others, then what we have in Schelling's case is a removal of the sensuous aspect of willing, to obtain the goals of the individual, in favor of willing to obtain the goals of the universe as a whole, or non-individual willing. Schelling is explicit on this point in a letter to Hegel written in February of 1795 "God is nothing but the absolute self, the self in so far as it has annihilated everything theoretical; God in theoretical philosophy thus equals zero. Personality arises through the unity of consciousness. Yet consciousness is not possible without an object. But for God, i.e., absolute self, there is no object whatsoever: for if there were the absolute object would cease to be absolute. Consequently there is no personal God, and our highest endeavor is aimed at the destruction of our personality." (This is not to say that there is no God for Schelling, merely that there is no personal God. As will become apparent, God is for Schelling the reunification of all beings in nature, at least at this stage in Schelling's development.) This is further complemented by Schopenhauer's notion of the universal as nothing, so non-willing could again, by Schopenhauer's definition refer to universal willing. This may seem to be a mincing of their specific uses of language, but the overall similarity between the dichotomies used by Schopenhauer and Schelling is clear.

The First Principle is the one by which beings are divided from God, or through which they are in the mere ground. But since an original unity occurs between what is in the ground and what is preformed in the understanding, and the process of creation comes to light only through an inner transmutation or transfiguration of the initially dark principle... the principle which is dark according to its nature is the very one which at the same time is transfigured into light, and both are one in every natural being, although only to a certain degree. To the extent that the principle originates in the ground and is dark, it is the creature's self-will; but to the extent that the self-will has not yet been raised to (or does not grasp) perfect unity with the light (as the principle of the understanding), it is mere craving or desire, i.e., blind will. Opposed to this self-will of the creature is the understanding as universal will, which uses the former and subjugates it as a mere instrument. But when through progressive transmutation and the division of all forces the innermost and deepest point of initial darkness is finally transfigured completely into light in one being, then while its will is a particular will insofar as the being is an individual, yet it is one with the original will or the understanding in itself, or as the center of all other particular wills, so that from both a single whole now comes to be. This elevation of the deepest centers into light occurs in no creature visible to us except in man. In man is the whole power of the dark principle, and in him too, the whole force of light. In man are the deepest abyss and the highest heaven both centers. Man's will is the seed – hidden in eternal longing – of the God who as yet is only present in the ground; it is the divine spark of life locked up in the depths which God beheld when he decided to will nature.<sup>285</sup>

This lucid explanation of the circular Abramsian / *Frühromantik* path describes the original dark state of being as one in which self-will reigns over the intellect, which is manifest only in the “mere craving or desire, i.e., blind will,” characteristic of the first stage in the Moral Progression, and the self-will's goal of reunification with the original will of God when the inner darkness becomes “enlightened.”

Until then man will contain both principles – darkness and light – within himself. Now darkness is not automatically associated with evil: it is merely unenlightened by God. But the dark principle that is self-will can become evil by assuming that its own will is the universal will thus making itself the center of the universe, rather than sublimating its own will to the universal will through the process of enlightenment. Such a figure would be akin to the “powerful man” of Rousseau et

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<sup>285</sup> Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom* [1809], 241.

al., who makes his goals the basis of the society as a whole. In this case it is not God who becomes realized, but the inverted God. Schelling offers the following description of this creature and the universe of selfishness, false wants, false existence, and fear which it inhabits, and which precisely make up the second stage of the Moral Progression:

[That being is dark] which indeed, never is, but always wants to be, thus which, like matter in the minds of the ancients, cannot be apprehended as actual (actualized) by the perfect understanding, but only by false imagination, which is sin. Thus it borrows its appearance from true being – since it itself has no being – by means of mirrored representations, as the serpent borrows color from the light; and it strives to bring man to senselessness in which it alone can be accepted and comprehended by him. Hence it is rightly represented not only as an enemy of all creatures (since they persist only through the bond of love) and especially of man, but also as man's tempter, enticing him to false appetites and to the acceptance of non-being into his imagination. There it is supported by evil inclinations of man's own, whose eye, being incapable of fixing his gaze upon the glory of the divine and of truth, constantly looks over to non-being. Thus the beginning of sin consists in man's move from genuine being to non-being, from truth to lying, from light to darkness, in order to become himself the creating ground and to rule over all things with the power of the center within him.<sup>286</sup>

The alternative to evil is of course good, in which the self-will aligns itself with the universal-will. Schelling associates this will, as he has done with the will of the world, with morality. It is a rejection of selfishness in favor of the betterment of the universal, another important feature of the ethical Categorical Imperative. One of the ways in which this is achieved is, as Schopenhauer and others have described, through cleansing pain. It first stems from fear and the inability to achieve anything based on contrary desires:

Anxiety is the governing affect that corresponds to the conflict of directions in Being, since it does not know whether to go in or out. Meanwhile, the orgasm of forces increases more and more and lets the contracting force fear utter cision [*Scheidung*] and complete dissolution.<sup>287</sup>

<sup>286</sup> *Ibid.*, 263-4.

<sup>287</sup> F.W. Schelling. *The Ages of the World: (Fragment) from the Handwritten Remains: Third Version (c. 1815)*. trans. Jason M. Wirth. (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 2000), 101.

This is an act of getting to know the self and its desires, and is the beginning of necessary suffering before the self-will can eventually align itself with the universal will:

Pain is something universal and necessary in all life, the unavoidable transition point to freedom... Suffering is universal, not only with respect to humanity, but also with respect to the creator. It is the path to glory. God leads human nature down no other path than that down which God Himself must pass. Participating in everything blind, dark and suffering of God's nature is necessary in order to elevate God to the highest consciousness. Every single being must get to know his own depths and this is impossible without suffering. All pain comes only from Being. Because all living things must first involve themselves in Being and break out of the darkness to transfiguration, so, too, in its revelation, the divine being must first assume nature and, as such, suffer it, before it can celebrate the triumph of its liberation.<sup>288</sup>

When the illumination is complete the ethical stage has begun in the universal moral will. However, there is still further moral striving to be achieved, namely, the connection between the universal-will and the “ground,” in other words, the consciousness associated with spirit, and that associated with nature, so that together they can bring the entire universe into a single being, God.<sup>289</sup> That force which brings the universal-will and nature together to form God is nothing other than love. For Schelling it was in fact love that both separated these dual principles and was the reason for their unification.

The ground separates itself into the two equally eternal beginnings only in order that the two that could not be simultaneous or one in the ground as such, become one through love, i.e. it separates itself only in order that life and love may be.<sup>290</sup>

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This quote concludes its sexual metaphor with the abandonment of desire in favor of morality – transition from stage two to three. It concludes: “But while the contracting force releases its life and, so to speak, discerns itself as already past, the higher form of its being and the silent purity of spirit rise before it like lightning. But this purity, in contrast to the blindly contracting will, is the essential unity in which freedom, the intellect, and differentiation dwell.” (101-102)

<sup>288</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

<sup>289</sup> *Essence of Human Freedom*, 267.

<sup>290</sup> *Ibid.*, 277-8.

Love creates unity between two separate entities. God, then, is the fusion of all life brought together by love, i.e., all life living for each other according to the principle of light or spirit.

In the end, for Schelling, the purpose of creation is to separate that which can love, or that which can be united into God, from that which cannot. The potential for both good and evil is always present in man, and the final necessary separation of the two occurs in death. That which is evil does not participate in the unity of God, i.e., “the good that was raised from the ground is combined with original good in eternal unity; those born out of darkness into light join the ideal principle as limbs of its body.”<sup>291</sup> In death, evil becomes reduced to non-being:

[A] state in which its activity, or what strives within it to become active, is constantly consumed... [W]hen reduced to non-being, or to the state of potential, it is what it always should be, a basis, subjugated, and as such no longer in contradiction to God’s holiness or love.<sup>292</sup>

So ultimately the last element of the subjective self or sensual element in man is extinguished, while the remaining universal will found in love joins into God. Death is the necessary final step and the final silencing of the self will or selfishness. Striving ends, to be replaced by eternal quietude in God. This notion is consistent with the fourth stage of the Moral Progression.

Although the language and vocabulary are altered between Schelling’s early work, primarily his *System of Transcendental Idealism*, and his later work, the stages of development are identical. Both include a cyclical progression departing from unity in God and returning to unity. Both stress the duality that exists within the self. Both say that consciousness begins from inclination and desire, and then expands through the attainment of fear which leads to an understanding of time, including imagination

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<sup>291</sup> *Ibid.*, 275.

<sup>292</sup> *Ibid.*, 275.

and extended planning for future events. Both find the inclinations of the self in contradiction with either itself or with other wills. Ultimately, both reject the selfishness of subjectivity or the self-will in favor of objectivity or the universal will, leading to a moral state; and Schelling's later work stresses the necessity of death in order to completely to abandon selfishness and the individual will, thus completing all of the stages of the Moral Progression.

## Chapter 8. Georg Friedrich Hegel

With Hegel, the Wagner scholar at last returns to the familiar. In the following outline, discussion of Hegel will be limited to the two works with which Wagner was the most familiar: *Phenomenology of Spirit* and *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*. In the Miller translation of the *Phenomenology* there is a lengthy and thorough Forward written by J. N. Findlay which summarizes the dualities and concepts outlined in the work as a whole. One such concise summary is that which discusses the progress of the self-consciousness to spirit, that progression with which our Moral Progression is concerned. Findlay breaks down the progression into several stages: 1. the hedonistic pre-ethical, 2. “law of the heart,” 3. “empty virtue” against the “way of the world,” 4. objectivity, 5. morality, and finally 6. the ethical life within a community. The summary is as follows:

Hegel begins by discussing the hedonistic approach to the world, the reasonableness which makes everything in the world, including the body and soul of another person, minister to one's own satisfaction. This attitude breaks down in a manner analogous to the seeming fullness of sense-certainty: it condemns the hedonist to an endless, hollow search for new pleasures, which never provide a lasting content for self-consciousness. The hedonistic life therefore dissolves in the romantic life of the heart, the life which espouses grand projects, which in their extravagance measure up to the sweeping universality of self-consciousness, but which inevitably clash with the equally grand life-projects of others. The game of the heart then yields place to the greater game of virtue, of the keeping of oneself pure in quixotic scruple and total indifference to the ‘way of the world.’ This game however, also interferes with the parallel quixoticism of others, and with the sensible non-quixoticism of the ordered social world, which is more truly universal than the cult of personal virtue. The dialectic then swings over from arbitrary subjectivity to the arbitrary objectivity of *Sachlichkeit*. A man identifies himself with a *Sache*, thing or task, which is his own, and which he pursues without regard to external success or approval. Everyone else is similarly supposed to be devoting himself to his own *Sache*. Such disinterested fulfillment of tasks rests, however, on self-deception. Its disinterestedness is always held up for the admiration of others, and is really a form of personal exhibitionism. When this is exposed, disinterestedness shifts to a moralistic

form, setting up absolute prescriptions of various simple sorts (Tell the truth, Help others, etc.). These can, however, never achieve the complete exceptionlessness to which they aspire. Reasonableness then finally assumes the Kantian form of identifying the universal with the formally universalizable or self-consistent. This, Hegel shows, is as vacuous as the universalism of the Stoics or the Sceptics, since any way of life can be rendered formally self-consistent. We therefore move to a universalism which is *substantial* as well as subjective, the universalism of the ethical life of an actual community, whose laws and customs clothe the bare bones of ethical prescription with living flesh, and make the universalizing life genuinely possible. We pass from the merely Reasonable (*Vernunft*) to the higher spiritual stage of Spiritual (*Geist*).<sup>293</sup>

After the initial hedonistic stage – the first stage of the Moral Progression – the remaining phases for Hegel make up his spiral path toward spirit. Each phase includes some incarnation of the dialectical opposition between subjectivity and objectivity. Hegel’s elaborated version of the second stage of the Moral Progression is made up of two separate oppositions: the subjective “law of the heart” with its counterpart the “real world” taking the part of the objective, and the subjective “empty virtue” against the objective “way of the world.” The beginning of the third stage of the Moral Progression is offered in Hegel’s next opposition, “arbitrary objectivity” against “interestedness.” Ultimately, the dialectical opposition is silenced and the process concluded in the real practical ethical community. Though Hegel implies that this is the final stage of the progression in his *Phenomenology of Spirit*, in *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* he follows Schelling’s example by concluding that the ethical community will eventually become Spirit. These make up the end of the third stage and the fourth stage of the Moral Progression.

The first of Hegel’s and the Moral Progression’s stages is pre-ethical hedonism. As Findlay mentions, everything exists to provide the individual with

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<sup>293</sup> G.W.F. Hegel. *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Introduction by J.N. Findlay. trans. A.V. Miller. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), XIX-XX. It should be noted that these are not all of the stages discussed in Hegel’s progression of the self-conscious, concepts including the ‘unhappy consciousness’ and the Master/Slave dialectic have a place in this progression, though Findlay removed them from his summary.

pleasure, and the hedonist is condemned “to an endless, hollow search for new pleasures, which never provide a lasting content for self-consciousness.” Hegel describes the “animal functions” of consciousness at this pre-ethical stage: “instead of being universal, it is the merest particular, we have here only a personality confined to its own self and its own petty actions, a personality brooding over itself, as wretched as it is impoverished.”<sup>294</sup> The self is entirely concerned with its own sense-driven reality. Self-consciousness is yet unknown to it, as are objects outside of itself. Later Hegel explains both the lack of an understanding of future time, and the never-ending series of desires which make up this stage. In speaking of the movement away from selfishness, Hegel explains something of the nature of this early consciousness:

[W]hat is superseded in the movement [toward a moral existence in the ethical substance] are the individual moments which for self consciousness are valid in their isolation. They have the form of an immediate will or natural impulse which obtains its satisfaction, which is of itself the content of a fresh impulse.<sup>295</sup>

Hegel goes on to describe the transition between this pre-ethical phase and his and the Moral Progression’s second stage, the “law of the heart”:

The final moment of its existence [pre-ethical consciousness] is the thought of the loss of itself in necessity or the thought of itself as a being that is absolutely alien to it [necessity]. However, self-consciousness has in itself survived this loss; for this necessity or pure universality is its own essence. This reflection of consciousness into itself, the knowledge that necessity is itself, is a new form of consciousness.<sup>296</sup>

This specifically occurs in the Master-Slave dialectic at the moment when the would-be slave in his fear of death, or “loss of itself in necessity,” takes up the causes of something outside of himself, his master’s will, or “the thought of itself as a being that is absolutely alien to it.” However this objectivity is ultimately short lived, as the

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<sup>294</sup> *Ibid.*, 136.

<sup>295</sup> *Ibid.*, 215.

<sup>296</sup> *Ibid.*, 221.

universality of the “law of the heart” is actually the same self, only now this self is capable of reflection and planning, and believes its own will to represent the universal will – a substitution consistent with the self’s embodiment of evil in Schelling. These are the crucial identifiers for the second stage of the Moral Progression.

Hegel goes on to describe further aspects of the “law of the heart”:

It knows it has the universal of law *immediately* within itself, and because the law is *immediately* present in the being-for-self of consciousness, it is called the *law of the heart*. This form takes *itself* to be, *qua* individuality, essence like the previous form; but the new form is richer because its *being-for-self* has for it the character of necessity or universality. The law, therefore, which is immediately self-consciousness’s own law, or a heart which, however, has within it a law, is the *End* which self-consciousness proceeds to realize.<sup>297</sup>

This selfish, universal “law of the heart” driven self faces the outside world which results in the self’s violent reaction against the order of the world, and its desire to supplant this order with its own (personal) ideal order for all. As the self does not view other selves as being different or having different goals from itself, the self views its will as that which all beings also will, placing the individual will in the universal. The world then becomes shaped through the will of the self living by the “law of the heart.” This enables the “grand plans” Findlay describes at this stage to come to fruition.

This reality [in which the law of the heart is predominant] is, therefore, on the one hand [ruled by] a law by which the particular individuality is oppressed, a violent ordering of the world which contradicts the law of the heart, and, on the other hand, [made up of] a humanity suffering under that ordering, a humanity that does not follow the law of the heart, but is subjected to an alien necessity... This individuality therefore directs its energies to getting rid of this necessity which contradicts the law of the heart, and also the suffering caused by it... What it realizes is itself the law, and its pleasure is therefore at the same time the universal pleasure of all hearts. To it, the two are undivided; its pleasure is what conforms to the law, and the realization of the law of universal humanity procures for it its own particular pleasure. Individuality

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<sup>297</sup> *Ibid.*, 221.

and necessity are one, the law is the law of the heart. Individuality is not as yet dislodged from its seat, and the unity of both has not yet been brought about by the mediating agency of the individuality itself, has not yet been achieved by discipline. The realization of the immediate undisciplined nature passes for a display of excellence and for bringing about the well-being of humanity.<sup>298</sup>

However, problems arise when this law takes the place of the laws of the outside world. Despite the inability of the self, or humanity as a whole, to achieve its aims by these old laws, the new laws eventually turn against the self as well, in that what the self desires is in flux and so any system put in place that follows the desires of any given self will have to be overturned when the desires change. When this happens, this new system put in place by the self becomes the new enemy and must itself be overturned. This is quite aside from the obvious reason for overturning the “law of the heart,” i.e., that it functions as a “law of the heart” only for the individual who comes up with it, that it is a law with its own rules which vary in detail from person to person. If others are forced to live under a “law of the heart” which is not their own and foreign to their interests, and which they did not come up with themselves, this “law of the heart” will be viewed as no better than the pre-ethical laws of the older order, one which must be overthrown in favor of a new “law of the heart.”

The individual then, carries out the law of his heart. This becomes a universal ordinance, and pleasure becomes a reality which absolutely conforms to law. But, in this realization, the law has in fact escaped the individual; it directly becomes merely the relation which was supposed to be got rid of... Consequently, what the individual brings into being through the realization of his law is not his law; on the contrary, since the realization is in principle his own, but actually is for him an alien affair, what he brings about is merely the entanglement of himself in the actual ordinance, an entanglement in it, moreover, not as a superior power which is only alien to him, but one which is hostile. By this act he places himself in, or rather posits himself as, the

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<sup>298</sup> *Ibid.*, 221-2. Last sentence slightly altered from Miller’s translation, “...a display of its excellence and as a productive of the welfare of humanity.”, for clarity. By comparison, the original German runs as follows: “Der Verwirklichung des unmittelbaren *ungezogenen* Wesens gilt für Darstellung einer Vortrefflichkeit und für Hervorbringung des Wohls der Menschheit.”

universal element of existent reality, and his act is supposed to have, even according to his own interpretation, the value of a universal ordinance... The individual has, by the principle of his action, determined the more precise way in which the actual universality, to which he has attached himself, turns against him. Consequently others do not find in this content the fulfillment of the law of their hearts, but rather, that of someone else; and, precisely in accordance with the universal law that each shall find in what is law his own heart, they turn against the reality he set up, just as he turned against theirs. Thus, just as the individual at first finds only the rigid law, now he finds the hearts of men themselves, opposed to his excellent intentions and detestable.<sup>299</sup>

When the self realizes that there is a contradiction both between its own wants and its wants and the wants of others, rather than recognizing itself as the problem, it places the problem with the system of laws established by the heart. The self objectifies the new system, places it outside of itself, and explains that these laws are a perversion and must be fought against. However, in essence, the self is really fighting its own desires, which is a pattern which shall continue.

[Consciousness in the law of the heart] speaks of the universal order as a perversion of the law of the heart and of its happiness, a perversion invented by fanatical priests, gluttonous despots and their minions, who compensate themselves for their own degradation by degrading and oppressing others, a perversion which has led to the nameless misery of deluded humanity. In this, its derangement, consciousness declares individuality to be the source of this derangement and perversion, but one that is alien and accidental. It is the heart or the individuality of consciousness that would be immediately universal, that is itself the source of this derangement and perversion and the outcome of its action is merely that its consciousness becomes aware of this contradiction... This, its Notion, becomes by its own action its object; thus the heart learns rather that its self is not real, and that its reality is an unreality. It is therefore not an accidental alien individuality, but just this particular heart, which in all its aspects is, in its own self, perverted and perverting.<sup>300</sup>

Over the course of the battle the self eventually realizes that it, its own subjective view, is its own enemy. Hegel refers to this state of being as the “unhappy consciousness” in which the self is in recognition of its own contrasting desires: a

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<sup>299</sup> *Ibid.*, 223-4.

<sup>300</sup> *Ibid.*, 225-6.

“dual-natured contradictory being”<sup>301</sup> In the realization of this fact, and the failure of the “law of the heart” – or what it has become, the law by which all obey only their own desires, the chaotic “way of the world” – the self views individuality as the enemy and so changes its way of living from the selfish “law of the heart” to the hypothetical selfless law of virtue. Hegel describes the shift from the “law of the heart” to virtue as follows:

The established laws are defended against the law of an individual, because they are not an unconscious, empty, and dead necessity, but a spiritual universality and Substance, in which those in whom this spiritual substance has its actuality live as individuals, and are conscious of themselves; so that even when they complain about this ordinance as if it went against their own inner law, and maintain against it the opinions of the heart, they cling to it with their hearts, as being their essential being; and, if this ordinance is taken from them, or they place themselves outside it, they lose everything. Since it is precisely in this that the reality and the power of public order consist, the latter thus appears as the self-identical essence alive in everyone, and the individuality appears as its form. But this ordinance is equally a perversion... This shape of consciousness which, in the law, is aware of itself, which knows itself in what is intrinsically true and good, not as an individuality to be perverted and the source of perversion, and therefore knows it must sacrifice the individuality of consciousness, this shape of consciousness is virtue.<sup>302</sup>

Now the new dichotomy becomes the self-less law of virtue and the selfish “way of the world.” Virtue places itself as a hypothetical opposite to the existent, selfish “way of the world.” So virtue is defined as nothing per se, only as the negation of the “way of the world”: the sacrifice of individuality. But since virtue only exists as the negation of something else, even the good which it intends to bring about by the conquering of the previous system can only be known in that it is not the “way of the world”: only through its rejection of subjectivism. So virtue itself then is doomed to failure as it cannot be known in and of itself and is solely defined by its other.

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<sup>301</sup> *Ibid.*, 125.

<sup>302</sup> *Ibid.*, 227-8.

For the virtuous consciousness law is the essential moment, and individuality the one to be nullified, and therefore both in its own consciousness as well as in the ‘way of the world’... True discipline requires nothing less than the sacrifice of the entire personality as proof that individual peculiarities are in fact no longer insisted on. In this individual sacrifice, the individuality in the ‘way of the world’ is at the same time eradicated... It is from virtue now that the universal is to receive its true reality by nullifying individuality, the principle of the perversion. Virtue’s purpose is, by so doing, to reverse again the perverted ‘way of the world’ and to make manifest its true essence. This true essence is at first only implicit in the ‘way of the world’, only its in-itself [an sich]; it is not yet actual, and consequently virtue only believes it. This faith virtue proceeds to raise to sight, without, however, enjoying the fruits of its labor of sacrifice. For in so far as it is an individuality, it is the activity of the conflict it wages with ‘the way of the world’; but its aim and true nature is to conquer the reality of the ‘way of the world’. The bringing into existence of the good thus effected is thus the cessation of its activity or of the consciousness of individuality.<sup>303</sup>

Ultimately, being cannot take place in a state of non-being, and the removal of individuality and experience cannot be a state of being in and of itself. This conception of virtue cannot exist in a real world, but is only idealized. The “way of the world” defeats this sense of virtue in that it has actuality and is based on something *per se*. The “way of world” is now considered in a better light as it at least represents actuality, and individuality. As it is through the growth of the individual and the progression of the duality between subject and object that spirit is achieved, to reject the individual entirely will not bring about this change, thus the empty sense of virtue must be rejected. Bringing idealized good into the world through the negation of being and individuality is impossible.<sup>304</sup>

Virtue is conquered by the ‘way of the world’ because its purpose is, in fact, the abstract [removal of individuality], the unreal essence, and because its

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<sup>303</sup> *Ibid.*, 229-30.

<sup>304</sup> It ought to be noted here that though this “virtue” may seem like a rejection of Hegel’s predecessors’ views on the rejection of the self in favor of objectivity, it is not. Hegel’s “virtue” is very specifically a rejection of individuality with nothing to put in its place, whereas duty and dignity and the like entail either a quieting of the individual will in favor of the universal will, or an aligning of the individual will with the universal will. In both cases the cause of the universal will is taken up, as a positive existing entity, something real, rather than a negation of a real world order. As will be shown, this is consistent with Hegel’s view of the ethical substance and spirit, whereas in “virtue” the positive taking up of the cause of the universal will is absent.

action as regards reality rests on distinctions which are purely nominal. It wanted to consist in bringing the good into actual existence by the sacrifice of individuality. The good was supposed to be that which has an *implicit* being, and to be opposed to what is; but the in-itself, taken in its real and true sense, is rather *being itself*. The *in-itself* is, in the first instance, the *abstraction of essence* in contrast to reality; but an abstraction is precisely what is not true, but exists only *for consciousness*, which means, however, that it is itself what is called *real*; for the real is that which is essentially *for an other*, or is *being*. The consciousness of virtue rests on this distinction between the *in-itself* and *being*, a distinction which has no truth. The 'way of the world' was supposed to be the perversion of the good because it had individuality for its principle; only, individuality is the principle of the *real* world; for it is precisely individuality that is consciousness, whereby what exists *in itself* exists equally *for an other*, it does pervert the unchangeable, but it perverts it in fact from the *nothing of abstraction into the being of reality*. Thus the 'way of the world' triumphs over what, in opposition to it, constitutes virtue, triumphs over that which is the essenceless abstraction of essence.<sup>305</sup>

In light of this failure, individuality itself and the actions taken by it are re-examined. During the re-examination the self attempts to define the ideal as something positive and real rather than merely conceptually as the opposite of something real; and so enters the third stage of the Moral Progression. Hegel describes this almost as a return to nature in that the self no longer desires anything in actions but only wishes unification between his will and that of the world or universality.

[I]n his actual world he [the self] can find nothing else but its unity with itself, or only the certainty of himself in the truth of that world... This is the Notion which consciousness forms of itself as an absolute interfusion of individuality and being... In his work he has placed himself altogether in the element of universality, in the indefinite expanse of being [*bestimmtheitslosen Raum des Seins*].<sup>306</sup>

The self makes two failed attempts at living by a real positive ideal before it succeeds with the ethical substance. The first type of positive ideal the self imagines is disinterestedness. The self attempts to abandon long term planning and wish fulfillment by defining itself by its work [Werke] of the moment. Each moment is

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<sup>305</sup> *Ibid.*, 233-4.

<sup>306</sup> *Ibid.*, 242.

considered separately for this objective being; as a result, no attachment can be made to any particular thing or event, as attachment is contingent upon causality, which is ignored when each moment is observed or appreciated in isolation. Hegel refers to this as the “heart of the matter” [*die Sache selbst*].

Consciousness is reflected out of its perishable work into itself, and preserves its Notion and its certainty as what objectively exists and endures in face of the experience and of the contingency of action. It experiences in point of fact its Notion, in which reality is only a moment... it experiences it as a vanishing moment, and reality therefore has for consciousness only the value of being as such, whose universality is one with action. This unity is the true work, it is the very heart of the matter [*die Sache selbst*] ... the interfusion of reality and individuality.<sup>307</sup>

However, the other side of the dichotomy, i.e., subjective interest, becomes involved in the actions of others by passing judgment, with the self as a standard for good actions on their actions. In this act of passing judgment, the self re-emerges saying in essence, this action reminds me of myself, so I look on it favorably or vice versa. As such the pretense of objectivity is lost.

In showing an interest in the work, it is enjoying its own self; and the work which it censures is equally welcome to it for just this enjoyment of its own action which its censure provides. Those, however, who think or pretend to think that they have been deceived by this interference, wanted really themselves to practice the same kind of deceit. They pretend that their action and efforts are something for themselves alone in which they have only themselves and their own essential nature in mind. However, in doing something, and thus bringing themselves out into the light of day, they directly contradict by their deed their pretence of wanting to exclude the glare of publicity and participation by all and sundry.<sup>308</sup>

When disinterestedness falls apart as a real positive ideal, Hegel moves next to the ideal life: one which is led by blanket, seemingly obvious moral and ethical statements. The self attempts to discover specific rigid moral and ethical laws by which all people should live that would lead to an ethical community. This leads to

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<sup>307</sup> *Ibid.*, 246.

<sup>308</sup> *Ibid.*, 250-1.

its own problems as no community exists in a vacuum, so no ideal laws will be able to be applied for all civilizations, which are each unique. Hegel brings up two such possible laws to prove this point: the first relating to truth, the second to love. About the first possibility Hegel says,

‘Everyone ought to speak the truth.’ In this duty as expressed unconditionally, the condition will at once be admitted: if he knows the truth... For speaking the truth is made contingent on whether I can know it, and can convince myself of it: and the proposition says nothing more than that a confused muddle of truth and falsehood ought to be spoken just as anyone happens to know, mean, and understand it.<sup>309</sup>

Again, truth as an ideal is good, but when it is required of real people despite their knowledge and abilities, it can lead to more harm than good. So truth cannot be a universal law. Hegel then describes the Christian law “love thy neighbor as thyself” as essential to the ideal ethical community, but only if the state itself holds it as law. He explains that if it is held only in interactions between individuals, the law, though kind, will not lead to anything of lasting effect, and may do more harm than good.

Hegel continues:

Another celebrated commandment is: ‘Love thy neighbor as thyself’. It is directed to the individual in his relationship with other individuals and asserts the commandment as a relationship between two individuals, or as a relationship of feeling. Active love - for love that does not act has no existence and is therefore hardly intended here - aims at removing an evil from someone and being good to him. For this purpose I have to distinguish what is bad for him, what is the appropriate good to counter this evil, and what in general is good for him; i.e. I must love him intelligently. Unintelligent love will perhaps do him more harm than hatred. Intelligent substantial beneficence is, however, in its richest and most important form the intelligent universal action of the state - an action compared with which the action of a single individual, as an individual, is so insignificant that it is hardly worth talking about. The action of the state is moreover of so great a power that, if the action of the individual were to oppose it, and either were intended to be a downright, explicitly criminal act, or the individual out of love for someone else wanted to cheat the universal out of its right, and its share in the action, such an action would be altogether useless and inevitably

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<sup>309</sup> *Ibid.*, 254.

frustrated. The only significance left for beneficence, which is a sentiment, is that of an action which is quite single and isolated, of help in a situation of need, which is as contingent as it is transitory.<sup>310</sup>

The final stage is the inclusion of the self into the ethical substance or community. Hegel uses the notion of love previously described as the basis for a real community, and the individuals in it now exist as participating citizens. Their wills are all unified in the universal will of the state or “individuality of the community,” and are freed from sensuous individuality. They have a place in the ethical substance and in the spirit as citizens, but not as individuals, or, as Hegel described to his friend Niethammer in the language of Schelling: “[S]pirit is unity with itself in otherness.”<sup>311</sup>

Just as it was for his predecessors, the stepping stone for this unity between individuality and citizenship is found in the will of the family, which Hegel describes as the original “*natural* ethical community.”<sup>312</sup> Hegel explains in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* that the family mutually surrender their individual personalities to each other, for the betterment of the family; particularly in regard to the betterment and education of the children. He then explains how this relationship should be used as a model for an ethical state.

The Spirit of the Family - the Penates [gods of the storeroom/house] – form one substantial being, as much as the Spirit of a People in the State; and morality in both cases consists in a feeling, a consciousness, and a will, not limited to individual personality and interest, but embracing the common interests of the members generally. But this unity is in the case of the Family essentially one of *feeling*; not advancing beyond the limits of the merely *natural*. The piety of the Family relation should be respected in the highest degree by the State; by its means the State obtains as its members individuals who are already moral (for as mere *persons* they are not) and who in uniting

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<sup>310</sup> *Ibid.*, 255.

<sup>311</sup> Letter to Friedrich Immanuel Niethammer of October 23, 1812 in *Hegel: The Letters*. trans. Clark Butler and Christiane Seiler. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 282. Hegel continues this passage to say that Spirit was God. “As a rule when one uses the words “soul”, “spirit”, or “God” one is speaking all the same, only of stones and coals.” This is a statement he never uttered in his formal writings, except in the most couched terms. How much of this discussion of God was meant to be simplification of his works for his friend is unclear. As such, this is a step which I will not include in my overall discussion of Hegel’s path, but I mention it here as an aside.

<sup>312</sup> *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 268.

to form a state bring with them the sound basis of the political edifice - the capacity of feeling one with a Whole.<sup>313</sup>

When this natural ethical state, family, is made the basis for the ethical state, the mutual self-sacrifice to the state will make every member of the state not a tool to be used, but an embodiment of the state as a whole. The unification of all, not just a single individual, will exist in every soul. The self would then finally be in full realization of its long history and would accept itself for its faults, while simultaneously willing only for the community.

Because we suffer we acknowledge that we have erred. With this acknowledgment there is no longer any conflict between ethical purpose and actuality; it signifies the return to an ethical frame of mind, which knows that nothing counts but right. But the doer thereby surrenders his own character and the reality of his self, and has been ruined. His being consists in his belonging to the ethical law, as his substance...The youth comes away from the unconscious spirit of the family, and becomes the individuality of the community.<sup>314</sup>

The highest example of this giving of oneself or will over to the community is achieved by the individual through death.

The deed [which is the act of embracing all of existence in the self] no longer concerns the living but the dead, the individual who, after a long succession of separate disconnected experiences, concentrates himself into a single completed shape, and has raised himself out of the unrest of the accidents of life into the calm of simple universality. But because it is only as a citizen that he is actual and substantial, the individual, so far as he is not a citizen but belongs to the family, is only an unreal impotent shadow. [real existence in the ethical state comes only from being a citizen]... The universality which the individual as such attains is *pure being; death*; it is a state which has been reached *immediately*, in the *course of nature*, not the result of an action *consciously done*...What nature did in the individual is that aspect in which his development into a universal is exhibited as the movement of an [immediate] existent [i.e. death]. This movement falls, it is true, within the ethical community, and has this for its end; death is the fulfillment and the supreme 'work' which the individual as such undertakes on its behalf.<sup>315</sup>

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<sup>313</sup> G.W.F. Hegel. *The Philosophy of History*. trans. J. Sibree (Amherst: Prometheus Books, 1991), 42.

<sup>314</sup> *Phenomenology of Spirit*. 284-5.

<sup>315</sup> *Ibid.*, 269-70.

Hegel goes into detail in his description of the coming-to-being of the first society taking part in spirit: the community of Christ's followers after the death of Christ. The act of sacrifice for society, which Christ's final action exemplified, became their model for the spiritual society to come or "Kingdom of God." Through the death of Christ the society as a whole became reborn in the image of mutual sacrifice to spirit, where every individual would follow that example for the benefit of spirit and the ideal ethical community.

We may say that nowhere are to be found such revolutionary utterances as in the Gospels; for everything that had been respected is treated as a matter of indifference – as worthy of no regard... Its [the ethical community of Christ's followers] first realization was the formation by the friends of Christ, of a Society – a Church... only after the death of Christ could the Spirit come upon his friends; only then were they able to conceive the true idea of God, viz. that in Christ man is redeemed and reconciled: for in him the idea of eternal truth is recognized, the essence of man acknowledged to be Spirit; and the fact proclaimed that only by stripping himself of his finiteness and surrendering himself to pure self-consciousness, does he attain the truth. Christ – man as man – in whom the unity of God and man has appeared, has in his death, and his history generally, himself presented the eternal history of Spirit – a history which every man has to accomplish himself [!], in order to exist as Spirit, or to become a child of God, a citizen of his kingdom. The followers of Christ, who live by this principle, with the spiritual life as their aim, form the Church, which is the Kingdom of God.<sup>316</sup>

It is not merely the death of the individual that can lead to his inclusion or the betterment of the ethical society. Hegel's conception of death is as a positive force for change; in fact, the betterment for society is only possible via death. He cites the myth of the phoenix and compares this myth to the ever improving spirit whose substance is the ethical state, explaining that the ethical state itself is driven higher and higher to a purer and purer form, and this can only be achieved by the death of the previous form.

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<sup>316</sup> *Philosophy of History*, 328.

[C]hange while it imports dissolution, involves at the same time the rise of a *new life* - that while death is the issue of life, life is also the issue of death. This is a grand conception; one which the oriental thinkers attained, and which is perhaps highest in their metaphysics. In the idea of *Metempsychosis* we find it evolved in its relation to individual existence; but [this idea is more well-known as] a myth of the *Phoenix* as a type of the Life of *Nature*; eternally preparing for itself its funeral pile, and consuming itself upon it; but so that from its ashes is produced the new, renovated, fresh life. Spirit – consuming the envelope of its existence – does not merely pass into another envelope, nor rise rejuvenescent from the ashes of its previous form; it comes forth exalted, glorified, a purer spirit. It certainly makes war upon itself – consuming its own existence; but in this very destruction it works up that existence into a new form, and each successive phase becomes in its turn a material [one], working on which it exalts itself to a new grade... As involved with the conditions of mere nature – internal and external – it will indeed meet in these not only opposition and hindrance, but will often see its endeavors thereby fail; often sink under the complications in which it is entangled either by Nature or by itself. But in such case it perishes in fulfilling its own destiny and proper function, and even thus exhibits the spectacle of self-demonstration as spiritual activity.<sup>317</sup>

It is in this sense that societies in the realm of spirit improve themselves and recreate themselves anew. The world ends when a new spirit takes over a society, sometimes called a “national spirit,”<sup>318</sup> and then is reborn from its own ashes better than it was before. Hegel describes ethical virtue, the notion of sacrifice and ultimately death, which instead of being a negation of something real, is itself something real in its voluntary self-renunciation to the universal will or Spirit. This being has attained complete consciousness of itself and the state into which it is sacrificing itself, and in its act of sacrifice it improves the state. So what seems like repose in the individual having attained the balance of his inner dualities is in fact another form of progression, but now on the spiritual level, in respect of society as a whole.

The noble consciousness thus finds itself, in the judgment, confronting the state power in such a way that the latter is, indeed, not yet a self, but only the universal substance; it is however, conscious of being the essence of that substance, its end and absolute content. Being so positively related to it, it adopts a negative attitude to its own ends, to its particular content and

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<sup>317</sup> *Philosophy of History*. 72-3.

<sup>318</sup> See: *Philosophy of History*, 75-77.

existence, and lets them vanish. This consciousness is the heroism of service, the virtue which sacrifices the single individual to the universal, thereby bringing this into existence - the person, one who voluntarily renounces possessions and enjoyment and acts and is effective in the interests of the ruling power...The sacrifice of existence which happens in the service of the state is indeed complete when it has gone as far as death.<sup>319</sup>

In these actions the individual follows the example that Hegel believes Christ set in order to better the spiritual society as a whole.

The final stage of spirit is the “Spirit which recognizes itself as Spirit.”<sup>320</sup> It can look at all of its previous stages of being and observe the path which made it into a “self-comprehending totality”; a “universal Spirit.”<sup>321</sup> It is this spirit which is in actuality the World-Soul in recognition of itself, or in more religious language, the plan of God; and it could be argued that it is at this point alone that striving ceases and the self achieves a final pure repose: an absolute knowing of itself.

Hegel’s elaborated version of the Moral Progression is clear. The self begins in natural instinctive living – stage 1. Then, through fear of death, the self moves in the so called “law of the heart” which is characterized by the same selfishness as the previous stage, except that now the self can make long-term plans to attain its goals – stage 2. When the world created by this law devolves into contrary desires, both in the case of the law and the faulty virtue which tries to remove the law, the self is brought to a stage of disinclined objectivity or another version of natural living – stage 3. This, in turn, is replaced by moral living, and the ethical substance in which the individuality is silenced for the benefit of the state or, ultimately, Spirit – stage 4. The highest example of this is the sacrifice of the individual for the benefit of the whole [Spirit, etc...] as seen in Christ. This drive will move the ethical spiritual society ever closer to the absolute. Death is not viewed as an end, but as a means for

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<sup>319</sup> *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 306-7.

<sup>320</sup> *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 493; *Philosophy of History*, 78.

<sup>321</sup> *Philosophy of History*, 78.

achieving something greater, a principle of positive change, for the ethical spiritual society. Although Schopenhauer and Hegel believed they held diametrically opposing viewpoints, in terms of the path of the individual, they essentially could have been working together.

## Chapter 9. Goethe's *Faust*

The impact of *Faust* on German culture and literature cannot be overestimated. Since the publication of *Faust. Ein Fragment* in 1790, philosophers and literary analysts have attempted to classify Faust's progression using their own terminology. Schelling uses *Faust* as an exemplification of his system of constant progress:

The spirit of the entire history of the world will find itself represented here in this tragedy, should it ever be completed; the latter will prove a true image of the life of humanity itself, effectively embracing the past, the present and the future. Mankind has been idealized in the figure of Faust; he is the very representative of humanity.<sup>322</sup>

For Hegel, Faust's position with Mephistopheles represents the initial state of being from which humanity ought to progress. In the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel adapts *Faust* part I in the following stanza:

Es verachtet Verstand und Wissenschaft des Menschen allerhöchste Gaben es hat dem Teufel sich ergeben und muß zu Grunde geh'n.	It despises intellect and science; The supreme gifts of man; It has given itself to the devil And must perish.
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And then he continues:

It plunges therefore into life and indulges to the full the pure individuality in which it appears. It does not so much make its own happiness as straight away take it and enjoy it. The shadowy existence of science, laws and principles, which alone stand between it and its own reality, vanishes like a lifeless mist which cannot compare to the certainty of its own reality. It takes hold of life much as a ripe fruit is plucked, which readily offers itself to the hand that takes it.<sup>323</sup>

The moral drawn by Schopenhauer from the sacrifice of Gretchen in the first part of *Faust* has already been made clear.

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<sup>322</sup> This passage from Schelling's *Lectures on Art* in: Schelling, *Sämtliche Werke*. 14 vols. (Stuttgart: Augsburg, 1856-1861):V, 446, was translated in: Rüdiger Bubner, *The Innovations of Idealism*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 256-7.

<sup>323</sup> *Phenomenology of Spirit*. 218.

Though many scholars and critics have tried to use *Faust* for their own ends for their own agendas, equally many, counting Goethe himself among their number, have tried to show that *Faust* cannot be understood through the guise of any one philosophy. Once asked to cut through the foreign analyses and reveal the fundamental concept behind the work, he replied:

The whole splendour of the poet's task would be destroyed by revealing any such thing. For the poet should not attempt to explain himself or provide some careful analysis of his own compositions in terms of everyday prose. He would cease to be a poet if he did so. The poet brings his creation into the world; it is the task of the reader, the aesthetic theorist, the critic, to investigate what he intended with these creations.<sup>324</sup>

It was left to later generations to relate the second part of *Faust* to philosophical writings. By far the most popular comparison was that made between the progression of Faust and that of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Ernst Bloch tried to do this by viewing both the dichotomy between Faust and Mephistopheles and that between the two souls within Faust's breast in the scene "Before the City Gate" (ll. 1112-7) as the moving forces behind Faust's progression. But this attempt was also rejected.

There is no doubt whatsoever that Goethe denied his Faust any gradual liberation from earthly entanglements or any ascent to the absolute through the exercise of his own powers. And this effectively removes any real basis for a serious comparison between Faust's path through life and the movement that animates Hegel's *Phenomenology*.<sup>325</sup>

Thomas Mann, in his essay "Das Ewig-Weibliche," called upon elements of Schiller's and Schelling's characterization of art as a path to the spirit or the absolute to explain the final lines of *Faust*. For Mann, the stillness found in the "Eternal Feminine" is that which is achieved by art. More recently William Brown tried to do the same with

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<sup>324</sup> *The Innovations of Idealism*, 257.

<sup>325</sup> *Ibid.*, 262.

the Schopenhauerian system, noting that Faust cannot be satisfied by the fulfilling of desires but is in fact thereby brought to another new desire, and that reality is an illusion, epitomized in *Faust I* by Faust's false new appearance which Mephistopheles gives him upon his looking into the mirror in the scene "Witches Kitchen," as well as Faust's illusion that Gretchen is Helen, and in *Faust II* by the system of paper money that replaces gold, and the appearance of Helen and Faust's consequent marriage and child with her in Act III. Only through the peeling away of the illusion is the truth made plain: i.e. the realization that the world of the sensuous is a mere shadow to the world of the spirit, the goal.<sup>326</sup> These interpretations are convincing, not because Faust is particularly Schillerian, Schellingian, or Schopenhauerian, but because those elements are common to the work of most philosophers from this period.

Our discussion will be limited to a few moments in *Faust* of import specifically for Faust's moral progression to the exclusion of the tragedy of the Faust-Gretchen love story, as this does not involve a progression for Faust, who is rather led into it and away from it by his constant companion Mephistopheles. The moments depicting changes in Faust's moral progression are few in number as throughout most of *Faust* the actual growth of Faust is nothing like Hegel's conception of the soul; Faust lives almost entirely in sensuous individuality.

Because of his deal with Mephistopheles, the only way that Faust will ever die is if he grows content enough to ask a particular moment to linger.

Werd ich zum Augenblicke sagen:  
Verweile doch! Du bist so schön!  
Dann magst du mich in Fesseln schlagen,  
Dann will ich gern zugrunde gehn!  
Dann mag die Totenglocke schallen,  
Dann bist du deines Dienstes frei,

If to the moment I should say:  
Abide, you are so fair –  
Put me in fetters on that day,  
I wish to perish then, I swear.  
Then let the death bell ever toll,  
Your service done, you shall be free,

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<sup>326</sup> William Brown. "Schopenhauer and Faust II" *Postscript: Papers of the Philosophical Association of the Carolinas*. XIV (1997), 18, 21.

Die Uhr mag stehn, der Zeiger fallen,  
Es sei die Zeit für mich vorbei!  
(*Faust I*: ll. 1699-1706)

The clock may stop, the hand may fall,  
As time comes to an end for me.<sup>327</sup>  
(Kaufmann, 185)

So barring such a euphoric feeling, Faust will be immortal. The problem with philosophically analyzing Faust's character lies in this: if a fear of death is the only way consciousness can move forward, as we have seen in the system of every philosopher discussed, someone with no fear can never grow beyond basic sensuousness. Another problem is the state of consciousness of Faust at the beginning of *Faust I* particularly the sentiment in "Beyond the City Gates," in which he explains that his soul is divided in two parts. The recognition or consciousness of this duality is something more common in the later stages of consciousness. Hegel described it as the "unhappy consciousness" attained after the realization of the flawed "law of the heart". For Schiller this is the key realization before actions of grace can be undertaken. About this duality, William Brown explains that it stems from an aesthetically free consciousness:

Through this aesthetic anticipation he has freed himself from the bonds of corporeal existence, and he steps beyond the illusions of the phenomenal world: space, time, and individuality; he rejoins the deeper level of reality hinted at throughout *Faust*, whether in the trappings of the Christian mythos or the mysteries of the Mothers, thanks to his ability to overcome himself aesthetically.<sup>328</sup>

It is this same Faust who, it is revealed in the same scene, helped the poor while a young man for no selfish gain. He took his needs as lesser than those of his society.

The old peasant explains to the audience:

Fürwahr, es ist sehr wohl getan,  
Daß Ihr am frohen Tag erscheint;  
Habt Ihr es vormals doch mit uns

Indeed, it is most kind of you  
That you appear this happy day;  
When evil days came in the past,

<sup>327</sup> The translations from *Faust* will be taken from Walter Kaufmann's 1961 translation: *Goethe's Faust: The original German and a New Translation and Introduction by Walter Kaufmann*. (New York: Anchor Books, 1961)

<sup>328</sup> "Schopenhauer and Faust II," 21.

An bösen Tagen gut gemeint.  
 Gar mancher steht lebendig hier,  
 Den Euer Vater noch zuletzt  
 Der heißen Fieberwut entriß,  
 Als er der Seuche Ziel gesetzt.  
 Auch damals Ihr, ein junger Mann,  
 Ihr gingt in jedes Krankenhaus,  
 Gar manche Leiche trug man fort,  
 Ihr aber kamt gesund heraus,  
 Bestandet manche harte Proben;  
 Dem Helfer half der Helfer droben.  
 (*Faust I: ll. 993-1006*)

You always helped in every way.  
 And many stand here, still alive,  
 Whom your good father toiled to wrest  
 From the hot fever's burning rage  
 When he prevailed over the pest.  
 And you, a young man at that time,  
 Made to the sick your daily round.  
 While many corpses were brought out,  
 You always emerged safe and sound,  
 And took these trials in your stride:  
 The Helper helped the helper here.  
 (*Kaufmann, 137*)

And after this sentiment is expressed, Faust shows that he wished he could do more, by lamenting the inability of his father to come up with what Faust viewed as proper medicine. Faust viewed his father as a tinkerer in potions, and so decried to Wagner his inability to save more people and the frustration that comes with being praised for something he does not feel he deserved.<sup>329</sup> This shows not only consciousness of a dual nature within him, but traces of being within an “ethical community.”

Faust also portrays his ability to observe and react to objects per se without relation to himself in the first scene with Mephistopheles, “Study.” Faust catches Mephistopheles and questions him; he asks for his name in several different ways in order to decipher his characteristics. At first Mephistopheles claims to be a “part of that force which would do evil evermore and yet creates good.”<sup>330</sup> Then upon further questioning he describes himself as the “spirit who negates. And rightly so, for all that comes to be deserves to perish wretchedly.”<sup>331</sup> But Faust catches him in his inconsistency, saying: “You call yourself a part, yet whole you make your debut.”<sup>332</sup> Mephistopheles cannot exist as a part of something and also represent the whole of something. Faust’s dialogue is almost Socratic in this way: by asking questions, he allows Mephistopheles to contradict himself. But in order to be Socratic Faust must

<sup>329</sup> *Faust I: ll. 1022-1055*

<sup>330</sup> *Faust I: ll. 1336.*

<sup>331</sup> *Faust I: ll. 1138-40*

<sup>332</sup> *Faust I: ll. 1345*

be able to be a clear mirror for Mephistopheles's words and not view Mephistopheles through the prism of the self. He must be able to look on him *per se*. Humbled, Mephistopheles offers this description:

Bescheidne Wahrheit sprech ich dir.  
 Wenn sich der Mensch, die kleine  
 Narrenwelt,  
 Gewöhnlich für ein Ganzes hält –  
 Ich bin ein Teil des Teiles, der anfangs  
 alles war  
 Ein Teil der Finsternis, die sich das  
 Licht gebar,  
 Das stolze Licht, das nun der Mutter  
 Nacht  
 Den alten Rang, den Raum ihr streitig  
 macht  
 Und doch gelingt's ihm nicht, da es,  
 soviel es Strebt,  
 Verhaftet an den Körpern klebt.  
 Von Körpern strömt's die Körper  
 macht es schön  
 Ein Körper hemmt's auf seinem Gange;  
 So, hoff ich, dauert es nicht lange,  
 Und mit den Körpern wird's zugrunde  
 gehn.

(*Faust I*: ll.1346-1358)

The modest truth I speak to you.  
 While man, this tiny world of fools,  
 is droll  
 Enough to think himself a whole,  
 I am part of the part that once  
 was everything,  
 Part of the darkness that gave  
 birth to light,  
 That haughty light that envies mother  
 night  
 Her ancient rank and place and would  
 be king—  
 Yet it does not succeed  
 however it contend,  
 It sticks to bodies in the end.  
 It streams from bodies, it lends  
 bodies beauty,  
 A body won't let it progress;  
 So it will not take long I guess,  
 And with the bodies it will perish, too.

(Kaufmann, 161)

Faust's reaction is the truth that cuts through Mephistopheles's subjective sentiment.

Where Mephistopheles decries the light's position above darkness, but explains that the bodies which make up the light will eventually perish, so darkness will have the last laugh, Faust sees the true kernel behind the statement and says, "I understand your noble duty. Too weak for great destruction, you attempt it on a minor scale."<sup>333</sup>

Mephistopheles, further humbled, admits the accuracy of Faust's statement by saying that no matter what he does, how many people he is able to bring to the darkness, there are always more, and he will never be able to get them all:

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<sup>333</sup> *Faust I*: ll. 1359-61

Dem ist nun gar nichts anzuhaben: Wie viele hab ich schon begraben! Und immer zirkuliert ein neues; frisches Blut. So geht es fort, man möchte rasend werden! Der Luft, dem Wasser, wie der Erden Entwinden tausend Keime sich, Im Trocknen, Feuchten, Warmen, Kalten	One cannot hurt them anyhow. How many I have buried now! Yet always fresh new blood will circulate again. Thus it goes on I could rage in despair!  From water earth and even air, A thousand seeds have ever grown In warmth and cold and drought and mire!
Hätt ich mir nicht die Flamme vorbehalten, Ich hätte nichts Aparts für mich. ( <i>Faust I: ll. 1370-8</i> )	If I had not reserved myself the fire, I should have nothing of my own (Kaufmann, 163)

Gone is the confidence of the “spirit that negates”. Faust has revealed the truth of his lot to him. But in a final presentation of Faust’s ability to view objects outside of himself objectively, he offers Mephistopheles advice on how to escape the *Teufelskreis* in which Mephistopheles finds himself.

So setztest du der ewigen regen, Der heilsam schaffenden Gewalt Die kalte Teufelsfaust entgegen, Die sich vergebens tückisch ballt. Was anders suche zu beginnen, Des Chaos wunderlicher Sohn! ( <i>Faust I: ll.1379-84</i> )	And thus I see you would resist The ever-live creative power By clenching your cold devil’s fist Resentfully in vain you glower. Try something new and unrelated, Oh you peculiar son of chaos! (Kaufmann, 163)
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Mephistopheles then breaks off the debate, but not before noting that he will consider [besinnen] his words next time they resume it. In this sequence Faust is able to look upon Mephistopheles completely *per se* without reference to his will.<sup>334</sup>

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<sup>334</sup> But in another sense, Mephistopheles’ initial definition of himself as “part of that force which would do evil evermore and yet creates good” foreshadows his eventual deconstruction by Faust and realization of the impossibility and fruitlessness of his task. This line when placed against one of two similar lines in Book 1 of Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, the line describing the lot of the powerful Leviathan:

So stretcht out huge in length the Arch-fiend lay  
Chain'd on the burning Lake, nor ever thence  
Had ris'n or heav'd his head, but that the will  
And high permission of all-ruling Heaven  
Left him at large to his own dark designs,  
That with reiterated crimes he might  
Heap on himself damnation, while he sought  
Evil to others, and enrag'd might see  
How all his malice serv'd but to bring forth  
Infinite goodness, grace and mercy shewn

So if Faust is to be viewed as a progressing consciousness of the kind described in the above-discussed Moral Progression, his pre-deal behavior indicates a stage three reflective being which would then move to stage four. But upon making the deal with the devil, Faust regresses to stage one, an existence free from the fear of death and the burden of knowledge, only interested in experiencing as much as possible, and moving from one desire to the next. This state is perhaps best exemplified by the last lines of Faust's opening monologue, or dialogue with a silent version of the earth spirit, in the scene "Wood and Cave." As he turns from exalting the Earth-spirit to his realization of the coming of his companion Mephistopheles, his words mimic the regression which he made upon first entering into the bargain with Mephistopheles. He begins the scene extolling the gift of the Earth-spirit which made him see the world of nature objectively, and look upon himself with sober objective self-reflection:

Erhabner Geist, du gabst mir, gabst mir alles,	Exalted Spirit, all you gave me, all
Warum ich bat. Du hast mir nicht umsonst	That I have asked. And it was not in vain
Dein Angesicht im Feuer zugewendet.	That amid flames you turned your face toward me.
Gabst mir die herrliche Natur zum Königreich,	You gave me royal nature as my own dominion,
Kraft, sie zu fühlen, zu genießen. Nicht	Strength to experience her, enjoy her. Not

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On Man by him seduc't, but on himself  
Treble confusion, wrath and vengeance pour'd.

reveals a surrender to or reconciliation with the fact, on the part of Mephistopheles in *Faust* that is not present in Leviathan and elsewhere with the creatures at Lucifer's table in Book 1, that what the creatures associated with evil will in their effort to go against the will of God ultimately is in line with that same will of God. Neither Leviathan nor the other creatures are at all reconciled to this fact as Leviathan is "enrag'd" at "how all his malice serv'd but to bring forth infinite goodness". So Goethe begins Mephistopheles' self-examination with a concession not found in his Miltonian predecessor, from which Faust's deconstruction of Mephistopheles is made possible.

But such a deconstruction is found nowhere in the opera literature based on *Faust*. This sequence ought to be compared to the equivalent passages in the operas by Berlioz, Boito, and Gounod. In the Berlioz and Gounod, Faust is overcome and describes his reaction to seeing Mephistopheles, and describes what Mephistopheles can do for him. In the Boito, Faust asks the same questions of Mephistopheles, but lacks the insight into the true nature of the creature.

<p>Kalt staunenden Besuch erlaubst du nur,  Vergönntest mir, in ihre tiefe Brust  Wie in den Busen eines Freunds zu  schauen.  Du führst die Reihe der Lebendigen  Vor mir vorbei und lehrst mich meine  Brüder  Im stillen Busch, in Luft und Wasser  kennen.  Und wenn der Sturme im Walde braust  und knarrt,  Die Riesenfichte, stürzend, Nachbaräste    Und Nachbarstämme quetschend  niederstreift  Und ihrem Fall dumpf hohl der Hügel  donnert,  Dann führst du mich zur sichern Höhle,  zeigst  Mich dann mir selbst, und meiner eignen  Brust  Geheime tiefe Wunder öffnen sich.    Und steigt vor meinem Blick der reine  Mond  Besänftigend herüber, schweben mir  Von Felsenwänden, aus dem feuchten  Busch  Der Vorwelt silberne Gestalten auf  Und lindern der Betrachtung strenge Lust.  (<i>Faust</i> I: ll. 3217-39)</p>	<p>The cold amazement of a visit only  You granted me, but let me penetrate  Into her heart as into a close friend's.    You lead the hosts of all that is alive  Before my eyes, teach me to know my  brothers  In quiet bushes and in air and water.    And when the storm roars in the wood  and creaks,  The giant fir tree, falling, hits and  smashes  The neighbor branches and the  neighbor trunks,  And from its hollow thud the mountain  thunders,  Then you lead me to this safe cave and  show  Me to myself, and all the most profound    And secret wonders of my breast  are opened.  And when before my eyes the pure  moon rises  And passes soothingly, there float to me  From rocky cliffs and out of dewy  bushes  The silver shapes of a forgotten age,  And soften meditation's somber joy.  (Kaufmann, 311-3)</p>
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This is the state in which Faust found himself without Mephistopheles: third stage self-awareness and objective perception of the world around him moving toward the fourth stage. But then the thought of his necessary companion returns to him, along with the realization of his own regression.

<p>O daß dem Menschen nichts  Vollkommnes wird,  Empfind ich nun. Du gabst zu  dieser Wonne,  Die mich den Göttern nah und  näher bringt,  Mir den Gefährten, den ich schon  nicht mehr  Entbehren kann, wenn er gleich kalt</p>	<p>Alas, that man is granted  nothing perfect,  I now experience. With this happiness    Which brings me close and closer  to the gods,  You gave me the companion whom I can    Forego no more, though with cold</p>
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und frech  
 Mich vor mir selbst erniedrigt und  
 zu Nichts  
 Mit einem Worthauch deine Gaben  
 wandelt.  
 Er facht in meiner Brust ein wildes Feuer  
 Nach jenem schönen Bild geschäftig an.  
 So tauml'ich von Begierde zu Genuß,  
 Und im Genuß verschmacht ich nach  
 Begierde.

(*Faust I*: ll 3240-50)

impudence  
 He makes me small in my own eyes  
 and changes  
 Your gifts to nothing with a few words'  
 breath.  
 He kindles in my breast a savage fire  
 And keeps me thirsting after that fair  
 image.  
 Thus I reel from desire to enjoyment,  
 And in enjoyment languish for desire.

(Kaufmann, 313)

To solidify the point that this passage is meant to represent the transition in microcosm from pre-Mephistophelian to Mephistophelian Faust, Mephistopheles offers this rebuke to Faust, criticizing his continued existence in his former state of being and consciousness, saying:

Habt Ihr nun bald das Leben genug  
 geführt?  
 Wie kann's Euch in die Länge freuen?  
 Es ist wohl gut, daß man's einmal  
 probiert;  
 Dann aber wieder zu was Neuen!

(*Faust I*: ll. 3251-4)

Have you not led this life quite long  
 enough?  
 How can it keep amusing you?  
 It may be well for once to try such  
 stuff  
 But then one turns to something new.<sup>335</sup>

(Kaufmann, 313)

This was Faust's previous state before Mephistopheles, and now he must degenerate to the state of Mephistophelian control.<sup>336</sup> Faust laments that under the influence of Mephistopheles he is caught in a circle of desires which upon being fulfilled lead only to further desires: i.e. Faust is caught in the first stage of our Moral Progression. This does not bode well for a philosophical analysis such as we have observed hithertofore.

<sup>335</sup> Compare this line to Faust's rebuke to Mephistopheles in their first scene together where Faust tells him that he should try something new, i.e., Faust, according to Mephistopheles, is in his own Teufelskreis.

<sup>336</sup> This notion of Mephistopheles wresting back control of Faust in this scene is borrowed from Erich Heller. I disagree, however, with his final conclusion which states that Mephistopheles saves him from losing the wager and being satisfied by the moment of communion with nature by interrupting him, because Faust clearly says in lines *Faust I*: 3241-2 that what he feels from this communion brings him close and closer (nah und näher) to the gods. This is not stagnation in a happy moment, but striving for a moment which he sees coming nearer and nearer, but which is not yet reached. He is in no danger of losing the bet through this act of communion. See: Erich Heller. *The Disinherited Mind: Essays in Modern German Literature and Thought* (London: Bowes and Bowes, 1971), 56-8.

Let it be said, then, that he made this regression, but still retained memories of his character and self before the deal, and so a return to the third stage of the Moral Progression would be unnecessary and redundant for him. Returning to what he had already done would be tantamount to asking the moment to tarry, so he does not return to that stage. What then is the moment when Faust progresses again; that moment when fear is instilled in order to allow progress? Goethe gives us such a moment quite literally by introducing to Faust the spirit Care-Fear [Sorge] in *Faust II*: Act V; “Midnight.” Of her three sisters, Need [Not], Guilt [Schuld], and Want [Mangel], he is receiving what he needs from Mephistopheles, guilt has no place in the first stage of consciousness and without fear, and Faust wants for nothing because of his deal with Mephistopheles, and so none of them is able to enter Faust’s room and affect him. It is only Care who can enter, the feeling which begins consciousness’s progression towards morality.<sup>337</sup> She explains her power to Faust:

Auf dem Pfaden, auf der Welle,  
Ewig ängstlicher Geselle,  
Stets gefunden, nie gesucht  
So geschmeichelt wie verflucht. –  
Hast du die Sorge nie gekannt?

(*Faust II*: ll.11427-32)

On the road and on the sea,  
Ever anxious company,  
Always found and always nursed,  
Never sought, and always cursed.  
Is Care a Force you've never faced?

(Kaufmann, 459)

Faust then explains that he had never felt Care:

Ein jed Gelüst ergriff ich bei den Haaren,  
Was nicht genügte, ließ ich fahren,  
Was mir entwischte, ließ ich ziehn.  
Ich habe nur begehrt und nur vollbracht

Whatever I might crave, I laid my hand  
on,  
What would not do, I would abandon,  
And what escaped, I would let go.  
I would only desire and attain,

<sup>337</sup> A similar point is made in Albrecht Schöne’s commentary on *Faust II*. Citing Schopenhauer and the fact that his writings were known to Goethe by the time he was writing this section, Schöne includes *Sorge* among the feelings which bring about a change in consciousness along with *Not* (Want-Need), and *Mangel* (Guilt) and so makes at least a parallel – if not proposing a direct point of influence – between Goethe and Schopenhauer, linking Faust’s transformation in this scene and Schopenhauer’s “Will-to-live” i.e. the second stage of Schopenhauer’s *The World as Will and Representation*. But as we have observed, these ideas, particularly in this context the idea that there is a change in consciousness which is brought about by need-want and care-fear, go beyond Schopenhauer specifically and were used by nearly everyone discussed above. (Johann Wolfgang Goethe. *Faust: Kommentare*. (Frankfurt am Main: Insel Verlag, 2003), 773.

Und abermals gewünscht  
(*Faust II*: ll.11434-8)

And wish for more,  
(Kaufmann, 459)

Faust ends this thought by saying that he does not concern himself with the unknown, saying of it:

Nach drüben ist die Aussicht uns  
verrannt;  
Tor, wer dorthin die Augen blinzeln  
richtet  
Sich über Wolken seinesgleichen dichtet!

(*Faust II*: ll.11441-4)

But into the beyond we cannot see;  
A fool that squints and tries to pierce  
those shrouds,  
And would invent his like above the  
clouds.

(Kaufmann, 459)

In other words, the world beyond death with which the person with fear concerns himself, the world which is based on what is not empirically given, is not his concern, being in the stage of consciousness without fear of death. Care then responds by explaining what people can achieve, as well as what haunts them, after she has enveloped them. Her first line makes this clear: “He whom I have conquered could own the world and not feel good.”<sup>338</sup> One who only experiences the world, like Faust, cannot own the world; only one capable of planning for the future, to secure themselves for the future, can do that, which is the stage of consciousness which consistently follows the sensuous stage in the Moral Progression. Care continues by once again stressing the misery of someone enveloped in care who is constantly planning for the future to stave off death, and so is never able to enjoy himself:

Ewiges Düstre steigt herunter,  
Sonne geht nicht auf noch unter,  
Bei vollkommen äußern Sinnen  
Wohnen Finsternisse drinnen,  
Und er weiß von allen Schätzen  
Sich nicht in Besitz zu setzen.  
Glück und Unglück wird zur Grille,  
Er verhungert in der Fülle;  
Sei es Wonne, sei es Plage,  
Schiebt er's zu dem andern Tage,  
Ist der Zukunft nur gewärtig,

Gloom surrounds him without end.  
Sun shall not rise nor descend;  
Though his senses all abide,  
Darkness now dwell inside,  
And though he owned every treasure,  
None should give him any pleasure;  
Luck and ill luck turn to anguish,  
In his plenty he must languish;  
Be it rapture or dismay,  
He will wait another day,  
Worry lest the future vanish,

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<sup>338</sup>*Faust II*: ll. 11453-4

Und so wird es niemals fertig.  
(*Faust II*: ll.11455-66)

And so he can never finish.  
(Kaufmann, 459-61)

After Faust spurns Care's attempts to frighten him, her next litany describes the inability to make decisions when under her spell. This is consistent with the inconsistency of desires and their contradictory nature echoing the sentiment of Hume, Kant, et al. at this stage of consciousness: "We do not know what will make us happy or what we want."

Soll er gehen, soll er kommen?  
Der Entschluß ist ihm genommen;  
Auf gebahnten Weges Mitte  
Wankt er tastend halbe Schritte,  
Er verliert sich immer tiefer,  
Siehet alle Dinge schiefer,  
Sich und andre lästig drückend,  
Atem holend und erstickend;  
Nicht erstickt und ohne Leben,  
Nicht verzweifelnd, nicht ergeben.  
So ein unaufhaltsam Rollen,  
Schmerzlich Lassen, widrig Sollen,  
Bald Befreien, bald Erdrücken,  
Halber Schlaf und schlecht Erquicken  
Heftet ihn an seine Stelle  
Und bereitet ihn zur Hölle.  
(*Faust II*: ll.11471-86)

Should he go or should he come?  
All decision has grown numb;  
In the midst of well-paved places  
He reels groping in half places.  
As he sinks and is more thwarted,  
Everything grows more distorted;  
Burdening himself and others,  
Breathing deeply he yet smothers;  
Not quite smothered not quite dead,  
Not resigned but fool of dread.  
Ceaselessly he alternates –  
Yields, resenting; must, but hates;  
Liberated then enmeshed,  
Barely sleeping, unrefreshed,  
He is pinned down in his cell  
And prepared to go to hell.  
(Kaufmann, 461)

Again Faust refuses to recognize her power, and then Care curses him with it, and curses him with blindness until death. But Faust's reaction to having this sensuous faculty taken away from him, i.e., making it impossible for him to live purely experientially in the world, is surprisingly positive. With care he is now capable of conscious growth. For the first time since the deal with Mephistopheles he is capable of planning and creating something without having experienced it before. This is the "brilliant light" of which he speaks. He gathers his servants together to irrigate the swamp land as they perform his will. He is now capable of grand plans for an ultimate purpose independent of the sensuous, ever-shifting and ever-fulfilled

yearnings associated with Mephistopheles. In short, Faust has now moved to the second stage of consciousness in the Moral Progression. He says upon being blinded:

<p>Die Nacht scheint tiefer tief hereinzudringen, Allein im Innern leuchtet helles Licht;</p> <p>Was ich gedacht, ich eil es zu vollbringen; Des Herren Wort, es gibt allein Gewicht. Vom Lager auf, ihr Knechte! Mann für Mann! Laßt glücklich schauen, was ich kühn ersann. Ergreift das Werkzeug, Schaufel rührt und Spaten! Das Abgesteckte muß sogleich geraten.</p> <p>Auf strenges Ordnen, raschen Fleiß Erfolgt der allerschönste Preis; Daß sich das größte Werk vollende, Genügt ein Geist für tausend Hände. (Faust II: ll.11499-11510)</p>	<p>Deep night now seems to fall more deeply still, Yet inside me there shines a brilliant light;</p> <p>What I have thought I hasten to fulfill: The master's word alone has real might. Up from your straw, my servants! Every man! Let happy eyes behold my daring plan.</p> <p>Take up your tools, stir shovel now and spade! What has been staked out must at once be made. Precise design swift exercise Will always win the fairest prize; To make the grandest dream come true, One mind for thousand hands will do. (Kaufmann, 463)</p>
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Finally, as his men work to achieve what his will had thought, his final lines describe the future dream for which this land will be used. The dream is one of freedom. He dreams of a time when he is gone and people will be able to live on his land as equals; "With free men on free ground their freedom share": living toward a common goal, "A common will fills gaps and checks its course." His final lines are as follows:

<p>Eröffn' ich Räume vielen Millionen, Nicht sicher zwar, doch tätig-frei zu wohnen Grün das Gefilde, fruchtbar; Mensch und Herde Sogleich behaglich auf der neusten Erde, Gleich angesiedelt an des Hügels Kraft, Den aufgewälzt kühn-emsige Völkerschaft. Im Innern hier ein paradiesisch Land, Da rase draußen Flut bis auf zum Rand, Und wie sie nascht, gewaltsam</p>	<p>For many millions I shall open regions To dwell, not safe, in free and active legions. Green are the meadows, fertile; and in mirth Both men and herds live on this newest earth, Settled along the edges of a hill That has been raised by bold men's zealous will. A veritable paradise inside, Then let the dams be licked by raging tide; And as it nibbles to rush in with force,</p>
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<p>           einzuschießen,            Gemeindrang eilt, die Lücke zu            verschließen            Ja! Diesem Sinne bin ich ganz ergeben,            Das ist der Weisheit letzter Schluß:            Nur der verdient sich Freiheit wie das            Leben,            Der täglich sie erobern muß.            Und so verbringt, umrungen von Gefahr,              Hier Kindheit, Mann und Greis sein            tüchtig Jahr.            Solch ein Gewimmel möchte ich sehn,            Auf freiem Grund mit freiem Volke stehn.              Zum Augenblicke dürft' ich sagen:            Verweile doch, du bist so schön!            Es kann die Spur von meinen Erdetagen            Nicht in Äonen untergehn. –            Im Vorgefühl von solchem hohen Glück            Genieß ich jetzt den höchsten Augenblick.            (Faust II: ll.11563-86)         </p>	<p>           A common will gaps and checks its            course.            This is the highest wisdom that I own,            The best that mankind ever knew:            Freedom and life are earned by those            alone            Who conquer them each day anew.            Surrounded by such danger, each one            thrives,            Childhood, manhood, and age lead            active lives.            At such a throng I would fain stare,            With free men on free ground their            freedom share.            Then, to the moment I might say:            Abide you are so fair!            The traces of my earthly day            No aeons can impair.            As I presage a happiness so high,            I now enjoy the highest moment.            (Kaufmann, 467-9)         </p>
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Faust's highest moment is the vision of a society of happy free people living under a common universal will, which will occur after his death, and for which he would be glad to die. The only quirk in sentiment comes from the line, "Nicht sicher zwar, doch tätig-frei zu wohnen." This might not seem at first to be consistent with the happiness Goethe prizes, but as Steinhauer mentions,

The activity is not for selfish ends; it provides opportunity for others to be active. There must be freedom (the word is used four times in this one passage), but a freedom that is fought for. Faust dreams of making life comfortable for millions; but he does not wish to supply them with a stagnating security; hence danger will be ever present, to be overcome by courage and enterprise. Such an ideal, says Faust, could make one content with life.<sup>339</sup>

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<sup>339</sup> Harry Steinhauer "Faust's Pact with the Devil" *Modern Language Association of America* 7 (1956), 197. In addition to this meaning there is a notion here consistent throughout the Moral Progression, but particularly as formulated by Hegel and Schopenhauer, ironically enough, the two philosophers Goethe was physically acquainted with. Both stress that morality or pure objectivity in the final stage of their versions of the Moral Progression is not merely attained, but needs to be constantly reattained in order for it to have any worth.

In this way life is to continue its constant striving even in the contented society or ethical whole which Faust believes will be created by his death. This sentiment represents the fourth stage of the Moral Progression. Faust dreams of relinquishing his will to the universal and desires only the happiness of others. So for Faust, the progression is in part not consistent with the other systems discussed, but then Faust is a different kind of character. He begins the drama in the third stage of development, always being one to avoid the sensuous, then regresses to the first stage: the purely sensuous. He is brought to the second stage by Care and begins to will something new, and then skips over the already-traversed third stage and moves directly to self-renunciation for the betterment of a state. Despite Faust's less travelled path, the stops along the way are still the same, and it is clear that Goethe had this progression in mind when writing *Faust II*.<sup>340</sup>

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<sup>340</sup> It is important to realize that *Faust II* is filled with self-renunciation for the betterment of others, primarily in the guise of Wagner's homunculus who by his act of sacrifice at the end of Act II enables Faust to be with his desired Helen in Act III – the last great desire he had prior to his newly formed idea attained after his encounter with Sorge. In the homunculus's desire to attain being he gives up his present condition of creative impulse, and is transformed into the spirit of Eros which can offer Faust what he wants the most. The homunculus relinquishes its will, and in its last act in its present state creates the possibility for love between Helen and Faust. (See: *Faust, a Tragedy: An Authoritative Translation, Interpretive Notes, Contexts, Modern Criticism*. trans. Walter Arndt. (New York: W.W. Norton, 2001), 240, footnote 8.) Helen herself also gives up her life with Faust so that he may abandon unreal existence and stagnation in fantasy, and thus allow Faust to continue to progress and act. So by the end of the Act she dissipates back into the unreal state from whence she came, willing her own end, for Faust's betterment. The final scene of Faust again stresses the notions of constant progress, and sacrifice for the benefit of others, as we see Faust's soul and the souls of unborn pure children wrapped together. Faust is giving of himself for their betterment, and they of theirs for his. So to weigh in on an old debate, it is the striving that saves him, and his deed of self-renunciation which he continues after death for the souls of the unborn children: "Whoever strives with all his power we are allowed to save." (ll. 11936-7) It is not the love of Gretchen alone, as Hans Vaget among others seem to hold, that releases Faust's soul from bondage. (Vaget: "Strategies for Redemption: *Der Ring des Nibelung* and *Faust*" in *Wagner in Retrospect* ed. Leroy Shaw, Nancy Cirillo, and Marion Miller. (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1987), 93.)

## Chapter 10. Ludwig Feuerbach

In the wake of Hegel, for a time in the 1830's and 40's Feuerbach became one of the most famous and discussed philosophers in Europe. Using Hegel's notions of the spiritual state and constant progress brought about through inherently dialectically opposing forces, Feuerbach sought to show that the Christian God was ultimately redundant and unnecessary if one followed the teachings of Christ. This was perhaps most clearly expounded in his *Essence of Christianity* (1841),<sup>341</sup> but it is a common element in all of his work dating back as early as *Thoughts on Death and Immortality* (1828). In these works, he separates himself from the previous generation of philosophers, that which proceeded from Kant, by removing the spiritual from the progression of consciousness. In its stead he substitutes the notion of love, specifically Christian love. Rather than observing the growth of the human consciousness through its actions, Feuerbach limits his observations on this growth to the conscious conception of God at various stages of development, and the self's reaction thereto: in short he offers a history of man's relationship with God.

The startling result of this search is that the final stage of religious development is atheism. The most sincere Christian, he claims, who follows the doctrine to the letter, is an atheist. Beginning with the Christian doctrines and Hegel's dialectical method, Feuerbach explains that by God's own decree, He is of less import than humanity as a whole. Christ's sacrifice on the cross emphasizes the placement of love of man above that of God, as Christ died for the benefit of man. So in fact God worships *man*. From this position Feuerbach returns to Spinoza and shows that as

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<sup>341</sup> Wagner described this work as not containing anything new, but as a good summary of Feuerbach's thought, in his letter to Röckel from June 8, 1853. In English see: *Richard Wagner's Letters to August Röckel*. trans. Eleanor Sellar. (London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent & Company, 1897), 63-64.

God worships the earthly, man himself is divine, as is all that is earthly. Thus God is only necessary in His ability to bring about the realization in man that He is unnecessary.<sup>342</sup> It is based on this conclusion that Feuerbach tends to be labelled a “materialist” by critics and scholars, and the label is not wholly without merit, though it limits the impact Feuerbach’s philosophy can be supposed to have by examining only his final conclusion. Here his entire path will be examined.

Since Feuerbach primarily examines humanity in its relationship with God, a relationship that only appears in the second stage of the Moral Progression, he rarely discusses humanity before it has a conception of God. But when this pre-God consciousness is brought up it focuses on the same tropes associated with the first stage of the Moral Progression. Particularly prevalent in Feuerbach is that the self at this stage is incapable of viewing objects as independent of itself. All objects appear to the self as representations of objects given substance by the self alone; or as Feuerbach says, “Men first see objects only as they appear to them not as they are... they [Men] posit their own essence in them and do not differentiate the object from the conception of it.”<sup>343</sup> For Feuerbach, a consciousness at this stage, then, associates itself with the objects it perceives, not yet separating itself from them.<sup>344</sup>

The change comes from the inclusion of two concepts into the self: fear and love. According to Feuerbach, fear initially stems from the observation that actions

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<sup>342</sup> Ludwig Feuerbach. *Essence of Christianity*. [1841] trans. George Eliot. (New York: Harper, 1957), 53-4. Van Austin Harvey: *Feuerbach and the Interpretation of World Religion* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 47-8.

<sup>343</sup> Ludwig Feuerbach. *Principles of the Philosophy of the Future*. [1843] trans. Manfred Vogel. (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1966), 60, para 43.

<sup>344</sup> “Before becoming conscious of himself, that is, before his consciousness acquires a reflexive relationship to itself, man exists outside himself, or his consciousness is absorbed by the object... man’s self-consciousness is his consciousness of the object. One knows the man by the object which reflects his being; the object lets his being appear to you; the object is his manifest being, his true objective ego. This is true not only of intellectual but also of sensuous objects. Anything that is an object of a man’s consciousness, whether actual or possible, concrete or abstract, close by or farthest removed, expresses his being.” (Zawar Hanfi “An Introduction” from *The Fiery Brook: Selected Writings of Ludwig Feuerbach*. trans. Zawar Hanfi. (New York: Anchor Books, 1974), 22.)

occur in the world which are independent of the self or occur in the not-I. This is the key to consciousness.<sup>345</sup> These actions would seem to be in contradiction to an action of the self, and would then seem to occur in nature, i.e., somewhere in the world of objects outside the self. The realization of this is the realization of limits: limits to the power of the will and to the life of the self. For Feuerbach this is the crucial moment in which real life begins; the realization that life ends.<sup>346</sup> How humanity deals with this realization is what interests Feuerbach. In the moment of this realization all striving begins, thus this moment is Feuerbach's version of the second stage of the Moral Progression. The self's new existence becomes one of suffering: a positive forward step in consciousness which one could liken to Hegel's "unhappy consciousness," among other concepts.

Where there is no limit, no time, and no need, there is also no quality, no energy, no spirit, no fire, and no love. Only that being which suffers from need [Notleidend] is the necessary [Notwendig] being. Existence without need is superfluous existence. Whatever is absolutely free from needs has no need of existence. Whether it is or is not is indifferent – indifferent to itself and indifferent to others. A being without need is a being without ground. Only that which can suffer deserves to exist. Only that being which abounds in pain is a divine being. A being without suffering is a being without being. A being without suffering is nothing but a being without sensuousness, without matter.<sup>347</sup>

Out of this suffering, egoism takes over. The self had previously thought that it was in control of the universe, but now, knowing it is not, it wishes to gain control of the universe. In order to do this, the self first rejects nature, now viewed as "blind and deaf to the desires and wants of men."<sup>348</sup> Then the self posits a way to remove its

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<sup>345</sup> *Philosophy of the Future*, 52, para 33.

<sup>346</sup> See: "Death is not only the real and true end of your existence, but also the true and real beginning and ground of your existence. For your existence is possible only together with the condition of death... Death is the presupposed and preceding condition of your existence. As you depart from existence in death, so you enter existence only in death. Is not the end of something always its true beginning?" (Ludwig Feuerbach. *Thoughts on Death and Immortality*. [1830] trans. James Massey. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 42).

<sup>347</sup> "Preliminary Thesis on a reform of philosophy" [1843] in *The Fiery Brook*, 163.

<sup>348</sup> *Lectures on Religion*, 202.

suffering by hypothesising a being above limitations and above nature who could fulfill its desires: God. Abstract unsympathetic nature is exchanged for a sympathetic God.

Egoism is the natural self-love that spurs human beings on to satisfy and develop all the impulses and tendencies without whose satisfaction one neither is nor can be a complete person...It fastens onto whatever can alleviate its dependence and save the self from death... A God is a being who fulfills man's desires. And the most heartfelt desire is the desire not to die, the desire of all desires... Impelled by his instinct for self-preservation, he transforms his desire into a being capable of granting it, a being with human eyes to see his tears, [and] human ears to hear his complaints. For nature can not grant his desire, nature is not a personal being. [It has] no heart [and] is blind and deaf to the desires and wants of men.<sup>349</sup>

Thus religion begins on the back of self-interest and fear of death.<sup>350</sup>

In true Hegelian fashion,<sup>351</sup> Feuerbach then describes God in terms of not-man and not-nature. Where nature was impersonal, God would be personal; where man would be something limited or mortal, God would be unlimited and immortal. But when God is posited as such he becomes the representation of all the wants of man. Everything that man is denied, he places in God. God then is the consciousness to the self-consciousness that is man.

God is the manifestation of man's inner nature, his expressed self; religion is the solemn unveiling of man's hidden treasures, the avowal of his innermost thoughts, the open confession of the secrets of his love. But if religion, i.e., the consciousness of God, is characterized as the self-consciousness of man, this does not mean that the religious man is directly aware that his consciousness of God is his self-consciousness, for it is precisely the absence of such an awareness that is responsible for the peculiar nature of religion. Hence in order to eliminate this misunderstanding, it would be better to say that religion is the first, but indirect, self-consciousness of man... Man transposes his essential being outside himself before he finds it within himself... Man is seen to have worshipped his own essence.<sup>352</sup>

<sup>349</sup> *Lectures on Religion*, 202, 269. Harvey, 176-180.

<sup>350</sup> *Thoughts on Death and Immortality*, 20. *Lectures on Religion*, 33. "Man's tomb is the sole birth place of the gods." And; Harvey. *The Interpretation of World Religion*, 174.

<sup>351</sup> Also Fichte and Schelling, but as was mentioned, Hegel is best known for the dialectic format.

<sup>352</sup> "Introduction to *Essence of Christianity*" in *The Fiery Brook*, 109-10.

Through God or man's self-consciousness, man can achieve every dream, every whim: but this comes at a cost, and that cost is abiding by the rules of religion. In religion there is a shift from ordinary theology to speculative theology or philosophy. The God of ordinary theology is, for Feuerbach, an indefinite being that has as its own wants and desires, the wants and desires of man. Feuerbach continues:

God creates things that are apart from him, relates himself to himself and other beings that exist apart from him, loves and thinks himself and other beings at the same time. In short, man transforms his thoughts and even his emotions into thoughts and emotions of God, his essence and his viewpoint into the essence and viewpoint of God... [He] is self-contradictory, for he is supposed to be a non-human and superbeing; yet in truth he is – according to all his determinations – a human being.<sup>353</sup>

However the God of religion or speculative philosophy holds the exact opposite position: God does not want what man wants, God wants the opposite of what man wants.

God [in speculative philosophy] is in contradiction to man; he is supposed to be the essence of man, at least of reason, and yet in truth he is a non-human and superhuman, that is, abstracted being. In ordinary theology, the superhuman God is only imaginary, an edifying cliché and a toy of fantasy; in speculative philosophy, on the other hand, he is truth and bitter seriousness. The severe contradiction in which speculative philosophy became involved was caused only by the fact that it made God – who in theism is only a being of fantasy, a far-removed, indefinite, and cloudy being – into a present and definite being, thus destroying the elusive charm that a being far removed has in the blue haze of the imagination.<sup>354</sup>

Once speculative philosophy took over, God had to become something specific and could no longer remain in the domain of wonder with his role as simple wish-granter, but had to have an origin and a purpose; and so speculative philosophy found a way to define its God's characteristics as the negation of everything human.

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<sup>353</sup> *Principles of the Philosophy of the Future*, 11, para 8.

<sup>354</sup> *Ibid.*, 11-12, para 8.

God is pure spirit, pure essence, and pure action, without passion external determination, sensation or matter. Speculative philosophy is the pure spirit and pure activity realized as an act of thought – the absolute being as absolute thought.<sup>355</sup>

They have created a “real being” from the “blue haze of the imagination” and the “real being” represents the not-I or self-consciousness to the I or consciousness of the self.

The initial gain for creating such a being is that when God is made real, so are the benefits he brings. In this sense, speculative philosophy created the ability to live forever and achieve everything by believing in a real God. When God becomes a personal God so the goals of the self can be achieved, and therefore is working toward the same goals as the self, the self with its God extension becomes the totality or the absolute: being both I and not-I; this totality, however, is under the influence of the subjective personal will. The personal will, now found in God, can achieve every goal. This is Feuerbach’s version of Hegel’s “law of the heart,” where the universe is under the will of the subjective self.<sup>356</sup>

The essence of faith, as may be confirmed by an examination of its objects down to the minutest specialty, is the idea that that which man wishes actually is: he wishes to be immortal; therefore he is immortal; he wishes for the existence of a being who can do everything which is impossible to Nature and reason, therefore such a being exists; he wishes for a world which corresponds to the desires of the heart, a world of unlimited subjectivity, i.e., of unperturbed feeling, of uninterrupted bliss.<sup>357</sup>

This stage, though, is pure fantasy, and obeys none of the rules of logic. Feuerbach neatly expresses the whole problem of the delusion of the second stage of the Moral Progression in the following epigram-like passage

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<sup>355</sup> *Ibid.*, 12, para 10.

<sup>356</sup> Also Schelling’s evil man, etc...

<sup>357</sup> *Essence of Christianity*, 128.

[T]he subjective man is not guided by the wearisome laws of logic and physics, but by the self-will of the imagination; hence he drops what is disagreeable in a fact, and holds fast alone what is agreeable.<sup>358</sup>

This phase passes because, according to Feuerbach, the nature of God cannot be simultaneously determinable by the rules of logic and illogical flights of fancy. The determinability and logic of speculative philosophy get in the way of the “self-will of the imagination” and eternal bliss-desiring of the subjective self. So the illogical human aspect of God is removed in favor of a logical non-human one, and the characteristics of God then become completely determinable.

These characteristics, following the I – not-I dichotomy, have their roots in the neo-Platonic rejection of the material world in favor of the world of forms, or the spiritual world. Feuerbach discusses the difference between ancient philosophy and neoplatonic philosophy in that the ancients (referring to the Platonists, the Peripatetics [Aristotelians], Stoics, and Epicureans) were aware of the balance between the physical and the mental worlds. Philosophy was not necessarily solely metaphysics for them, but was also anthropology. Any concept of there being any worthwhile knowledge in the physical world was rejected by the neo-Platonists.<sup>359</sup>

To the neo-Platonic philosophers, on the other hand, matter – namely, the material and the real world in general – is no longer an authority and a reality. Fatherland, family, world ties, and goods in general, which the ancient peripatetic philosophy still counted as man’s bliss – all these are nothing for the neo-Platonic sage. He even considers death better than corporeal life; he

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<sup>358</sup> *Ibid.*, 137. See also: Wartofsky. *Feuerbach*, 218. “The characterization of fantasy in Feuerbach's earlier works emphasizes its lack of self-limitation, its penchant for “infiniteizing” its particular representation. Insofar as fantasy imposes no self-limitations, it is essentially lawless, arbitrary. But insofar as fantasy remains merely fantasy (i.e., the work of imagination), it is not self-contradictory, for it can be self-contradictory only with respect to a logic, a system, a concept - all of which it eschews.”

<sup>359</sup> Feuerbach does not offer specific examples of this trait, but for those interested, Plotinus wrote a treatise called “Matter”; the second tractate of his third *Ennead*, in which he is explicit on the evils of the material plane. That being said, Feuerbach does appear to be giving the peripatetic school undue credit for its anthropological works. One could liken Aristotle’s conception of happiness or ethical living to Hume’s conception of moral man or Schiller’s conception of *Anmut* in that happiness comes from a balance between the physical and the mental. The physical alone offers nothing ethically sound, which seems to be what Feuerbach is implying, and the mental alone is beyond the achievement of mortal men.

does not include the body in his essence; he transfers bliss to the soul only and separates himself from all [that is] corporeal, in short, external things... Matter can be found in the immaterial world of the neoplatonists, but it is here only ideated and imagined matter. And where man no longer has a being apart from himself, he posits a[n] [imagined] being in his thought.<sup>360</sup>

This imagined being which he posits is God. It represents all of the features of the not-I, it is not sensuous, it is immortal, it is without passion, it is without conflict, and it was never created. These then become the features religion wishes men to strive for if they ever wish to attain ultimate happiness. For this goal of happiness, they are able to put immediate pleasure aside and follow the example of the speculative neo-Platonic God. They shun all that is sensuous, and hide their passions so that they may achieve bliss according to the will of the not-I.

This is Feuerbach's version of Hegel's false virtue. God here is not viewed as something *per se*, but only as the negation of all that is human; so living virtuously, in Hegel's terminology, or living religiously – i.e., living according to speculative philosophy according to Feuerbach's terminology – is described only by negativity and not as something real. In religion, man emulates the characteristics of God. He shifts from the subjective center of the universe, the superimposing of his will on God, to its opposite, the rejection of his will to follow the rules according to God, but God in this case is nothing but the negation of the self.

Man denies as to himself only what he attributes to God. Religion abstracts from man, from the world; but it can only abstract from real or perceived wants or limitations; in short, from the negative, not from the essence, the positive of the world and humanity[.]<sup>361</sup>

Feuerbach finds numerous flaws with this speculative philosophical conception of God, the most important of which is the contradiction of the substance of God, whether or not he has or is made up of matter, i.e., whether it is possible that

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<sup>360</sup> *Principles of the Philosophy of the Future*, 45, para 29.

<sup>361</sup> *Essence of Christianity*, 27.

he can exist. Nature is representative of matter. God must be placed above nature and as such cannot be made up of matter but is rather above or beyond matter. God is supposed to be without limits, immortal, and a being from which all was created. If he is without limits, then he must contain matter; otherwise his existence is limited to that which does not have substance, making him nothing. If other objects are created from him then they must exist and have substance within the mind of God, in which case the mind of God must also be material. So God cannot be immaterial, or else he would not logically be able to exist. On the other hand, if he is made of matter he can't exist either. The primary characteristic of God is something above nature, being the extent of the material plane that can control nature. If God is material, that would mean that he is actually nature, which cannot be posited above itself, so in this case God cannot exist.<sup>362</sup>

As Feuerbach says: "Matter is indeed posited in God, that is, it is posited as God, and to posit matter as God amounts to saying "There is no God," or what amounts to the same, it is to renounce theology and to recognize the truth of materialism."<sup>363</sup> So for Feuerbach, the God of speculative philosophy has at his core his own destruction. "Speculative philosophy as the realization of God is at the same time the positing and the cancellation or negation of God, at the same time theism and atheism."<sup>364</sup> God, then, cannot exist in this speculative neo-Platonic guise.

From a more practical point of view, this view of God, like Hegel's conception of empty virtue, is still based on the same selfishness as the God whose will is really the will of the self, or Hegel's "law of the heart." This is not existence defined by what it is, but only by what it is not – the self – and as such will always be empty.

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<sup>362</sup> *Principles of the Philosophy of the Future*, para 12, 14, 21.

<sup>363</sup> *Principles of the Philosophy of the Future*, 33, para 21.

<sup>364</sup> *Principles of the Philosophy of the Future*, 19, para 14.

These two conceptions of God for Feuerbach fit smoothly into the self-oriented second stage of the Moral Progression, just as they did in Hegel's schema.

Feuerbach then follows Hegel again. Hegel viewed consciousness as something which needed to be based on something positive, an other that was not merely the negation of the self. This was found first by being able to observe other men objectively, and then by surrendering the will of the individual into an ethical community. Feuerbach does exactly this by switching his conception of God from the speculative philosophical one to the Christian God who sacrificed himself for love of humanity.<sup>365</sup> If the notions of this God are taken to be maxims for living, then it is not in the negation of man that one finds God, but in love and man himself.

Love determined God to the renunciation of his divinity. Not because of his Godhead as such, according to which he is the subject in the proposition, God is love, but because of his love, of the predicate, is it that he renounced his Godhead; thus love is a higher power than God. Love conquers God. It was love to which God sacrificed his divine majesty. And what sort of love was that? Another than ours? Than that to which we sacrifice life and fortune? Was it the love of himself? Of himself as God? No! it was love to man... Love; for God as God has not saved us, but Love, which transcends the difference between the divine and human personality. As God has renounced himself out of love, so we, out of love, should renounce God; for if we do not sacrifice God to Love, we sacrifice Love to God, and, in spite of the predicate of love, we have the God – the evil being – of religious fanaticism.<sup>366</sup>

So this becomes the new model for the consciousness: love others, and in loving others you give your self to them and love them objectively for what they are. Love is impossible without being able to recognize an object or other self as independent of the self. "Only in feeling and in love does "this" – as in "this person" or "this object" that is the particular have absolute value[.]"<sup>367</sup> So Feuerbach goes one

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<sup>365</sup> Feuerbach does not view the God of "modern" Christianity in this sense, only the God of the original ideal christianity. The God of "modern" Christianity is essentially the same as the God of Speculative philosophy. "Christianity cared nothing for the species, and had only the individual in its eye and mind." (*Essence of Christianity*, 151).

<sup>366</sup> *Essence of Christianity*, 53.

<sup>367</sup> *Principles of the Philosophy of the Future*, 52, para 33.

step further and exclaims that objectivity is only possible through sensuousness, feelings and love. So when we recognize another person as an independent object rightly capable of working towards his own ends and not ours, according to Feuerbach, this capability stems from our ability to love. By this act of recognition we are, in some degree, giving love to that outside object. “Love is the true ontological proof of the existence of an object apart from our mind; there is no other proof of being but love and feeling in general.”<sup>368</sup>

Feuerbach does note there is a middle ground between self-love and love, in which the self is only partially able to relinquish itself in its loved object. Such is the case with the miser and is a regression into something akin to Hegel’s “law of the heart”.

The miser exists in his money and at the same time outside of it; he is dependent on it and at the same time independent of it; he surrenders himself to an object to which he can not surrender the self and which, therefore, always returns and reflects back to him his unsundered, unfulfilled self. There thus arises in him the terrible contradiction that he is poor in wealth, is empty in abundance. In this way passion, as a disordered condition, is perverted into the desire to devour the object instead of the desire to let oneself be consumed by the object.<sup>369</sup>

It can only be through a complete withdrawal of the self into the loved object that real love is achieved.

This love occurs on two levels: family and community. The immediate form of this type of love, i.e., not self-love, is through the family exemplified by Feuerbach as sex. It is in part through sex that man is able to recognize himself as a part of the species as a whole.

Sex is the cord which connects the individuality with the species, and he who belongs to no species, belongs only to himself, is an altogether independent,

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<sup>368</sup> *Principles of the Philosophy of the Future*, 53, para 33.

<sup>369</sup> *Thoughts on Death and Immortality*, 123.

divine, absolute being... He who lives in the consciousness of the species, and consequently of its reality, lives also in the consciousness of the reality of sex. He does not regard it as a mechanically inserted, adventitious stone of stumbling; but as an inherent quality, a chemical constituent of his being. He indeed recognizes himself as a man in the broader sense, but he is at the same time conscious of being rigorously determined by the sexual distinction, which penetrates not only bones and marrow, but also his inmost self, the essential mode of his thought, will, and sensation. He therefore who lives in the consciousness of the species, who limits and determines his feelings and imagination by the contemplation of real life, of real man, can conceive no life in which the life of the species, and therewith the distinction of sex, is abolished; he regards the sexless individual, the heavenly spirit, as an agreeable figment of the imagination.<sup>370</sup>

The love between two people, just as it is in the ideal love between an individual and society, is achieved through the relinquishing of selfish subjective existence into the object of your affection:

The human loves and must love. But human love has great variety, and its truth and value are measured by the content and extent of that which is loved. The human loves either that which is single, sensible (money, determinate things) or honor, fame, or, again, that which is substantial, universal, living; he loves either single persons, determinate beings (sensible love), or humanity in general, the humanity in humans, the good in humanity, or the purely universal good, God, or the pure truth. The deeper the content of the object of love, the greater is its extent. And the value of love can be determined by the extent of the beloved object in the following manner: the more you sacrifice yourself, the greater and more genuine is your love. For one can not love without self-sacrifice. In loving, I love myself in another, I locate myself, my essence, not in myself, but in the object that I love. I bind my being to the being of another; I exist only in, with, and for another. If I am not in love I exist only for myself.<sup>371</sup>

Here Feuerbach repeats a notion of early love and early objectifying that goes back to at least Hume: loving another because the self is able to see itself in another. So by

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<sup>370</sup> *Essence of Christianity*, 170.

<sup>371</sup> *Thoughts on Death and Immortality*, 122. See also: "Love as it appears in humanity is a consuming fire. The being of the single and the particular, of the diverse and various, which otherwise has existence and reality for you, is consumed and destroyed by love. In and before the object of love, which, to you, is one and all, everything that is distinct and separated from it, which otherwise would be something for you, becomes nothing. All multiplicity and variety are destroyed in you as love arises in you; its arising is the disappearing of all particular existence. When you love, you no longer exist in the connections and associations with things and humans in which you previously existed and which alone constitute particular existence; you no longer exist in your particular interests, in your affairs, in the many objects in which you used to exist. You exist now only in the one being that is object of your love. All outside of it is vanity, is nothing." (*Thoughts on Death and Immortality*, 37.)

loving the other, what is really loved is the self in the other. This level of love occurs right before true objective love.

This is the first stage of love. The next is the relinquishing of the self into a community, and by doing so the community itself is enriched. So in essence, both objects relinquish what they are and become a new communal being sometimes referred to as the perfect man or as containing the essence of man.<sup>372</sup>

But at the same time this perishing is a new and more excellent state of being.

Accordingly you exist and do not exist in love; love is being and not-being in one, life and death as one life. Love gives life and takes it away, destroys and engenders life.

Life and existence obtain meaning only by and in the all-consuming and painful purgatory of love. But only meaning makes life into life; a meaningless existence is as nothing. Thus existence really becomes existence only when it is the existence of love; love changes being into nothing and nothing into being, and only the something that is purged in nothing means and is something.<sup>373</sup>

Or elsewhere:

All men are sinners. Granted; but they are not all sinners in the same way; on the contrary, there exists a great and essential difference between them. One man is inclined to falsehood, another is not; he would rather give up his life than break his word or tell a lie; the third has a propensity to intoxication, the fourth to licentiousness; while the fifth, whether by favour of Nature, or from the energy of his character, exhibits none of these vices. Thus in the moral as well as the physical and intellectual elements, men compensate for each other, so that taken as a whole, they are as they should be, they present the perfect man... But this perfect being, free from the limits of the individual, is nothing else than the species, which reveals the infinitude of its nature in this, that it is realized in infinitely numerous and various individuals.<sup>374</sup>

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<sup>372</sup> In the context of Hegel, Feuerbach, and Wagner the word here interpreted as “relinquish” is usually either “(selbst)vernichten”, by which is meant two subjects destroying themselves to form a greater subject, or “erhaben” by which is meant two subjects ennobling themselves into a greater subject and so cancelling out what they formerly were. Though Wagner uses this concept to explain much of his philosophical thought, it can most famously be seen in his conception of Gesamtkunstwerk in which all arts destroy-ennoble themselves into one enriched all-encompassing total art.

<sup>373</sup> *Thoughts on Death and Immortality*, 38.

<sup>374</sup> *Essence of Christianity*, 155f., 157

The notion that the self should relinquish its will into that of the community or the universal will is familiar to us from Hegel and nearly everyone else discussed above. Feuerbach offers another explanation of it in his *Essence of Christianity*: “In isolation human power is limited, in combination it is infinite.”<sup>375</sup> And in *Philosophy of the Future*:

The single man for himself possesses the essence of man neither in himself as a moral being nor in himself as a thinking being. The essence of man is contained only in the community and unity of man with man; it is a unity, however, which rests only on the reality of the distinction between I and thou. Solitude is finiteness and limitation; community is freedom and infinity. Man for himself is man (in the ordinary sense); man with man - the unity of I and thou - is God... The secret of the trinity is the secret of communal and social life; it is the secret of the necessity of the ‘thou’ for an ‘I’; it is the truth that no being - be it man, God, mind, or ego - is for itself alone a true, perfect, and absolute being, that truth and perfection are only the connection and unity of beings equal in their essence. The highest and last principle of philosophy is, therefore, the unity of man with man. All essential relations - the principles of various sciences - are only different kinds and ways of this unity[.]<sup>376</sup>

And in his *Thoughts on Death and Immortality*:

Being is an abundance of associations with others, rich connections, the inexhaustible source of the most various connections; that which is, is necessary with others, in others, and for others. Being is [possible only in] community.<sup>377</sup>

The final stage for Feuerbach is the self’s final silencing of its will into that of the community by its death. After an existence spent attempting to limit the separation between itself and other beings as well as the community as a whole through the love it feels towards other beings, the boundaries are finally broken by its death, and in a sense it merges with the community. Here again we see an important common element in the “surrender to death” trope in the Moral Progression is the

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<sup>375</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.

<sup>376</sup> *Principles of the Philosophy of the Future*, 71-2: para 59, 60, 63.

<sup>377</sup> Ludwig Feuerbach. *Todesgedanken. Feuerbach Samtliche Werke*. Bd 3, 15. “Sein ist beziehungsreiche Fülle, inhaltvolle Verbindung, der unerschöpfliche Schooss der mannigfaltigsten Zusammenhänge; was ist, ist Notwendigkeit mit Anderem, in Anderem, für Anderes. Sein ist Gemeinschaft.”

willfulness with which it must take place, not from self-consciousness but from duty, dignity, or as Feuerbach says, the “universal will in your will.”

Thus your life as a continuing process of recollection and spiritualization, is the uninterrupted process of cancelling the boundary between you and others and therefore of cancelling your personal being and with it your personhood. In death, the result of this process, those boundaries for the cancellation of which you have worked in and by Spirit throughout your entire life completely disappear. The last word that you speak is death, in which you totally express yourself and impart yourself to others. Death is the ultimate act of communication. You live only as long as you have something to communicate, only as long as there still remains in you something that is not yet communicated, and therefore, only as long as there exists a boundary between you and others which is still to be cancelled. When you have communicated everything, when there is nothing left but the last dry shell of your personhood, then you give yourself up. This surrender is death... [D]eath comes from the ethical essence, from the innermost heart, from love. Indeed, death comes not just from your love for another, but from love in general... The spiritual surrender of the self must also be a natural, physical surrender, although, as already stated, this surrender must be willed and established, not by your own intentional self-conscious will, but by the universal will in your will. Natural death is thus the ultimate sacrifice of reconciliation, the ultimate verification of love.<sup>378</sup>

But Feuerbach is not wholly consistent on how the self transfers to the community. In this last quote it seems that the memory of the community, which itself is immortal, will incorporate the self into it in the last moment of the self's life; and in this moment the self through this memory, becomes immortal. In other cases, he fuses this idea of the community's memory with the notion that what is immortal in man is his capacity to love and comprehend, and if one being dies he is replaced by another with the same abilities, so the abilities specific to humanity never die.

In the act of love, our essence demands other essences and, in fact, in such a way that love appears to be only the materialization and sensible manifestation of a more profound and lofty union, of a union that is more truthful than love itself. Thus others remain after your death, your essence remains after your death; humanity remains uninjured and undiminished by your death. Humanity is eternal; infinite Spirit guarantees it. Spirit is eternal; consciousness is everlasting and infinite; freedom and will are withdrawn

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<sup>378</sup> *Thoughts on Death and Immortality*, 121, 125.

from all of nature and therefore from death. Thus persons, conscious, willing, free beings, will also exist for eternity. But you as a determinate person, as only an object of consciousness and not consciousness itself, must at some time depart from consciousness and a new fresh person will replace you in the world of consciousness... Death is nothing but the action whereby you again give back and hand over your consciousness to others. Your knowing once again steps out of you and into the other. As in the beginning, your knowledge again becomes only others' knowledge of you, a knowledge that is now recollection, memory, remembrance. Consciousness is like an office that you hold for life. In death you resign it.<sup>379</sup>

In either case the example of Christ and sacrifice for the species through love is used, and when Christ's example has been fully integrated into the collective consciousness of humanity, then the species can live as a whole guided by the informal law of love.

Christ, as the consciousness of love, is the consciousness of the species. We are all one in Christ. Christ is the consciousness of our identity. He therefore who loves man for the sake of man, who rises to the love of the species, he is a Christian, is Christ himself. He does what Christ did, what made Christ Christ. Thus, where there arises the consciousness of the species as a species, the idea of humanity as a whole, Christ disappears, without, however, his true nature disappearing; for he was the substitute for the consciousness of the species, the image under which it was made present to the people, and become the law of the popular life.<sup>380</sup>

It is through such a categorical imperative that religion can be abandoned entirely for the benefit of the state.

Feuerbach's major problem with his idealistic predecessors, primarily Hegel, was in their adherence to the immaterial idea and its dominance over the material object. In Hegel, all things material and immaterial join together to form the Absolute, an idea Feuerbach dismissed as speculative. Yet Feuerbach himself has, in the guise of the species, an immortal being to which everything returns through love and death, i.e., the species or state. All things considered, Feuerbach's outlined moral progression, despite its vocabulary, does not differ greatly from the moral progressions outlined by his predecessors. The journey of the self begins in natural

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<sup>379</sup> *Thoughts on Death and Immortality*, 114, 116.

<sup>380</sup> *Essence of Christianity*, 269.

instinct and journeys to theism and the view that a speculative God will grant all of his desires. But this is really the same as saying the self creates in it a subconscious not-I and so makes it possible to superimpose its own self will over nature. The positing of such a God, i.e., the transition to theism, was brought on by the realization of death or finitude. The self then shifted its view of God from wish-granter for the self's own gain to virtuous not-I which ought to be emulated – to the general detriment of the sensual self. The relinquishing of self in favor of the virtuous not-I God is then altered to the relinquishing of the self in favor of the universal will, species, essence of man, or perfect man through love, and the realization of love's dominance over God. This is then objective living and the ability to look at objects in the world purely *per se* and without reference to the selfish will. Finally, the journey of the self ends with the sacrifice of the life of the self to the universal immortal species, ever changing in its parts, yet absolute. The moral of Feuerbach is that death and love are connected. It is only through the realization of death that love is possible, and death itself becomes the ultimate act of love. It is both an end and a new beginning: a rejuvenation of the absolute ever into something new.

## Chapter 11. Conclusion – Summary of the Moral Progression

This journey through time and thought has been most revealing. In the search for the specific ethical-metaphysical path of the self, whether in its own process of becoming or entwined with social or political change, there are distinct points of consistency between all of the philosophers discussed above.

In every case the self begins from a type of natural, innocent instinct, aware only of the objects around him, and defining himself using those objects. Moving from object to object, the self is always seeking to satisfy its ever-altering, ever-wavering desires. There is no inner conflict at this stage; nature or the world provides all of the objects necessary to sate these types of desires. There is no consideration of the future or of other beings as beings per se independent of the original self.

Then something happens: consciousness. It may be caused by curiosity, to will something that is unnecessary and against the natural order, as per Kant; or the self may experience a sudden ability and desire to use the imagination, as per Hume; but most importantly, it realizes the limitations of existence, i.e., fear: the self no longer can be sustained by what nature or the world at large can readily give it and begins to desire objects outside its immediate periphery, objects and concepts that take planning to acquire. The self now has a conception of the future, and in using its imagination or will to shape the world around it, all desires are satiable. The problem with this stage is that now that the self has posited its will as both individual self and the world or universal self the unity it previously had is now broken up. The self is now filled with contradictory desires, a state of being universally described as painful. The philosophers discussed above believe that upon this recognition, the individual self or desire should be quieted. For Hume this means an attempt at an Aristotelian balance

between the passions and reason. For Spinoza and most others this means a relinquishing of individual desires in favor of living life for the community as a whole or for, at least in some sense, God. Though Hegel and Feuerbach follow this notion of self-relinquishing for the community or the absolute, they both emphasize an intermediary stage still focused on the selfish, individual will

Before the self relinquishes what it is into something else, it directly negates itself, and lives according to the negation of the self. For Hegel this is empty virtue and for Feuerbach this is religion according to speculative philosophy. However, in this middle ground, the self is still living only for itself: it may be living for the negation of the self, but it still does not recognize other beings and live for them. What follows then is a moment of either great pain or transcendence, in the case of Schiller, Schelling, Fichte, and Faust the character, in which a shift takes place between selfish existence and selfless existence. Hume, following an earlier tradition, explains that only beings higher than man are capable of such a sacrifice and so mere men should concentrate on attaining a balance between the passions and reason, subject and object. That being said, he does say that living for the public interest is a sublime notion. So although he doesn't hold that it is possible for man so to live, living for the benefit of the state rather than for your own interests is for Hume perhaps the highest goal of existence. The others do believe that such a sacrifice for and in the state is possible, and it is given as the ultimate goal. In Kant, Fichte, Hegel, Feuerbach, and Schopenhauer, this is achieved through a complete annihilation of the sensuous part of the self, whereas for Spinoza, Schiller, and Schelling this is achieved through some form of union of the two, though the union consistently entails an altering of the sensuous self or subjective self so that it resembles the objective self or universal. So theirs is, despite the different vocabulary, the same process.

On the way to achieving this, the self learns to look beyond itself and recognize the existence of other beings. First this is done only through an appreciation of the parts of other beings that resemble the self; this appreciation grows until the self is fully able to observe and appreciate foreign objects *per se*. This ability is viewed as a conscious return to nature – not the purely sensuous nature, i.e., the unconscious experiential nature, but a reasoned version – a conscious acceptance of a return to a natural state in which selfish striving ceases and the will of the world, universal will, ethical community or an absolute takes over in its stead. Then, through duty – in the case of the philosophers up to and including Kant – or love – in the case of Schelling, Hegel, and Feuerbach – the self increasingly transforms itself into the other, either the community or the absolute, until this self-annihilation is completed by death – the last perfect act of duty or love.

There are two distinct ideological sides to how this ideal state or return to naturalness-ethical community is attained – i.e., the transition from the second to the third stage of the Moral Progression. This distinction lies in whether humanity is conceived as an instinctively moral *Volk* or as a gullible immoral *Maase-Publikum*. Spinoza, Hume, and Rousseau have a faith in a natural law and freedom which can and ought to be returned to *if*, in the case of Hume and Spinoza, and *presently*, in the case of Rousseau, the establishment no longer follows the will of the people. Kant expresses this view to an extent in his earlier writings, as we have seen. However, in the time immediately following the Revolution in Paris, philosophers expressed a preference not for a natural government, but for one that contained characteristics of the natural state mixed with some form of required moral education, the purpose for which would be to instill moral selflessness in the populace. It was no longer assumed that if the *Volk* took control of the government everyone would be free. The

*Volk* was no longer idealized in that manner, but was now referred to negatively as the *Maase* or *Publikum*.

Proudhon looked to a revolution which could be attained by an ideal *Volk* in part without this wholesale overturning of the status quo; only property had to be abolished.<sup>381</sup> The realization of this necessity can be considered a type of moral education, but it is assumed that this one decision – abolishing property – would be made only by one person and not by the *Volk* as a whole, and from this one decision the moral state would inevitably follow from the naturally behaving *Volk*, with no further moral education required other than that which their own humanity can offer them. If property were abolished then the moral state would eventually naturally come about as a result.

The difference between these two ideologies, then, is essentially that between revolution – belief in the rightness of the *Volk* as a whole and their natural ability to make moral decisions in a free environment – and conservatism, in which the people, the mob, or the public need to be educated, or need some form of self-realization in order for the free state to be attained. This difference will be further explored in Part II in Wagner’s own writings which vacillate between these two ideologies.

Concerning the ends of the progressions, there are also a few differences. Spinoza believes that the final act of death cements the fusion of the self with God under the will of God.<sup>382</sup> Fichte, Schelling, Goethe, and Hegel all present a variation of this: the self in its final sacrifice joins with the absolute or the universe as a whole, Nature, or God, which is constantly rejuvenating itself. Hume, Rousseau, Kant and Schiller do not go beyond death in their discussions, so the self ends by joining with or sacrificing itself to the state or community. Feuerbach combines these two

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<sup>381</sup> See Appendix below.

<sup>382</sup> The God of Spinoza of course is the world or nature.

elements. The self ends by sacrificing itself to and joining with the state or community, which is constantly rejuvenating itself, but he posits the state or community as immortal and the only possible material form of Hegel's absolute. Schopenhauer, on the other hand, though similar to Feuerbach in his belief in both the unification of beings through an extinguishing of their individual wills and absorption into the absolute as well as in his belief in the impossibility of a non-material absolute, differs from Feuerbach in that he also rejects any material absolute. So the being in which all beings sacrifice their wills is, in fact, non-being or nothingness. There is no rejuvenation or constant improvement. "The rest is silence."

With the Schopenhauerian "keystone" in mind, a specific, essentially four-part path of becoming has been established and can then be considered, in terms of the path itself without reference to its final end, an enlightenment/post-enlightenment philosophical *Zeitgeist* – or from Wagner's perspective, an "horizon of expectations" from which to work. It is perhaps now clear why Schopenhauer was viewed by Wagner and Oxenford as a shining white knight making clear what was unclear in German philosophy. Schopenhauer seems to have fused, on the one hand, the aesthetic-based *Frühromantik* philosophy, with its roots in Aristotle's *Poetics* and art as a means of living morally by employing the faculty of feeling, with, on the other hand, the German "Idealistic" tradition and its progression to moral living.

In addition to this progression must be added two other important notions which contribute to a *Zeitgeist* of the period or to Wagner's "horizon of expectations." The first is that of the community of individuals giving up their individual wills for the betterment of the state, common to all the philosophers discussed above, and representative of the third and fourth stages of the progression. This idea is revolutionary, a chastisement of the monarchical system in favor of a socialist state of

equals. Hegel and Feuerbach in particular speak of a society destroying itself periodically and making itself better with each destruction. This refers in particular to one form of government being destroyed and made into something better, something more beneficial to its parts. Spinoza, Hume, and Rousseau speak directly of monarchy when they discuss the failed state which is for the benefit not of the whole, but of the few, or the king alone, i.e., the king's will is taken for that of the state, rather than the other way around.<sup>383</sup> Their remedy is dethronement of the king, removal of his government, and a return to a social democracy of equals, thought by them to be a natural state. This state of social democracy of equals is nearly always described as a government directed to or by the *Volk* – the common, ideal human nature.

The second is the notion of *Notwendigkeit* or necessity. This idea is taken up in great detail by Wagner, particularly in the writings of the Zürich period. The principle is that there is an inner drive that takes over a person's actions, over which he has little direct control, and which leads him to achieve or attempt to achieve not the goals of his personal will, but of a greater will: that of the world soul or universal will. This "necessity" takes over particularly between the second and third stages of the Moral Progression and is a possible source for positive moral behavior or the switch in willing from selfish to selfless. To a lesser or greater extent, all of the philosophers discussed here have a concept which represents this inner necessity or drive which brings on moral behavior, but there are a few instances that are particularly worthy of note.

Spinoza, in his discussion of the mystery of nature, explains that it leads men to act in a particular way which may not seem to follow reasonably but stems from the

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<sup>383</sup> In some contexts like "What is Enlightenment," this applies to Kant as well. See: Note 160 above.

fundamental unity of the world. We may not fully understand it, but it is for a greater good.

Nature is not bounded by the laws of human reason, which aims only at man's true benefit and preservation; her limits are infinitely wider, and have reference to the eternal order of nature, wherein man is but a speck; it is by the *necessity* of this alone that all individuals are conditioned for living and acting in a particular way. If anything, therefore, in nature seems ridiculous, absurd, or evil, it is because we only know it in part, and are almost entirely ignorant of the order and interdependence of nature as a whole, and also because we want everything to be arranged according to the dictates of our human reason; in reality that which reason considers evil, is not evil in respect to the order and laws of nature as a whole, but only in respect to the laws of our reason.<sup>384</sup>

Kant takes up this notion of a nature beyond reason which follows an incomprehensible higher order in his *Conjectures on a Universal History*, quoted above, which in the context of the Spinoza example seems not like an original thought of Kant's, but a paraphrase of Spinoza.<sup>385</sup> But the real use of *Notwendigkeit* as a specific term in this context begins with Schiller. The twenty-fourth letter of his *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man* highlights Schiller's aspects of *Notwendigkeit*. In general, Schiller's conception of *Notwendigkeit* is as an inner necessity which drives man – ultimately to morality – from his earliest primitive stage on.

Accordingly, three different moments or stages of development can be distinguished, which the individual man, as well as the whole race, must of *necessity* traverse in a determinate order if they are to fulfil the circle of their determination. ... Man, in his physical condition, suffers only the power of nature; he does away with this power in the aesthetical condition, and he rules them [nature and desire] in the moral state.<sup>386</sup>

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<sup>384</sup> Spinoza. *Theologico-Political treatise*, 202. Spinoza wrote in Latin and so did not use the specific term *Notwendigkeit*, but it is clear that Spinoza's description was an early forerunner of it. Hereafter, as we are examining the use of a specific German term *Notwendigkeit* I will include the German original in the footnotes which will show the clearly similar use and meaning of the term by the philosophers who employed it.

<sup>385</sup> See page 203 above; *Conjectures* 227-8. Kant here does not use the specific term *Notwendigkeit*, which is why the original German is absent here.

<sup>386</sup> Schiller, *Letters on Aesthetic Education of Man*. XXIV, 115. In the original: "Es lassen sich also drei verschiedene Momente oder Stufen der Entwicklung unterscheiden, die sowohl der einzelne Mensch als die ganze Gattung *notwendig* und in einer bestimmten Ordnung durchlaufen müssen, wenn

But he differentiates between the lower level of this guiding principle, necessity viewed as constraint, what Schiller calls the “matter’s [the sensuous’s] blind constraint” [*der blinden Nötigung der Materie*] and the higher level of necessity that requires morality, “reason’s sublime necessity” [*die erhabene Notwendigkeit der Vernunft*].<sup>387</sup> We see traces of these two aspects in Schiller’s “second nature”: an early conception of the dichotomy that exists between the sensuous conception of nature and the intellectual conception – or in the language of Schelling and Hegel, spiritual conception – of nature. With Spinoza and Kant both aspects – instinct and the seemingly incomprehensible higher order – fit under the overall arch of nature. Schiller divides these into two separate aspects of nature. In the sensuous conception of nature this necessity exists in an ideal primitive state of nature without understanding or choice, i.e., freedom, whereas in the intellectual conception of nature, the Abramsian spiral back to an enlightened or ennobled conception of nature has been traversed and the individual returns to nature now by choice and with understanding. This second nature or necessity pushes the individual again towards morality.

There is a moment, in fact, when the instinct of life, not yet opposed to the instinct of form, *acts as nature and as necessity*[.] [A moment] when the sensuous is a power because man has not begun; as [at this moment] mankind can have no other power than will. But when man passes over into the realm of thought, reason, on the contrary, will be a power, and *moral or logical necessity* will take the place of physical necessity. Sensuous power must then be annihilated before the law which must govern it can be established. It is not enough that something shall begin which as yet was not; previously something must end which had begun. Man cannot pass immediately from sensuousness

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sie den ganzen Kreis ihrer Bestimmung erfüllen sollen. ... Der Mensch in seinem physischen Zustand erleidet bloß die Macht der Natur; er entledigt sich dieser Macht in dem ästhetischen Zustand, und er beherrscht sie in dem moralischen.” (Emphasis mine.) (*Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen in einer Reihe von Briefen*. from Schiller, *Sämtliche Werke*. 5 vols. (Munich: Hanser, 1962): V, 645-646).

<sup>387</sup> *Ibid.*, 649.

to thought. He must step backwards, for it is only when one determination is suppressed that the contrary determination can take place.<sup>388</sup>

We again see this conception of *Notwendigkeit* in the writings of Schelling. Schelling shifts the emphasis back to Kant, and the necessity in question is only partially embodying nature and now embodies a spirit which drives history forward.<sup>389</sup> The same characteristics of this spirit of history apply to the spirit of nature as discussed by Spinoza, Kant, and Schiller, but Schelling takes his lead from Schiller and this spirit represents the higher order of nature, the higher form of the dichotomy. The spirit or necessity is often incomprehensible to the individuals who feel its force, but it leads them to morality and to an overall unification with other individuals into a community and ultimately with this spirit itself. This notion of forming into a community might be considered a new element of this inner *Notwendigkeit*, but as has been shown in the above-described Moral Progression, every third stage leads to a moral community. So although this idea is not new, Schelling is perhaps the most explicit in his description of it as such.

The objective factor in history is thus an intuition indeed, but not an intuition of the individual, for it is not the individual who acts in history, but rather the species; hence the intuitant, or the objective factor in history, will have to be one for the entire species. But now although the objective element in all

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<sup>388</sup> *Ibid.*, XX, 94-5. In the original: “Denn es gibt nun einen Moment, wo der Lebenstrieb, weil ihm der Formtrieb noch nicht entgegenwirkt, als *Natur und als Notwendigkeit* handelt; wo die Sinnlichkeit eine Macht ist, weil der Mensch noch nicht angefangen; denn in dem Menschen selbst kann es keine andere Macht als den Willen geben. Aber im Zustand des Denkens, zu welchem der Mensch jetzt übergehen soll, soll gerade umgekehrt die Vernunft eine Macht sein, und eine *logische oder moralische Notwendigkeit* soll an die Stelle jener physischen treten. Jene Macht der Empfindung muß also vernichtet werden, ehe das Gesetz dazu erhoben werden kann. Es ist also nicht damit getan, dass etwas anfangs, was noch nicht war; es muß zuvor etwas aufhören, welches war. Der Mensch kann nicht unmittelbar vom Empfinden zum Denken übergehen; er muß einen Schritt zurücktun, weil nur, indem eine Determination wieder aufgehoben wird, die entgegengesetzte eintreten kann.” (Emphasis mine.) (*Ibid.*, 632).

<sup>389</sup> Schelling further elucidates this “historical spirit” as follows: “History as a whole is a progressive, gradually self-disclosing revelation of the absolute. Hence one can never point out in history the particular places where the mark of providence or God himself is as it were visible. For God never exists, if the existant is that which presents itself in the objective world; if He existed thus, then we should not; but He continually reveals Himself.” (*Transcendental Idealism*, 211) In this context God not being able to be specifically noticeable in the actions or events which unfold in this spirit serves the same function as the nature which is unclear in its reasoning to humanity, but leads to a higher morality.

intelligences is the same, still, every distinct individual acts with absolute freedom, and thus the actions of different rational beings would not necessarily harmonize; on the contrary, the freer the individual, the more contradiction there would be in the whole, unless this objective factor common to all intelligences were an absolute synthesis, wherein all contradictions were resolved and eliminated beforehand. – From the wholly lawless play of freedom, in which every free being indulges on his own behalf, as though there were no other outside of him (which must always be assumed as a rule), something rational and harmonious is still to emerge eventually, and this I am obliged to presuppose in every action. Such a thing is inconceivable unless the objective factor in all acting is communal, whereby all the acts of men are guided to one harmonious goal; and are so guided, that however they may set about things, and however unbridled the exercise of their choice, *they yet must go where they did not want to, without, and even against, their own will; and this owing to a necessity hidden from them*, whereby it is determined in advance that by the very lawlessness of their act, and the more lawless it is, the more surely, they bring about a development of the drama which they themselves were powerless to have in view. But *this necessity* can itself be thought of only through an absolute synthesis of all actions, from which there develops everything that happens, and hence also the whole of history; and in which, because it is absolute, everything is so far weighed and calculated that everything that may happen, however contradictory and discordant it may seem, still has and discovers its ground of unity therein.<sup>390</sup>

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<sup>390</sup> Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, 206-7. In the original: “Das Objective in der Geschichte ist also allerding's ein Anschauen, aber nicht ein Anschauen des Individuums, denn nicht das Individuum handelt in der Geschichte, sondern die Gattung; also müsste das Anschauende, oder das Objective der Geschichte *eines* sein für die ganze Gattung. Nun handelt aber doch jedes einzelne Individuum, obgleich das Objective in allen Intelligenzen dasselbe ist, absolut frei, es würden also die Handlungen verschiedener Vernunftwesen nicht notwendig zusammenstimmen, vielmehr, je freier das Individuum, desto mehr Widerspruch würde im Ganzen sein, wenn nicht jenes Objective, allen Intelligenzen Gemeinschaftliche eine *absolute Synthesis* wäre, in welcher alle Widersprüche zum voraus aufgelöst und aufgehoben sind. – Daß aus dem völlig gesetzlosen Spiel der Freiheit, das jedes freie Wesen, als ob kein anderes außer ihm wäre, für sich treibt (welches immer als Regel angenommen werden muß), doch am Ende etwas Vernünftiges und Zusammenstimmendes herauskomme, was ich bei jedem Handeln voraussetzen genötigt bin, ist nicht zu begreifen, wenn nicht das Objective in allem Handeln etwas Gemeinschaftliches ist, durch welches alle Handlungen der Menschen zu *einem* harmonischen Ziel gelenkt werden, so, dass sie, *wie sie sich auch anstellen mögen, und wie ausgelassen sie ihre Willkür üben, doch ohne, und selbst wider ihren Willen, durch eine ihnen verborgene Notwendigkeit*, durch welche es zum voraus bestimmt ist, dass sie eben durch das Gesetzlose des Handelns, und je gesetzloser es ist, desto gewisser, eine Entwicklung des Schauspiels herbeiführen, die sie selbst nicht beabsichtigen konnten, dahin müssen, wo sie nicht hin wollten. *Dies Notwendigkeit* selbst aber kann nur gedacht werden durch eine absolute Synthesis aller Handlungen, aus welcher alles, was geschieht, also auch des ganze Geschichte sich entwickelt, und in welcher, weil sie absolut ist, alles zum voraus so abgewogen und berechnet ist, dass alles, was auch geschehen mag, so widersprechend und disharmonisch es scheinen mag, doch in ihr seinen Vereinigungsgrund habe und finde.” (Emphasis mine.) (Schelling. *System der Transcendental Idealismus*. (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1992), 268-269.)

Hegel has a similar conception of history and its goal of bringing about unity, and he uses the same language to describe this seemingly incomprehensible spirit of history (for Kant and Spinoza, nature) that strives for unification of all into Universal Spirit. “The history of the world begins with its general aim - the realization of the Idea of Spirit only in an implicit form (an sich) [for itself] that is, as Nature; a hidden, most profoundly hidden unconscious instinct; and the whole process of History (as already observed), is directed to rendering this unconscious impulse a conscious one. Thus appearing in the

For Hegel, *Notwendigkeit* serves the same function as for the others. It is a driving force that leads to morality and absolute unity with spirit. In some cases he uses the word to refer to a force pushing the individual on to a particular new stage of development, as opposed to a general force pushing the individual forward specifically towards absolute unity. One example of this earlier notion of necessity is found in his description of the “law of the heart” in which the individuality which exists at the second stage of the Moral Progression fights against the “way of the world” to bring about its own idealized version of the world before it realises the futility of such a conception. Necessity is pushing the self morally forward along the path of the Moral Progression, bringing the conflict between the “law of the heart” and the “way of the world” to an impasse. The acknowledgement of this impasse will bring about further moral development and bring the self closer towards the third stage of the Moral Progression.

This individuality therefore directs its energies to getting rid of this necessity which contradicts the law of the heart, and also the suffering caused by it. And so it is no longer characterized by the levity of the previous form of self-consciousness, which only wanted the particular pleasure of the individual; on the contrary, it is the earnestness of high purpose which seeks its pleasure in displaying the excellence of its own nature, and in promoting the welfare of mankind. What it realizes is itself the law, and its pleasure is therefore at the same time the universal pleasure of all hearts. To it, the two are undivided; its pleasure is what conforms to the law, and the realization of the law of universal humanity procures for it its own particular pleasure. *Individuality and necessity are one, the law is the law of the heart.* Individuality is not as yet dislodged from its seat, and the unity of both has not yet been brought about by the mediating agency of the individuality itself, has not yet been achieved by discipline. The realization of the immediate undisciplined nature

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form of merely natural existence, natural will - that which has been called the subjective side - physical craving, instinct, passion, private interest, as also opinion and subjective conception - spontaneously present themselves at the very commencement. This vast congeries of volitions, interests and activities, constitute the instruments and means of the World-Spirit for attaining its object; bringing it to consciousness and realizing it. And this aim is none other than finding itself - coming to itself - and contemplating itself in concrete actuality.” (Philosophy of History, 25) This is in essence Hegel’s definition of *Notwendigkeit*, though he doesn’t here use the specific term. This process of progress from the unconscious sensual conception of nature to the conscious spiritual one (Hegel’s version of the binary opposition that exists in nature) derives from *Notwendigkeit*.

passes for a display of its excellence and as a productiveness of the welfare of humanity.<sup>391</sup>

Elsewhere, *Notwendigkeit* is synonymous with universality and the bringing about of Hegel's unification of all in the Spirit.<sup>392</sup> At the end of the early selfish phase before the "law of the heart" rules the individuality, it is necessity, likened by Hegel to pure universality, which, upon being recognized as the very nature of the self, incites the self to moral progress.

The final moment of [individuality's] existence is the *thought of the loss of itself in necessity or the thought of itself as a being that is absolutely alien to it. However, self-consciousness has in itself survived this loss; for this necessity or pure universality is its own essence.* This reflection of consciousness into itself, the knowledge that *necessity* is itself, is a new form of consciousness.<sup>393</sup>

Finally, with Feuerbach *Notwendigkeit* becomes very specifically the moral urging that leads men to abandon the self and egoism in favor of others and the community.

We found this notion in Schelling specifically, though, as observed in the Moral Progression, this is the ultimate direction of every third and fourth stage and so he is consistent with his forbears, despite the use of secular humanist vocabulary.

Feuerbach mentions a "natural-necessity" when referring to a feeling that works in

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<sup>391</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 221-2. In the original: "Diese [Individualität] dem Gesetze des Herzens widersprechende Notwendigkeit, so wie das durch sie vorhandene Leiden, aufzuheben, darauf ist also dies Individualität gerichtet. Sie ist hiermit nicht mehr der Leichtsinn der vorigen Gestalt, die nur die einzelne Lust wollte, sondern die Ernsthaftigkeit eines hohen Zwecks, die ihre Lust in der Darstellung ihres *vortrefflichen* eigenen Wesens und in der Hervorbringung des *Wohls der Menschheit* sucht. Was sie verwirklicht, ist selbst das Gesetz, und ihre Lust daher zugleich die Allgemeine aller Herzen. Beides ist ihr ungetrennt; ihre Lust das Gesetzmäßige, und die Verwirklichung des Gesetzes der allgemeinen Menschheit, Bereitung ihrer einzelnen Lust. *Denn innerhalb ihrer selbst ist unmittelbar die Individualität und das Notwendige Eins; das Gesetz, Gesetz des Herzens.* Die Individualität ist noch nicht aus ihrer Stelle gerückt, und die Einheit beider nicht durch die vermittelnde Bewegung derselben, noch nicht durch die Zucht zu Stande gekommen. Die Verwirklichung des unmittelbaren ungezogenen Wesens gilt für Darstellung einer Vortrefflichkeit und für Hervorbringung des Wohls der Menschheit." (Emphasis mine) (Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*. Philosophische Bibliothek Bd. 414. (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1988), 244-245).

<sup>392</sup> See the quote from *Philosophy of History* in Note 401.

<sup>393</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 221. In the original: "Bis hierher geht die Erscheinung dieser Gestalt des Selbstbewußtseins; das letzte Moment ihrer Existenz ist der *Gedanke ihres Verlusts in der Notwendigkeit, oder der Gedanke ihrer selbst als eines sich absolut fremden Wesens.* Das Selbstbewußtsein an sich hat aber diesen Verlust überlebt; denn diese Notwendigkeit, oder reine Allgemeinheit ist sein eignes Wesen. Diese Reflexion des Bewusstseins in sich die Notwendigkeit als sich zu wissen, ist eine neue Gestalt desselben." (Emphasis mine) (Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*. 243.)

contradiction to the irrational fear of death. “And the most heartfelt desire, at least of those men whose desires are not curtailed by natural necessity, is the desire not to die, the desire of all desires.”<sup>394</sup> When natural-necessity becomes a guiding principle for an individual, the fear of death is no longer present, and so the individual is an advanced moral being. Through natural-necessity this advancement becomes possible.

Feuerbach uses the idea of “the essence of man” [*das Wesen des Menschen*] to describe the goal of this necessity as existence in a community, the relinquishing of self in favor of the other or whole.<sup>395</sup> But perhaps the most important characteristic of this *Notwendigkeit*, for Feuerbach, is its inherence in love and love’s final act: death. It is a natural necessity that is instilled in the individual who wills (or more specifically is willed by his inner manifestation of the universal will towards) a voluntary death for the benefit of the other or community out of his love for them.

Love would not be complete if death did not exist. The free act of humanity must exist simultaneously as necessity in nature. The spiritual surrender of the self must also be a natural, physical surrender, although, as already stated, this surrender must be willed and established, not by your own intentional self-conscious will, but by the universal will in your will.<sup>396</sup>

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<sup>394</sup> Feuerbach, *Lectures on Religion*, 202, 269.

<sup>395</sup> See Note 376 above. Feuerbach. *Principles of the Philosophy of the Future*, 71-2. In the original: “Das Wesen des Menschen ist nur in der Gemeinschaft, in der Einheit des Menschen mit dem Menschen enthalten – eine Einheit, die sich aber nur auf die Realität des Unterschieds von Ich und Du stützt. Einsamkeit ist Endlichkeit und Beschränktheit, Gemeinschaftlichkeit ist Freiheit und Unendlichkeit. Der Mensch für sich ist Mensch (im gewöhnlichen Sinn); Mensch mit Mensch – die Einheit von Ich und Du ist Gott. ...Die Trinität war das höchste Mysterium, der Centralpunkt der absoluten Philosophie und Religion. Aber das Geheimnis derselben ist, wie im Wesen des Christentums historisch und philosophisch bewiesen wurde, das Geheimnis des gemeinschaftlichen, gesellschaftlichen Lebens – *das Geheimnis der Notwendigkeit des Du für das Ich – die Wahrheit, das sein Wesen, es sei und heiße nun Mensch oder Gott oder Geist oder Ich, für sich selbst allein in wahres, ein vollkommenes, ein absolutes Wesen, das die Wahrheit und Vollkommenheit nur ist die Verbindung, die Einheit von wesensgleichen Wesen. Das höchste und letzte Prinzip der Philosophie ist daher die Einheit des Menschen mit dem Menschen.* Alle wesentlichen Verhältnisse – die Principien verschiedener Wissenschaften – sind nur verschiedene Arten und Weisen dieser Einheit.” (Emphasis mine) (Feuerbach. *Grundsätze der Philosophie der Zukunft* para. 59, 60, 63).

<sup>396</sup> Feuerbach. *Thoughts on Death and Immortality*, 125. In the original: “Die Liebe wäre nicht vollkommen, wäre kein Tod. Die freie That des Menschen muss zugleich in der Natur als Notwendigkeit existieren, die geistige Aufhebung des Selbst zugleich eine natürliche, leibliche sein. An und für sich ist der Tod als natürlicher das letzte Versöhnungsoffer, die letzte Bewährung der Liebe.” (Feuerbach. *Gedanken über Tod und Unsterblichkeit*.)

*Notwendigkeit* then, can be taken as an inner necessity that drives the individual to progress morally and ultimately, to sacrifice his individuality for the betterment of the whole, whether it is through the physical act of death for the community, or the spiritual *Aufhebung* or *Selbstvernichtung* that joins both the individual and the community with the whole as in Hegel, (and to an extent Schelling and Schiller), or a sacrifice of individuality to the inner necessity inherent in following a higher ideal of nature that we have seen particularly in Spinoza and Kant, but also in everyone else discussed above.<sup>397</sup> *Notwendigkeit* is an intuitive urge which comes from without that leads away from selfishness and to morality and oneness with the whole.

A third, by no means universal notion, but one arguably vital for Wagner, is the importance of the *Frühromantik* conception of art exemplified in this study by the works of Schiller and Schelling.<sup>398</sup> Schiller and Schelling share the belief that it is through artwork that man learns to be objective and relinquish his self, and to reattach himself and his will to the community or the *Volk*. In the case of Schiller it is through the observation of artwork, particularly drama, that humanity is able to rise above selfishness and move toward selflessness. This is achieved by the example of the self-sacrificial hero or villain in a tragedy and such an example offers an

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<sup>397</sup> Despite Jane Fulcher's opinion regarding Proudhon's lack of this conception of *Notwendigkeit* in his philosophy (see: Jane Fulcher, "Wagner, Comte, and Proudhon: the aesthetics of positivism in France", *Symposium*, 33:2 (1979: Summer) 150), I would call the attention of the reader to the following passage from "What is Property?" "Duty (Devoir) and right (Droit) are born of need (besoin), which, when considered in connection with others, is a right, and when considered in connection with ourselves, a duty." (Proudhon, "What is Property?" 282) Although *Besoin* isn't always a direct translation for *Notwendigkeit*, Proudhon uses this as his foundation for his ideal system of anarchy: a society based on the highest stage of morality, in which every duty and right inherent in moral behavior is based on need, a need then which then shapes the ideal civilization and drives toward the moral behavior. In short, it is *Notwendigkeit* with all of the connotations which that implies; which is no surprise considering the German philosophical influence on Proudhon.

<sup>398</sup> The same applies likewise to Schopenhauer, but if we are examining an horizon of expectations for Wagner which helped to shape the writing of the *Ring*, Schopenhauer ought not to be included as he does not clarify art and its purpose in the same overarching way that would make it possible to view him as a clear exemplification of the German late-eighteenth- through nineteenth-century philosophy of morality.

aesthetic/moral education to the audience. Schiller advises that the audience should ideally see the transition the hero makes which leads to the act of necessary self-sacrifice for the betterment of his people – or in the case of the villain, the act of evil and the process of redemption. In this way the audience can make the journey with the hero, and come out of the work with a knowledge of morality learned by example. While with Schelling the observation or intuiting/feeling of a work of art can bring about this same moral education, he is not specific as to what kind of art should achieve this, and instead prizes the act of creation of art as the sublime moment when the constant striving ceases and the moral life begins.

The important feature of this realization is that art is taken in or cognized through the faculty of feeling or intuition, not through a reflective faculty of reason or understanding. For Schiller and Schelling the appeal to the faculty of feeling through the artwork and most importantly through the final sublime moment of the artwork, is necessary in order to complete the aesthetic education. The *Frühromantiks* would follow this notion of the artistic appeal to the faculty of feeling. Frederick Beiser summarizes it well by saying, “The chief aim of aesthetic education, whether in the romantic or Leibnizian-Wolffian tradition, was the cultivation of sensibility.”<sup>399</sup> In this context, sensibility refers to the opposite of the understanding: all of the sensual faculties, primarily feeling. Beiser paraphrases Novalis from his unpublished essay “Vorarbeiten 1798”: “To romanticize the world... is to make us aware of the magic, mystery, and wonder of the world; it is to elucidate the senses to see the ordinary as extraordinary, the familiar as strange, the mundane as sacred, the finite as infinite.”<sup>400</sup> It is arguable that Novalis was able to achieve this in his famous work *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*. The entire movement, and its members like Schelling, built upon this

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<sup>399</sup> Beiser, *The Romantic Imperative*, 100.

<sup>400</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

notion of feeling, or a higher form of the feeling – intuition – being the basis upon which art was both created by the artist and internalized by the audience, and morality thereby learned.<sup>401</sup>

Friedrich Schlegel built on the notion of aesthetic education by the heroic process in tragedy, and discussed eight features which ought to be in a romantic poetry meant to be morally educating. They are as follows: 1. Mixture of genres 2. Insatiable longing, and eternal striving 3. Irony 4. A focus on: the individual, the similarities and differences between things, and individuality at the expense of universality 5. A lack of concern with pure beauty and an attempt to make art serve the interests of morality and science. 6. An absence of self-restraint, where goals are reached only to be transcended. 7. An attempt to portray a whole age, the culture of an epoch. 8. An attempt to fuse philosophy and poetry.<sup>402</sup>

The first point is not new. Both Schiller and Schelling thought that art should cross genres, i.e., painting should be like music, which in turn should be like dance. But Schlegel has expanded Schiller's notion of a progression leading to an ultimate act of morality to embrace, if we take points two through seven as a whole, something akin to the Moral Progression. Schlegel begins with insatiable longing which could be likened to the first stage, follows it with "a focus on the individual at the expense of the universal," which is the second stage, and follows this by, "an attempt to make art serve the interests of science and morality" which resembles Schiller's notion that before humanity can be moral, an aesthetic education will be necessary; he proceeds from here with "the reaching and transcending of goals" and "a portrayal of a whole age", which exemplifies both the end result of the Moral Progression, and the portrayal in a work of art of the entire progression.

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<sup>401</sup> See: Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, 220-35.

<sup>402</sup> First mentioned in "Studium Aufsatz" but repeated throughout his work. The list below was translated by Beiser in from "Studium Aufsatz". See: Beiser, *The Romantic Imperative*, 109.

The final feature – “the fusion of poetry and philosophy” – Schlegel and Schelling explain can be found in mythology. Schelling himself views the myth as artwork, as has been observed in his thoughts on Homer and Hesiod, and as a means of transfiguring a society to a higher level. When Homer and Hesiod encapsulated the history of the world to their time via myth by means of the written word, they separated themselves from the previous age. Schelling says that a similar separation then could take place between the current age, representing the stage of the Moral Progression before the advent of the morally-based social state of equals, and the next, a transition which could be made by a new mythology which would summarize the history of the world and its end just as Hesiod had. The mythology’s purpose would then be to summarize the universal culture, telling its history leading to the present moment, and thence to stimulate the transition of society as a whole to the new age.<sup>403</sup>

What can be constructed from these sources concerning artwork and mythology is that the ideal art, which will be able to educate mankind and bring it to its next stage of development, will be in the form of a work of art, a myth, which will combine elements of different art forms together. It will summarize the thoughts of an entire age, which will include the various stages of development of man and society that are outlined in that age, from selfish striving to heroic self-abandonment for the betterment of society, and it will propel the audience members who observe the work, by the example set in it, to moral living by appealing directly to their faculties of feeling as opposed to their understanding. But how could this new society come about, except through the end of the old society? Thus the artwork will move people to join the new social order of equality and, by necessity, lead them to revolt

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<sup>403</sup> As is also the case in other *Frühromantik* writings including: Schlegel “Gespräche über die Poesie”, Novalis “Fragmente und Studien” and the Anonymous Bamberg Treatise “Systemprogramm des deutschen Idealismus”.

against and destroy the current society, i.e., its government, in order to achieve the new ideal state.

All told, this precisely describes how Wagner considered his *Ring des Nibelungen*. Part II then will focus on Wagner's writings: with an eye towards Wagner's general consistency with the Moral Progression, and more specifically, those on the artwork and its place in forming a new society and how this is vital in Wagner's conception of the *Ring*.

**Part II – Wagner and the Moral Progression**

## **Introduction. The Problem of Wagner's Prose**

### Wagner in Translation

In examining the writings of Richard Wagner numerous difficulties arise, and these difficulties need to be addressed before making use of Wagner's writings to inform our discussion. We native English speakers reading Wagner in translation are immediately thrust into the shadow and drama of William Ashton Ellis; a man whose translations spark great debate among Wagnerians and tend to be either loved or hated. The negative side of these translations is perhaps best summarized by Stewart Spencer, a fellow Wagner translator:

Although he did at least have the advantage of understanding what Wagner was trying to say, he believed, unfortunately, that only by reproducing Wagner's sentence structures and word-formations could he convey the sense and tone of the original. As a result Ellis's translations can really only be

understood by readers already familiar with the German.<sup>1</sup>

There are examples beyond measure of his German sentence constructions which often, as Spencer says, make his translations extremely difficult to understand for those who do not have a rudimentary knowledge of German. A particular oddity of Ellis's approach is his practice of frequent capitalization of nouns. In German it is common practice to capitalize every noun, but this is not the case in English unless it is meant to accentuate a particular word. Unfortunately, as he does not capitalize all nouns, it is difficult to tell which he is trying to do: follow the German use of capitalization of nouns, or add emphasis to a particular word. The reader is then constantly wondering which words to focus on in order to decipher the basic meaning of any given passage. Moreover Ellis's explanation of his use of capitalization does not clear this matter up, as he says that his choices for words to capitalize are decided both "arbitrarily" and "with a definite purpose."<sup>2</sup> This just adds another layer of confusion to a work which already has it in abundance.

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<sup>1</sup> Stewart Spencer, "Collected Writings" in *The Wagner Compendium: A Guide to Wagner's Life and Music*. ed. Barry Millington (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd., 1992), 196. H.S. Chamberlain, another native Englishman, regretted that Wagner's writings were to be revealed to the English speaking world through Ellis's unclear writing. In letters to Cosima written in 1893 after having had a chance to look at the translations, he wrote "I think Ellis is a good man, but alas! That is a sad business! Only now have I been able to examine his work as translator, and I have to look upon it as a pure calamity." (October 4<sup>th</sup>, 1893) Cosima assumed in her reply of October 8<sup>th</sup> that this meant that Ellis's translation was not faithful to the original. But when Chamberlain again broaches the subject with her on November 15<sup>th</sup> he explains more clearly the nature of the problem of Ellis's translation. He says "I must talk to you some other time about Ellis's translations. I did not mean, as you appear to think, that they are not faithful; but they are not *English*. No Englishman who does not understand German can understand this Ellis-style. Ellis is faithful enough to the word — too faithful; but not to the sense." (*Cosima Wagner und Houston Stewart Chamberlain im Briefwechsel 1888-1908*, ed. Paul Pretzsch (Leipzig: Philip Reclam jun., Verlag., 1934) 354, 363 or Ernest Newman, *The Life of Richard Wagner*. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1936), II 564-5.) That being said, being Wagner's son-in-law, writing to Cosima of all people, it would have been highly unlikely to read from his pen that Wagner was *ever* unclear in his writings. For an excellent background of Ellis and his relationship with Bayreuth and future scholarship see: David Cormack "Faithful, All Too Faithful: William Ashton Ellis and the Englishing of Richard Wagner" *Wagner* XIV 3 (1993): 104-137.

<sup>2</sup> "I am perfectly aware that the use of a capital A for "Art" is jeered at by those whose own art had better be printed upside down; yet I have felt that it was not only allowable, but helpful, to *capitalise* such words as "Understanding and Feeling" and several others, rather than run a greater risk of misunderstanding. I ought to say, however, that all nouns are decorated with capitals, in the German; therefore, that my selection of any particular word for this mark of distinction is purely arbitrary, though guided by a definite purpose." *Opera and Drama* from: *Richard Wagner's Prose Works*. trans.

Because of these translation issues, many dismiss Ellis's work, and are inspired to follow in the footsteps of Newman, among others writers on Wagner, by forming their own translations from the original German. The problem which we native English speakers then face is the realization that the original German is itself convoluted and unclear: the dirty little secret of those who mock Ellis's translations and the reason why another translation on Ellis's scale has never been made. As Newman discovered:

I have made all [my] translations from the prose works, the letters, the autobiography, etc., direct from the originals. This has necessitated referring to them throughout in the German editions, but no one who has the current English versions will have any difficulty in tracing any particular passage by means of dates and indices. I cannot hope that with prose so involved as that of Wagner's I have always been able to achieve perfect accuracy; but I am consoled by the consciousness that native German scholars to whom I have referred a few passages have been as puzzled over them as myself.<sup>3</sup>

So in truth, being in touch with the *Zeitgeist*, to paraphrase Spencer, is worth a great deal in a study such as this, where Ellis plays the part not only of translator but of interpreter as well. He tends to use the appropriate consistent terminology when equating Wagner's sentiment to a similar philosophical idea. That being said, his knowledge of this subject is somewhat concentrated on Schopenhauer, Feuerbach and to some extent in the later volumes, Nietzsche; which is disappointing as someone with as sharp a mind as he clearly has could have offered a fascinating look into more

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William Ashton Ellis. 8 vols. (London: K. Paul Trench, Trübner, 1892-1899) (Hereafter referred to as PW) II. xix-xx. Regarding references to the German editions of Wagner's writings, his *Gesammelte Schriften und Dichtungen*. 10 vols. (Leipzig: E.W. Fritsch, 1887-8) shall be referred to as GS, and his *Sämtliche Schriften und Dichtungen*. ed. Richard Sternfeld and Hans von Wolzogen. 16 vols. (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1911-6) shall be referred to as SS.

<sup>3</sup> Ernest Newman. *Wagner as Man and Artist*. x. Ellis himself in the Introduction to his translation of *Opera and Drama* mentions something similar. First, *Opera and Drama* had been translated in the 1850s but upon looking at the translation Ellis thought it would not help him in his work. Second, and more importantly, he had particular trouble translating some of the work for the very reason Newman discovered; because the German prose is often-times confusing. "The Third Part is undeniably a difficult piece of work, and I am not ashamed to confess misgivings as to my rendering of certain passages, for I know that even at "Wahnfried" a few of the pages are considered doubtful of interpretation." PW II. xvii.

of Wagner's influences had he only decided to do so. Nonetheless, Ellis's translations will be used here, with only a few minor changes to improve clarity.<sup>4</sup>

### Wagner's (Lack of) Clarity

The primary problems that one faces when attempting to decipher the intent of Wagner's writings, no matter the language, are Wagner's writing style, insufferable tone, and inconsistency. Wagner often writes his prose as if he were an orator speaking to a crowd. He sets up the primary point he is trying to make through long paragraphs filled with overly-florid language and only actually makes his point at the end of the section or work. This makes quoting him incredibly difficult as he very rarely is capable of making a point in succinctly; and so his rambling writings often end up being ignored.

Wagner's inconsistent views on composers are well known as he changed his opinion and his conception of music numerous times over his life, particularly towards the composers who influenced him the most such as Beethoven, Berlioz,

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<sup>4</sup> This is not to say that Ellis's translation is all that English reading Wagnerians really need and could want in a translation of Wagner's works. The grammatical constructions aside, the footnotes, as mentioned, focus too much on Wagner's self-avowed influences and not enough on all of his influences; and are terribly out of date. Thomas Grey's recent translations are excellent, but they are without the kind of footnotes that would put Wagner's writings in their proper context. The next critical translation ought to offer a more historical perspective of the writings, with a view to their influences and the writings which influenced them. Such a translation would require looking at various 'Horizons of expectations' with an eye to influence on and comparison to Wagner's prose. There would have to be: 1. the philosophical horizon, which would primarily place Wagner's writings in the context of the writers discussed, at very least, in part I of this work; 2. the literary horizon, garnered from journals associated with the highly influential Young German movement, including *Zeitung für die Elegante Welt*, and *Aurora* which would include the writings of Laube and Gutzkow, their associates Heine and Börne, and their enemy Menzel; 3. the Young Hegelian horizon, which would include the writings of Gervinus, David Strauss, Feuerbach, Ruge, Vischer, and Prutz along with the journal *Hallische Jahrbücher*; 4. the horizon of the Frühromantik movement, based upon the ideas of Lessing and Schiller, and carried over by primarily the Schlegels, and Novalis; 5. The revolutionary-anarchist-socialist horizon, seen through journals such as Röckel's *Volksblätter*; and finally, 6. the horizon of music-aesthetic criticism, garnered from journals such as the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, the *Rheinische Musikzeitung*, and the *Neue Berliner Musikzeitung*. Wagner's writings must be placed in the context of the debates going on, or that had gone on, in each of these six horizons in the 1830's, 40's, and 50's, because it is from them and their contexts that his writings were born.

Mozart and Mendelssohn.<sup>5</sup> But he is also inconsistent regarding important aspects of his theory and so leaves himself and his writings open to attacks from detractors. Even now, as his 200<sup>th</sup> birthday approaches, Wagner's writings are still rightly considered at the very least daunting, and at worst a waste of the Wagner scholar's time.

Take three prominent examples: Thomas Mann, Carl Dahlhaus, and Ernest Newman. Thomas Mann says that no one would have given a second look to Wagner's writings had it not been for his music:

I am not talking about his theory. If it were not something so completely secondary, not so wholly a retrospective and superfluous glorification of his own talent, then his creative work would undoubtedly have become just as untenable as the theory: and nobody would have taken it seriously for a moment without the work, which appears to validate it as long as one is sitting in the theatre, which in fact validates nothing but itself. Has *anybody* ever seriously believed in his theory, I wonder? In this amalgam of painting, music, words, and gesture that Wagner had the nerve to proclaim as the fulfillment of all artistic ambition? In a hierarchy of genres in which *Tasso* would rank below *Siegfried*? Are Wagner's writings on art actually read, in fact? And whence this lack of interest in Wagner the writer? Is it because his writings are propaganda rather than honest revelation? Because their comments on his work – wherein he truly lives in all his suffering greatness – are singularly inadequate and misleading? This must suffice by way of excuse. But it is true enough: there is not much to be learned about Wagner from Wagner's critical writings.<sup>6</sup>

When the *Ring* premiere in 1876 failed to create an ideal society, Wagner placed the blame, not on his art, but on the people not properly preparing themselves to be moved by not reading his writings on art. He explains in *Shall We Hope?*

How easily even deeds may remain ineffectual, we have learnt from the fate of the Bayreuth Bühnenfestspiels: their sole result, so far as I can see at

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<sup>5</sup> For one example among many of this, compare Wagner's comments on Berlioz as well as the general manner in which Berlioz is considered in *Opera and Drama* (PW II. 76.) to those in *On the Application of Music to the Drama* (PW VI. 129.). His opinions on composers shift with the sands, and it is most illuminating to read through Cosima's diaries and observe Wagner's thoughts on the value of the music of Haydn, Mozart, and Mendelssohn which were often the polar opposite of his thoughts on the music of those same composers during the late 40s and early 50s.

<sup>6</sup> Thomas Mann. *Pro et Contra Wagner*. "Coming to Terms with Richard Wagner," 47.

present, has been the incitement of many an individual to go behind the deed to its tendencies. This needed a very earnest study of my writings, and it seems that these friends now think it of importance to urge others to repair a great and damaging omission in that regard. I am quite of their opinion.<sup>7</sup>

Carl Dahlhaus states in *The New Grove Wagner* the opposite of what Wagner is saying here. According to Dahlhaus, the prose works do not clarify the music, but the music clarifies the prose works. In his biting analysis of the prose works Dahlhaus first laments the fact that influence behind Wagner's works cannot be laid at the feet of just one man or just one system, but is so broad that an analogy can be made to nearly any system of thought found in the nineteenth century; in essence, that he used the philosophical ideas of the *Zeitgeist* to justify his writings, which in and of themselves are not worth as much as the operas as a keystone to Wagner's thinking:

The tiresome fact that all these interpretative possibilities remain open is the consequence of an ambiguity characteristic of Wagner's writings. It is less important to seek out the partialities and make exegetical hay with them than to recognize that these are statements in which a composer who was also an intellectual formed in the 'Vormärz' period summoned almost the entire intellectual inheritance of his age and forced it into service to justify his conceptions of musical drama. This process involved some drastic reinterpretation of the philosophies upon which it drew; yet the conceptions they were supposed to serve stood in no need of justification. Further, the nature of the conceptions is anyway such that they are not likely to be more easily understood by apostrophes to musical drama as a philosophy expressed in sound, or by the assembly of fragmentary formulations of that philosophy culled from the composer's prose writings. Wagner varied the philosophical, aesthetic and political theories he proclaimed in his writings entirely for the sake of his musical dramas, which in the last analysis were the only thing that truly possessed him. The works are the key to the writings, not vice versa.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> PW VI. 114-5.

<sup>8</sup> Carl Dahlhaus. "Theoretical Writings" in John Deathridge, Carl Dahlhaus. *The New Grove Wagner*. (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1984), 86-7. To prove his point he takes the opening paragraph from the late work of 1880 *Religion and Art* and analyzes it using the terminology of a number of different philosophical systems, seemingly missing the point, that there is a root moral progression that is common to these systems which Wagner employed. "It could be said that at the point where religion becomes artificial, it is reserved to art to salvage the kernel of religion, inasmuch as the mythical images which religion would wish to be believed as true are apprehended in art for their symbolic value, and through ideal representation of those symbols art reveals the concealed deep truth within them. While the priest bends every effort to get the allegories of religion regarded as literal truths, the artist had no interest in anything of the kind, for he frankly and freely makes his work known as his own invention.' [*Religion and Art*, PW VI. 213.] In other words, it is the free invention that contains the concealed deep truth. It is possible to extract from these two sentences almost all the ideas most

But the harshest criticism of Wagner's thinking comes from Newman, who calls him pathetic in his belief in his own clarity:

His faith in his own philosophical ideas, his belief in their importance for the regeneration of the universe, would surely be grotesque were it not so pathetic. His purely musical gift, which has never been equaled among men, he seemed to lay comparatively little stress upon; while he constantly troubled himself, his correspondents, his reader, and his hearers, with speculations in philosophy and other subjects for which he had only the most mediocre capacity. One sometimes rises with a feeling of sadness from a study of the *Ring* and all Wagner's writings connected with it – a feeling of pity that this man should have spent precious year after year of his life gnawing at his own heart to no purpose, embittering his days and nights with long meditations on questions that any clear-headed school-boy could quickly have settled for him. For it must be reiterated that Wagner had no more capacity for philosophical speculation than the average curate. He hung upon the fringe of every great question, half understanding it and half perverting it, falling victim to the most elementary of verbal fallacies, twisting everything into a kind of forced harmony with his own preconceived notions, but reaching no conclusion by dint of solid thinking, and in the long run adding nothing to the sum of human knowledge. ... For surely one has only to read that poem with one's eye open to be convinced that Wagner was labouring under the most pathetic delusion when he thought that he was contributing anything of the slightest value to the store of the race.<sup>9</sup>

This near universal affirmation from some of the most famous names in Wagner scholarship that Wagner's writings do not clarify his music and are in themselves poorly constructed is difficult to argue with. This is notable considering Wagner's emphasis throughout the late 1840's and 1850's – while he was writing these works –

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characteristic of the century: that music, as an 'organon of philosophy' (Schelling) or 'opus metaphysicum' (Nietzsche), contained in its sound an appreciation of the absolute which was at first transmitted in absolute instrumental music (E.T.A: Hoffmann on Beethoven) but transferred to musical drama when the latter assumed the substance of the symphony (Wagner); that myths – words or images, that is – are merely external appearances projected by that inner essence of the world which is expressed by music (Schopenhauer); that religion is nothing other than a world of fables 'believed as true' and transposed to a transcendental sphere, while its 'concealed truth' is something that man must recognize as being himself, in his corporeal reality (Feuerbach); that art, the 'invention of the artist', is one of the ways by which to reach the 'deep truth' of religion, which is a truth of the intuition (Schleiermacher); that religion – symbolic representation – is a step by way of which the spirit may progress towards philosophy (Hegel) or art (Wagner). (The order in which the steps are placed is secondary to the fact that Wagner, testifying yet again to the Hegelian inheritance, constructed a series of steps at all.)" (*New Grove Wagner*, 85-6.)

<sup>9</sup> Ernest Newman. *A Study of Wagner*, 220-2.

on his own clarity.<sup>10</sup> But in merely examining the revolutionary – Zürich-period writings we see inconsistencies in terminology and in Wagner’s own conception of the faculties of feeling and understanding and how they relate to apprehending music.

The discrepancy, in this regard, among *Artwork of the Future* and *Opera and Drama* and *A Communication to My Friends* is particularly blatant. *Artwork of the Future* stresses a process by which unconscious and instinctive elements of being are brought to the understanding, which leads one to believe that the faculty of understanding is the vital faculty in comprehending a work of art.<sup>11</sup> In *Opera and Drama* he outlines a pattern similar to Schelling’s study of history in which mythology, as the original study of history, gives way to our modern conception of history which in turn will give way to a new mythology again. Understanding does follow from feeling, but in this new schema, feeling, in turn, takes over from understanding, as the understanding is incapable of apprehending the immeasurable meaning of the artwork: only the feeling can do that.<sup>12</sup> Then, in *A Communication to My Friends*, he writes of a fusion of the two faculties, a felt-understanding or *Gefühlsverständnis*, to which art ought to be directed.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> *Selected Letters of Richard Wagner*, 242. Letter to Theodor Uhlig, December 28, 1851. “But I really do think that I have now written enough as a journalist: *what* is there left to say if my friends do not see things clearly now, and why should I care *now* if they have still got dirt in their eyes. As for what’s been done, *I* at least am completely satisfied with myself, for I have certainly spared no effort in making myself understood. The rest is solely the concern of those who take an interest in me!” This is one example of this sentiment among a sea of examples from this time.

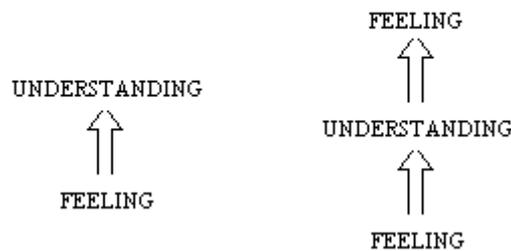
<sup>11</sup> PW I. 197.

<sup>12</sup> PW II. 224.

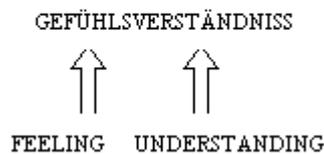
<sup>13</sup> PW I. 391.

## ARTWORK OF THE FUTURE

## OPERA AND DRAMA



## A COMMUNICATION TO MY FRIENDS



It is no wonder, then, that these writings are viewed as confusing, as Wagner himself is inconsistent on this central philosophical issue.

But as we have seen in Part I, the issue of how the faculties of feeling and understanding are employed by the self, and the philosophical dichotomy of differing outlooks born from this issue – revolution vs. conservatism – is part of Wagner’s “horizon of expectations,” part of what Newman called Wagner’s “preconceived notions.” The vacillation present in and among Wagner’s writings is emblematic of the dichotomy present in the *Zeitgeist* between the world-views of the revolutionaries and of the conservatives, i.e., between those who view the people as ideal *Volk* (Spinoza, Hume, Rousseau and often, Kant) and those who view the people as common *Maase* or *Publikum* who need to be educated before they will be ready for the ideal moral society.

## Chapter 1. Wagner's Writings before the Revolution of 1848

### A. Vacillating between Revolution and Conservatism

The key to much of Wagner's world-view lies in this dichotomy. In revolution the ideal becomes physical, real and universal; everyone takes part in it, and everyone achieves the end goal together. It is assumed that the natural morality inherent in man will take over in the act of revolution and in the proceeding ideal government to follow. This is opposed to conservatism, in which it is assumed that the ideal can only be readily attained by a few in the immediate future who will make it their mission to morally educate the public to make them ready to participate in the ideal government. Conservatism is divisive in this sense; it appeals to a particular party against its opponent, and it is through teaching or a moral realization, whether it is gentle – as in Proudhon's and Feuerbach's model of selfless love supplanting selfishness – or rough – as in the “terrible trial of suffering” in Schiller and Schopenhauer among others – that this opponent is brought in line with the ruling party. Revolution has an opponent in the present culture, but this opponent is about to be either destroyed or consumed by the inherent imminence of the coming revolution, opening the way for total equality. This is not the case with conservatism, which leaves open the possibility for equality, but believes that its totality will be postponed to when the other party or parties come around to the view held by the “correct” party. There is a basic faith in the inner morality of the people in revolutionary thinking that is not present in conservative thinking.

Just as there is a conservative and revolutionary dichotomy present where the faculties of understanding and feeling are vying for supremacy in the systems of the

Moral Progression, a dichotomy is also present in the field of aesthetics. Jakob Sulzer, on one side, holds that music can be received only by the faculty of feeling and expresses only feelings and passions, not concepts. In his *Allgemeine Theorie der Schönen Künste* he says:

The Principal if not indeed the sole function of a perfect musical composition is the accurate expression of the emotions and passions in all their varying and individual nuances... There is no justification, though, for the idea that music can influence the conceptual imagination [*Vorstellungskraft*] in matters that are altogether unrelated to emotion, or that are related to them only through cognitive reflection. Language was invented to express ideas and concepts; it is language that constructs and projects images in the imagination, not music. The portrayal of such images is altogether foreign to music's aim. Music, therefore, does not influence man in so far as he is a thinking being, or in that he has the ability to imagine concepts, but it influences man in so far as he is a feeling being [*empfindet*]. However learned, correct, or well wrought, then, a composition may be, it is not a piece of genuine music if it fails to stimulate the emotions. All that a listener needs is a sensitive heart [*empfindsames Herz*]; with this he may judge whether a work is good or bad, even if he lacks all musical knowledge. If music has reached his heart it has achieved its purpose, and whatever serves to achieve this aim is good.<sup>14</sup>

Wackenroder, on the other hand, holds that music, though beginning in the feeling, can quiet the passions and bring about understanding and love by expressing not feeling alone, but the incomprehensible, and ultimately the immortal truths.<sup>15</sup> This comes across in the following example from his *The Marvels of the Musical Art*:

O, then I close my eyes to all strife of the world – and withdraw quietly into the land of music, as into the *land of belief*, where all our doubts and our

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<sup>14</sup> J.G. Sulzer “Expression in Music” and “Music” from *Allgemeine Theorie der Schönen Künste*. [1792-1794] trans. Peter Le Huray and James Day in *German Essays on Music. The German Library v. XLIII* ed. Jost Hermand and Michael Gilbert. (New York: Continuum, 1994), 26, 33-34. See also Hegel. *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art* II 899: “So long as it [music] has sprung from the heart itself and is penetrated by a richness of soul and feeling, it may be amply impressive.”

<sup>15</sup> These examples ought to suffice as poles for this discussion, as the ideas from these two essentially make up the backbone for the aestheticians to follow such as Schopenhauer and Hegel. There are numerous examples of similar language employed by Wackenroder, Herder, E.T.A. Hoffmann, Wagner, Schopenhauer, and Hegel on this issue of feeling and understanding in music. Peter le Huray and James Day in their compilation *Music and Aesthetics in the Eighteenth and Early-Nineteenth Centuries* have done a convincing job of bringing many of these similarities to light in their introductory essay to the work. (See: Peter le Huray and James Day. *Music and Aesthetics in the Eighteenth and Early-Nineteenth Centuries*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 1-16.) But the subject is still wide open for further comparisons.

sufferings are lost in a resounding sea... [I]n the place of all answers and revelations, airy, beautiful cloud formations are shown to us, the sight of which calms us, we do not know how; - with brave certainty we wander through the unknown land; we greet and embrace as friends strange spiritual beings whom we do not know, and all the incomprehensibilities that besiege our souls and that are the disease of the human race disappear before our senses, and our minds become healthy through the contemplation of marvels that are *far more incomprehensible* and exalted. At that moment the human being seems to want to say: 'That is what I mean! Now I have found it! Now I am serene and happy!'... Happy the one who (weary of the business of splitting ideas more and more finely, which shrinks the soul) surrenders himself to the gentle and powerful currents of desire, which expand the spirit and elevate it to a beautiful faith. Such a course is the only way to universal, all-embracing love and only through such love do we come close to divine blessedness... It is the only art that reduces the most multifarious and contradictory emotions of our souls to the *same* beautiful harmonies, which plays with joy and sorrow, with despair and adoration in the same harmonious tones.<sup>16</sup>

In short, while Sulzer holds that music is apprehended by the feeling and meant for the feeling, Wackenroder believes that music is apprehended by the feeling, but then is transfigured and brought to the understanding. Music, according to Wackenroder, has essentially the same effect on the self as Schelling's artwork – and thus embodies the transition between the second and third stages of the Moral Progression: it calms the passions, brings about objectivity and selflessness, and brings us closer to the divine. At least in aesthetics, Sulzer, then, is closer to the revolutionary, feeling-based, conception of music where no education is needed, and Wackenroder represents the conservative, music-as-education, listening experience.

Wagner vacillates on these issues both aesthetically and politically-morally within and among his own writings. A clear example of this difference in world-view can be observed in Wagner's early writings in comparing his *Pasticcio* of 1834 with his "German Musician in Paris" series of articles written in Paris between 1840 and 1842. The *Pasticcio* embodies the revolutionary mentality with its emphasis on

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<sup>16</sup> W. H. Wackenroder "The Marvels of the Musical Art" [1799] trans. Mary Hurst Schubert in *German Essays on Music. The German Library v. XLIII* ed. Jost Hermand and Michael Gilbert. (New York: Continuum, 1994), 37-9.

feeling while the “German Musician in Paris” series embodies the conservative mentality with its emphasis on understanding. In *Pasticcio* he explains that the function of opera or in his words, opera’s “sole true path of salvation” – was the “expression and communication of feeling” (*Ausdruck und Mittheilung der Empfindung*).<sup>17</sup> He then goes on to explain a crucial missing element in the works of art of today: it has lost touch with the *Volk*. His complete conclusion is as follows:

The public is confused about art, and artists are out of touch with the *Volk*. Why is it, that no German opera-composer has come to the front of late?— Because none has known how to gain the voice of the *Volk*,—in other words, *because none has seized true warm Life as it is*. The essence of dramatic art does not consist in the specific subject or point of view, but in this: that the inner kernel of all human life and action, the Idea, be grasped and presented. By this standard alone should dramatic works be judged, their special points of view and subjects being simply regarded as special varieties of this Idea. Criticism makes a radically false demand on Art, when it requires the art of the Beautiful to do nothing else than idealise. For without all Ideality, so-called Dramatico-musical art can take many a form. If the librettist has the true poetic spirit, in him there lies the universe of human moulds and forces, his figures have an organic core of life; let him unroll the heavenly, or the earthly chart of human characters, we shall always find them lifelike, even though we never may have met their like in actual life. But our modern Romantic misfits are just dumb stiffs. Away with them all—give us *passion!* Only in what is human, does man feel interest; only the humanly-feelable can the dramatic singer represent. You have been often enough told, but refuse to believe it, that *one* thing alone is needful for Opera—namely *Poesy!*—Words and tones are simply its expression.<sup>18</sup>

It is not that the people need some form of education in the form of an artwork, but that artists need to channel the people’s voice in order to create good art. There exists, then, an ideal *Volk* to which the artists need to listen and to which art ought to be addressed, addressed through feeling alone, not understanding.

In his point about “*modernen romantischen Fratzen*” he is clearly siding with Sulzer, who gives primacy to the *Volk*, against Wackenroder – the Romantic misfit – and his ideal, passion-calming effect that music expresses. Music that expresses this

<sup>17</sup> PW VIII. 65.

<sup>18</sup> PW VIII. 66. The inciting of the actors to be passionate is familiar throughout time from Aristotle’s *Poetics* to Shakespeare’s [Hamlet’s] advice his players, to Lessing’s *Hamburgische Dramaturgie*.

ideal is not for the *Volk* and their passions, and so is dismissed by Wagner. The *Volk* do not need to be educated, they should be idealized and embraced by the artist.

Music does not communicate immaterial concepts, but human feelings to a real *Volk*.

The one bit of quasi-metaphysics in Wagner's explanation is when he explains that the essence of dramatic art is "the inner kernel of all human life and action, the Idea, [which is to] be grasped and presented." But this is an illusion. "Idea" ought not to be misconstrued for the *Idee* of Kant, Hegel or Schopenhauer: an Idea that is not phenomenal but noumenal.<sup>19</sup> But Wagner could not have meant a noumenal *Idee* because of his criticism of the idealist romantics and his statement that art can only communicate what is humanly feelable and thus not the noumenal "inner meaning of all life." What is likely meant, then, is that the Idea is synonymous with the ideal *Volk*, and that art ought to express the nature of this ideal *Volk*, its actions and deeds

On the other side, in *Pilgrimage to Beethoven* – the first of the "German Musician in Paris" series about a composer named R. and his experience in Paris – he turns toward conservatism and these "*modernen romantischen Fratzen*" and changes his vocabulary. Wagner explains through the voice of authority, Beethoven, that instrumental music appeals to feeling, but it is specifically a wild indirectable "primordial" feeling, while words appeal to a focused specific individual feeling which he calls the "clear and definite emotion of the human heart." As in *Pasticcio*, Wagner stresses the importance of combining words and music. The change is that instead of espousing the glories of a music meant to appeal to what is humanly feelable, he is now espousing a music that is capable of clarifying to the human heart all that was formerly incomprehensible, and thus transforming the self into a "godly consciousness" [*göttlichen Bewußtsein*].

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<sup>19</sup> And Köhler relates this to Hegel (Joachim Köhler. *Richard Wagner: The Last of the Titans*. trans. Stewart Spencer. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 256).

The human voice is not to be gainsaid. Nay, it is a far more beautiful and nobler organ of tone, than any instrument in the orchestra. Could not one employ it with just the same freedom as these? What entirely new results one would gain from such a procedure! For the very character that naturally distinguishes the voice of man from the mechanical instrument would have to be given especial prominence, and that would lead to the most manifold combinations. The instruments represent the most rudimentary organs of Creation and Nature; what they express can never be clearly defined or put into words, for they reproduce the primitive feelings themselves, those feelings which issued from the chaos of the first Creation, when maybe there was not as yet one being to take them up into his heart. 'Tis quite otherwise with the human voice; that represents the heart of man and its sharp-cut individual emotion. Its character is consequently restricted, but definite and clear. Now, let us bring these two elements together, and unite them! Let us set the wild, unfettered elemental feelings, represented by the instruments, in contact with the clear and definite emotion of the human heart, as represented by the voice of man. The advent of this second element will calm and smooth the conflict of those primal feelings, will give their waves a definite, united course; whilst the human heart itself, taking up into those primordial feelings, will be immeasurably reinforced and widened, equipped to feel with perfect clearness its earlier indefinite presage of the Highest, transformed thereby to godlike consciousness!<sup>20</sup>

This might as well have been written by Wackenroder. Feeling, no longer the end result, is instead replaced by the illusory conceptual “godly consciousness” which is instilled after a quieting of the passions has taken hold of the self. Wagner has completely turned around.

Part of this change has to do with Wagner’s abandoning his belief that mankind is *Volk* to be emulated by the artist in exchange for a more conservative belief, that mankind is *Publikum* to be educated. There are biographical reasons for this change. Hugo Dinger, who wrote one of the first major studies, not only of the prose works, but of Wagner’s thinking and his philosophical and spiritual progressions throughout his life, says that this period made him the man he was to become. Wagner went into Paris an idealist who felt much like R felt upon his arrival in Paris in the “A German Musician in Paris” series. R exclaims surprisedly:

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<sup>20</sup> PW VII. 41-42.

Am I to believe that here, too, one needs the wonted tactics of servility? Here in Paris, the capital of free France, where a Press exists that unmasks and makes impossible all humbug and abuse; where merit alone can win the plaudits of a great incorruptible public?<sup>21</sup>

Wagner believed in the success of the *Volk*, and their success was embodied in the 1830 Revolution in France. Of course France was the capital of freedom, and of course France was where an artist could write his own ticket. Dinger comments that at this time Germans were envious of the perceived freedoms of industry and talent that the French had but the Germans didn't. This perceived liberality in which all doors seemed open to those with talent was, upon closer examination, nothing but a Plutocracy; and so Wagner wrote with bitter irony against the Parisian society with which he had grown so discontented.<sup>22</sup> The French worshipped money, not talent as Wagner had assumed, and this is portrayed in the next line from *An End in Paris* where the narrator responds to R's conception of the "incorruptible public":

'The public' I interrupted; 'there you are right. I also am of the opinion that, with your talent, you well might succeed, had you only the public to deal with. But as to the easiness of reaching that public you hugely err, poor friend! It is not the contest of talents, in which you will have to engage, but the contest of reputations and personal interests. If you are sure of firm and influential patronage, by all means venture on the fight; but without this, and without money, – give up, for you're sure to go under, without so much as being noticed.'<sup>23</sup>

Works such as *The Virtuoso and the Artist* and *The Artist and Publicity* stress the *Publikum's* interest in the flashiness of the performer rather than the content of the music itself as well as the abuses that the true artist encounters who does not sacrifice his inner duty and creative genius in the face of public opinion.<sup>24</sup> Because of this,

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<sup>21</sup> PW VII. 49.

<sup>22</sup> Hugo Dinger. *Richard Wagners geistige Entwicklung* (Leipzig: Fritzsche, 1892), 57, 59.

<sup>23</sup> PW VII. 49.

<sup>24</sup> PW VII. 137. "Impossible that Duty Urges Genius to the fearful act of self-denial whereby it makes itself away to public life... He, the blest, the over-joyed, the over-rich goes begging. He begs for your favor, ye victims of boredom, ye seekers after amusement, ye vain presumptuous, ye ignorant all-wise,

Wagner rejects the use of the term *Volk*, in favor of the more selective term *Publikum*, appealing specifically to the listener who is able to feel music. The emphasis has been taken away from the common elements of humanity, and put into the music which now can help people if they listen to it, thus showing themselves worthy of the help, and so making them capable of attaining godly consciousness.

*An End in Paris* stresses this change from *Volk* to *Publikum* once again. The friend R meets at the very beginning explains to R that the French *Publikum*, not worthy enough to be referred to as *Volk*, would love a piece by Beethoven but only because Beethoven is famous, and if a piece by a mediocre composer was performed but was billed as being by Beethoven the public would love it, and if a piece by Beethoven was billed as being by an unknown composer, the audience would hate it. In that way the French *Publikum*, he explains, are philistines and more interested in fashion than actual talent and the portrayal of feeling.<sup>25</sup> This is the most damning indictment of the people of France so far and the furthest from the democratic *Volk*-ish idealism with which he arrived in Paris.

## B. The Moral Progression in the Early Writings

It is clear that Wagner changed his vocabulary and world-view between *Pasticcio* and the Paris writings. But yet the moral progression in both cases with both world-views is the same. There is an overarching belief that comes across in these writings, that the individual ought to surrender to the universal ideal – the transition between the second and third stage of the Moral Progression. In *Pasticcio*, the *Volk* represents this universal ideal, and the composer is pushed to abandon his own perspective in favor of that of the *Volk*. In *A Pilgrimage to Beethoven* the people

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bad-hearted, venal, envious reporters, – and God knows of what else thou mayst consist, thou modern Art-public, thou institute of Public Opinion! And what humiliations he endures!”

<sup>25</sup> PW VII. 50.

no longer represent this ideal universal characteristic into which the self must surrender. Wagner's ideal artwork which combines instrumental and vocal music now functions as the means by which men are able to sacrifice their individuality and enter the godly-consciousness. In other words, Wagner has become a conservative because now not everyone may be included in the godly-consciousness, but only the few who are able to use music effectively and rid themselves of their individuality. This transition from revolutionary to conservative is perhaps never made clearer than in the famous Credo of the musician R in *An End in Paris*.

I believe in God, Mozart, and Beethoven... I believe in the holy spirit and the truth of the one indivisible Art; I believe that this Art proceeds from God and lives within the hearts of all illumined men – I believe that he who once has bathed in the sublime delights of this high Art, is consecrate to Her for ever, and never can deny Her; – I believe that through this Art all men are saved, and therefore each may die for Her of hunger; – I believe that death will give me highest happiness; – I believe that on earth I was a jarring discord, which will at once be perfectly resolved by death. I believe in a last judgment, which will condemn to fearful pains all those who in this world have dared to play the huckster with chaste Art, have violated and dishonoured Her through evilness of heart and ribald lust of senses; – I believe that these will be condemned through all eternity to hear their own vile music. I believe, upon the other hand, that true disciple of high Art will be transfigured in a heavenly fabric of sun-drenched fragrance of sweet sounds, and united for eternity with the divine fount of all Harmony. – May mine be a sentence of grace! Amen!<sup>26</sup>

It is true that much of the Credo reiterates his conservative viewpoint. Although salvation could come to all men through music, it will come only to the “illumined men” and the “true disciple of high Art.” Also following the conservative view, art has the power to morally educate and instill selflessness, the same power that we observe in Schiller's, Schelling's, and the *Frühromantik* conception of art. But the Moral Progression's second through fourth stages are all here particularly the transition between the second and third stages of the Moral Progression seen in his earlier works. We have the second stage represented by the selfish vain composers

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<sup>26</sup> PW VII. 66-67.

who do not sacrifice themselves to the goddess of art and instead “have violated and dishonoured Her through evilness of heart and ribald lust of senses.” These composers did give in to fear, the fear that only music that catered to the public taste was of any worth. They put stock in a culture that the true artist who is honest with himself and his work knows must be put aside. We have the transition to the third stage where the “illuminated men” who let art into their hearts are never able to deny art again. They abandon themselves for art just as they abandon the corrupt culture for a better more ideal one. We also have something new in the Credo: the fourth stage where death is viewed as a positive thing. Upon taking in “the sublime delights of the high art” men willingly give up their individual wills to participate in the unity which music is capable of giving for all men and with all men. Death is the fulfillment of this unity with other enlightened souls into a community based on the common influence of music. This is Wagner’s earliest metaphysical thought in his prose works. Music teaches men to be moral and selfless, and in the afterlife one is unified with music itself; a primal force of nature for which they sacrificed themselves.

Admittedly, Wagner’s specific version of the fourth stage – unity through music – is unique in its specific language. But by viewing the progression or enlightenment that takes place in those who are able to gain a moral education from music as the shift from selfishness to selflessness, and altering the language so that it is not music *per se*, but the characteristics that Wagner includes here *for* music, we get a shift from selfishness to selflessness for the betterment of the object or unity which will eventually become the whole, and in which all will ultimately take part. This language resonates with similar concepts found in the philosophies surveyed in Part I: the unification with nature from Spinoza, the dutiful death of Hume, Kant, and to an extent Rousseau in that he views the silencing of the will for the community as

the process by which individuals unify and in unifying become God. It also recalls Schiller, as well as the joining with the spiritual element through constant progress of Fichte, Schelling, to an extent Faust, and Hegel; and there are traces of Feuerbach's death for the betterment of, and ultimately unity with, the community of equals through love of the community – Wagner merely substitutes “music” for “community” – and finally, Schopenhauer's ideal death which leads to unification in Nirvana.<sup>27</sup>

### C. The Role of Fearlessness in His Writings and Early Operas

One important aspect of the Moral Progression that pervades the Paris writings is the importance of fearlessness. Fearlessness had been a part of Wagner's personal philosophical outlook since, at latest, his time under Laube, and so becomes highly prevalent in the writings themselves, as seen in *Artist and Publicity*. Wagner describes being willing to sacrifice his own personal success so that he may produce a true work of genius not necessarily that the public desires to hear, but that they should hear, and though this might lead the composer into the same naive hope that he just broke away from, there is something that ultimately will protect him and his ideals.

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<sup>27</sup> Aberbach makes a similar shift of language in describing the overall meaning of Wagner's Credo here in religious terminology. “First, God is at the core of human existence, and we relate to that power through the soul. Second, God's presence in the Universe reveals itself through a transcendental, or intuitive, or mystical process, if and when it suits God's purpose. Therefore, a link, an umbilical cord exists between the spiritual and earthly worlds. How, why, when and under what circumstances God makes use of this connection cannot be answered. It appears to be exclusively up to God to determine when and with whom that force will enter into such a relationship. Therefore, through some process, certain individuals appear to earn God's favor or grace which permits them to enter into a direct relationship which transcends the physical world.” (Alan David Aberbach. *Richard Wagner's Religious Ideas: A Spiritual Journey* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1996), 8.) While Aberbach focuses on the seeming arbitrariness of God's will in making humanity ready to achieve unity with him, my view is more humanist and focuses on the fact that every human is capable of being saved, and so everyone has the potential to be an “illuminated soul” [erleuchteten Menschen] once the appropriate education or realization is brought on, as Wagner's line “that through this Art all men are saved” implies.

Happy the genius that Fortune ne'er has smiled on!—It is so wondrous precious to itself: what more could Fortune give it? And that's what he tells himself, smiles and—laughs, renews his strength; it glimmers and leaps up in him: anew it rings from him, brighter and fairer than ever. A work, such as he himself had ne'er yet dreamt of, is growing up in silent solitude. This is it! That's the right thing! All the world must be entranced by this: to hear it once, and then—! Look how the madman is running! 'Tis the old, old road, that seems to him so new and glorious: mud splashes him; here he bumps against a lackey, whose finery he takes for a General's, and bows respectfully; there against a no less worshipful bank-porter, whose heavy gold-bag slung across the shoulders makes his nose bleed. They are all good omens. He runs and trips, until at last he stands once more within the temple of his shame! And everything comes back again: for, as Schiller sings, 'each crime itself on earth avenges.' And yet a good spirit protects him, apparently his own: for he is spared fulfilment of his wishes. If he once succeeded in gaining welcome to that wondrous sanctuary, what else than a stupendous misunderstanding could have helped him thither? What Hell could compare with the slow torture of its dissolution day by day? We took you for a sensible fellow who would accommodate yourself, as you really were so anxious for 'success': here it is, all guaranteed; only set this and that to rights; there is the prima donna, there the ballerina, here the great virtuoso: arrange affairs with them! There they stand, and group themselves into that strangely curtained porch through which you travel to the one Supreme, the great Public itself. Why! everyone who passed through here to the realms of bliss, had to make his little sacrifice. What the devil! Do you think the 'grand' Opera could have ever held on, had it raised such a fuss about trifles? Can you lie? No! Then you are done for, dismissed, as in England the 'Atheists.' No respectable person will talk to you again. – Well, well: still hope that thy good genius will spare thee *that*. Laugh, be light-minded, but have patience and suffer: then all will be well. Dream! 'Tis the best thing!<sup>28</sup>

In this excerpt which pushes the limits of stream-of-consciousness writing, the protector of his ideals is in part hope, in part Hegel's *Weltgeist*, but entirely his freedom from fear. The new work of art that does not lower itself to appealing to the public grows within the artist himself, and through some inner force it will be carried out despite the culture of present. This is precisely how Hegel describes the inner necessity moving the men of history like Alexander and Napoleon against the culture of the day. Another characteristic of the *Weltgeist* is fearlessness in the face of the opposing culture – in Wagner's case that it the Parisian plutocracy. Here, through his multiple references to laughing in the face of distress, Wagner embodies that

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<sup>28</sup> PW VII. 140-141.

fearlessness. He would rather fail than compose a work not consistent with his genius. This places the ironic invocation of “*Not und Sorge*” at the beginning of *Pilgrimage to Beethoven*<sup>29</sup> and his hope that they would leave his side, in its proper context.

Wagner is rejecting fear [*Sorge*] in favor of following feeling, and inner nature, which he views as the only moral solution to the genius’s dilemma in modern society, and is another important aspect of the change from the second to the third stage of the Moral Progression.

The philosophical image of the fearless moral being managed to work its way into his operas particularly under the guise of his heroines. After returning to Germany from Paris in 1842 he had luck with *Rienzi* in Dresden and soon afterwards became the royal Kapellmeister to the Saxon king in Dresden. During his tenure there, he was able to perform *Der fliegende Holländer*, which he had composed in Paris, and compose *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin*. Each heroine – Irene, Senta, Elisabeth, and Elsa – is fearless and takes complete control of her own destiny in the Hegelian heroic “man of history” fashion. In *Rienzi*, Irene is the only one to stand at Rienzi’s side throughout while the people flippantly go back and forth between loving him and hating him. Rienzi is doomed by the people and so cannot escape, but Irene freely chooses to die with her brother despite Adriano’s wish that she be with him. It is this free choice that makes her fearless. Senta redeems the Dutchman through her fearless self-sacrificial act by which they both become free. Elisabeth, out of her love of Tannhäuser, is willing to defy the whole world and its order, in the guise of the Pope, and fearlessly sacrifice herself for his betterment. “As his advocate before God, Elisabeth atones for Tannhäuser... By dying for Tannhäuser, Elisabeth enables

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<sup>29</sup> PW VII. 21-22.

Tannhäuser to die a pure death.”<sup>30</sup> Finally, Elsa prefers love on her own terms, where each partner would have full knowledge down to the core of and about the other. She was fearless in that she would rather have lost everything than have a love that was less than perfect and complete. Elsa made this choice in full awareness of the consequences, just as Irene, Senta, and Elisabeth did. As Wagner said in his A

*Communication to My Friends:*

This woman [Elsa], who with clear foreknowledge rushes on her doom, for sake of Love’s imperative behest, – who, amid the ecstasy of adoration, wills yet to lose her all, if she is unable to completely embrace her loved one; this woman, who in her contact with this Lohengrin, of all men, must founder, and in doing so, must shipwreck her beloved too; this woman, who can love but thus and not otherwise, who, by the very outburst of her jealousy, wakes first from out the thrill of worship into the full reality of Love, and by her wreck reveals its essence to him who had not fathomed it as yet; this glorious woman, before whom Lohengrin must vanish, for reason that his own specific nature could not understand her[.]<sup>31</sup>

Elsa cries in pain at the knowledge of Lohengrin’s name and history that she longed to hear, but does not cry a single word of regret. She willfully surrendered her imperfect happiness, in full awareness of the consequences. In that sense she was braver than the others, for they only had to die, she had to live a life of suffering and pain as a result of her fearless action, and she knew that that is what she would have to do. Every one of Wagner’s heroines takes the moral imperative into her own hands, every one fearless, everyone a Hegelian hero, a *woman* of history. This fearlessness and embodiment of the *Weltgeist* is clearly something Wagner viewed as essential in his heroes and heroines, and this would not change in his later work.

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<sup>30</sup> Peter Wapnewski, “The Operas as Literary Works” in *Wagner Handbook*, 26.

<sup>31</sup> PW I. 347.

#### D. *Friedrich I*, Germanness, and the Return to a Revolutionary Ideology

After his utter defeat in Paris, Wagner arrived back in Dresden to glowing applause for his *Rienzi*. The culture that truly accepted his work and did not falsely judge by what was fashionable was not that of France, but of Germany. His people were the true *Volk* for which he was searching, and to them in the liberal state of Saxony, he would bring operatic reform and true art.<sup>32</sup> So upon arriving back in Germany from Paris he decided that from now on the subjects of his operas would be taken from German legend, literature, and history – beginning with the writing of *Tannhäuser* – in an attempt to appeal to the common *Volk* elements of his audience. He wrote to the critic Karl Gaillard after the completion of *Tannhäuser* in 1845 that *Tannhäuser* was “a German from Head to toe... May he be capable of winning me the hearts of my fellow Germans in far greater numbers than my earlier works have thus far succeeded in doing.”<sup>33</sup> For his remaining German works he would look to a variety of sources of medieval legend and saga, but first to familiar and reliable sources such as Heinrich Heine, who had given him, at least in part, the basis for *Der fliegende Holländer* with his *Memoirs of Herr Schnabelewopski*, and *Tannhäuser* in his *Elementargeister*.<sup>34</sup> Heine offered a list of German legends to be explored by German artists in his *The Romantic School*, written in collaboration with his old

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<sup>32</sup> As Köhler relates in *Richard Wagner: Last of the Titans*, “When Wagner returned to Germany from Paris in 1842, he thought that a glorious future lay ahead of him, one in which a liberal state would provide him with a stage for his new art. He saw in the Wartburg a symbol of both a mythical and a democratic Germany, an emblem of the medieval song contest and the Wartburg festival of 1817. With *Rienzi* he sparked a theatrical revolution in the sleepy city of Dresden. Its hero called for ‘freedom’, and the town responded with a rousing cheer.” (213)

<sup>33</sup> *Selected Letters of Richard Wagner*, 122. June 5<sup>th</sup>, 1845 to Karl Gaillard. See also: Peter Wapnewski “The Operas as Literary Works” in *Wagner Handbook*, 20. At the end of this letter Wagner again rejects the idea of an artist making a substandard work for the purpose of making money “Only money-grubbers can be content to produce a single insignificant work – I shall never earn any money for myself, – I am now fully resigned to that fact.” (123)

<sup>34</sup> See Peter Wapnewski “The Operas as Literary Works” in *Wagner Handbook*, 14, 22 and Dieter Borchmeyer *Richard Wagner: Theory and Theatre*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991) 192, 216-7 among other sources.

professor A. W. Schlegel, which functioned as a reply to Madame de Staël's *De l'Allemagne*. The works brought up for exploration included *Lohengrin*, the *Nibelungenlied*, *Tristan and Isolde*, *Parcival*, and *Titurël*; so it is quite likely that this may have been Wagner's first source for German dramatic themes,<sup>35</sup> followed by anthologies such as Gervinus's *History of Literature*, which he read in 1845 while spending time at Marienbad and where he found the basis for *Die Meistersinger*, and the aforementioned A.W. Schlegel's *Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature*, which he consulted before delving into the legends themselves.

But one common theme in his source material, particularly Heine and Schlegel, was the necessity for social upheaval in favor of the *Volk*; not merely upheaval of the theatrical system, but of the government itself. Wagner, all the while, was receiving these revolutionary messages, years before the revolution of 1848-1849, along with the German legends, and was incorporating them into his own work.

Schlegel stressed this upheaval through the renewed pride in German-ness which would accompany the renewed authority of Germany on the world stage when Germany would again become one with its *Volk* through the theater. He was interested in seeing the future of German drama turn to its own historical figures whose actions had forever shaped the nation as a whole such as Friedrich Barbarossa and Charles V, as opposed to the current fashion among the aristocracy in particular of appreciating only works of foreign origin. Schlegel wished to remind and in part to shame the Germans of his own time into reviving a feeling for German-ness that could lead to a renewal of the importance of Germany. Through its examples in art, Germany would be able to reclaim its rightful place on the world stage as long as a poet would come along to bring such works to the theater and allow this aesthetic-

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<sup>35</sup> Köhler makes this point in *Richard Wagner: Last of the Titans*, 134-5.

nationalistic education to take place. At the end of his lectures he offers a goal to the creator of this bold new artwork:

May all who have an opportunity of influencing the public mind exert themselves to extinguish at last the old misunderstandings, and to rally, as round a consecrated banner, all the well-disposed objects of reverence, which, unfortunately, have been too long deserted, but by faithful attachment to which our forefathers acquired so much happiness and renown, and to let them feel their indestructible unity as Germans!<sup>36</sup>

It is difficult to imagine that Wagner did not see this invocation as directed to himself.

It would have been equally difficult for him to miss Heine's new nationalistic poem upon his return from Paris, "Germany: A Winter's Tale," which was widely published in 1844. Heine dedicates four of his twenty-seven cantos to a description of Friedrich Barbarossa and his communication with him in his dream state. The first canto offers what he describes as the legend of Barbarossa as told by his nurse; Barbarossa is not dead, but sleeping in a cave in his mountain Kyffhäuser waiting for the right time to return Germany to its glory days and to its own volk spirit by punishing the current leadership who destroyed the power of Germany. The end of the fourteenth canto gives the description of the Emperor:

In the fourth hall lives the Emperor.  
For centuries he's been there,  
His head on an arm, at a table of stone,  
He sits on a stone-chair.  
The beard that grew down to the floor  
Is red, as vivid as fire.  
Sometimes he blinks an eye,  
Sometimes he raises his brows higher.  
Does he sleep deep or does he brood?  
This is difficult to infer;  
But when the right hour comes along,  
He will rouse and mightily stir.  
Then, he will seize the worthy flag

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<sup>36</sup> August William Schlegel. *A Course of Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature*. [1809] trans. John Black. (London Harrison and Co, 1846), 529. Of particular interest here is Schlegel's indictment of the aristocracy for separating themselves from the Folk tradition and enjoying only foreign art. Wagner would pick up this point in his indictment against the aristocracy.

And cry: "On horses! To war!"  
 His men will awake and leap from the ground,  
 With a most frightening roar.  
 And all will swing upon on their horse,  
 That'll stamp their hoofs while neighing.  
 They'll ride out into the clattering world,  
 With all the trumpets blaring.  
 They'll ride well, they'll fight well,  
 After having slept overtime.  
 The Emperor's tribunal will be stern:  
 Murderers must pay for their crime.  
 Those treacherous murderers who once  
 Against our maiden did conspire,  
 Our dear, wondrous, golden-haired Germany!  
 "Sun, thou accusing fire!"  
 Many who, laughing in their castles thought  
 They'd be safe for the rest of their age,  
 Won't escape the Emperor's rope,  
 Or the Emperor's avenging rage.  
 How lovely my old nurse's tales ring!  
 How sweet the dreams they inspire!  
 My superstitious heart exults:  
 "Sun, thou accusing fire!"<sup>37</sup>

The next two cantos involve Heine's experience speaking with Barbarossa, urging him at first to take back Germany now. Then upon hearing his opinion of the revolution in France, particularly the execution of the king and queen, Heine rejects the Emperor and says that if revolution is to come it should come through the *Volk* alone, not through the regressive step to an Emperor. But in the final canto he begs forgiveness for having spoken to the Emperor that way, and begs him to come back even if it means returning Germany to the Middle Ages and medieval sensibilities.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> For those unfamiliar with the work, the entire canto begins with the depiction of the punishment of a murderer who was hanged: "The song is about a murderer, / A happy, carefree fellow; / But, at the end, he's found in a wood, / Hanged from a grey willow. / The secret avengers had nailed / On the tree-trunk, with much ire, / The murderer's death sentence- "Sun, thou accusing fire!" So the canto associates the current leaders of Germany with the happy carefree fellow, (who doesn't expect to suffer redress for his evil deed). At their death at the hands of Barbarossa the same judgment is pronounced upon aristocrats, "Sun, thou accusing fire!"

<sup>38</sup> Barbarossa is depicted as caring especially about the condition and maintenance of his luxury silk, and as paying his soldiers one ducat per century. Heine is simultaneously longing for a German state by and of the Volk and mocking the notion that Barbarossa could ever get the German people to that point. Wagner, however, ignores the cynicism, and observes the nurse's legend itself. The description of Friedrich in *Die Wibelungen* is taken bodily from Heine's poem.

Wagner took in Schlegel's and Heine's suggestions by beginning to write two works in 1845 and into 1846: *Lohengrin* and a spoken drama on Friedrich Barbarossa. He must have recognized the revolutionary implication of his composing thoroughly German works, particularly a drama on Barbarossa who is meant to cleanse Germany and bring it back in line with the *Volk* by overthrowing the unworthy government.<sup>39</sup> That he did recognize the revolutionary implications is clear from this account from Alfred Meißner of a conversation with Richard Wagner in Dresden during September of 1846:

[O]n our very first walk together we spoke at length, but exclusively about politics. Richard Wagner considered the current situation ripe for a total overhaul and looked forward to the radical changes that were soon to take place as something utterly inevitable. The transformation would come about with little effort, for national and social institutions were only outwardly intact. I remember his words exactly: a revolution had already taken place in people's heads, the new Germany was ready and waiting, like a bronze cast that needed only a hammer blow on its clay shell in order for it to emerge. Meanwhile Gutzkow had joined us. He disagreed, stressing the force of lethargy, the power of the old and the fear of the new, the masses' habit of serving and obeying, and the lack of character of the vast majority. He expressed a hundred reservations in that guarded way of his. Wagner lost all control and broke off the discussion with a few well-chosen words.<sup>40</sup>

This account makes several points. It reveals Wagner's revolutionary mind-set. He has a firm belief in the moral *Volk*, as opposed to a *Publikum*, and he has a belief as early as 1846 that the system at large is so fragile that its fall is inevitable. It also places Gutzkow, his opponent at the Dresden theater, in direct opposition to Wagner's view of the *Volk* in that Gutzkow views them as nothing more than a gullible

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<sup>39</sup> Even Hegel viewed Friedrich Barbarossa as an example of his heroic man of history who embodies both the spirit of Germany and the *Weltgeist*, and viewed the downfall of his house owing to the always regressive papacy as a tragedy for all Germany. See: G. F. Hegel *Philosophy of History*, 388-389 and Köhler, *Last of the Titans*, 260.

<sup>40</sup> *Wagner Remembered*. ed. Stewart Spencer (New York: Faber and Faber, 2000), 44. Originally from Alfred Meißner. *Geschichte meines Lebens* (Vienna: Verlag der k.k. Hofbuchhandlung Karl Prochaska: 1884) I. 169-170; and also discussed: in Rudiger Kröhn "The Revolutionary of 1848-1849" trans. Paul Knight in *Wagner Handbook*, 158-159; and Mark Berry uses this same anecdote to stress the same point in *Treacherous Bonds and Laughing Fire*, 40.

*Publikum*. This anecdote also shows Wagner's anger against viewing the people or his audiences as anything but a ripe-for-revolution moral *Volk*.

In the context of this anecdote, Wagner's turn to the German *Volk* becomes clear through his willful change of operatic subject matter to the specifically German historical and legendary, including his attempt to write a spoken drama on the revolutionary subject of Friedrich which he began about a month after this conversation took place. He is appealing to the *Volk* so that they will be inspired to achieve the single hammer blow that will return Germany to an ideal *volkstümlichen Staatsverfassung*,<sup>41</sup> which he saw as an inevitable necessity. This feeling was inspired in him in part by the Germanic populist focus of Heine and Schlegel, and in part by the *Volk* of Saxony themselves who showed themselves ready for his new art by their warm reception of his *Rienzi* and hence the ideal audience – a *Volk*, not a *Publikum* – that he had been searching for. Wagner's description in *Communication to My Friends* of his turning to the study of Germanic legend and history upon his return from France in 1842 becomes clear in this context; it is through the remembrance of the ideal past that an ideal future in the rejection of the present is attainable.<sup>42</sup> His art is a tool to achieve revolution, as much as revolution will itself be a tool to achieve better appreciation of his own art. The choice of turning toward German subject

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<sup>41</sup> A term that he used in *Mein Leben* to describe the pro-*Volk* measures the Saxon king was taking in 1848, such as dismissing his cabinet and hiring known populists in their place. See: *Mein Leben*. ed. Martin Gregor-Dellin (Munich: List, 1963), 374.

<sup>42</sup> PW I, 357 "Since my return to Germany from Paris, my favourite study had been that of ancient German lore. I have already dwelt on the deep longing for my native home that filled me then. This Home, however, in its actual reality, could nowise satisfy my longing; thus I felt that a deeper instinct lay behind my impulse, and one that needs must have its source in some other yearning than merely for the modern homeland. As though to get down to its root, I sank myself into the primal element of Home, that meets us in the legends of a Past which attracts us the more warmly as the Present repels us with its hostile chill. To all our wishes and warm impulses, which in truth transport us to the *Future*, we seek to give a physical token by means of pictures from the Past, and thus to win for them a form the modern Present never can provide."

matter, particularly Friedrich, cannot be separated from his turn to revolution and belief in the *Volk*: they are one and the same.<sup>43</sup>

Looking back then at the Wagner of 1848, who began his work on what would eventually become the *Ring*, we have someone who, in his operas, consistently focused on overcoming fear and surrendering the self to an ideal or a greater good – the second through fourth stages of the Moral Progression. We also have someone with a history of aesthetic-philosophical writing which emphasizes this same progression from the second to the fourth stage with an emphasis, in the Parisian works, on the role of music and its ability to enable the self to abandon selfish living in favor of selfless living. We also have someone who believes the idealized work of art has the ability to push the onlooker into the third stage of the Moral Progression. In short, we have someone who holds to the ideas of his time and employs the Moral Progression in every avenue of his creative output. Being familiar with his “horizon of expectations,” we can examine the works of 1848: Wagner’s speech to the *Vaterlandsverein*, the remaining portion of his *Friedrich I* sketch, and the dramatic elucidations, *Die Wibelungen*, the *Nibelungen Sketch*, *Siegfrieds Tod*, and *Jesus von Nazareth*. These works offer a crucial insight into what sort of artwork Wagner was trying to write, and why he was trying to write it, and as such, place the formative thinking that went into Wagner’s construction of what would become the *Ring* before our eyes.

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<sup>43</sup> James Treadwell gives a similar account of the importance of revolution and the *Volk* in Wagner’s theatrical writings upon his return to Dresden. See: James Treadwell. *Interpreting Wagner*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 53.

## Chapter 2. Morals and Revolutionary Message in the Artistic Projects

### *Friedrich I, Die Wibelungen, the Nibelung Sketch, and Jesus von Nazareth*

#### A – *Friedrich I*

As Ernest Newman explained long ago, there is a direct connection between Friedrich's conception of kingship and Wagner's in his *Vaterlandsverein* speech of the ideal king who gives himself up to become the spiritual embodiment of the *Volk*, and whose only concern is not for himself, but for the *Volk*. Wagner's model of this ideal prince in his speech is as follows:

And who is more called to be the *truest, faithfulest* Republican, than just the *Prince*. Res Publica means: the affairs of the nation [*Volkssache*]. What individual can be more destined than the Prince, to belong with all his feelings, all his thoughts and actions, *entirely to the Folk's affairs*? Once persuaded of his glorious calling, what could move him to belittle himself, to cast in his lot with one exclusive smaller section of his Folk? (Aristocracy) However warmly each of us may respond to feelings for the good of all, so pure a Republican as the Prince can he never be, for his cares are undivided [*seine Sorgen theilen sich nie*]: their eye is single to the One, the Whole; whilst each of us must by necessity divide and parcel out his cares, to meet the wants of every day.

The appearance of *Sorge* here is important. The king does not experience worry or fear for himself, but only for the state and its people. This is consistent with Wagner's earlier heroic conceptions both of his own fearlessness and unwillingness to compromise on artistic ideals, and with that fearlessness and Hegelian heroic characteristic found in his heroines. Wagner had already created an ideal king along these lines in *Lohengrin*: Henry the Fowler. He comes to Brabant to remind his citizens of their duty to the state and to collect an army for its protection. But upon seeing the problems of Brabant he immediately addresses not the duty of the citizens

of Brabant to the state, but his own duty to them as sovereign; putting on hold all other issues until this is resolved. In this way the marginalizing of the Henry the Fowler plot thread is in fact what shows him to be the first of the folk and the ideal king that he is. In *Friedrich I*, the Kaiser declares the same: “Ihr *sorgt* für euch allein, der Kaiser kennt nur die *Sorge* für euch alle.” [Each of you care for yourselves alone, the Kaiser knows only care for you all.]<sup>44</sup> The Kaiser knows no fear for himself alone, the characteristic which Wagner values above all; Friedrich is above fear for himself; he worries and concerns himself only with the state and its people.

The watch-phrase for kingship and heroes is “fearless self-sacrifice for the benefit of the *Volk*.” But perhaps most fascinating about this speech is what the king becomes upon giving himself up to his people. Wagner describes him:

At the head of the Free State (the republic) the hereditary King will be exactly what he should be, in the noblest meaning of his title [*Fürst*]: the First of his Folk, the Freest of the Free! Would not this be alike the fairest commentary upon Christ’s saying: ‘All whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all’? Inasmuch as he serves the freedom of all, in his person he raises the concept of Freedom itself to the loftiest, to a God-implanted consciousness [*götterfüllten Bewußtsein*].<sup>45</sup>

In relinquishing his ego for the benefit of the state he raises this freedom of all, or community to a *götterfüllten Bewußtsein*. If that seems like a familiar notion from Wagner, it is because we heard it from the mouth of Beethoven in *Pilgrimage to Beethoven*, who described a “godly consciousness” being attained by listening to a music that combines instrumental and vocal and so enables the heart to take unto itself primordial feelings, comprehending them. This is supplemented in R’s Credo at the end of *An End in Paris* by the self-sacrifice which occurs in those who, upon hearing

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<sup>44</sup> SS XI. 271. This translation is a slight alteration from Newman’s in *Life of Wagner* II 23, “...the Kaiser’s care is for you all,” but it is an important distinction. (Emphasis mine)

<sup>45</sup> PW IV. 144. Stewart Spencer holds a similar view of the *Vaterlandsverein* speech to that described here, and offers further connections between the speech and the ideas of Kant and Schlegel among others. See: *Wagner Remembered*, 59-60.

true music, gladly give themselves up in favor of union with others who can hear and in union with the Goddess of Music herself. A consistent picture emerges: self-sacrifice and union with others, whether it be in listening to art, in a performance, or in the field of politics, is a noble and moral act for Wagner.

Both *A Communication to My Friends* and *My Life* describe the timeline and motivation behind working on *Friedrich I*, *Die Wibelungen*, and *Siegfried*. After his reorganization of the Saxon theater was rejected – in part owing to his speech before the *Vaterlandsverein* – he began work on *Friedrich I*. He then followed this with a work on history, myth, and kingship called *Die Wibelungen*, and it was *Die Wibelungen* which ultimately convinced him to abandon the historical drama in favor of myth and his *Siegfried* project. According to his *My Life* description, which it should be noted was written after having completed the full *Ring* poem, the primary problem he wanted to address in *Friedrich I* was as follows:

The idea of a ruler was to be grasped here in its most powerful and momentous significance; his dignified resignation at the impossibility of realizing his highest ideals was to lead, while arousing sympathy for the hero as well, to a true insight into the manifold complexity of all action in the world.<sup>46</sup>

In short, he is describing the attainment of the realization between the second and third stages of the Moral Progression: the relinquishing of desire upon the realization that not all of the goals can be attained. He concludes this passage with a very short description, not an explanation, of his abandonment of the subject of Friedrich in favor of Siegfried.

My interest in carrying out the massive plan, however, was at once overborne by the more powerful attraction exerted upon me by the Nibelungen and Siegfried legends, in their mythic treatment of material that struck me as somewhat similar. At first, the points of similarity I had discovered in history

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<sup>46</sup> *My Life*, 376

and legend induced me to write an essay on the subject, wherein a number of monographs I found in the Royal Library by people whose names I have forgotten helped and stimulated me by providing attractive insights into the ancient German conception of kingship. I later published this longish essay, which signaled my abandonment, once and for all, of any desire to adapt historical subjects to spoken drama, under the title *Die Wibelungen*.<sup>47</sup>

He simply states that the basic themes in the history of Friedrich and the legend of Siegfried were the same, and after analyzing this through his essay *Die Wibelungen*, he chose to go with Siegfried.

His description of this change in *A Communication to My Friends* is a bit more detailed, but retains the overall purpose: to portray the drama of someone reaching too high and failing to achieve their goals, and examining the reasons why. He explains:

In order to make plainly understandable both my hero [Friedrich] and the relations that with giant force he strives to master, only to be at last subdued by them, I should have felt compelled to adopt the method of Mythos, in the very teeth of the historic material: the vast mass of incidents and intricate associations, whereof no single link could be omitted if the connection of the whole was to be intelligibly set before the eye, was adapted neither to the form, nor to the spirit of Drama. Had I chosen to comply with the imperative demands of History, then had my drama become an unsurveyable conglomerate of pictured incidents, entirely crowding out from view the real and only thing I wished to show; and thus, as artist, I should have met precisely the same fate in my drama as did its hero: to wit, I should myself have been crushed by the weight of the very *relations* that I fain would master, i.e., portray, without ever having brought my *purpose* to an understanding; just as Friedrich could not bring his *will* to carrying-out.”<sup>48</sup>

What Wagner leaves unsaid is that historical dramas are limited by the reality or perceived reality of the historical events while myths are not. Clearly, to fully understand the reasoning behind the switch from Friedrich to Siegfried it will be necessary to look at Wagner’s conception of the dramas, and their connection in *Die Wibelungen*.

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<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.* 376.

<sup>48</sup> PW I. 359-360.

## B – Early *Die Wibelungen*

There are some problems with the essay quite apart from Wagner’s “creative” use of research. As Newman said,

It is almost impossible to condense the nebulous haze of Wagner’s argument... His interpretation of history is often fantastic; the connection between the various elements of the picture he paints is sometimes not apparent to any eye but his own.<sup>49</sup>

The problem is that Wagner rewrote the essay after a year of new influences to his thinking. He originally began in the summer of 1848 with one basic purpose: to state the connection between Friedrich and Siegfried through their mutual inheritance of kingly authority, denoted by the winning of their respective hoards or treasures. But he didn’t decide to publish the essay until September of 1849, after the Dresden uprising and his essay *Art and Revolution* had been published. So he attempted to bring his *Die Wibelungen* more in line with his Proudhonian conceptions from *Art and Revolution* and his recent change to a Feuerbachian world-view after reading *Thoughts on Death and Immortality* in late July and early August of 1849. In a letter to Uhlig from September 16, 1849, Wagner cites two places where changes are particularly evident. The first is in the third chapter where Wagner, under the influence of Feuerbach, dismisses both religion and saga as the products of the *Volk*’s search for the true meaning of the purely human, to portray the essence of the *Volk* to

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<sup>49</sup> Newman. *The Life of Richard Wagner*. II. 20. Perhaps no work of Wagner’s is disrespected by Wagner scholars quite as much as *Die Wibelungen*. Often it is excluded from any meaningful discussion of the origins of the Ring text, as it is in Dahlhaus’s *Richard Wagner Music Dramas*, and Darcy’s *Wagner’s “Das Rheingold”* to name two of many; and when it is mentioned it tends to be associated with phrases like “the craziest of all the writings from this period” as it is in Treadwell’s *Interpreting Wagner* or “bewildering” as it is in Mark Berry’s *Treacherous Bonds and Laughing Fire*. Robert Gutman and Joachim Köhler stand out in their view that *Die Wibelungen* is an important precedent that offers insight not only into the *Ring*, but *Parsifal* as well. See Gutman. *Richard Wagner: The Man, His Mind, and His Music*: “Despite the turgid prose a reader with knowledge of the completed cycle of Wagner’s masterworks is thrilled to perceive in this essay what the struggling young genius could himself only dimly apprehend, the unparalleled path that lay before him from *Rheingold* to *Parsifal*.” (120) and Köhler. *Richard Wagner: Last of the Titans* (particularly 250-255).

itself.<sup>50</sup> The second is the final chapter, which is a seeming negation of all that has come before, by a Proudhonian rejection of the evils of property – including the literal hoard-grail which Friedrich found and keeps in his mountain Kyffhäuser. In 1848, Wagner thought that when Friedrich found the hoard-grail that will give him, when he will return to the world from Kyffhäuser, the right to be the undisputed spiritual and temporal ruler of the world, it would be assumed that it was he whom the world was seeking. It was he Wagner invoked in the opening passage to the essay, “I was occupied with the reawakening of Friedrich the Red-beard, so longed for by so many.”<sup>51</sup> But by the time of the September 1849 published edition, Wagner had come

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<sup>50</sup> PW VII, 266. See Feuerbach’s idea: God represents love of man, the community at its essence depicts the love of man, God is the portrayal of the essence of the community. (See Part I, Feuerbach Notes 388, 393, 394) George Windell has approximated that Wagner became associated with Feuerbach sometime between March 1848 and May 1849, which is a rather large window. Robert Petsch in his article “Der Ring des Nibelungen in seinen Beziehungen zur griechischen Tragödie und zur zeitgenössischen Philosophie” opens the door for an earlier association of Wagner with Feuerbach by noting that there was an article by Kuno Fischer written in 1848 which summarized Feuerbach’s philosophy in the same journal – *Die Akademie* – which contained an article by the editor Arnold Ruge, “Die Religion unserer Zeit,” which Wagner used as the basis for his discussions of the history of religion in *Art and Revolution*. Petsch assumes that if Wagner had just leafed through the rest of the periodical which included this article he would have come across Fischer’s summary of Feuerbach. (See: Robert Petsch “Der Ring des Nibelungen in seinen Beziehungen zur griechischen Tragödie und zur zeitgenössischen Philosophie” *Richard Wagner Jahrbuch* II (1907), 284-332, especially 308). Wagner’s “Annals” however, paint a different, more specific picture, which is consistent with Paul Rose’s early August date (Paul Lawrence Rose. *Wagner: Race and Revolution*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 58). Slightly after “Beginning of July: to Zürich” he writes “Out of Touch with Minna – Feuerbach Death and immortality – ‘Art and Revolution’”. Sent to Leipzig, to Wigand – Revise ‘The Wibelungen’ End August letter from Minna. Conciliatory. Announcing arrival.” (*The Diary of Richard Wagner: The Brown Book*. annotated Joachim Bergfeld. trans. George Bird. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 98). The last letter before getting out of touch with Minna was dated July 23 1849. *Art and Revolution* was sent to Liszt in Weimar on August 4<sup>th</sup> along with an envelope for Liszt to send the essay to Wigand in Leipzig and a letter to go on to Wigand requesting works of Feuerbach other than *Thoughts on Death and Immortality*. The revisions of *Wibelungen* were completed before September 16<sup>th</sup>, as Wagner sent the completed version along with an envelope addressed to Wigand and the original draft to Uhlig on that date. September 16<sup>th</sup> is also the first mention of an “Artwork of the Future” project, implying not only that Wagner read Feuerbach’s *Philosophy of Future*, but was already writing an homage to it. So if Wagner’s reading of *Thoughts on Death and Immortality* is accurately chronologically depicted here, as it seems to be, then he read it between July 23, 1849 and August 4, 1849. Of course it is possible that he could have been acquainted with Feuerbach’s main ideas through the *Zeitgeist* as is bound to happen with popular works such as Feuerbach’s, but if the “Annals” are reliable then he didn’t read the book itself until the end of July to the beginning of August.

<sup>51</sup> See: PW VII, 258. For the original ending to *Die Wibelungen*, see: SS XII, 229.

to believe that the entire basis for Friedrich's rulership was made false because the hoard really amounted to the concept of ownership and property, which is immoral.<sup>52</sup>

This frustrating inconsistency of glorifying the return of Friedrich – because he found the hoard-grail – and simultaneously telling us that the hoard-grail is not the basis for leadership makes the contributions gleaned from an examination of *Die Wibelungen* spurious when examined as a whole. With a selective eye, however, the original aspects of the essay can be observed and separated from the later additions which belong squarely to the time of the revolutionary writings.<sup>53</sup>

The essay opens with a chapter on the concept of Ur-kinghood. The king had been in ancient times an ideal self-sacrificing hero-king who obeyed not his own will, but the will of his people:

The King accordingly was left with little more than the application and execution of the god's decree, as rendered by the members of the commune, in the equal interest of all and pursuant to the customs of the tribe.<sup>54</sup>

This same concept of ancient kingship appears at the end of his *Vaterlandsverein* speech. Speaking of the ideal self-sacrificing republican king who Wagner hopes will come and give way to true republicanism, he says that this idea of kingship is not new, but rather is the original idea of kingship:

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<sup>52</sup> This is not to say that Wagner was not aware of Proudhon at the time of his beginning *Die Wibelungen*. On the contrary, as Appendix B – P.J. Proudhon shows, there are numerous aspects of Proudhon's philosophy throughout the *Vaterlandsverein* speech, as well as Wagner's own admission that Röckel had convinced him of the rightness of Proudhon's ideas before 1849. So as not to be seen as cherry-picking I will explain that I draw the line between the newer conception of *Die Wibelungen* and the older conception at least regarding Proudhon's influence, specifically at the final association of the hoard with property and as such the dismissal of all modern kingly authority. This was a view Wagner did not hold in the *Vaterlandsverein* speech, whereas he did hold that the king would sublimate his will to that of the people in the speech (which will be discussed in further detail below), a point similar to Proudhon's conception of Ur-kingship, and so as a repletion of an idea from early summer 1848: "Its chiefs, legislators, or kings have devised nothing, supposed nothing, imagined nothing. They have only guided society by their accumulated experience, always however in conformity with opinions and beliefs." ("What is Property?" 252). I see no inconsistency with placing this idea in *Wibelungen* among his earlier writings of this essay.

<sup>53</sup> A chapter by chapter analysis would be beyond the scope of this work, but the important highlights of the early scheme of the work will be mentioned.

<sup>54</sup> PW VII. 261.

The farther back we search among Germanic nations for the Kinghood's meaning, the more intimately will it fit this new-won meaning, and prove it strictly naught but re-established; the historic cycle of the Kinghood's evolution will have reached at last its goal, have rounded back upon itself, and we shall have to look on *Monarchism*, that foreign and un-German notion, as the farthest aberration from that goal.<sup>55</sup>

So Wagner was merely continuing along this train of thought from the speech.

The association of Siegfried's story with Friedrich's by Wagner makes the original conception of Friedrich clearer. Wagner describes Siegfried's legend only briefly. Siegfried is a key player, the first player in the eternal battle between good and evil. He, as God of Light, slays the dragon of night which had previously ruled the world and becomes the first human king or the first of a line of (W)Nibelung kings<sup>56</sup>, bringing light and goodness back into the world, and ruling the world with his inheritance, the hoard; but ultimately, Siegfried is himself slain by the product, the descendants of that evil. What Siegfried achieved was the first swing of the pendulum, and because the pendulum is now in motion the possibility to regain control of the world from chaos and evil is always open, and it is from this possibility that kings, emperors, and popes are able to rule. Part of his legacy is that all reigns, all Nibelungen who follow in his footsteps, will not last forever and are left unfulfilled in some way; the pendulum always swings back. This is the reason for Wagner's prefacing of the second chapter with the description:

The ceaseless strain of men and races toward never-encompassed goals will mostly find a clearer explanation in their Ur- and Stem-sagas than can be gathered from their entrance into naked History, which tells us but the consequences of their essential attributes. If we read the Stem-saga of the

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<sup>55</sup> PW IV. 144.

<sup>56</sup> Edward Haymes has shown that Wagner got the association between Ns and Ws as well as the German Emperors, particularly the Hohenstaufen, being Nibelungs from Grimm's *Teutonic Mythology*. See: Edward Haymes. "Richard Wagner and the *Altergermanisten: Die Wibelungen* and Franz Joseph Mone." In *Re-Reading Wagner* ed. Reinhold Grimm and Jost Hermand (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1993) 29-30.

Frankish royal race aright, we find therein an explanation of its historic deeds past anything obtainable on other paths of scrutiny.<sup>57</sup>

He is saying that the reason why the pendulum of history is always swinging and good deeds and noble plans last only temporarily and go unfulfilled dates back to the beginning of the Ur- and Stem-sagas, to the first king of the Nibelungs, Siegfried.

It is in this context that Friedrich's unfulfilled goals should be viewed. *Die Wibelungen* describes Friedrich, as representative of the Nibelung, now Wibelung-Wibeling, kingship, on one side of the pendulum of power and authority: the side that relates to earthly authority. The other side has two aspects; one is spiritual authority in the form of the pope, and the other is stemless baseless earthly authority in the form of the Welf. For Wagner the Welf represents the authority that comes not from the *Volk*, where the Wibelungs get their authority, but from the stem-less lords or aristocracy which side against the ideal *Volk*-ish Wibelung-Wibeling kingship.<sup>58</sup> The Welfs are the aristocracy against which Wagner speaks in the *Vaterlandsverein* speech as well as the leaders of the modern fiefdoms like Prussia and Austria who are moving against the will of the *Volk* by preventing a united Germany to emerge because of their own selfish interests. Germany, as long as the Welfs are in control, will only ever be divided and ruled by those who will never achieve the will of the people.<sup>59</sup> The last line of the original ending alludes to this necessary downfall of Prussia and Austria if the hoard and freedom is to be returned to the people. Friedrich exclaims: "Two ravens fly around my mountain – they have made themselves fat

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<sup>57</sup> PW VII. 262.

<sup>58</sup> See especially: PW VII. 270-271.

<sup>59</sup> Wagner goes over a specific plan to limit the populations of all German states to 3-6 million, thus forcing Prussia and Austria to surrender some of their land, in order to better integrate all German states into a united Germany in a letter to Franz Wigard from May 19, 1848. (*Selected Letters of Richard Wagner*, 139.) This passage from *Die Wibelungen* is an allusion to this plan.

from the[ir] ravashing of the Reich! One pecks away at it from the South-east, the other from the North-east: hunt down these ravens and the hoard will be yours.”<sup>60</sup>

Friedrich’s drama begins with his stated goal, absolute rulership over the earthly and spiritual realms which would finally stop the swinging pendulum. He is able to defeat the Welf Henry, but not the pope with whom a treaty must be made. In his attempt to take up the position of both spiritual and earthly ruler he goes to the Holy Land, where true Christianity will side with him against the Catholic Church and the pope.<sup>61</sup> To this end he seeks the hoard-grail first in Palestine and then further east in India. On the way he “ascends into the Grail” and now sleeps in his mountain with the hoard-grail waiting to come back to Germany, having achieved the fusion of spiritual and earthly leadership. Hence he will become the Wibelung Stem-king once more, that figure in whom the spirit of Christ and Siegfried had lived, ruling through the voice of the *Volk*.<sup>62</sup>

This is the parallel that Wagner saw between Siegfried and Friedrich: Friedrich was Siegfried’s heir, and embodied an historical form, or “relation” as Wagner said, of the original pure ideal form of this drama found in the story of Siegfried and the dragon. So it was from this basic shell story, outlined in *Die*

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<sup>60</sup> SS XII, 229.

<sup>61</sup> Wagner here says the German *Volk* associated Siegfried (God of Light and Good) with Jesus. That way, Jesus’s rebellion against Judaism became another version of Siegfried’s rebellion against the Night, an analogy Wagner was quick to make, and this also placed Jesus as the first Stem-king or Wibelungen. According to this logic, Christianity would more quickly side with the Stem-king, than with the Church. “Fidelity and attachment were transferred to Christ all the more easily, as one recognised in him the Stem-god once again; and if Christ, as Son of God, was father (at least the spiritual father) of *all* men, that harmonised the better and more conclusively with the divine Stem-father of the Franks, who thought themselves indeed the oldest race and parent of all others. Christianity therefore, with their incomplete and physical understanding of it, would rather strengthen the Franks in their national faith, particularly against the Roman Church” (PW VII. 287.) See also Köhler. *Richard Wagner: Last of the Titans*. 161 “Wagner clearly already conceived of an original Aryan Christianity, deriving from the Aryan homelands in India, and envisaged the Holy Grail as signifying the power that granted the Aryan race a peculiar immortality. This immortality, which may be construed as racial, had been lost by the Germans on account of their defeat by the false Christianity of the Church. The Grail was the symbol of the eventual redemption of the German people and the restoration of their true Aryan Christianity, and with it their immortality.”

<sup>62</sup> SS XII, 229.

*Wibelungen*, that Wagner began when setting the Siegfried story and Nibelung legend. It bears a striking resemblance to the Moral Progression. The story begins with the defeat of the forces of darkness and evil by fearless Siegfried, which lead to his ideal universal rule over the world as Nibelung king. Wagner continues with the problem of keeping this happy existence permanently because of the ever swinging pendulum. He observes the swinging pendulum as seen in the story of Friedrich's life. And the story is concluded with the final conquering of the pendulum by the forces of good embodied by the return of Friedrich – who embodies the same heroic element as Siegfried and so is called by Wagner: Friedrich-Siegfried.

#### C – *Nibelung Sketch* and Some Aspects of *Siegfrieds Tod*

Taking a pause from *Die Wibelungen*, he prepared an outline of the world in which his Siegfried drama would take place. His *Nibelung Sketch for a Drama* was completed on October 4<sup>th</sup> 1848, and it incorporates ideas from his *Die Wibelungen* already sketched out, as well as from his mythological studies. With the *Nibelung Sketch*, he wanted to show how the pendulum's swing could finally be halted. He had associated this idea, the end of strife and the beginning of universality, with the ideal government through the ideal king who embodied not his own will, but the will and spirit of his *Volk*. So the end of the pendulum swing would come with the end of the hoard, which was the reason the pendulum kept swinging. The hoard as a symbol for authority would have to be abandoned for a universal peace, happiness, and joy. It is with this in mind that he differentiated the true power and the symbol of the hoard into its two sides in *Die Wibelungen*. Wagner cryptically explains that the source of the true power of the hoard and the earthly authority it entails lies in “*the Earth itself*

with all its splendour, which in joyous shining of the Sun at dawn of day we recognise as our possession to enjoy,”<sup>63</sup> but this only becomes the symbol for power after the powers of Night and darkness “that held its ghostly gloomy dragon’s wings spread fearsomely above the world’s rich store” has been routed. As long as the world lives under the dark shadowy wings of the dragon, humanity will live in fear of its tyrannical worldly authority, but once this fear is overcome and the dragon slain, and the worldly authority sees the sun after being hidden underneath the dragon’s wings, it is shared and enjoyed by all. Again, Wagner stresses a parable about freedom from fear leading to moral freedom and equality. The hoard must not be under the controlling shadow of any one thing, but it must be free to be enjoyed by all. Now Wagner had his solution, a transfiguration of the hoard from its state under the dragon’s wing of evil to the open air and equality.

In his search for a face of evil before the dragon he finds the Black-elves of Scandinavian mythology coming from a place with a name resembling Nibelung, “Nifelheim,” which Wagner translates as Nebelheim, i.e., “foghome”: a place devoid of the “moral” light of day. They are the smelters of swords and gold deep within the earth, and they are the “children of Night.”

These Black-elves, ‘Niflûngar,’ children of Night and Death, burrow the earth, find out its inner treasures, smelt and smith its ore: golden gear and keen-edged weapons are their work. Now we find the name of ‘Nibelungen,’ their treasures, arms and trinkets, again in the Frankish stem-saga, but with the distinction that the idea originally shared by all the German stems has here evolved to ethical historic import.<sup>64</sup>

So Wagner gained from this source the origin of the dragon’s hoard: the Black-elves, the first smelters of treasure, born from the same mother Night as the dragon itself.

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<sup>63</sup> PW VII. 276. This view, as Borchmeyer rightly noted, is the same view of the Gold in the Rhine as that held by the Rhinemaidens in *Das Rheingold* and in the final version of *Siegfrieds Tod*, *Götterdämmerung* revised in 1853. See: Dieter Borchmeyer *Richard Wagner: Theory and Theater*, 378.

<sup>64</sup> PW VII. 276.

Moreover, this gold came from nature: a double sided nature. From the darker perspective at the beginning of the *Nibelung Sketch*, nature is referred to as a corpse and the digging and smelting Nibelungs are its worms.<sup>65</sup> But from the point of view of the ideal longed-for hoard under no wing but shining to all in the light of day, the treasure is the earth itself – no longer viewed as a lifeless corpse, but a joyous giver of life. So the history of the hoard in the sketch is as follows: it was once part of nature, the dragon of Night and her servants the Nibelungs took it away from nature for selfish gain, Siegfried freed it from the dragon, and now in the sketch Brünnhilde will give it back to the earth, transforming it into the basis for the ideal republic. His Siegfried story would then not just tell the story of the first overcoming of evil, but its ultimate overcoming, the stopping of the pendulum. The ring would return to nature and as such worldly authority would be shared by all in the light of day under no authoritarian shadow. It would be a roadmap for how to change the world and create an ideal government. Thus it would be immediately applicable to the revolutionaries interested in changing the world.

But where does the rest of the myth fit into this schema? There are numerous possibilities in interpretations of the Nibelung myth for the marginalized Giants, Nibelungs, and Gods, as they ultimately play minor roles in the drama as a whole, roles that are shifted fundamentally by the time of the completed *Das Rheingold* in 1852. Most scholarship avoids a detailed analysis of their roles. In the sketch, the Gods are the arbiters of law. They essentially take over authority of the world from the Giants in exchange for the hoard and ring of Alberich; and though they ultimately rule the world from the time of the creation of the fortress, their desire for a rule entirely based on “moral consciousness” causes them to be sickened by their use of

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<sup>65</sup> PW VII. 301.

cunning and strategy to obtain the hoard and ring by which they purchased their means of world rule, just as they are sickened by the servitude of the Nibelungs which they could not prevent. They desire only to see this moral consciousness become the categorical imperative for all life by an undoing or a setting right of the wronging of the unfree Nibelungs:

In high emprise the Gods have planned the world, bound down the elements by prudent laws, and devoted themselves to the most careful nurture of the human race. Their strength stands over all. Yet the peace by which they have arrived at mastery does not repose on reconciliation: by violence and cunning was it wrought. The object of their higher ordering of the world is moral consciousness: but the wrong they fight attaches to themselves. From the depths of Nibelheim the conscience of their guilt cries up to them: for the bondage of the Nibelungen is not broken: merely the lordship has been wrenched from Alberich, and not for any higher end: but the soul, the freedom of the Nibelungen lies buried uselessly beneath the belly of an idle Worm: Alberich thus has justice in his complaints against the Gods.<sup>66</sup>

Wagner describes the Giants as a race which is, “boastful, violent, ur-begotten,” but simultaneously worried about the future:

[The race of Giants] is troubled in its savage ease: their monstrous strength, their simple mother wit, no longer are a match for Alberich’s crafty plans of conquest: alarmed they see the Nibelungen forging wondrous weapons, that one day in the hands of human heroes shall cause the Giants’ downfall.<sup>67</sup>

They are immediate products of nature and portray this consciousness-less right up until they are awakened from it through fear of their own demise, and do not know how to combat it. When the fear is quelled through their winning of the hoard, they return to intellectual and literal slumber, guard the hoard with a dragon, and atrophy.

Wagner describes the race of Dwarves unflatteringly as worms crawling through the carcass of the earth. They smithed and smelted but merely for trinkets until Alberich stole the gold, smelted the ring, and discovered the secret to domination

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<sup>66</sup> PW VII. 302.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.* 302.

of his race. After this, they served the lord of the ring by making weapons for an eventual conquest by Alberich, until the ring and hoard were stolen by the Gods and given to Giants as a form of payment for their castle. Now they too wait to be freed, unable to work without command, unable to obey their own wills without freedom. They are trapped, and the system of the world, the Gods' authority, is built upon their being trapped.

The Giants and the Gods have no individual characters among them; Wotan is the only God mentioned by name, and is representative of all Gods, and there are no individual Giants. The Nibelungs have Alberich and his brother Reigin-Mime who are schemers willing to use any tool at their disposal to get the ring and rule the Nibelungs, but the other Nibelungs are an innocent amorphous mass character waiting and longing to be freed. Because there are few characters in these three groups, the groups themselves have often, rightly, been taken as allegorical ideas, mostly political. The original myths themselves offer no air-tight description of any one group. The Giants and Gods are in constant battle with each other throughout all of time and each use planning, scheming and violence in their battles with the other. Wagner's intellectual Gods and stupid Giants do not stem from mythology. Shaw, in his description of *Das Rheingold*, classified them in political allegorical terms as the "three classes of men"; the Dwarves are the instinctive, predatory, lustful, greedy people; the Giants are the patient, toiling, stupid, respectful, money-worshipping people; and the Gods are the intellectual, moral, talented people who devise and administer states and churches.<sup>68</sup> But the description doesn't quite fit. Alberich might fit Shaw's description, but the other Dwarves are the reason the Gods feel guilty; they are pawns in this affair. Wagner describes the Giants as "violent and

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<sup>68</sup> *The Selected Prose of Bernard Shaw*. "The Perfect Wagnerite" [1898] (New York: Dodd, Mead and Co: 1954), 237.

boastful,” which seems to be the opposite of “patient and respectful.” Ellis comes a little closer to the mark by describing the Dwarves as the proletariat working class, the Giants as the “landed aristocracy or idle rich” and the Gods as the princes. But this view goes against Wagner’s conception in *Die Wibelungen* in which the aristocracy came about later than the princes, while here the Giants are “ur-begotten,” and the Gods are the newer race waiting for their chance to rule; so it is unlikely Wagner would have thought of it this way. Dahlhaus, like Ellis, describes the Dwarves as the proletariat, but doesn’t offer a further description of the other two races, noting only that the Gods also have something to fear from Alberich and are not just taking advantage of the Giants’ fear.<sup>69</sup> So the Gods, at least in part, fit the description so offered by Shaw, but nothing else quite fits.

In the *Nibelung Sketch*, the Gods do have fears, not born from the strength of the Nibelungs, however, but from the prophecy of their “downfall” or mortality if they keep the ring: “Wotan yields to the counsel of the three Fates (Norns), who warn him of the downfall of the Gods themselves.” Later, Siegfried explains that in a battle for the survival of the Gods which will take place sometime in the distant future, they will not win without his help: “[O]ne day the Gods will be battling in bitter fear. To the Gods it is a benefit, if they are worrying, that I will at that time battle with them.”<sup>70</sup> As long as Siegfried, the hero partly of their own making, and partly of his

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<sup>69</sup> Carl Dahlhaus. *Richard Wagner’s Music Dramas*. trans. Mary Whittall (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 87, 88.

<sup>70</sup> PW VII. 308. There are many who misinterpret the following line of Siegfried’s to the Wasserfrauen from this same scene in order to push their agenda that somehow Wagner had already assumed at the time of writing this that Siegfried would eventually conquer the Gods: “Zeiget ihr mir die Möglichkeit, die Götter zu bewältigen, *so müßte ich nach meinem Mute sie bekämpfen*. Drei weisere Frauen, als ihr seid, kenne ich; die wissen, wo die Götter einst in banger Sorge streiten werden. Zu der Götter Frommen ist es, wenn sie sorgen, dass ich dann mit ihnen kämpfe.” [italics mine]. The bottom line is Siegfried has no illusions about conquering the Gods, and is merely describing his nature to the mermaids in that he will not yield to fear. As he says in the next line, he will side with them and is not against them, but because he is fearless his very nature [Mut] *requires* him not to back down from any enemy no matter how certain his demise may be. His language “I would be required to make war upon them because of my character” makes this clear: it portrays his blind courage and inability not to show

own because of his free will, is with them – by which is meant he upholds free will and their high moral ideals, they fear nothing – even the possibility that they may no longer exist as a result of him:

In man they therefore seek to plant their own divinity, to raise his strength so high that in full knowledge of that strength, he may rid him of the gods' protection, to do of his free will what his own mind inspires. So the Gods bring up man for this high destiny, to be the canceler of their own guilt; *and their aim would be attained even if in this human creation they annulled themselves, that is to say, if in the freedom of man's conscience they had to divest themselves of their influence.*<sup>71</sup>

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his inner nature, but it foreshadows nothing about the end of the Gods. This line is often used as evidence to back up the false interpretation of the passage explored in Note 71 below.

<sup>71</sup> This passage is one of the most often misinterpreted in all of Wagner's writings, and the misinterpretation is a philosophical-grammatical one performed by, among others, Dahlhaus – who should have known better. The passage reads “und ihre Absicht würde erreicht sein, wenn sie in dieser Menschenschöpfung sich selbst vernichten, nämlich in der Freiheit des menschlichen Bewusstseins ihres unmittelbaren Einflusses sich selbst begeben müssten“. It does not read „ihre Absicht *wird erreicht worden sein*, wenn sie in dieser Menschen...etc.“ as Dahlhaus seems to think it reads. It is unclear why Dahlhaus's view has been so readily accepted though it is clearly based on a false interpretation of the sentence. In Dahlhaus's lengthiest work of the subject, the chapter “Über den Schluss der Götterdämmerung” from *Richard Wagner: Werk und Wirkung* (Regensburg: Gustav Bosse Verlag, 1971): 97-115, he explains that the line ought to be interpreted in this manner because it is consistent with Wagner's Feuerbachian “religious-psychological desire for self-annihilation” and with his politics from the *Vaterlandsverein* speech. Speaking of the speech he says that, “the monarch should rule, but as a republican, i.e., on the basis of his self-annihilation as monarch.” (100) But even if we agree with this interpretation of the message of the speech, the basic problem is that according to Dahlhaus' version of the line from the *Nibelung Sketch*, the Gods must not rule, even nominally as non-deity republicans, as their ideal moral aim will only be achieved when the Gods play no role and have no influence over man, which is not the case even with Dahlhaus's ruling republican monarch who might no longer be a monarch, but certainly still rules. But as we know, Wagner felt, at the time of the speech, that the people must be ruled, and ruled by one who is capable of putting his interests above and beyond the monarch's own, which no individual is capable of doing or group of individuals is capable of doing as effectively as the ideal monarch. The ideal ruler, according to the speech, would be one who rules entirely for the benefit of his subjects, which is exactly the way the *Nibelung Sketch* and the first ending of *Siegfrieds Tod* end, with the rulership of Wotan in his role as guiltless God who believes, as this line in question shows according the literal interpretation, that humanity, the people, are more important than the Gods and as an ideal monarch he would be willing to sacrifice himself for their benefit. So Dahlhaus's interpretation is inconsistent with the actual message of the *Vaterlandsverein* speech. As for the influence of Feuerbach, we know that Wagner had not yet read Feuerbach as of the writing of the *Nibelung Sketch*; this would, however, not keep him from having a “Feuerbachian” association with morality and self-annihilation, as we have seen from Part I above. But this self-annihilation is reserved for beings going through a process of moral growth, particularly in the glorious culmination of this process, not conceptual Gods such as those in the *Nibelung Sketch*. Moral growth for them serves no function, so this reason for his interpretation does not hold water either.

But perhaps, at its most basic level, the English speaking world has flocked to this view of the line because it is comparatively clearer than Ellis's first translation of it in PW VII published in 1898 “and their aim would be attained even if in this human creation they should perforce annul themselves, that is, must part with their immediate influence through freedom of man's conscience” (303, though Ellis changed this to the slightly clearer translation, quoted above, in *Life of Richard Wagner III*, 447 in 1903). Compare this to Dahlhaus-Whittall: “their purpose will have been achieved when they have destroyed themselves in this human creation, namely when they have had to surrender their direct influence, faced with the freedom of the human consciousness.” (*Richard Wagner's Music Dramas*,

Freedom and their ideals are of highest import, not the lives of the Gods themselves. So they don't have a sense of self-preservation that makes them fear; they only have cares for the world and their ideals. If Wotan had not given up the ring, then not only would he have stolen the ring, but he would have made an enemy of the Giants and made the Nibelungs slaves to his will, both of which would have been antithetical to the moral consciousness which the Gods wish to be the law by which the world is ruled. In essence, the Gods, though still living, would have negated the purpose of their own existence and their ideals by keeping the ring; thus they gave it to the Giants so that they would not be negated and so prevented their end.

With this in mind, perhaps abandoning the political language in favor of the philosophical will bear more fruit. The first rulers of the world are the Giants and they rule by strength alone. When they are faced with the threat of extinction they are incapable of the reasoning necessary to prevent it and go to the Gods in order to solve their problem. The fear of death has paralyzed them and they will do anything, including building a castle from which the Gods can rule the world, displacing them as rulers, in order to prevent their own deaths. The rule of the giants fits perfectly into the first stage of the Moral Progression; they are *Urgeschaffenen*: created directly from nature, living by instinct alone, incapable of reasoning and long range planning, and they rule the world by force.<sup>72</sup> They are the natural men of Rousseau without

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93), in which the clearer sense of the phrase won out despite its erroneous grammatical interpretation of the past subjunctive as the future perfect passive and faulty reasoning behind the interpretation.

It might also be worth considering that Dahlhaus in his interpretation seems to be following an "anti-subjunctive in favor of simplicity" precedent set by Adorno's abnormally obtuse critique of the last scene of *Faust II*: "There has been much fuss about the question of whether the devil won or lost the bet. People have clung so sophistically to the subjunctive mood of Faust's words "Zum Augenblicke dürft' ich sagen" to infer that Faust does not really speak the words "Verweile doch, du bist so schon" in the scene in his study. All the ways that people have distinguished between the letter and the meaning of the pact, with the most pitiful generosity! ... The Wager is lost." (Theodor Adorno, "On the Final Scene of *Faust*" in *Notes to Literature I*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, trans. Shierry Weber Nicholsen. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 118.)

<sup>72</sup> As Wagner said through Friedrich in the portion of his draft written in 1846: "Natural law: Everything that lives, lives under the law of the strong." (SS XI. 270).

reflective reason, the Fichtean natural leaders who rule by brute strength,<sup>73</sup> and they portray the world pre-Master-Slave dialectic, according to Hegel. The Giants' rule of law is the natural world without reason of the first stage. It takes an unnatural occurrence, Alberich's theft, to scare them, as the unnatural is outside their understanding.

Alberich creates the ring by altering the natural form of the gold, going against the rule of nature, and starts using reason for his own selfish ends by forcing the Nibelungs into slavery and forcing them to create weapons for his own purposes. The Gods too can use reason to achieve their long-term goals, but they wish to rule through morality, not through power. So they trick Alberich and give the hoard to the Giants in exchange for absolute dominion over the world, which they now rule according to moral ideal laws. But as their rule is founded upon an immoral act – the theft of the gold and the forced servitude of the Nibelungs – the Gods are unable to achieve the goal of a world based on true morality, and in realising their failure they shape the race of men to achieve this goal. From Alberich's unnatural act to the Gods' realisation of the unattainability of the moral world under their system, this is the complete second stage of the Moral Progression, employing perhaps more specifically an aspect of Hegel's "law of the heart" in Alberich, followed by its negation – "empty virtue" – in the Gods, but obviously this description is consistent with all of the other systems that follow the Moral Progression as well, so it need not be specifically Hegelian. For example, to put it in a more Rousseau-Proudhon context of the second stage, the hoard is a representation of the authority of man over man,

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<sup>73</sup> "Reason cannot as yet work by Freedom... it acts as a law or power of Nature; and thus may be visibly present in consciousness and active there, only without insight into the grounds of its activity; or in other words, may exist as mere feeling, for so we call consciousness without insight. In short, to express this in common language: Reason acts as blind Instinct, where it cannot as yet act through Free Will. ... instinct is blind, a consciousness without insight." (Fichte. *Characteristics of the Present Age*, 6-7).

and the world that Alberich creates through it, even if it is ultimately ruled by the Gods and the spirit of reason, is one based on this authority. The Gods, as moral beings, wish to rid the world of this authority in order to make it fit their moral ideals, and this is why they require freedom in their hero – the only quality which can destroy the authority of man over man – and which they as beings of intellect against nature do not have. The world of Alberich and the Gods embodies the second stage of the Moral Progression.

The Gods find the solution to their problem in men. The Gods will instill in men their love of reason and morality, but men will also have independence and free will. In other words, their free will remains intact, but they will be morally educated by the Gods. Men are born from the Gods to achieve this deed that will free the Nibelungs, but they are able to do this only by raising themselves out from the shadow of the gods and using their independent free will.

Wotan himself, however, cannot undo the wrong without committing yet another: only a free will, independent of the gods themselves, and able to assume and expiate itself the burden of all guilt, can loose the spell; and in man the gods perceive the faculty of such free will. In man they therefore seek to plant their own divinity, to raise his strength so high that in full knowledge of that strength, he may rid him of the Gods' protection, to do of his free will what his own mind inspires. So the Gods bring up man for this high destiny, to be the canceler of their own guilt; and their aim would be attained even if in this human creation they annulled themselves, that is to say, if in the freedom of man's conscience they had to divest themselves of their influence. Stout human races, fruited by the seed divine, already flourish: in strife and fight they steel their strength; Wotan's wish-maids shelter them as shield-maids, as *Walküren* lead the slain-in-fight to Walhall, where the heroes live again in glorious life of jousts in Wotan's company. But not yet is the rightful hero born who shall reach total consciousness through his self-reliant strength. Who, enabled by this total consciousness and from his own free will, will achieve the boldest deed, atonement through death, which will stem from his own necessity, and which he will call his own.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Wagner's final sentence here is convoluted in the original German: "Immer ist aber der rechte Held noch nicht geboren, in dem die selbstständige Kraft zum vollen Bewußtsein gelangen soll, so dass er fähig sei, aus freiem Willen die Todesbüßung vor den Augen, seine kühnste Tat sein eigen zu nennen." (GS II. 158.), and made meaningless by Ellis: "But not yet is the rightful hero born, in whom his self-reliant strength shall reach full consciousness, enabling him with the free-willed penalty of death before

Men are given the intellect of the Gods to combine with free will, and the ultimate hero that will emerge from men will fearlessly and knowingly sacrifice himself so that all may be free, including the Nibelungs. The purpose of the Gods' moral education of man is the deed of free-willed self-sacrifice for the greater good of freedom of all, represented by their lowest common denominator: the Nibelungs.

This description of ideal man is a description of the third stage leading to the fourth stage of the Moral Progression. Siegfried is a being who is ruled by his fearless nature, and simultaneously is aware of this fact and knows himself clearly without bias, as we observe in his conversation with the Mermaids:

What my Courage bids me, is my being's law; and what I do of mine own mind: so is it set for me to do: call ye this curse or blessing, but I will obey it and will not strive counter to my strength.<sup>75</sup>

He is an equal product of nature and the Gods' moral education, along with his partner Brünnhilde, the result of which is the ability to make the free-willed deed of self-sacrifice his own, and so he is the ultimate idealized product of the Gods' rule. Siegfried lives by the "second nature" or intuition of Schiller, Schelling, Fichte, and Hegel in which morality has been so engrained that moral action comes not from reflective reasoning, but from the inner nature itself [*"nach seinem Mut"*]. This is Hegel's man of history who by obeying his inner law becomes an extension of the will of the world-spirit.

Finally, Siegfried knowingly goes to his death ("Guiltless, he has taken the guilt of the Gods upon him, and atones for their wrong"), Brünnhilde returns the ring to the Mermaids, and Brünnhilde and Siegfried join the Gods. By Siegfried's act

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his eyes to call his boldest deed his own." (PW VII. 303). So for this final sentence, which is a vital philosophical explanation of the necessary ideal hero, I substituted my own less literal interpretive-translation.

<sup>75</sup> PW VII. 308.

against the dragon he became the master of the Nibelungs, but chose not to use his authority, but when Brünnhilde consciously returned the ring to the river, she ended the possibility of all authority of man over man. By the conscious act of returning the ring, the original reason for breaking away from nature and natural rule, the natural rule was now restored, only now morally uplifted by its being a free-willed, Abramsian return.

So Wagner retained the following basic idea from *Die Wibelungen*: the story of the first and last swing of the pendulum of world authority. The hoard plays a prominent role as something unnatural under the evil wing of authority but natural and shared by all under the light of day alone. But in the *Nibelung Sketch* he philosophically expanded upon this story. In the *Nibelung Sketch* we now see the entire history of authority of the world, embodied by the Hegelian world-spirit. Authority begins in the reasonless nature of the Giants. Through an unnatural act – Alberich’s theft – authority is created and the world is no longer led through instinct, but by reflective reason: hence the unjust origin of the rule of the Gods. Authority is ended by a conscious return to nature through Siegfried. Each rule is a stage in the overall development of the world-spirit ending in the unification of all in freedom. To put it in Wagnerian terminology, the ur-begotten Giants ruling through their strength alone are instrumental music or raw uncontrolled feeling, the Gods represent vocal music, reflective reason that speaks directly to the heart, and Siegfried embodies the music drama. Siegfried employs the felt-understanding or the feeling that is capable of expanding his heart so that it understands,<sup>76</sup> which brings with it freedom and godly moral consciousness. This ideal in Siegfried brings to mind the feeling induced in Wagner’s ideal listener by a combination of instrumental and vocal music as we

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<sup>76</sup> Or feels, depending on which article by Wagner one is referring to.

saw in *Pasticcio* and the Paris writings. We also see in this governorship the ideal republican monarchy outlined in Wagner's *Vaterlandsverein* speech. In short, Siegfried embodies the goal Wagner held consistently for moral development: the end of the individual will, or the negation of its authority in favor of the freedom of all. Wagner wrote the *Nibelung Sketch* as a philosophico-political parable and it embodies the Moral Progression. In a more philosophico-psychological sense it tells the story of the stages of man's consciousness through the story of the world's kingship. As far as both are concerned, the way to achieve godly consciousness is to give your will up to the *Volk* or moral ideal in favor of unification with nature, just as the ruler should give up his will to the *Volk* or to this unification with nature. It is only through this added philosophical dimension that Wagner's intention for this sketch becomes clear.<sup>77</sup> Viewed merely as a political parable it is incomplete and grossly inconsistent.

The philosophical system so outlined here is not a new one for Wagner garnered by some epiphany brought on by a conversation or a realisation. The only difference is that the context in which the *Nibelung Sketch* was written, the birth of the world and authority offered Wagner an opportunity to explain the beginning of consciousness. In the Paris writings he had only included a Moral Progression from the second through fourth stages. In the *Nibelung Sketch*, Wagner outlines the beginning of consciousness, and he does it in a way consistent with the first and second stages of the Moral Progression. So we see for the first time, a complete Moral Progression in Wagner's writings.

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<sup>77</sup> One last addition to this can be found in Wagner's conception of Wotan in *Die Wibelungen*, as the dynamic force of the Universe, the god of perpetual motion, evolution and change. As Elizabeth Magee says, "he is present in the constant flux of forces" She quotes from *Die Wibelungen* "The essence of this perpetual motion – of life in other words – eventually found its expression in 'Wuotan' Zeus, being the principle God, the father and pervader of the Universe" a conception she shows comes from Grimm. (Elizabeth Magee. *Richard Wagner and the Nibelungs*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 182-183) This does not appear to be the case in the *Nibelung sketch*, but the association of Wotan with the Hegel's *Weltgeist* in *Die Wibelungen* explains the progress of history shifting from its more abstract focus in the *Nibelung Sketch* on world authority, to the specific focus on Wotan in the later additions to the myth from 1851-3.

This is how Wagner saw his ideal world being achieved, through a renunciation of authority by the ruler in favor of the freedom of all. The Gods' willingness to end their influence on free-willed man in the interests of this goal is another symptom of Wagner's view that whether the ideal government was achieved through the king remaining in authority but negating his own will for that of the *Volk*, or the king abdicating in favor of the *Volk*; the freedom of the *Volk* would be achieved. This view of the arbitrariness of kingly authority appears in an article published two weeks after the *Nibelung Sketch* was completed, *Germany and its Princes*, in Röckel's *Volksblätter*. If Wagner wrote that article, it would be consistent with his sentiment in the *Nibelung Sketch*. That being said, both the sketch of *Siegfrieds Tod* and the eventual poetic verse draft which was completed on November 28, a little over a month after the sketch, exclude any notion of the end of godly influence, (the political-allegorical equivalent of kingly authority). The passage between the Mermaids and Siegfried which made this allusion to his "*Mut*," and which would require him to fight the Gods was cut. The Mermaids no longer say "So you do not fear the Gods" as they had said in the *Nibelung Sketch* and instead ask "Where Gods are mourning [trauern], you mock?" to which he immediately answers with an exposition of the final battle between Good and Evil, mentioned in the *Nibelung Sketch*, which will be lost by Good unless a fearless Siegfried is on the side of the Gods.<sup>78</sup> So if the role of godly authority in the *Siegfrieds Tod* sketch is to be taken as the sole indicator of Wagner's feelings towards retaining the Saxon king or dismissing

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<sup>78</sup> "Dämmert der Tag auf jener Haide, / wo sorgend die Helden sie schaaren, – / entbrennt der Kampf, dem die Nornen selbst / das Ende nicht wissen zu künden: / nach meinem Muth / entscheid' ich den Sieg!" (GS II. 214-5.) Both Robert Petsch and, in more recent times, Edward Haymes, make the connection from this excerpt, between Siegfried saving the Gods from evil and the Greek myth in which Hercules saves the Gods from the Giants. See: Edward Haymes, "Richard Wagner and the *Altergermanisten*" in *Re-Reading Wagner*, 24; and, Robert Petsch, "Der Ring des Nibelungen in seinen Beziehungen zur griechischen Tragödie und zur zeitgenössischen Philosophie." *Richard Wagner Jahrbuch* II (1907), 293.

him in favor of a republic, it would seem that Wagner sides more with retaining the king.

The story Wagner wished to tell with *Siegfrieds Tod* was that of the end of the cycle of world authority in favor of freedom, as that was the immediate concern of his present age. The *Nibelung Sketch* and *Die Wibelungen* offer a description of the entire problem of world authority from beginning to end, but after outlining the roots of the problem, the actual drama to be produced would deal with the problem of the day: the transition to a free society. He stopped working on *Siegfrieds Tod* and *Friedrich I* during the winter of 1848-1849, and took up the third partner of Siegfried and Friedrich from *Die Wibelungen: Jesus von Nazareth*.

*Siegfrieds Tod* actually portrays the end of this swinging pendulum by the returning of the ring to the earth and thus transforming its contents and meaning from worldly authority, which is now rejected, to the joy equally felt and experienced by all under the sun that it was in *Die Wibelungen*. Friedrich's story, and the tradition of it from Heine among others is what originally brought Wagner to the subject of revolution. *Friedrich I* would not have ended with the stopping of the pendulum and true revolution achieved in *Siegfrieds Tod*, but it would have offered a model to which the present world could look and the present king could emulate in order to achieve this utopia. Friedrich himself failed, but his life nonetheless is a model for how utopia could be achieved. His ultimate "death" and promised return can be achieved by the present, by the audience who become this returned Friedrich, whether it is the king of Saxony who becomes Friedrich and so the utopia is achieved through reform, or the people who become Friedrich, achieving utopia by revolution and finishing what he could not. By the winter of 1848-49 Wagner also decided to write a third version of this narrative in the story of Jesus of Nazareth. It is here that Wagner begins to be

more of an outspoken follower of Proudhon, and truly begins to turn against property and custom in his writings.

#### D – Early *Jesus von Nazareth*

The prose draft itself for the drama of Jesus is a fairly unremarkable outlining of the early to mid-nineteenth century conception of the New Testament which could be found in Fichte, Proudhon, David Strauss' *Life of Jesus*, and Thomas Jefferson's *The Life and Morals of Jesus of Nazareth* – a work Wagner could not have read, but which is a clear indicator of the universality of this new conception of Jesus.<sup>79</sup> All eschew magical aspects of Jesus' life such as his ability to raise the dead, and instead focus on the political Jesus who embodies self-sacrifice for the benefit of the *Volk*, his life with and the roles of his brothers and sisters, as well as supplementary material not strictly in the four main narratives of the New Testament.

Jesus expounds on the doctrine of love leading to morality<sup>80</sup> which by its espousal leaves an enraptured [*beseligender*] impression on the *Volk* to whom it was addressed, after which Jesus calls this *Volk* both his mother and his brethren. Wagner depicts several instances that lend themselves to his and Proudhon's conception of Jesus as anti-property and anti-custom while being self-sacrificially in favor of the *Volk*. Wagner describes a scene in which a rich man offers himself to Jesus:

A young man of rank arrives on a mule, with servants: he offers himself to Jesus: the latter interrogates him: the young man boasts of his strict observance of the laws. At the request to sell his whole possessions, and give the money to the commune, he withdraws ashamed.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> See Appendix pg. 593.

<sup>80</sup> PW VIII. 287.

<sup>81</sup> PW VIII .288.

After this, Wagner alludes to a speech criticizing the rich, possibly including “it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to get into heaven.” Jesus orders a boat be made to take himself and his disciples to Jerusalem so as to escape the throng who wish to make him king, but as he is setting sail another throng of poor *Volk* beg him to stay. He is so affected by the sight of them that he must stop and comfort them.

While they are hoisting sail, the multitude increases: all cry to Jesus, imploring him to stay: they try to hold the boat fast, but Simon wards them off. Then Jesus bids furl the sails again: his deepest soul is grieved at sight of the unhappy *Volk*, and he will not leave it unconsolated. He commands the people to dispose themselves upon the shore and listen to him quietly. (Mary Magdalene, Mary the Mother, and other women, distribute bread and wine to the multitude.) Jesus standing on board preaches to the *Volk*. Comfort and blessing; of the Kingdom of Heaven in Man: his being sent to them as physician, as teacher: his ordinances for his community. On tribulation: the coming strifes: ‘I am not come’ etc. He foreshadows his redeeming death and second advent for the liberating of mankind. – Shouts of the deeply moved people. At Jesus’ order the boat is thrust off. – Farewell. The *Volk* disperses to follow him to Jerusalem.<sup>82</sup>

One particular, somewhat misplaced comment is from the Last Supper, when after Jesus explains his final doctrine of love, Wagner writes:

Jesus’ one concern is that at least his disciples shall have learnt to understand him thoroughly [a concern of Wagner’s as well]: this is to happen through his sacrificial death, after which the Holy Ghost shall be sent to them. Announcement of the future and return. Peter’s boasting: (Jesus’ warning against oaths!)<sup>83</sup>

Wagner’s highlighting of this point, accentuated and separated from the rest of the draft, is notable. But again, these warnings against property, oaths, and established law are all in the context of the Jesus story and so are not an implication that Wagner has adopted the political philosophy of Proudhon.

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<sup>82</sup> PW VIII. 288-289.

<sup>83</sup> PW VIII. 292.

Wagner ends his draft of the drama at Jesus' death on the cross and does not go over any bodily return to Mary or the disciples, though his ultimate return and with it revolution to a utopia is prophesized. Wagner, in this retelling, extends his purpose of showing the basis of revolution and the ideal government outlined in *Friedrich*, with one change: it is not the return of Christ at the end of the sketch which is said to bring utopia, but his message. After John and the two Marys return to Peter with confirmation of Jesus' death on the cross, Wagner says:

Peter feels himself inspired with the Holy Spirit: in high enthusiasm he proclaims the fulfilment of Jesus' promise: his words give strength and inspiration to all; he addresses the people, - whoever hears him presses forward to demand baptism (reception into the community)<sup>84</sup>

Wagner boldly states that it is not Jesus' physical return which will bring about this utopia, but the message, his doctrine, which, when once expounded, will bring all *Volk* into the fold and unite them into a unified community. Jesus does not return, but tells the world through his complete message – his revolutionary philosophy against established laws and customs, his deeds, and ultimately his death – how to attain the ideal state. Jesus is a revolutionary in the vein of Hegel's<sup>85</sup> and Proudhon's conception of revolutionary original Christianity and Strauss's *Life of Jesus*. While *Friedrich I* showed the audience through deeds and the character of Friedrich how to achieve the ideal utopia, this achievement required reflective reasoning and

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<sup>84</sup> PW VIII. 297.

<sup>85</sup> *Philosophy of History*, 328 “We may say that nowhere are to be found such revolutionary utterances as in the gospels; for everything that had been respected is treated as a matter of indifference - as worthy of no regard. The next point is the development of this principle; and the whole sequel of History is the history of its development. Its first realization is the formation by the friends of Christ, of a Society - a Church. ...only after the death of Christ could the Spirit come upon his friends that only then were they able to conceive the true idea of God, viz. that in Christ man is redeemed and reconciled: for in him the idea of eternal truth is recognized, the essence of man acknowledged to be Spirit; and the fact proclaimed that only by stripping himself of his finiteness and surrendering himself to pure self-consciousness, does he attain the truth. Christ -man as man - in whom the unity of God and man has appeared, has in his death, and his history generally, himself presented the eternal history of Spirit - a history which every man has to accomplish himself [!], in order to exist as Spirit, or to become a child of God, a citizen of his kingdom. The followers of Christ, who combine on this principle and live in the spiritual life as their aim, form the Church, which is the Kingdom of God.”

association: “I must be like Friedrich to attain my goal of utopia” is the unsaid message. In *Jesus*, Wagner made the direct connection between listening to the message of Jesus and achieving utopia in the last lines of his draft. The audience, by the very act of watching and listening to Jesus, has heard the message, and has been immediately incorporated into the ideal utopian community without a specific act of reflection on their part being necessary – reflection being a conservative rather than revolutionary tool. If the artwork is merely seen and heard, utopia is achieved.

So Wagner offers three approaches to obtaining utopia via his art: the model of Friedrich to be imitated, the observed achievement and fulfilment of utopia portrayed in Siegfried, and the direct incorporation of the audience into an utopian state through participating in and taking in of the message of Jesus. *Friedrich I* would then have been directed to those who still believed in reform, and so could use the story of Friedrich as a model for achieving lasting utopian reform. Siegfried would have been directed at those who had already achieved this utopia as it outlined the way in which this change had taken place. Jesus would have been directed at those just on the verge of attaining utopia, and the Jesus drama would complete the societal transformation. Aspects of these three formats would ultimately merge in the *Ring*.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Dinger, in his work on Wagner’s spiritual development, did not differentiate between the purposes of these dramas but rather grouped them all together under the single theme “erhabener Weise” or “rising path”. See: Hugo Dinger. *Richard Wagners Geistige Entwicklung*, 263.

### Chapter 3. Wagner's Employment of the Moral Progression in the Revolutionary and Zürich-period Writings:<sup>87</sup>

#### A – *Volksblätter* Articles

None of these dramas would come to fruition immediately, as Wagner directed himself toward the bringing of revolution not merely in his role as artist, but through actively participating in revolutionary change. Though it may appear that his turn against property and oaths in *Jesus von Nazareth* is new for Wagner upon incorporating Proudhon's philosophy into his own, it is not, as Wagner had held all of these utopian, anti-plutocratic ideals to some degree from the time of his earliest writings. But by the time he returned to *Jesus von Nazareth* after the revolution, sometime between June and November of 1849, he decided to include a commentary on the original draft which would reinterpret the story now in Feuerbachian and Proudhonian language. He may not have had Proudhon specifically in mind while writing the original draft the previous winter, but now he had thrown himself into revolution. His previously on-the-fence revolutionary status, going back and forth between republicanism and monarchy as a way of attaining utopia, had shifted and been solidified in republicanism. After all of the events of 1848-9 – his reading of Feuerbach that summer after the revolution, his loss of faith in the Frankfurt assembly, the shooting of the democratic activist and associate of Röckel Robert Blum in November 1848, and finally, his loss of faith in the king upon the abolishing of the Reform Ministry of Saxony in February 1849 at a time when the reactionaries

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<sup>87</sup> The purpose of this chapter is to show, unequivocally, that Wagner was outlining either the entire Moral Progression or aspects of it in his aesthetic-philosophical writings from 1848 through the completion of the *Ring* libretti in 1853 and beyond. As a result, the works to be examined will focus on these aspects of the writings, and not necessarily on the theory itself.

throughout Germany were beginning to retake control – Wagner no longer saw reform as an option and so gave himself entirely to the cause of the revolution, committing himself to being a fully-fledged disciple of Proudhon and associate of Röckel and Bakunin.<sup>88</sup>

He wrote at least one essay for Röckel's *Volkblätter*, *The Revolution*, in April. The essay *Man and Established Society* from the February edition, however, might have been by Wagner or Röckel or another author; there is still no scholarly consensus. All the same, both of these essays completely abandon the ideal kingship Wagner had been preaching, as well as abandoning established customs, oaths, and laws in order to achieve an ideal *Volk* government. As Wagner would later say, he “preferred to league himself with chaos rather than with the Established”<sup>89</sup> and that is exactly what these essays do.

These essays mark the change from a bringing about of the ideal society through art using Siegfried, Friedrich, and Jesus, to actually inciting the *Volk* to political revolution. In *Man and Established Society* he explains:

*In the year 1848 Man's fight against Established Society began... These latest struggles of a privileged nobility in Prussia and Austria, this last upflickering of Royal Prerogative, fed on a brute force that daily melts away before the*

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<sup>88</sup> The January 17<sup>th</sup>, 1849 essay *Again Theater Reform* does offer some interesting turns of phrase which seem to show Wagner moving in the direction of Proudhon, while not making that final break with kingly authority. One memorable example is from the beginning of the essay. Wagner is rejecting the current practice of absolute authority of the theater being transferred from one director to the next depending on the production and he explains that this leads to nothing but depravity and chaos in the theater. Instead he believes that a law should come from the king [i.e., the director should be appointed by the king] which would not only end the arbitrary transfer of absolute authority from one economically minded noble to the next but would make the end of absolute authority over the theatre law [...sondern in der gänzlichen Vernichtung jedes Absolutismus durch: das Gesetz.” (SS XII, 235.)] And this law that would come from the king would then allow the freedom to progress and allow the personnel to work better together, each taking a part in the creative process. The fact that he mentions an end to absolute authority in favor of an authority based on the *Volk* of the theater company and of the country is a microcosmic representation of his revolutionary thinking. But at the same time, even here in January he is supporting the king as representative of the people. It is only after the dismissal of the Reform Ministry of Saxony the following month that he loses faith in his ideal kingship for the *Volk*, and completely sides with chaos.

<sup>89</sup> PW VII. 322. Introduction from the *Gesammelte Schriften* to the *Plan for a Reform of the National Theatre for the Kingdom of Saxony*.

light of knowledge (*Aufklärung*), are nothing further than the death-throes of a body from which the soul, its life, has flown already, nothing beyond the last mists of night set scudding by the rising sun.”<sup>90</sup>

This not only describes Austria and Prussia negatively as Wagner had done indirectly in his June 1848 letter to Wigard and the original ending to *Die Wibelungen*, but it associates royal authority not with the voice of the people, but with brute force, which Wagner had not previously done, and concludes that an education of the people would end this type of government in favor of a *Volk*-led government. Further on, the author describes the purpose of man in a formulation which essentially outlines an important element of the Moral Progression. One must consciously follow the *Weltgeist* (or inner moral necessity) of the third stage of the Moral Progression and not give in to the mere unconscious instinct of the first stage of the Moral Progression, or as the author explains: “Unworthy were it of reason-dowered Man, to give himself resistless, like the beasts, to the will of the waves. His task, his duty bids him do with *consciousness* what the age demands of him.” He continues by offering as given the destiny and right of man:

*Man’s **destiny** is: through the ever higher perfecting of his mental, moral, and corporeal faculties, to attain an ever higher, purer happiness. Man’s **right** is: through the ever higher perfecting of his mental, moral and corporeal faculties, to arrive at the enjoyment of a constantly increasing, purer happiness. So that, from man’s *Destiny* proceeds his *Right*; destiny and right are one; and the right of Man is simple, to fulfill his *destiny*.*

The author then continues that, as the established society’s interest is not in man achieving his destiny, there is no reason that humanity should continue to abide by its laws, and so should look for another form of society that would assist Man in achieving his destiny. This form cannot be achieved by one person alone, but in the

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<sup>90</sup> PW VIII. 227.

community.<sup>91</sup> This is an important aspect of the third and fourth stages of the Moral Progression. Here the author says explicitly that man can and ought to achieve his destiny of becoming ever more enlightened only in the community, and so must give up his will in favor of the communal will which alone can achieve the noble destiny of humanity, i.e., the *Volk* not the individual can achieve this destiny.

The author concludes by saying that in order to create this ideal society the initial task is to recognize the worthlessness of the current society: “Wherefore our first, our weightiest task is this: to search and ever more distinctly grasp the essence and the agency of our Society, on every side; *once it is **recognized**, it also is doomed!*”<sup>92</sup> *So Man and Established Society* is a rejection of every aspect of the current society; it does not directly say that laws and property are the problem, but it is the first full rejection of the society as a whole, and therefore the first to give up hope in its reformation. It must instead be destroyed so that the new society can be built that is more in line with the destiny of mankind in terms reminiscent of the “all” or “one” particularly of Fichte and Hegel, while the stressing of community in this attainment brings the notion more in line with certain aspects of Feuerbach.

What the author of *Man and Established Society* left unsaid, namely, the specific aspects of society which are wrong (its basis on property and law) *The Revolution* says. Revolution will destroy the old society, ruthlessly, while nurturing and offering hope to the *Volk* who, collectively, will form the new world order. Love will end the old world and bring about the new.

In the face of this force princes, aristocrats, and government officials are terrified for their lives and their system, but pretend not to be: “There you see one, the mightiest prince, with halting heart and catching breath, yet seeking to assume a

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<sup>91</sup> PW VIII. 228-229.

<sup>92</sup> PW VIII. 231.

tranquil, cool demeanor, to shut his eyes and those of others to what he clearly sees to be inevitable.”<sup>93</sup> This essay offers one message to these princes, aristocrats, and officials: be afraid, because your time is nigh. When revolution comes, as it will from the united masses, it will completely destroy the old order and create from its ashes the new.

The utopia which this revolution will bring is the Proudhonian utopia; the end of authority of man over man, the end of property, the end of law. The only law by which man ought to abide is that of his inner character [*Mut*], the divine instinct without false culture to impurify it. It is the inner law of Siegfried, Hegel’s man of history, that will be the only law.

I will destroy each phantom [*Wahn*] that has rule o’er men. I will destroy the dominion of one over many, of the dead o’er the living, of matter over spirit; I will break the power of the mighty, of law, of property. Be *his own* will the lord of man, his *own* desire his only law, his strength his whole possession, *for the only Holiness is the free man, and naught higher there is than he.*<sup>94</sup>

But revolution is here embodied not only as the immediate revolution which is coming to liberate mankind: it is also the spirit of change, bringer of death and new life. Much of the essay bears a strong resemblance in this regard not merely to Proudhon, but to Hegel’s description of the spirit of change, destruction, and death as a necessary aspect of the world-spirit, and of new life.<sup>95</sup> Wagner invokes something

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<sup>93</sup> PW VIII. 233.

<sup>94</sup> PW VIII. 236. Wagner then continues with a sentiment more akin to Feuerbach, stressing the influence of those living over living society and the rejection of the laws of the past as well as the laws of religion which stems from a fear of death, and comes to us from the voices of the past. “Annulled be the fancy [*Wahn*] that gives Death power over Life, the Past o’er the Future. The law of the dead is *their own* law; it shares their lot, and dies with them; it shall not govern Life. *Life is law unto itself.* And since the Law is for the living, not the dead, and *ye* are living, with none conceivable above you, *ye yourselves are the law, your own free will the sole and highest law, and I will destroy all dominion of Death over Life.*” This idea offers an interpretation of the final end of *Götterdämmerung*, in that the laws of the past and of the religion of which Wotan is the center must be destroyed in order to create the new world for those living alone. Only in a world of men alone can there be utopia.

<sup>95</sup> Hegel. *Philosophy of History*. 72-3.

akin to Hegel's Phoenix metaphor, bringing forth life from death and death from life, in the following passage:

[T]hey all who have *never* known joy, encamp there on the heights and strain their eyes in blissful expectation of her coming, and listen in rapt silence to the rustle of the rising storm, which fills their ears with Revolution's greeting: I am the e'er-rejuvenating, ever-fashioning Life; where *I* am not, is Death. I am the dream, the balm, the hope of sufferers! I bring to nothing what exists, and whither I turn there wells fresh life from the dead rock. I come to you, to break all fetters that oppress you, to redeem you from the arms of Death and poor young Life through all your veins. Whatever stands, must fall: such is the everlasting law of Nature, such the condition of Life; and I, the eternal destroyer, fulfill the law and fashion ever-youthful life.<sup>96</sup>

Ellis called attention to this last passage and described it as the fount from which Erda's words "Alles was ist, endet" spring; but in truth it is no more than another example of the swinging pendulum. In *Die Wibelungen* Wagner realized that the common element of Friedrich's and Siegfried's stories was the failed attempt at lasting peace and equality in both of their reigns as Nibelung kings. Now that Wagner had abandoned reform as a possibility for utopian equality, the solution presented itself anew: there has never been a true revolution that wiped away all of the traces of the old regime, so revolution is all that will be necessary to create this utopia. As long as some aspects of the previous society could be viewed as positive and worth retaining, reform was a possible means for achieving utopia and only a slight push of the pendulum would be necessary to achieve it. But because only slight pushes of the pendulum were used, in only the slightest forms of reform over time, the pendulum always swung back. So when he abandoned this idea, the solution lay in pushing the pendulum so hard in the direction of revolution that the pendulum would break and the cycle would end. That is the invocation present in Revolution: a complete end of

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<sup>96</sup> PW VIII. 235.

reform, a complete end of society and the cycles brought on by its most evil root, property.

Ay we behold it, the old world is crumbling, a *new* will rise therefrom; for the lofty goddess **Revolution** comes rustling on the wings of storm, her stately head ringed round with lightnings, a sword in her right hand, a torch in her left, her eye so stern, so punitive, so cold; and yet what warmth of purest love, what wealth of happiness streams forth toward him who dares to look with steadfast gaze into that eye! Rustling she comes, the e'er-rejuvenating mother of mankind; destroying and fulfilling, she fares across the earth; before her soughs the storm, and shakes so fiercely at man's handiwork that vast clouds of dust eclipse the sky, and where her mighty footsteps falls in ruins what an idle whim had built for eons, and the hem of her robe sweeps its last remains away. But in her wake there opens out a ne'er dreamt paradise of happiness, illumed by kindly sunbeams; and where her foot had trodden down, spring fragrant completely fill the air scarce silent from the din of battle.<sup>97</sup>

The final prayer returns to the Phoenix concept and also foreshadows the eventual ending of the *Ring*:

And lo! The legions on the hills, voiceless they fall to their knees and listen in mute transport; and as the sunbaked soil drinks up the cooling drops of rain, so their sorrow-parching hearts drink in the accents of the rustling storm, and new life courses through their veins. Nearer and nearer rolls the storm, on its wings Revolution; wide open now the quickened hearts of those awaked to life, and victrix Revolution pours into their brains, their bones, their flesh, and fills them through and through. In godlike ecstasy they leap from the ground; the poor, the hungering, the bowed by misery, are they no longer; proudly they raise themselves erect, inspiration shines from their ennobled faces, a radiant light streams from their eyes, and with the heaven shaking cry *I am a Man!* The millions, the embodied Revolution, the God become Man, rush down to the valleys and plains, and proclaim to all the world the new gospel of Happiness.<sup>98</sup>

Through becoming the goddess revolution and embodying the spirit of change, the people destroy the old society through fire, which is then put out by the “cooling drops of rain” by which new life is restored. Through this revolutionary act, by which all join together to achieve the desired end of revolution they are all ennobled, and as a whole, combined as one, become the essence of man. Having achieved this

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<sup>97</sup> PW VIII. 232-233.

<sup>98</sup> PW VIII. 238.

destruction they all kneel as one humbled and silently contemplate their great deed before rushing throughout the world bringing peace and universal freedom to all humanity.

All told, this last article before the Dresden uprising reaffirms his philosophical system. He begins again with the transfer from the second to third stage of the Moral Progression with the destruction of the status quo in favor of one based on brotherhood, community, and equality. This can only be achieved by the community of workers together, who reject their individuality for the benefit of the community, and as a community of ideal *Volk* channel the *Weltgeist's* revolutionary spirit of change and destroy all aspects of the selfish society – property, money, class – and reject all authority of man over man in favor of the community of workers who consciously choose to be in this ideal community. It is only through the complete rejection of the old order that utopia is achieved; through burning fire and cleansing water. When this has been achieved the community is, in terms which foreshadow Feuerbach, “God become Man,” and in an Hegelian sense individuality has been replaced by a true essence or spirit of the nation. All consciously, happily work together as one for the benefit of each other.

But it didn't work out this way. The opportunity came, and so did the troops from Berlin, and Wagner was forced into exile in which he would remain for fifteen years. Wagner made a decision to not get involved in actual revolutions again, saying instead that he should help to prepare the way for revolutions. In a letter to Liszt from June 5<sup>th</sup>, 1849 he writes a telling notion: “I none the less feel impelled to speak out: art will not grow in the soil of the counter-revolution; initially, it may not even grow in the soil of the revolution, unless we take steps in good time to see that it does

[wenn nicht beizeiten – dafür gesorgt werden sollte.]”<sup>99</sup> The *Sorgen* of which he speaks is elaborated upon in his later pamphlets which he believes will prepare the way for both revolution – as art is only possible in a world in which counter-revolution is not the driving force – and the art to follow it.<sup>100</sup> The first such product is *Art and Revolution*.<sup>101</sup>

## B – *Art and Revolution*

On the cover of *Art and Revolution* Wagner wrote the following by way of an introduction: “When Art erst held her peace, State-wisdom and Philosophy began: when now both Statesman and Philosopher have breathed their last, let the Artist’s voice again be heard.”<sup>102</sup> It is fascinating in that it is a look back to the *Frühromantiks*

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<sup>99</sup> *Selected Letters of Richard Wagner*, 171.

<sup>100</sup> After writing *Art and Revolution* he expanded on this notion of the “care to be taken” to Uhlig in more direct language; his writings clarifying the goals and purpose of art would be the preparation without which art could offer nothing further; “But it is absolutely necessary for me to write these essays and send them out into the world before I continue with my more immediate artistic creations: I myself and all who are interested in me as an artist must be forced once and for all to come to a precise understanding of the issues involved, otherwise we shall all spend the rest of our lives groping around in a loathsome world of half-lit forms, which is worse than a state of total obscurity in which the benighted traveller can see nothing at all but where he continues to clutch desperately and piously at long familiar objects to guide him on his way.” (*Selected Letters of Richard Wagner*, 176).

<sup>101</sup> As noted in the Appendix it is likely that this notion that art can only exist after the revolution, and not in the world of the counterrevolution comes from Wagner’s reading of Proudhon’s “What is Property?” which Wagner at this time was reading on his own. Rainer Franke holds that Wagner was here arguing against the possibility of Schiller’s moral education or ennobling of the character through experiencing tragedy on the stage as something which must take place *before* political change. Franke says, “After fifty-five years of ‘ennobling’ the character of man, the state is just as barbarous as it ever was, just as egotistical and far away from a community of free equals, and as such Wagner felt that he as an artist could only prepare the way for such an art, which would be created by an enlightened people as a whole; i.e. the post revolutionary community of equals living as one people [*das Volk*], by outlining in his work, the goals of the revolution itself.” (Rainer Franke. *Richard Wagners Züricher Kunstschriften*. (Hamburg: Verlag der Musikalienhandlung Karl Dieter Wagner, 1983), 263) Wagner himself said in the introduction to the essay for his *Gesamelte Schriften* that producing this artwork of the future as a model for the revolution would have the effect of silencing the revolution, and so at the time he was against it. Such a work written before the revolution would “contribute toward the work of damming the flood of Revolution within the channel of the peaceful-flowing stream of Manhood.” (Introduction to *Art and Revolution*, PW I. 24) In any case this was a temporary idea only, and in later letters to Liszt and Uhlig, he wavered back and forth on this idea until he realized in December 1851 that the revolution wasn’t coming, at which point he believed that there could be art after all before the revolution. Circumstances like this show Wagner for his inner pragmatist.

<sup>102</sup> PW I. 24.

and Schelling. Art and mythology are seen as the beginning of human thought; they give birth to the sciences of history and philosophy, but these will in turn surrender back to art to achieve the highest form of communication. Wagner would later use a variant of this when in *Opera and Drama* he would say that the receptive faculties of man begin and end in feeling, with understanding as a middle point. With these words he began the elucidation of his overall post-revolutionary philosophy.

Much of *Art and Revolution* is a formalizing of the previous systems we have observed hitherto. It opens with a defense of the charge that the revolution has been responsible for the deterioration of the arts. Wagner holds that future works of art can only come about in a post-revolutionary environment, in the context of a post-revolutionary mind-set by the populace.

Only the great Revolution of Mankind, whose beginnings erstwhile shattered Grecian Tragedy, can win for us this Art-work. For only this Revolution can bring forth from its hidden depths, in the new beauty of a nobler Universalism, that which it once tore from the conservative spirit of a time of beautiful but narrow-meted culture-and tearing it, engulfed. But only Revolution, not slavish Restoration, can give us back that highest Art-work. The task we have before us is immeasurably greater than that already accomplished in days of old.<sup>103</sup>

This is exactly an extension of his article *The Revolution* from April: revolution, not restoration, is the only solution to the swinging pendulum; all aspects of the culture need to be rejected in order to achieve the “noble universalism.” Now he uses this position – the substance of the current struggle of his age – to explore what kind of art needs to be portrayed to best fit with modern culture.

To do this he goes back to ancient times and examines the role of art in the Athenian Polis, as well as to the revolutionary origins of the current struggle which he shows in Christ, and which is consistent with his views on Christ-Siegfried from *Die*

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<sup>103</sup> PW I. 53.

*Wibelungen*. The essay is written in Hegelian-Fichteian language: there is the thesis, the success of Aeschylus and the Athenian Polis's intimate connection with the art of its day; the antithesis, Christ and the revolutionary mentality of the present age; and the synthesis, the ideal art that best portrays the intimate connection that the Athenian Polis had to its art while reflecting the modern revolutionary mentality whose origin is in Christ.

First Wagner explains that the achievement of the Greeks in the practice of their perfect art form, drama, was its ability to summarize the feelings and nature of the Greek nation.

With the Greeks the perfect work of art, the Drama, was the abstract and epitome of all that was expressible in the Grecian nature. It was the nation itself-in intimate connection with its own history-that stood mirrored in its art-work, that communed with itself and, within the span of a few hours, feasted its eyes with its own noblest essence. All division of this enjoyment, all scattering of the forces centred on one point, all diversion of the elements into separate channels, must needs have been as hurtful to this unique and noble Art-work as to the like-formed State itself; and thus it could only mature, but never change its nature.<sup>104</sup>

Specifically, the Greek state prior to Pericles was conservative, i.e., nationalistic, and so was best exemplified by the conservative work of Aeschylus, "The Orestiad," in which Orestes, the rightful heir, wrests control of his kingdom away from his mother and her lover. It is a drama of stability, the word that best describes the Greek state, and so, according to Wagner, the Greek drama was at its peak during this age, in that the subject and morals depicted by the drama best exemplified the state in which it was performed.

However, upon the shift to Sophocles, the drama began to stress revolution over stability, and so no longer exemplified the stability of the Greek state. The main revolutionary theme of Sophocles to which Wagner is referring is to that of universal

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<sup>104</sup> PW I. 52.

love over love of the state, as found in Antigone's treatment of her brothers, which Wagner would address in further detail in *Opera and Drama*.<sup>105</sup> Because the morals of the art no longer reflected the morals and culture of the conservative Athenian polis, both the Greek state and its art went in decline. Despite the fact that, as Wagner said, this shift to revolution over stability was a step forward in the Hegelian *Weltgeist* scheme of the world, the mind-set of the conservative *Volk* of Greece was not ready to adjust along with their art.

The victory of Sophocles, like that of Pericles, was fully in the spirit of the advancing development of mankind; but the deposition of Æschylus was the first downward step from the height of Grecian Tragedy, the first beginning of the dissolution of Athenian Polity.<sup>106</sup>

Wagner then draws one further conclusion from the example of Greece here set. He equates the conservatism of the Greek state with its inability to love those outside of itself. Wagner said that the end of the Greek state lay in the fact that it was incapable of loving everyone equally and was too interested in itself. The lesson to be learned from the Greeks was, therefore, to love everyone equally, and to destroy national boundaries and – if need be a stagnant culture – in favor of love and a state based on universal love.

This Greek conservative view also comes into play in Wagner's discussion of Christ and the revolution he brings, which is very similar to Wagner's view of Antigone's revolution. When Christ appeared, he did not bring peace, but war; war on the Romans and those who for their own selfish benefit sided with the authoritarian Roman state.

The historian knows not surely that this was the view of the humble son of the Galilean carpenter; who looking on the misery of his fellow men, proclaimed

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<sup>105</sup> See: PW II. 187-191.

<sup>106</sup> PW I. 52.

that he had not come to bring peace, but a sword into the world; whom we must love for the anger with which he thundered forth against the hypocritical Pharisees who fawned upon the power of Rome, so as the better to bind and heartlessly enslave the people; and finally, who preached the reign of universal human love – a love he could never have enjoined on men whose duty it should be to despise their fellows and themselves.<sup>107</sup>

So the authoritarian state is revolted against in the name of freedom, equality, and love, whose message cannot be heard by the populace until the revolt is complete and they live in a post-revolution world, just as the artwork of the future cannot be heard and taken in in the correct mind-set by those not yet living in the post-revolutionary society.

The problem is that the revolution that Christ brought on was never completed: the pendulum continued to swing. But worse, Christ's opponents incorporated him into the absolute authoritarian regime as a speculative God, no longer representing human love and revolution as he had preached. In this way, the revolutionary message of Christ, brotherly love in a society of equals, was inverted into a complete shunning of others, and the sensual aspects of moral life [*Sittlichkeit*] that come with an association with others in a community is replaced by a relinquishing of control to the authoritarian regime.<sup>108</sup> This amounts to a rejection of the natural or sensual in favor of the unnatural; it is the difference between the Christ of Proudhon and Feuerbach, and the Christ of the Saint-Simonians.

It is with this notion in mind that Wagner returned to the subject of the Greeks and art. He equated the conservative art of ancient Greece with the public consciousness [*Bewußtsein*] and the revolutionary art, represented by Christ and his

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<sup>107</sup> PW I. 37.

<sup>108</sup> See: PW I. 37, 49, for Wagner's comments against the Church and against the speculative God of the Church. The conception of Christ Wagner presents is perhaps more in line with Feuerbach than Proudhon as Franke explains "Wie Feuerbach geht Wagner in den Züricher Schriften davon aus, dass der gegenwärtige „Christ“ gemeinsam mit der staatlichen Autorität im Grunde allein weltliche Macht und Herrschaft beanspruchen und dabei den sittlichen Anspruch der Religion nur als Deckmantel benutzte, um ihn in Wahrheit fuer seine egoistischen und unsittlichen Ziele zu missbrauchen. Der sittliche Anspruch des Christ-Sein-Wollens und sein unsittlich-egoistisches Handeln aus diesem Anspruch klafften auseinander." (Rainer Franke. *Richard Wagners Züricher Kunstschriften*, 232).

own times, with the public unconsciousness [*Unbewußtsein*] in that the individuals desire to escape from the authoritarian principle.<sup>109</sup> Wagner then associates this public unconsciousness with Nature and the public consciousness with authoritarian control, thus combining his notions of the Greeks with his notions of modern Christendom.<sup>110</sup> The corrupt state, i.e., one under authoritarian control represents culture against the love and free society of nature.

Nature, then, and only Nature, can bring about the unravelling of this great world-fate. If Culture, starting from the Christian dogma of the worthlessness of human nature, disown humanity: she has created for herself a foe who one day must inevitably destroy her, in so far as she no longer has place for manhood; for this foe is the eternal, and only living Nature. Nature, Human Nature, will proclaim this law to the twin sisters Culture and Civilisation: ‘So far as I am contained in you, shall ye live and flourish; so far as I am not in you, shall ye rot and die!’ In the man-destroying march of Culture, however, there looms before us this happy result: the heavy load with which she presses Nature down, will one day grow so ponderous that it lends at last to down-trod, never-dying Nature the necessary impetus to hurl the whole cramping burden from her, with one sole thrust; and this heaping up of Culture will thus have taught to Nature her own gigantic force. The releasing of this force is – Revolution.<sup>111</sup>

So by following nature, the unconscious drive, or the intuition [*Anschauung*], humanity can move beyond the systems put in place by the corrupt government, and through a revolution, the exemplification and highest moment of this switch from the conscious drive of culture to the unconscious drive inherent in nature, man will be able to found a society based on equality and love; and from this society a new artwork, in which all citizens of the free state join together to both create and participate, will be possible: the artwork of the future. With this association of nature with revolution and unconscious intuition, Wagner incorporates nearly everyone’s description of the third stage of the Moral Progression.

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<sup>109</sup> PW I. 51.

<sup>110</sup> An idea discussed in similar terminology by both Schelling and Hegel.

<sup>111</sup> PW I. 55.

Wagner then describes the process of freeing oneself from the slavery of the authoritarian government, and, not surprisingly includes vocabulary and sentiments consistent with the philosophies of everyone discussed in Part I. He says the cause of our suffering is the care [*Sorge*] that fills us with worry, initially over the preservation of our bodies, and then later as something which causes the individual to give up its freedom to either the speculative God or commercial authoritarian culture, to alleviate the suffering. It is by relinquishing this care, the maintenance of one's own life, that we will be able to move forward into the post-revolutionary world.<sup>112</sup> It ought to be no surprise that he is once again emphasizing the transition from the second to third stage of the Moral Progression. This transition appears in all of his heroines from his pre-*Ring* operas, in his more recent projects Friedrich, Siegfried, and Jesus, and is something he has repeatedly describes in his prose writings going back to the 1830's. He continues:

But when life's maintenance is no longer the exclusive aim of life, and the Freemen of the Future – inspired by a new and deed-begetting faith, or better, Knowledge – find the means of life assured by payment of a natural and reasonable energy; in short, when Industry no longer is our mistress but our handmaid: then shall we set the goal of life in joy of life, and strive to rear our children to be fit and worthy partners in this joy. This training, starting from the exercise of strength and nurture of corporeal beauty, will soon take on a pure artistic shape, by reason of our undisturbed affection for our children and our gladness at the ripening of their beauty; and each man will, in one domain or other, become in truth an artist. The diversity of natural inclination will build up arts in manifold variety and countless forms of each variety, in fulness hitherto undreamed. And as the Knowledge of all men will find at last its religious utterance in the one effective Knowledge of free united manhood: so will all these rich developments of Art find their profoundest focus in the Drama, in the glorious Tragedy of Man. The Tragedy will be the feast of all mankind; in it, – set free from each conventional etiquette, – free, strong, and beauteous man will celebrate the dolour and delight of all his love, and consecrate in lofty worth the great Love-offering of his Death.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> PW I. 57.

<sup>113</sup> PW I. 58.

Ideal moral living consists then in the renewed sense of the sensual or the real objects of the world *per se*, and a unity of men into a community representing the free-united manhood. Wagner also reveals here the nature of the ideal art work: a Drama the subject of which is the tragedy of man and his glorious self-sacrifice through death for love. That drama will not only perfectly mirror this revolutionary free world but it will be both created by and participated in by this enlightened community as a whole. All of this is consistent with his earlier writings and with the self-sacrificial heroes Friedrich, Siegfried, and Jesus, who enable humanity to attain this noble goal of the enlightened community through their sacrificial deed to this community: the fourth stage of the Moral Progression.

Wagner concludes *Art and Revolution* with this sentiment calling upon the two saviours of humanity: Christ, for creating the possibility for revolution and a free society of equals; and Apollo, for inspiring that society to achieve the highest goal: art. Jesus leads men to act for revolution in the name of love and freedom: Apollo brings men together after having attained this freedom to glorify themselves and thereby raise themselves in communion with the *Weltgeist*.<sup>114</sup>

Like *Die Wibelungen* and the *Nibelung Sketch*, *Art and Revolution* too stresses the entire four-stage Moral Progression. Though Wagner is less specific on the first stage, only describing it in terms of initial unconsciousness and nature, the second stage is the incorporation, brought on by fear [*Sorge*], of all of the vices of property and modern society as well as emphasis on the unnatural speculative god in favor of authoritarian rule: the shadow of the dragon. Only a complete rejection of this society, its laws, its property, and its authoritarian rule can return society to a state of freedom and free it from fear. But this itself can only be done when man puts aside his selfish

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<sup>114</sup> PW I. 64-65.

ego-fear, and joins with his fellow man in community so that together they may perform the deed of revolution and bring with it the true fulfilment of Christ's revolution and doctrine of universal love. Art, for now, is no longer used as a means to achieve the unity which is necessary for the revolutionary deed, but as a means to unite in the message of love after the unification in revolutionary deed for love's benefit. The Revolution will destroy the world, but the artwork will help create utopia on earth afterwards.

In the Paris writings Wagner stressed this same idea of unification through the goddess of music, and the power of love and mutual self-sacrifice that it instills, which is the same function music has in the coming utopia in *Art and Revolution*. The only difference is that in the Paris letters and essays he was writing primarily as a spiritual conservative. Humanity would rise into godly consciousness, and the enlightened souls who are ready to hear his music would achieve through death unity, with the spirit. All this is written in a language which focussed on attaining a universal morality based on supplanting the imperfect and human. Under his current humanist-revolutionary thinking, by contrast, utopia could be achieved on earth through men, not through the enlightened men alone, but through the *Volk*, following the model of the revolutionary Christ, and as such proving they are the living embodiment of the ideal essence of man and so able to destroy the current system. Then the world would be ready for an art that would unite all humankind in love.

His change reflects the same stages of development in the Moral Progression that end in mutual sacrifice for the whole, except without the spiritual element and so in line more with Hume, Rousseau, Kant, and Schiller, and the later Proudhon, though he would find a reiteration of this humanism perhaps most clearly in his reading of Feuerbach, which took place at the same time as he was completing *Art and*

*Revolution*. After this reading he seems to have been reinvigorated by Feuerbach's revolutionary humanism, so similar to his own, because that summer, immediately after completing Feuerbach's *Thoughts on Death and Immortality*, he sent a letter through Liszt to Feuerbach's publisher in Leipzig asking for more books by Feuerbach.<sup>115</sup> He then went back to his drafts of *Die Wibelungen* and *Jesus*. He completed *Die Wibelungen* and sent it in September, through Uhlig,<sup>116</sup> to be published by the same Wigand in Leipzig. He expounded upon *Jesus* that summer and fall, with his new rush of Feuerbach-instilled inspiration. The immediate product of this inspiration came in the form of a lengthy pamphlet written in October and November of that year. He had assumed at the time that this work would include all of his aesthetic ideas in a form that would clarify them to the public so as to make them universally understood, and would thus, as he described to Liszt, "prepare the ground" for the art which would follow the revolution. This work was called *The Artwork of the Future*, a clear reference and homage to Feuerbach's *Principles on the Philosophy of the Future*.

#### C – Revisions of *Die Wibelungen* and *Jesus von Nazareth*

The immediate results of his newly acquired Feuerbachian-Proudhonian inspiration is present in the changes he made to *Die Wibelungen* and the commentary added to *Jesus von Nazareth*. As mentioned, Wagner told Uhlig that *Die Wibelungen*'s third and final chapters were the ones in which the most editing took place. The third chapter offers a rejection of the prevailing perception of religion and mythology and explains that these things are in reality the *Volk*'s representation of its own essence.

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<sup>115</sup> See letter to Liszt from August 4th, 1849, *Selected Letters of Richard Wagner*, 173-174.

<sup>116</sup> See letter to Uhlig from September 16th, 1849, *Selected Letters of Richard Wagner*, 175-176.

This is a serious break from the original version of *Die Wibelungen* in reference to the role of the God Wotan. Wotan was the god of fate and change in the earlier sections of *Die Wibelungen*, and the Gods and Giants were concepts alone, not personalities, in the *Nibelungen Sketch*. But now, Wagner's Wotan can no longer be a God *per se*, as Wagner explains "The Gods and Heroes of its religion and saga are the concrete personalities in which the Spirit of the Folk portrays its essence to itself."<sup>117</sup> Wotan, unlike the God of *Siegfrieds Tod*, can no longer be a conceptual speculative God-the-Father, but a real person embodying the essence of man. What eventually became of Wagner's conception of Wotan stems from this fundamental shift in his conception of Gods as representatives of man that appears for the first time in his writings here. But for now, he would not revisit Wotan specifically, but rather would concentrate on his other human God, Jesus.

The changes made to the last chapter are all in the Proudhonian sense, a statement against property and its becoming law. As long as the hoard was a symbol of authority and authority was actually achieved by a righteous deed of self-sacrifice, then the line of kings was noble and true. But when the law became property which could be inherited rather than won, kingship and the law became immoral. He says:

[B]y deriving his worth from a stiffened family-possession he was openly disowning any actual *human nobleness*. So—after the fall of the heroic-human *Wibelungen*—this hereditary ownership, then property *in general, de facto possession*, became the title for all rights existing or to be acquired; and Property gave Man that right which man had theretofore conveyed to property. It was this dreg of the vanished *Nibelungen-Hoard*, then, that the sobered German lords had kept for themselves... Possession now was consequently *Right*, and upright was it kept by all Established and Approved being henceforth drawn from that one right on a more and more elaborate system. He who had a share in property, or managed to acquire one, *from that instant* ranked as a natural pillar of the State (*der öffentlichen Macht*).<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> PW VII. 266-267. See above: Note 50.

<sup>118</sup> PW VII. 296-297.

The self-sacrificial deed by which the king gave himself to the people and became their voice gave way to money, property, and contract, the evils upon which Wagner would further expand upon in his *Jesus* commentary and in *Artwork of the Future*.

The *Jesus* commentary stems from his desire to produce a revolutionary drama in a place that would be ready for the revolutionary artwork: Paris, where revolution was already achieved, but which was still imperfect and needed the message that revolutionary Christ could offer to make it into a true utopia. *Jesus*, unlike Friedrich and Siegfried, is a subject common to all cultures and so would be the most likely to be produced outside of Germany. Wagner wrote to Ferdinand Heine of his work on *Jesus* and its purpose:

I shall even keep half an eye on Paris: it is not, however, the conditions currently prevailing there which I have in mind, but the ones which must inevitably replace them, and in the not too distant future. I shall spend the next few days elaborating my sketch for there; it is *Jesus* of Nazareth. I must first of all attempt to win over my French poet [Gustav Vaëz] to the idea, so that, encouraged by the hope of a none-too-distant success, he may come to some arrangement with me concerning the plan, in order that we may appear before the public with the finished work when the time comes. Only when I regard matters in this light can I remain an artist, and create works of art: if not I shall cease to exist.<sup>119</sup>

There is hope in this letter that the French will be ready to receive the message. He did not have a lot of hope in this project, as his letters to Uhlig from August and September show, but in his letter to Heine he shows some faith in the possibility of a future success.<sup>120</sup> In the meantime he began work on his elaborate philosophical commentary on the already-produced sketch which portrays the story of *Jesus* the revolutionary and the message that will bring the entire world to a state of utopia.

Right at the beginning Wagner describes *Jesus*'s revolutionary purposes.

Wagner rejects *Jesus* merely being the king of the Jews meant to save the Jews alone

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<sup>119</sup> *Selected Letters of Richard Wagner*, 178.

<sup>120</sup> *Selected Letters of Richard Wagner*, 174-180.

in favor of the revolutionary who does not stem merely from David, but from Adam, and so will redeem the whole world from Roman oppression. In language similar to the description of Jesus offered in *Art and Revolution* as well as his descriptions of Friedrich and Siegfried from *Die Wibelungen* and his essays *The Revolution* and *Again Theater-Reform* he explains that absolute power should not transfer from one person to another, but it should be in the hands of the *Volk*. It is only the *Volk*, and the lowliest of those, brought to understanding through the message that Jesus offers, that can offer salvation to the rest of the world. Wagner explains that this revolution and higher consciousness cannot be bestowed on man from any God, but must come from man himself, beginning from the lowest as in *The Revolution* and his conception from *Art and Revolution* of the poorest destroying the current system, and then in the post-revolution embodying Christ's message of community and love which will spread to the rest of humanity.<sup>121</sup>

The human take on the birth free from sin that separates Jesus from the rest of his brothers is itself further symptomatic of the "revolution through destruction" which Jesus embodies. Jesus explains to his brothers that he is a product of love and therefore God, because his parents were not yet married when he was born (i.e. they were not legally bound and so not each other's property). Thus he was a product of their conscious free-willed choice to be together. His siblings, by contrast, were products of the law because by the time of their birth Mary and Joseph were married, so they are not products of God. "Jesus to his brothers concerning his ante-nuptial birth, as to which they question him: Ye are born of the flesh, but I of love: so I am of God, but ye of the Law."<sup>122</sup> Wagner's Jesus is not supernatural, but a free product of humanity who merely realized his own purely human content and now forms this

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<sup>121</sup> PW VIII. 298.

<sup>122</sup> PW VIII. 306.

truth into his doctrine of love, freedom, and destruction of law, property, and agreements.

[John:] ‘Ye shall never swear’; in Oaths lay the binding law of a World that knew not Love as yet. Let every man be free to act at every moment according to Love and his ability: bound by an oath, I am unfree: if in its fulfillment I do good, that good is robbed of merit (as every bounden virtue) and loses the worth of conviction; but if the oath leads me to evil, then I sin against conviction. The Oath engenders every vice: if it binds me against my profit, I shall seek to circumvent it (as every law is circumvented) and what I should quite rightly do in pursuance of my welfare, through the oath becomes a crime; but if I find my profit in it (without doing harm to another), then I rob myself of the moral satisfaction of doing right at every instant through my own free judgment... One law alone is right: the more the laws, the more corrupt the world!<sup>123</sup>

The next portion of the analysis is essentially a treatise on the progress of man.

Wagner presents a complete Moral Progression which is completed by the self through ultimate fulfilment in the death of the individual and the incorporation into the *Allgemeine*; the one, the universal or the generality. Wagner outlines this progression in a few different ways. First, he offers a version of Genesis and the Fall which bears a striking similarity to Spinoza and Schelling in its stress on nature and the unity of God and nature. He begins: “God was one with the world from the beginning: the earliest races (Adam and Eve) lived and moved in oneness, innocent, without any knowledge of this oneness:” This is the typical first stage of the Moral Progression, a unity based entirely on instinct without conscious knowledge or choice made to take part in this unity. He continues:

[T]he first step in knowledge was the distinguishing between the helpful and the harmful; in the human heart the notion of the Harmful developed into that of the Wicked: this seemed to be the opposite of the Good, the Helpful, of God, and that dualism formed the basis of all Sin and Suffering of mankind; upon it was built the idea of man’s imperfectness, and that idea itself was bound to swell to doubt. (In misunderstanding his own impulses, Man

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<sup>123</sup> PW VIII. 299, 313. For connection to Proudhon see Appendix B: Proudhon, pgs. 607-610.

assumed himself to be outside of God, i.e. wicked: over against themselves men set the Law, as come from God, to force themselves to good.)

As in Kant, the result of the original use of knowledge is the understanding of what is good for you and what is bad for you. Though Wagner does not elaborate further here, we know from Kant's explanation that by using his reason and thus going away from unity, which by its nature is always good, man tries something that might not necessarily be good for him. This leads to the understanding dividing the world into good and bad, or helpful and harmful. Wagner explains that from this initial knowledge, and the inability to recall the unity with God, the choices made by man become associated with evil and wickedness, as it was they that brought man away from the initial state of unity and instinct; and so human choice becomes associated with evil, and not with good. From this error and lack of faith in human free choice, the law is created as an example of the Good. Wagner continues:

Human Society next sought deliverance through the *Law*: it fastened the notion of Good to the Law, as to something intelligible and perceptible by us all: but what was bound fast to the Law was only a moment of the Good, and since God is eternally generative, fluctuating and mobile, the Law thus turned against God's self; for, as man can live and move by none save the ur-law of Motion itself, in pursuance of his nature he needs must clash against the Law, i.e., the binding, the standing – [which by its nature becomes] the erring which thus becomes the sinful. This is man's suffering, the suffering of God himself, who has not come as yet to consciousness in men.

Unfortunately it was inevitable that this system which is based on the falsity of "what is Good is the not-I" inevitably clashed with itself. The basic point made is that laws will clash with the circumstances in which they are forced to operate. If what is good at one time is made into a law, which by its nature is unchanging, it will not remain a good thing, and will ultimately be an evil thing. This inner clashing within society and its laws leads only to suffering, and as such embodies the second stage of the Moral Progression – moving away from nature, creating false systems and universals

with faulty reason which in the end leads to a clashing of contrary laws or desires and suffering.

Wagner concludes his description with a conscious return to nature and the instinctive. Man is no longer assumed to be automatically not-God. When humanity and what is human is taken to be the Good, with its fluctuating nature and all, then oneness with God and nature is achieved again.

That consciousness we finally attain through taking the essence of Man himself for immediate Godhood, through recognising the eternal law whereby the whole creation moves as the positive and ineluctable, and transcending the distinction between the helpful and the harmful through our recognition that the two are the self-same utterance of the creative force: the original oneness of God and the World thus is gained anew to our consciousness, and Sin, therefore Suffering, abolished by our abolition of the clumsy human law – which opposed itself as State to Nature – through recognition that the *only* God indwells in us and in our unity with Nature – which, again, we recognise as undivided. Jesus removed this conflict, and established the oneness of God, by his proclamation of Love.<sup>124</sup>

So the ideal is achieved through a renewed knowledge and faith in the self and in the goodness of human nature. The Good cannot be a law that reflects humanity's lack of faith in itself and its ability to be good, but must stem from an acceptance and love of humanity. When it is no longer rejected as the source of Good, unity is reattained with God and nature. But to do this the law, or the state, must be torn down, since it is against nature; when this is done, through revolution, the state of nature is reattained.

This narrative does not end with death, but with an acceptance of human nature and a conscious return to nature. Thus it is closer to Spinoza's and Hume's ideal than to the more spiritual ending of Fichte, for example, although in Wagner's description of humanity returning to a unity, this progression is consistent with the most important aspect of the third and fourth stages of the Moral Progression. But

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<sup>124</sup> This and the previous three quotes are all from: PW VIII. 310-311.

Wagner expounds further upon this unity in a miniature treatise that immediately follows called “Concerning Death,” where he explains: “The last ascension of the individual life into the life of the whole, is death, which is the last and most definite upheaval of egoism.”<sup>125</sup> This thought fills in an important part of the previous outline. The unity represents community and the “coming into the unity” requires a relinquishing of egoism, which ultimately is completed by death. Now Wagner is incorporating Fichte, Hegel, and Feuerbach, in that death is now the final means of surrendering the individual egoism to the community and joining the universal. Wagner now employs the term *Notwendigkeit* as it is meant in the Moral Progression, i.e., on the level of the individual’s moral progression; an inner necessity that drives the individual to progress morally, and ultimately to sacrifice his individuality for the betterment of the whole. Wagner’s version of this same *Notwendigkeit* runs as follows:

The plant grows from *one* germ, which is itself: each evolution of the plant is a manifolding of itself in bloom and seed, and this process of life is a ceaseless progress unto death. Its death is the self-offering of every creature in favor of the maintenance and enrichment of the whole: the creature that fulfills this offering with consciousness, by attuning its free will to the necessity [*Notwendigkeit*] of this offering, becomes a co-creator, – in that it further devotes its free will to the greatest possible moral import of the sacrifice, it becomes God himself. This nature-necessity [*Naturnotwendigkeit*] had to lead man to consciousness of itself, so that, for all his seeming to content his egoism by exercise of his free will, he is always advancing on his ascent into an ever more extended generality. This advance is conditioned by Love. Love is the most imperative [*nothwendigste*] utterance of life: but as, materially speaking, in it the ego’s life-stuff is voided, so in it takes also place the moral process of a riddance of egoism; and the perfect riddance thereof is Death, the giving-up of the body, of the hearth and home of egoism, of the last hindrance to my ascent into the universal [*Allgemeinheit*].<sup>126</sup>

When compared to the meaning of and implications behind *Notwendigkeit* and its consistent meaning to the philosophers in the conclusion to Part I, this description

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<sup>125</sup> PW VIII. 313.

<sup>126</sup> PW VIII. 313-314.

bears every one of its characteristics. Death and sacrifice are moral imperatives which support new life and the community, and the individual is driven by this moral necessity to make this sacrifice through and for the love of his community. The end of the moral progression of the individual is the annihilation of his individuality, through death and incorporation into the community through love.

With this in mind, Wagner then gives a second account of the Moral Progression, this time not through quasi-religious language as in the Genesis-Fall parable above, but in terms of the ego's progression from selfish egoism to its ultimate conscious sacrificial annihilation in the community through love.<sup>127</sup> His progression begins with youthful selfishness, the first most selfish form of love:

Thus, until his physical maturity, man develops after the principle of his sheerest egoism: the love of the child to its begetters, nourishers and bringers-up, is gratitude, – a feeling which is always directed to the thing received; it is the receivers delight in himself, but no return, for a making good, a paying back, is unthinkable here. So that the individual first fronts the generality as a full-fledged egoist, and his active dealings with it are the gradual abandonment of egoism, ending in his ascent into generality.

As Hume explained,<sup>128</sup> when love is given to those only because they resemble the giver of that love, it is self-love, and so in no way is it participating in a community, as it is only looking for oneself in others, and praising those aspects of oneself in others. It is selfish egoism and nothing more.

Wagner goes on to say that the first time the self is broken of this selfishness is due to the realization of death; a crucial realization in the second stage of the Moral Progression. In an attempt to defeat death, the self desires to copy itself by creating children, so some aspect of the self will continue even with the death of the body. So it partially surrenders itself in the act of sexual love which is followed by a surrender

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<sup>127</sup> Wagner's outline of a version of the Moral Progression is, by the standards of Wagner's prose, lucid and brief. See: PW VIII. 315-320.

<sup>128</sup> See Part I, Chapter 1 pg. 46.

of the self for the family. It is still a selfish form of love in that the products of this love, the children, are in essence copies of the self, so any sacrifice of the self made to these offspring are in fact merely the shifting of emphasis from one part of the self to the other: as Wagner said, it is a relinquishing love only in that it is “giving-up himself in favor of the multiplying of himself.”

The important aspect of the two descriptions of these two types of love is that one is based on the first stage of the Moral Progression and stems from pure selfishness practiced by a being who does not yet have a fear of death, while the other stems from a newly found fear of the death. Therefore this second type of love, this minimal surrendering of the self, is a way to cheat death for those still frightened by it who have not learned to truly and completely give themselves up to pure love. For those involved in this second type of love it is a constant race against time: there must always be children, and if there aren't, death has won, but even if there are, the individual still hasn't won, only extended the game – kept the pendulum swinging. This is the realization of the second stage of the Moral Progression: the continuance of second stage behavior and selfishness that will never be successful.

It is only in the realization of death as a positive thing and the giving up of oneself for the community that the game is truly won, not by death but by the universal, and the pendulum stops swinging because utopia in the universal have been achieved: the third and fourth stages. This is achieved through an instilling of Christ's universal love.<sup>129</sup> In the completion of Jesus' message the truth of love and death, egoism and the universal is revealed. There is no higher act than the willful self-sacrifice for humanity as a whole; through this act unification with the universal is attained. This is an incorporation of duty: the free-willed self-sacrifice of the

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<sup>129</sup> PW VIII. 315-317.

individual for the state, found as the universal moral highest good in all variants of the Moral Progression, into the Feuerbachian language of the glorification of death in general and the individual incorporation into the universal through love. This passage also offers further examples of Jesus' and Wagner's desire not for national unity, but universal unity beyond familial and homeland borders as we observe in *Art and Revolution* and Wagner's lesson that Christ could have taught the Greeks that would have saved their civilization and their art: do not think of yourselves nationalistically, but humanly; appeal to the purely human elements, not to merely the national-cultural elements.

Wagner's discussion of this change employs startlingly familiar language. The ego, at first, places itself in direct opposition to the universal / Nature only to eventually realign itself with them. This particularly takes up the Fichte-Hegel conception of I – not-I, and the goal of aligning the two through rejection of the self and incorporation of it into the nature-universal not-I: objectivity, as opposed to subjectivity. Wagner refers to this act by which the self is supplanted by the universal as an act of "love"; another consistent element found throughout the fourth stage of the Moral Progression.

Nothing exists for us, but what is present to man's consciousness. - To the Me the Universal stands opposed: the I is to me the positive, the Universal the negative, for each requirement of the Universal in my regard is a denial of my Me. While I am aught soever to myself, the universe is naught to me: - only in degree as I rid myself of my Me, and ascend into the Universal, does the Universal become a fact to me, because with my own Me, the only certain thing to me, I now am in it: the process of putting off my me in favor of the Universal is Love, is active Life itself: the non-active life, in which I abide by myself is egoism. Through love I give myself to what lies without me, set my strength in the Universal, thus make the cipher something through myself, who now am in it, and that in measure as I rid myself of my Me through love. The most complete divestment of my Me takes place through death; for inasmuch as I completely upheave my Me, thus make it naught, I mount completely to the Universal, which henceforth is something substantial and

stands in the same relation to me through my death as I stood to it through my birth.<sup>130</sup>

Before ending his commentary and beginning the final section of the draft in which he finds supporting biblical quotes to be used in the drama, Wagner offers one last biblical parable which, again, outlines complete Moral Progression. This time it focuses on the role of the law, possession, and fear present in the world before Christ's message was received: a world in the second stage of the Moral Progression. He combines the original biblical parable with the types of love present in different stages of the Moral Progression.

Innocence is the [state of] absolute egoism, for it receives and gives not. Adam lived in innocence so long as he merely received; the first divestment of his egoism, through procreative love, was the fall, to wit the unit's step outside itself, and consequent advance towards complete repeal of egoism in death, i.e. self-annihilation. (The state of Innocence could not come to men's consciousness until they had lost it. This yearning back thereto, the struggle for its re-attainment, is the soul of the whole movement of civilization since ever we went to know the men of legend and of history. It is the impulse to depart from a generality that seems hostile to us, to arrive at egoistic satisfaction in ourselves, etc.)<sup>131</sup>

Using similar language to that used later by Abrams, Wagner says the whole movement of history, the path of the *Weltgeist*, is to consciously reattain this original state of being, which in its original form he describes as selfish, instinctive and ideal. In its final form, as a conscious return to unity, it would be selfless. By the sexual act, or the feeling which brings on the sexual intent – as Wagner viewed the self's attempt at immortality through its continuation as a self in its children past death – fear is brought into the world. To this selfish being, the end of the self is the ultimate evil to be avoided at all costs.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> PW VIII. 317. Wagner also offers an explanation slightly more in line with Schelling, in which “universal” is switched for “Nature”. See: PW VIII. 322.

<sup>131</sup> PW VIII. 320.

<sup>132</sup> PW VIII. 320.

As long as life was pleasant and man could reach the end of his long life knowing that a part of him would still exist in his children, the fear of death (though not extinguished, as it would be if pure love were received into the self) would be tolerable. But when this is not the case as it was, Wagner notably describes, with the Jews of Moses's time, a substitute must be put in place to alleviate this fear. That substitute is the Law and Possession.<sup>133</sup> The law's function was to content and protect the Jews and all those incapable of living out long lives and passing themselves on to their children. The substitute for children is further selfishness, property. If one can make something else permanent one's own, then that object will be one's for all time. But the objects themselves lack even the independence of children, and so the law of property is a further entrenching into selfishness. This loveless person is trapped in the second stage, doomed to live out life in constant frustration as his will can never be fulfilled.<sup>134</sup>

Wagner completes his commentary with a section labeled "To be much worked out" in which he explains that the system of law and property which rules over society needs to be overthrown in order for love, or the only divine law, to take its rightful place as the only law. Love can only be instilled when the law is gone.<sup>135</sup> The society based on love must of necessity destroy the Law and the rights of property. Then when love is taken into the heart all fear is vanquished – Wagner's solution to the ills of the second stage of the Moral Progression, as well as the cause of the revolution which will bring humanity to the third stage of the Moral

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<sup>133</sup> PW VIII. 320-321. By giving the origin of possession and loveless law to the Jews, Wagner gave himself another enemy against which he could rail. The Jews were now responsible for modern society's stress on property, and so the Jews were to blame for society's ills. In the following year's *Judaism in Music* he would again address this issue of the Jews and Jewishness of modern culture being the problem that prevents true Utopia from occurring.

<sup>134</sup> Wagner offers an archetype for the loveless selfish person which is substantially similar to Feuerbach's same archetype in *Thoughts on Death and Immortality*. See: PW VIII. 321-322 and *Thoughts on Death and Immortality*, 123.

<sup>135</sup> PW VIII. 322.

Progression. Love destroys the hold of fear over us, and allows us to dutifully sacrifice ourselves for the betterment of mankind. A Bible verse that Wagner cited in these supplementary notes best summarizes this change: “There is no fear in love, but perfect love casteth out fear, for fear hath torment. He that feareth, is not perfect in his love” (John I:4:18).<sup>136</sup>

The working out of this commentary to *Jesus von Nazareth* plays a crucial part in the development of Wagner’s thinking. Here for the first time he actively incorporates specific philosophical terminology such as *Notwendigkeit* and in its implied meaning stresses the dutiful self-sacrificial conscious act whereby the self is extinguished into the Universal.<sup>137</sup> That being said, all of this thinking has a precedent in earlier writings. He was against usury in 1840 just as he was in favor of the self-sacrificial act for the benefit of a larger community which could then attain “godly consciousness.” And just as at that time, this could only be achieved by relinquishing fear, an ideal he had always held as moral. His next major work on aesthetics and philosophy, *The Artwork of the Future*, would further elaborate and express these same ideas.

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<sup>136</sup> PW VIII. 328.

<sup>137</sup> It is unclear when this commentary was written compared to November’s *Artwork of the Future*, which also uses much of this same vocabulary and expounds these same ideas. Ellis is split between viewing all the commentary as being written at one time, as this commentary is found in a single notebook, and thus dating it to the latter part of the summer before *Artwork of the Future* and after *Art and Revolution*, (PW VIII. 284), and simultaneously noting that certain passages bear a strong resemblance to passages in *Artwork of the Future* and thus assuming that those parts of the *Jesus* commentary stem from after *Artwork of the Future*. (PW VIII. 317f) As no solid dating for this commentary is possible to make, the question cannot be definitively answered here, but there is no more reason why Wagner couldn’t have come to the ideas we find later in *Artwork of the Future* from his working out of *Jesus von Nazareth*, than the other way around as Ellis holds.

D – Wagner’s Moral Progression Variants from *Artwork of the Future* through the Failure of the Revolution in Paris, and to his Discovery of Schopenhauer

The *Artwork of the Future* is the best and most thorough example of Wagner’s employment of the philosophical ideas found in the Moral Progression. He examines the connection between nature and *Notwendigkeit* in which the necessity which rules nature is viewed as incomprehensible to the not-yet moral being who embraces culture and does not embody his own law of necessity, but becomes clear to the moral being who embraces the law of necessity – or the *Weltgeist* of Schelling and Hegel. Wagner explains how this moral being moves beyond nature’s abilities to guide humanity by being able to actively embrace natural-necessity and so is able to move himself and society towards a unification with the universal. In the same vein as Fichte and Feuerbach, he denounces false systems based on speculative philosophy in favor of embracing *Notwendigkeit*. And he explains – in the same vein as does Proudhon – the role of culture and its necessary abandonment in order for citizens to join with the already present and living ideal *Volk*.<sup>138</sup>

The self begins in instinctive unification with the universal, then through the force of natural necessity is separated from this universal and lives as a selfish ego placing itself at odds with the former universal, nature.<sup>139</sup> The self then develops a

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<sup>138</sup> For the connection between nature and necessity, similar to Kant’s from his *Conjectures*, See: PW I. 69. For the discussion of nature’s inadequacies in bringing about a utopian society, and thus the necessity for this society to be brought about by men who embrace the law of natural necessity, See: PW I 78-9. For denouncing speculative philosophy in favor of natural necessity, see: PW I. 74, 82-3. For abandoning culture to join with the *Volk*, See: PW I. 74-77, 80. *Artwork of the Future* is particularly difficult to quote, particularly on these subjects, as Wagner does not make his points succinctly. For that reason, notes have been offered to where one could find Wagner’s lengthy and elaborate discussions of this material, with minimal quotes present herein.

<sup>139</sup> Where Wagner was previously silent in *Jesus* on the ways in which this separation created consciousness, and left us to infer through Kant that it was from error that Man attained consciousness he now fills in this gap and says it explicitly. See: PW I. 70 “From the moment when Man perceived the difference between himself and Nature, and thus commenced his own development as man, by breaking loose from the unconsciousness of natural animal life and passing over into conscious life, –

false system based on its own subjective experience, from which stem religion, the laws of property and statecraft. But this system is unnatural as it does not stem from a truly human need, but instead from fashion and luxury, which by its nature places man against man in a struggle for power and control. This false system must be destroyed in order for any progress to be made, and this destruction is achieved through a rejection of the unnatural in favor of the intuitive natural necessity, and those led by this faculty: the *Volk*.<sup>140</sup> They negate their own selves and consciously return into the universal through love; the most moral need. The highest act of this need is the negation or sacrifice of the self for “all the world of human beings.” This *Volk* will unite humanity into a “humanity of the future” which will essentially embody the will of nature, the *Weltgeist*, and the universal; which are all the same thing. Nationalism and nations altogether will fade away into the unity of all mankind.<sup>141</sup>

In preparation for this utopia, Wagner places an emphasis on the role of his writings, and on the role of artwork itself. He specifically says, in his dedication of this work to Feuerbach, that the artwork of the future will not bring about utopia, as it

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when he thus looked Nature in the face and from the first feelings of his dependence on her, thereby aroused, evolved the faculty of Thought, – from that moment did Error begin, as the earliest utterance of consciousness. But Error is the mother of Knowledge; and the history of the birth of Knowledge out of Error is the history of the human race, from the myths of primal ages down to the present day. Man erred, from the time when he set the cause of Nature’s workings outside the bounds of Nature’s self, and for the physical phenomena subsumed a super-physical, anthropomorphic, and arbitrary cause; when he took the endless harmony of her unconscious, instinctive energy for the arbitrary demeanour of disconnected finite forces. Knowledge consists in the laying of this error, in fathoming the Necessity of phenomena whose underlying basis had appeared to us arbitrary”.

<sup>140</sup> Wagner describes this system and its rejection of necessity as nothing more than a “raging stream of madness brought upon the world,” the only cure for which is their abandonment and the embracing of natural-necessity. See PW I. 82-3.

<sup>141</sup> See: PW I. 96-7. “But the Life-need of man’s life-needs is the *need of Love*. As the conditions of natural human life are contained in the love-bond of subordinated nature-forces, which craved for their agreement, their redemption, their adoption into the higher principle, Man; so does man find his agreement, his redemption, his appeasement, likewise in something higher; and this higher thing is the *human race, the fellowship of man*, for there is but one thing higher than *man’s* self, and that is *Men*. But man can only gain the stilling of his life-need through *Giving*, through *Giving of himself* to other men, and in its highest climax, to *all the world of human beings*.”

can only be created by the real *Volk* of the future: an already utopian society.<sup>142</sup> His writings, then, are for those who instead embrace culture and need to be converted to real *Volk*, and so serve the purpose of explaining to them where and in what ways their culture errs and convince them of the rightness of *Volkheit* so that they may too be ready for the deed of revolution, which in turn would make them ready for the artwork of the future.<sup>143</sup> He clearly delineates the lines of artwork and criticism, except for a single passage at the beginning of the work. In it he explains the process of man at first separating himself from nature, and then reunifying himself when he recognizes that “the essence of nature is also his own.” Thus man recognizes the law of necessity that governs nature and himself. Wagner discusses this process in numerous ways, and this is familiar to us from the Moral Progression. What is interesting is what Wagner calls this coming into consciousness of these connections – art; vaguely adding in a footnote, “art in general or the artwork of the future in particular.”

If Nature then, by her solidarity with Man, attains in Man her consciousness, and if Man's life is the very activation of this consciousness... so does man's Life itself gain understanding by means of Science, which makes this human life in turn an object of experience. But the activation of the consciousness attained by Science, the portrayal of the Life that it has learnt to know, the image of its Necessity and Truth, is – Art.<sup>144</sup>

Unlike his other statements about the artwork of the future being a work that can only be achieved after the world is one united *Volk*, i.e., in the third or fourth stage of the

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<sup>142</sup> PW I. 68. “From the circumstance that this my attempt could never quite succeed, I was forced to recognise that it is not the individual, but only the community, that can bring artistic deeds to actual accomplishment, past any doubting of the senses. The recognition of this fact, if hope herein is not to be entirely abandoned, means as much as: to raise the standard of revolt against the whole condition of our present Art and Life.” As a general concept of revolution this is universally used in the Moral Progression, but as a specific goal for art this notion is again, as with the opening lines from *Art and Revolution*, a Schellingian idea: the artwork achieved by the community as a whole, not the individual, will bring about utopia. See also: PW I. 77, 82, 89, for further refrains of this notion of the artwork of the future being created by a society working communally.

<sup>143</sup> See PW I. 75-7, 84.

<sup>144</sup> PW I. 70.

Moral Progression, this art – or artwork of the future – is linked with the transition between the second and third stages of the Moral Progression, just as it appears in Schiller and Schelling. In Schelling we observed both these ideas: first, that when man no longer views nature-necessity as something outside of himself, he aligns himself with the higher form of nature, spirit, and in doing so brings nature herself up to the level of spirit at which time they join in a unity; and second, that this is done through the artwork which brings together the drive to follow the laws of natural necessity with a foundation in the science of reason. The possibility of art being used as an educational tool is present here, as is the return to conservatism that would require such a belief in the necessity of an aesthetic education.

After completing, *Artwork of the Future*, Wagner decided to tone down the philosophy in favor of aesthetics in his remaining prose writings of the Zürich period. But he remained utterly consistent to the ideas in the Moral Progression, though altering his revolutionary viewpoint for a more conservative one, and constantly shifting his vocabulary – without shifting the content – depending on with whom he was communicating. After two years of believing firmly in the real *Volk* and the inevitability of revolution that would finally bring with it the artwork of the future, the longed for revolution in France failed because of Louis Napoleon's coup.<sup>145</sup> After this event, Wagner changed his position from believing in a real *Volk* of workers who could bring about change to the more conservative outlook of the ideal “purely human” being, but his essential philosophical progression did not change. He still felt that revolution was necessary, but now it was also necessary to re-humanize all who

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<sup>145</sup> Evidence of Wagner's belief in the real *Volk* and in the usefulness of his writings to help bring about this change can be seen in numerous letters from the period, including: the November 21/22, 1849 and December 27, 1849 letters to Uhlig as well as the famous letter to Uhlig from a year later in October 1850 which includes his striking statement that Paris burning to the ground would be the perfect catalyst for a wide-spread revolution, and the March 1850 letters to his imprisoned compatriots from the Dresden uprisings Bakunin and Röckel.

had been damaged by the slave mentality of the present culture. In his letter to Kietz from December 30, 1851 he explains:

My entire political outlook no longer consists in anything but the bloodiest hatred of our entire civilization, contempt for all it has produced, and a passionate longing for nature. But that is not something anyone will understand who felt so enchanted by the industrial exhibition. Well, you've got your exhibition, and exhibition in the pillory, with all your industrious workers! That I ever set store by the workers as workers is something I must now atone for grievously: with the noises they make, these workers are the wretchedest slaves, whom anyone can control nowadays if he promises them plenty of 'work.' A slave mentality has taken root in everything with us: that we are *human* is something nobody knows in the whole of France except perhaps Proudhon at most – and even he is only dimly aware of the fact! – in the whole of Europe, however, I prefer dogs to these doglike men. However, I do not despair of the *future*; only the most terrible and destructive revolution can make our civilized beasts 'human' again.<sup>146</sup>

Despite his change of language, the general message is still the same. Civilization still needs to return to instinctive intuitive nature-necessity: the only difference is that he no longer believes that the lowly worker class embodies this nature-necessity but feels instead that it has a slave mentality. The high ideal of nature-necessity is still there in Wagner's thinking, it just no longer has a bodily persona. Revolution will bring about the change to a true nature-necessity in all, when it is eventually achieved. This is also described, though in less detail, in the letter to Uhlig two weeks later, along with a description of his personal goal, which is a further example of the end of the Moral Progression: to sacrifice himself for others.

And now, for my recovery – I do not say for my reward (for there is nothing here to reward!) – no! only to regain the ability to consume myself for the sake of *others* – which, in turn can be my only form of refreshment!<sup>147</sup>

His discovery of the poet Hafiz, a temporary idol of Wagner's in mid-1852, did not change his focus from the Moral Progression's vital component of moral

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<sup>146</sup> *Selected Letters of Richard Wagner*, 243.

<sup>147</sup> *Selected Letters of Richard Wagner*, 245.

change between the second and third stages. The only thing new is the Eastern-oriented language. We observe this reiteration when Wagner is writing about Hafiz's merits to Röckel in his letter from that September, he advocates a departure from European cultural intellectualism, reflective reason, in favor of "sublime tranquility of mind," in other words, the sublimating of reflection in favor of intuition.

Familiarity with this poet has filled me with a very real sense of terror: we with our pompous European intellectual culture must stand abashed in the presence of this product of the Orient, with his self-assured and sublime tranquillity of mind.<sup>148</sup>

In March 1853, after the completion of the *Ring* poem, Wagner outlined this same moral goal employing Christian language, presumably for Liszt's benefit. He states the importance of universal love over the selfishness and lovelessness of modern society. What is different is that the language shifts from that of his earlier work to the expression of his faith and belief in the coming of the future race, rather than its immediacy. But the characteristic of this race is the same: love which stems from need. In the society that embraces love a "force of love" [*Kraft der Liebe*] which Wagner says, "would not be possible were it not for this painful recognition [of the current loveless state of things]" will bring about a true utopian society based on love. This *Kraft der Liebe* which comes from the realization of the necessary destruction of the loveless state, a painful realization, can only be interpreted as revolution.<sup>149</sup>

Perhaps the fullest description of this system found in Wagner's letters was given to the philosophically-minded Röckel in late January of 1854. Wagner seemed to feel that this detailed outline was necessary in order to explain aspects of the

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<sup>148</sup> *Selected Letters of Richard Wagner*, 270. Aberbach perhaps offers the fullest examination into the influence Hafiz had on Wagner's thinking particularly in regard to the *Ring*. (See: Aberbach. *Richard Wagner's Religious Ideas*. 131-158).

<sup>149</sup> *Selected Letters of Richard Wagner*, 284-285.

completed *Ring* poem he had sent to Röckel in 1853 and to which Röckel had replied with questions that September. He outlines many aspects of the Moral Progression. He begins with the nature of freedom. Freedom only occurs when the inner nature of a person is aligned with his deeds and when one is not constrained by culture.<sup>150</sup> Then he focuses on the end of the progression: the necessary death for the benefit of others that follows when love has been internalized and fear quashed – the second through fourth stages.<sup>151</sup>

Later that year Wagner discovered Schopenhauer. It is often assumed that his philosophy changed drastically at this point, hence the “Schopenhauerian – I Saw the World End” ending, but it should be clear that aside from his terminology – particularly the Schopenhauerian term “resignation” – the philosophical progression as a whole has not changed. He writes to Liszt in December of 1854 of this Schopenhauerian “resignation.”

His [Schopenhauer’s] principal idea, the final denial of the will to live, is of terrible seriousness, but it is uniquely redeeming. Of course, it did not strike me as anything new and nobody can think such a thought unless he has already lived it. But it was this philosopher who first awakened the idea in me with such clarity. When I think back on the storms that have buffeted my heart and on its convulsive efforts to cling to some hope in life – against my own better judgement –, indeed now that these storms have swelled so often to the fury of a tempest, – I have yet found a sedative which has finally helped me to sleep at night; it is the sincere and heartfelt yearning for death: total unconsciousness, complete annihilation, the end of all dreams – the only ultimate redemption.<sup>152</sup>

So this idea, which he admits was not new, at least to him, leads to the goal of a sincere heartfelt yearning for death. In other words, a conscious negating of the self, a concept which, as we know, was indeed far from new to Wagner. He had been preaching it as the final goal of morality since his earliest writings.

<sup>150</sup> See: *Selected Letters of Richard Wagner*, 301.

<sup>151</sup> See: *Selected Letters of Richard Wagner*, 302-3; 306-7.

<sup>152</sup> *Selected Letters of Richard Wagner*, 323.

In his first letter to Röckel after his discovery of Schopenhauer, he describes Schopenhauer's work as demolishing the "nonsense and charlatanism of the Fichte-Schelling-Hegel view" but does not get into detail as to how. He does not elaborate on how his accepting of Schopenhauer's philosophy allowed him to "follow my own inner bent, and although he has given my line of thought a direction somewhat different from its previous one, yet only this direction harmonized with the profoundly sorrowful conception I had already formed of the world."<sup>153</sup> We only see that once again, to Wagner, any system of the world which does not end in the annihilation of the self in the other is faulty and immoral.

Nothing has profoundly changed in Wagner here. He is still against the society which he was against in the Paris writings, only now he is saying that he has no hope in its ever changing even if revolution does come, as his letter to Sulzer from May 1855 shows:

What is at issue here is something I cannot go into; to be honest, I have become dashed indifferent to politics and expect nothing from either the continued existence or from the overthrow of existing conditions.<sup>154</sup>

His fullest exercise in explaining Schopenhauer is in his June 1855 letter to Röckel. Wagner discusses Schopenhauer's version of the first stage of the Moral Progression: that the Will begins in the selfish being as blind instinct, and its goals are limited to anything that is for its own benefit. Only when the Will is freed from this purely subjective state is it capable of looking back at its origins and seeing its own selfish nature.

In this exceptional condition which we recognise in its highest development as genius, the faculty of perception becomes conscious in the first instance of its normal condition, and, being thus liberated from the service of the Will,

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<sup>153</sup> *Letters to Röckel*, 124.

<sup>154</sup> *Selected Letters of Richard Wagner*, 340.

recognises the state of bondage to which it has been hitherto subjected, and asks itself: How does this dominating all-controlling Will manifest itself up to this point, when in an abnormal condition of liberated perception it ceases to assert itself? In answer to this question we have to admit, with a deep sense of shame, that this Will has sought nothing but to live, namely, to nourish itself by the extermination of others, and to reproduce itself by propagation. We can discover nothing in Will beyond this blind instinct.<sup>155</sup>

Then Wagner reveals the world of this Will; it is all based upon the subject, every object is viewed subjectively, and this state of being is only capable of bringing suffering: the second stage of the Moral Progression.

Now in the abnormal condition in which this truth has become clear to us, we are forced to ask ourselves whether there is not some risk in subjecting ourselves to the service of a Will so constituted, and we seek to penetrate further into the meaning of this phenomenon. We then recognise that this Will is identical in all perceptible manifestations, and that consequently all isolated phenomena are nothing but individuations of the same Will, recognisable as such by our faculty of perception, according to its fundamental forms of cognition-individual manifestations, that is to say, of an entity that is continually engaged in self-consumption and self-reproduction. This entity thus appears as something that is perpetually at variance with itself, something that subsists in a discord, of which the only fruit visible to us is pain and suffering.<sup>156</sup>

Once this realization has occurred, and the selfish world is viewed for the falsity that it is, Wagner explains that the Will in which the self is the center of the universe is abandoned in favor of a universal sympathy. i.e., love in which the self is renounced into the world: the third stage of the Moral Progression.

The question then arises: To what height can this Will attain under the most favourable circumstances? Just to that point which we have reached when we recognise the possibility of the emancipation (that is to say in an abnormal case) of one of its organs, namely, of the faculty of perception, from the service of the Will, and thus to a recognition of its essential character. And in acknowledging this, what do we gain? Clearly we gain the knowledge of the essential, the awful nature of this Will, and at length through this knowledge we attain to sympathy – i.e., compassion with suffering (*Mitleiden*), for it is characteristic that we have no word to express sympathy with joy. At this point perception gains a moral import which hitherto had been ignored. Under

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<sup>155</sup> *Letters to Röckel*, 131.

<sup>156</sup> *Letters to Röckel*, 131-132.

the highest and most favourable conditions we attain to a sympathy with all things living, and by reason of their life, in unconscious bondage to the service of the Will. In this perfect unison with all that has been kept apart from us by the illusion of individuation lies the root of all virtue, the true secret of redemption.<sup>157</sup>

In this highest moral state the self is subsumed into sympathy for the world, and consequently, it serves a new higher Will. The highest stage of moral development is its negation of itself: the fourth stage of the Moral Progression.

True insight (and it is this that is so difficult to grasp) has only come to us when in an abnormal condition—we have renounced our individual Will, and thereby repudiated and denied the service of the Will. And there follows as the highest product of this knowledge the recognition that for him who has attained universal sympathy, redemption is to be found only in the deliberate negation of the Will – that is, in realisation of its corrupt nature, and of the necessity of release from participation in its service. And in the first place the only conceivable and practicable way towards this liberation that is open to us lies in the renunciation through sympathy of our individual Will. And that amounts to nothing short of the complete negation, in fact to the annihilation, of the Will. Well, I must confess that this philosophy appeals profoundly to my heart and head. I can conceive of no loftier or truer teaching. All misapprehensions of the apparent disagreement between the individual Will and the Will of all things living outside myself, result from the defective understanding of the subjective character of our perceptions, in so far as they are conditioned by the fundamental forms of our cognition (Time, Space, and Causality). The man who has mastered this profoundest of all problems, to whom Time, Space, and Causality are no longer realities, has also grasped the truth that his individuality based on these forms, of perception is no reality, and he sees that not in the creation of these notions of Time, Space, and Causality, but in self-renunciation is to be sought the highest act of the Will.<sup>158</sup>

Even in Wagner's incomplete explanation in this letter of the moral development outlined by Schopenhauer, the Moral Progression is present nearly in its entirety. The only difference between what Wagner had been saying for decades and what he describes in this letter is the end result of the progression.<sup>159</sup> If anything is

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<sup>157</sup> *Letters to Röckel*, 132-133.

<sup>158</sup> *Letters to Röckel*, 134-136.

<sup>159</sup> In the throes of interest in Schopenhauer, in this letter to Röckel, he even temporarily abandoned the desire to bring about revolution and create art, saying that Schopenhauer recommends personal salvation from the world, rather than salvation of the world itself. But this does not last, and in a letter to Liszt written on June 7, 1855 he explains that the artist ought to portray the world per se, without the

clear from the previous chapters it is that Wagner's philosophical-moral path – despite some minor terminological discrepancies – has been utterly consistent with itself from the time of his first writings to the time of the writing of the last of the rejected endings, the so-called “Schopenhauerian – I Saw the World End” ending of the *Ring*. With this in mind, the purpose of the work of art from the time of *Artwork of the Future* to the completion of the *Ring* text can be addressed.<sup>160</sup>

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bias of the will, and by doing so will help others for their own sake. (*Selected Letters of Richard Wagner*, 345.) Compare this sentiment to that seen in his letter to Uhlig from Hanuary 12, 1852 above, and we see the same notion despite Wagner's changing his philosophical role model between those two letters.

<sup>160</sup> An in-depth analysis of Wagner's writing beyond this time would be superfluous to this purpose, despite its inherent value. In works such as *State and Religion* of 1865, he outlines the philosophical progression of the *Ring* as being also present in the essence of the changing world, leading from its attempting to shape the world in its own image to “dignified annulment” of the will. “It is an attribute of the poet, to be riper in his inner intuition (*Anschauung*) of the essence of the world than in his conscious abstract knowledge: precisely at that time [of social and political upheaval of the late 1840's and early 1850's] I had already sketched, and finally completed, the poem of my *Ring des Nibelungen*. With this conception I had unconsciously admitted to myself the truth about things human. Here everything is tragic through and through, and the Will, that fain would shape a world according to its wish, at last can reach no greater satisfaction than the breaking of itself in dignified annulment. [Wotan]” (PW IV. 8-9). This work in particular focuses on finding a solution to the inherent contradiction between performing art for the benefit of the masses, and not producing art because it gives in to egoism. The solution it settles upon is that as long as the artist keeps in mind that the world is illusion [*Wahn*], then the artwork itself will then have the ability to show the audience the inherent illusion in the world and so be educational in that regard and for their benefit. (PW IV. 33-34) (Hugo Dinger also noted this change to a “Schopenhauerian optimism” in which the people are shown the suffering of the world through an art which offers them an “ethical regeneration” which will bring about a lasting new order. Dinger dates this change from *German Art and German Policy* (despite there being traces of it also in *State and Religion*), but supports it with the following comment from *Religion and Art*: “The history of this falling off— already broadly outlined—should teach us, when regarded as the human race's school of suffering, in consciousness to remedy an evil springing from the headstrong blindness of the world-creative Will, and ruinous to all attainment of its own unconscious goal; to rebuild, as it were, the storm-wrecked house, and ensure against its fresh destruction.” (PW VI. 246). See: Dinger 335). But perhaps most clearly, the very premise of the *Bayreuther Blätter* is to educate the masses about the inner truth contained in his art works and to prepare the people to see his work in the light in which he meant them to see it. This view is educational and for the betterment of the world, and so could not even be characterized using Dinger's concept of “Schopenhauerian optimism”, but is anti-Schopenhauerian in its look to an ideal future as seen in Wagner's letters and writings from the 1840's and 1850's. So even in the limited differences found in the respective endings of their Moral Progression-variants, (the progressions themselves do not differ) Wagner did not take Schopenhauer's unique approach entirely in the writings which followed his reading of Schopenhauer. But he did follow the component parts of the Moral Progression exactly as he had done in his earlier writings.

## **Chapter 4. Characteristics of the Drama of the Future and its Role in Bringing about Revolution**

In Chapter 3 the focus of discussion was on Wagner's consistent employment of the Moral Progression in some variant or another throughout his Zürich-period writings. In the following chapter the discussion of these writings will be expanded to include the traits of the ideal artwork such as how the public ought to perceive it and what its subject matter ought to be, and particularly, what events need to be described in the artwork and why. It will become clear that the development of Wagner's ideas about the artwork of the future in his Zürich-period writings is mirrored in the development of subject matter, over the same period, in the dramas which were meant to be this artwork.

### *A – Artwork of the Future*

The ideal artwork of which Wagner spoke in *Art and Revolution* combined two important elements: the connection to the people that Greek drama, particularly those of Aeschylus, had had in their original performances, and the sentiment of the revolutionary Jesus which embodied the morals of the present age. The particular aspect of Greek drama that would be incorporated into the ideal artwork was its mythic subject matter; the myths in Greek tragedy were national myths and were simultaneously representatives of the essence of man, the *Volk* common to all of humanity; as such they had the potential to appeal to both the entire Athenian polis, and to humanity as a whole. By focusing on and incorporating the modern

revolutionary themes of freedom, equality, and love, the new modern ideal artwork would reflect the modern sensibility and engage the audience directly in the same manner as the Greek tragedy had done in ancient Athens. But revolution would have to be achieved first, and then the artwork itself would be used to glorify that revolution and unite everyone in the love inherent in that new age. The *Artwork of the Future* holds all of this to be true, but attempts to show the origins of the artwork as a whole and its progression in a manner that parallels the progression made by man himself. That way the resulting artwork can be justified as completely representing the modern man and his sensibility.

#### i. The Faculties Involved in the Artwork of the Future

Wagner begins with the great equality in which dance, poetry and music existed in the time of Greek tragedy. Each complemented the others, but since they had never functioned as separate artworks each individual art never had to explore the limits of what it was capable of expressing; and so this combined artwork, though ideal, was limited in what it could communicate. Dance alone communicates through gesture: we see the body on the stage and react to it feeling the motions through sympathy – i.e., Wagner’s inner man, feeling – and observing them with our eyes – Wagner’s so called outer man, reflective reasoning. Music communicates through broad universal feeling and specifically to the ear and the inner man, and poetry through subjective feeling to the direct understanding. Music becomes the art known by the faculty of feeling, while poetry, the only art capable of communicating direct subjective feelings, moves into the realm of science and philosophy, the study of the phenomenal, and into subjective reason or reflective understanding.<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> PW I. 139.

Wagner explains that the problem with modern artworks that employ more than one type of artwork – as we see in opera with poetry and music, and in ballet with dance and music – is that each art attempts to overstretch itself by attempting to portray more than its capacity will allow, until a failed artistic experience is certain. He explains that modern poets no longer appeal to the ear – the domain of poetry – but to the eye.<sup>162</sup> Music and dance try to depict something specific through explanatory programs that ought to be left to the realm of poetry.<sup>163</sup> In the artwork of the future, the three arts will appeal to an “all-faculty” [*Allfähigkeit*] like individuals equally supplanting their egoism in the communistic universal.<sup>164</sup> But this separation of the three is a necessity, as is their exploration of boundaries beyond their nature, so that they may best know how to recombine and best employ their original natures. This development models the human return to nature necessity from the false world of speculative reason and the unnatural.

In our general survey of the demeanour of each of the three purely human (*rein menschlich*) arts after its severance from their initial communion, we could not but plainly see that exactly where the one variety touched on the province of the next, where the faculty of the second stepped-in to replace the faculty of the first, there did the first one also find its natural bounds. Beyond these bounds, it might stretch over from the second art-variety to the third; and through this third, again, back to itself, back to its own especial individuality, - but only in accordance with the natural laws of *Love*, of *self-offering* for the common good impelled by Love... Only that art-variety, however, which wills

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<sup>162</sup> PW I. 134.

<sup>163</sup> In describing this trend, Wagner says: “This is the genuine Egoism, in which each *isolated art-variety* would give itself the airs of universal Art; while, in truth, it only thereby loses its own peculiar attributes.” (PW I. 99.) Herder has something similar to say on the subject of the arts being most effective when they stay within their own realms, particularly music, to the point where he speaks of what he calls “pictorial” or program music as negatively as Wagner and in similar terms: “For the rest the strife over the *value* of the arts among themselves or with reference to the nature of man is at all times empty and meaningless. Space cannot be turned into time, time into space, the visible into the audible, nor this into the visible; let note take on a foreign field, but let it rule in its own the more powerful, the more certain, the more noble... Because an analogy can be conceived between tones and colors, if this wishes to treat tone as colors, colors as tones, to see pictures in music, and to paint in pastel the pictures of poetry as the poet conveyed them: then let it do so. The arts themselves are innocent of this tastelessness of a spurious reason.” (Johann Herder “Music and Art of Humanity,” 48-49.) When a full analysis of the origins of Wagner’s ideas is written Herder will find a prominent place in it.

<sup>164</sup> PW I. 97.

the common art-work, reaches therewith the highest fill of its own particular nature; whereas that art which merely wills *itself*, its own exclusive fill of self; stays empty and un-free-for all the luxury that it may heap upon its solitary semblance.<sup>165</sup>

The way in which these arts will reunite has been mapped out by Beethoven in his last symphony.

The Last Symphony of Beethoven is the redemption of music from out [of] her own peculiar element into the realm of *universal Art*. It is the human evangel of the art of the future. Beyond it no forward step is possible; for upon it the perfect Art-work of the Future alone can follow, the *universal drama* to which Beethoven has forged for us the key.<sup>166</sup>

Once again Wagner uses Beethoven's 9<sup>th</sup>, as he had in his Paris writings, as the ultimate example and highest art in which poetry and music join together, and this ultimately for the same reason, because the two arts, poetry and music, by relying on their mutual strengths and not delving into the territory of the other, assist each other and so are able to portray something more extensively to the audience than either art could alone. This is the essence of the artwork of the future: when all of the senses are working together as one sense – a felt-understanding – and all of the arts are working together as one art, then the artwork of the future has been attained.

So in sum, the artwork of the future will combine elements of all the other arts together, and the power of music to portray infinite, not subjective, emotion will increase the communication ability of all the other arts. In other words, Wagner never departed from his idea that music and poetry would combine to form a new art which would supplement the direct subjective feelings attained through poetry with the pure feelings communicable only through music, instilling in the listener a “godlike consciousness.”<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> PW I. 149-150.

<sup>166</sup> PW I. 126.

<sup>167</sup> PW I. 190-191.

ii. The Artwork of the Future is Myth

Wagner hints at a subject of the artwork of the future in his discussion of the ultimate failure of Greek tragedy. First, the failure of art came when the subjects strayed from the religion of the people in an attempt to show humanity's pure character alone. But because the only unification that the community had and felt was through their religion, this new religion-less art was doomed to failure. Without the religious aspect the man who was being depicted as emblematic of humanity was the selfish egoist, not the ideal self-sacrificing universal man. So Wagner tells us that the only way to get back to an art that prizes the self-sacrificing universal man in the post-religious world is to employ the other common background of the community and its members as a whole, its mythology: both the original source of its history and the inevitable result of its history, as Schelling had also said.<sup>168</sup> After the revolution, the new ideal artwork will resemble the art of the original natural *ur*-community in its mythic content, only this mythic content will be in the form of Schelling's synthesis of original myth and history into pure true myth.

In the conclusion to *Artwork of the Future* he affirms this idea. He explains first, that the basis and subject for the artwork of the future cannot be a wish for or a fancy of the future, but it must be based on the past and the present. It is based on the present in two ways; first, the future will be exactly the opposite of the property-based culture of the present, and second, the artwork will not be able to be portrayed until this future world becomes the present and it is portrayed by the men and artists of that present time, our future:

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<sup>168</sup> PW I. 166.

[W]hen we desire to portray a future state of things; we have only one scale for such a picture, and that lies decidedly not in the spaces of the Future, on which the combination is to shape itself, but in the Past and in the Present; even there where all those conditions are still in lusty life which make the longed-for future state impossible today, and allow its sheer antithesis to seem an unavoidable necessity. The force of Need impels us to a general preconception; yet we can only grasp it, not simply by an ardent aspiration of the heart, but rather by a logical induction which tells us that this state will be the very opposite of the evil which we recognise in our system of to-day.<sup>169</sup>

According to this logic, if we are to desire a future that contains “the very opposite of the evil which we recognise in our system today,” and we cannot characterize this future except in what we already have experienced – i.e., the past and the present – then in order to create this ideal future we must look to the past as the past was also a time in which the exact opposite of the present culture existed. The ideal *Volk* from the past will now make up the society of the future. The future will be a return to the ideal history, myths, and stories of the *Volk* who lived by the same force of nature-necessity which ought to drive the men of the future. So it is in these immediate products of the old *Volk* that the story of the new *Volk* of the future can be told: in short, through myth.

### iii. The Subject of the Artwork

In *Artwork of the Future*, there is one specific *dramatische Handlung* which must be depicted in order to, as Wagner says, ensure universal understanding of the work [*das allgemeinste Verständniß desselben versichert*] to all who observe it.<sup>170</sup>

The single most important *Handlung* in the life of the hero which must be depicted in the artwork is the act of self-surrender for the benefit of the community. Only in death, just as Wagner explained at the end of the *Jesus von Nazareth* sketch, is the

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<sup>169</sup> PW I. 205-206.

<sup>170</sup> PW I. 196-7.

story complete and can be fully understood by all who observe it. The artwork must portray the hero and his actions, based upon his inner drive and the force of natural necessity, and it must culminate in the hero's final act in which he gives of his essence to humanity as a whole:

Only that action is completely truthful – and can thoroughly convince us of its plain necessity – on whose fulfilment a man had set the whole strength of his being, and which was to him so imperative a necessity that he needs must pass over into it with the whole force of his character. But hereof he conclusively persuades us by this alone: that, in the effectuation of his personal force, he literally *went under*, he veritably threw overboard his personal existence, for sake of bringing to the outer world the inner Necessity which ruled his being. He proves to us the verity of his nature, not only in his actions – which might still appear capricious so long as he yet were doing – but by the consummated sacrifice of his personality to this necessary course of action. The last, completest renunciation (*Entäusserung*) of his personal egoism, the demonstration of his full ascension into universalism, a man can only show us by his *Death*; and that not by his accidental, but by his *necessary* death – a death resulting from the intensity of his essence which led to his actions [*dem durch sein Handeln aus der Fülle seines Wesens bedingten Tode*]. *The celebration of such a Death is the noblest thing that men can enter on.* It reveals to us in the nature of this one man, laid bare by death, the whole content of universal human nature.<sup>171</sup>

Ellis noted that this description bears a resemblance to Wagner's *Jesus von Nazareth*, but he misses the brunt of Wagner's statement. We find in Wagner's discussion of the portrayal of the "necessary death" and the actions which led to it all of the plots from this period: *Siegfrieds Tod*, *Friedrich I*, and *Jesus von Nazareth*, as well as the newer and more minor plots such as *Achilles*, of which a brief summary survives in his unpublished fragments, and *Wieland the Smith*, a summary of which ends *Artwork of the Future*.<sup>172</sup> But we find a particularly striking parallel here to Siegfried in the

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<sup>171</sup> PW I. 198-9.

<sup>172</sup> Wieland is, as Wagner describes, "a truthful poem of the *Volk*... a glorious saga which long ago the raw, uncultured *Volk* of old-time Germany sang for no other reason than that of inner, free Necessity" and although he does not actually die, he does ascend into freedom through the following of nature-necessity when he is visited by the very essence of that necessity [*Not*] in his cell. His struggle against King Neidung and the current culture ends with him destroying the culture as he ascends into heaven, no longer as a man, as the moment he flew away with his new wings he became something else. He gave up all aspects of his present life in the destruction of the state which he enabled, and now lives in a future ideal state, united in love with his once and future wife.

*Nibelung Sketch* in Wagner's emphasis of, not only a necessary death, but the nature of the character of the hero who, rightly or wrongly, follows his own *Mut* or *Wesen* – the origin of the necessary actions which led to his death. We have two explanation of Siegfried's character which employ all of the same terminology as we see above: Wotan-omniscient narrator's description of the hero who will redeem the world:

Who, enabled by this total consciousness and from his own free will, will achieve the boldest deed, atonement through death, which will stem from his own necessity, and which he will call his own.<sup>173</sup>

and Siegfried's own conversation with the Wasserfrauen:

What my Courage bids me, is my being's law; and what I do of mine own mind: so is it set for me to do: call ye this curse or blessing, but I will obey it and will not strive counter to my strength.<sup>174</sup>

#### iv. The Artwork of the Future and What it Achieves

These aspects of Wagner's explanation of his ideal artwork paint a specific picture of what the artwork is supposed to portray, how it is supposed to portray it, and what this portrayal is supposed to accomplish. The artwork must communicate immediately to the audience through their faculty of feeling, and the meaning of the artwork must be immediately comprehended by the audience. To that end, the artwork must be a combination of the other arts in order to achieve maximum communicative power, and it must have a subject whose basis is found in a common national mythology. It must stem from mythology rather than from religion because of the multitude of conscious thoughts that religion and religious themes evoke in the

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<sup>173</sup> My translation of GS II. 158. from above Note 74.

<sup>174</sup> PW VII. 308. See also Note 75.

individual which prevent the individual from properly experiencing the artwork. The action which this artwork must portray is a hero's necessary death brought about from his own courage and character and his embodiment of natural-necessity. Although Wagner had many subjects for dramas or operas in mind at the time of writing *Artwork of the Future* only an operatic form of *Siegfrieds Tod* fulfills all these requirements: a mythical story from the German collective consciousness which focuses on the actions relating to and resulting in the necessary death of the hero for humanity's benefit.<sup>175</sup>

After the audience participates in these events to their close, the inner nature of the hero imparts itself to the audience. The celebration of the hero's death, through its dramatic recreation, as Wagner says, "lifts us living to the highest bliss of love for the departed, and turns his nature to our own [*Wesen zu dem unsrigen macht*]."<sup>176</sup> By viewing this ancient product of the *Volk*, which is led by the force of nature-necessity to a conscious act of sacrifice of the self – what Wagner calls the most glorious episode of purely human life – the artist and audience unite with this figure and emulate the hero's life and mission: the artist becomes the *Volk*, and passes along this message of *Volk*-dom to all who see the artwork for its true content.<sup>177</sup>

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<sup>175</sup> Or as Wagner explains: "That action, therefore, must be the best fitted for dramatic art – and the worthiest object of its rendering – which is rounded off together with the life of the chief person that evolved it, and whose denouement is none other than the conclusion of the life of this one man himself." (PW I. 198.)

<sup>176</sup> PW I. 199.

<sup>177</sup> See: PW I. 199-200. "This specific energy of Love will therefore show itself most strenuously in that particular one who, by reason of his general character, or in this particular period of his life, feels drawn by the closest bond of affinity toward this particular Hero; who by his sympathy makes the nature of this hero the most especially his own, and trains his artistic faculties the fittest to requicken by his impersonation this hero, of all others, for the living memory of himself, his fellows, and the whole community."

## v. Afterward: The Audience and the Seed of a Problem

It seems as if Wagner's direction is now clear: by composing *Siegfrieds Tod* he will have composed the artwork of the future. But there arose a problem among Wagner's view of the audience, the message the artwork was supposed to send, and whether or not he felt *Siegfrieds Tod* alone could send that message. Throughout this explanation he has spoken of portraying the "unconscious and instinctive elements in life and making them clear to the understanding." If he were able to do this, the audience would, at the completion of the artwork, embody the inner necessity which drove the hero of our artwork to commit his heroic deeds, or as Wagner says, "[the hero's] Wesen zu dem unsrigen macht." So this implies the artwork will in effect, educate the people and make them heroes.

But he also says that "only from a life in common [*Gemeinsamkeit*], can proceed the impulse toward intelligible objectification of this life by Art-work; the Community of artists alone can give it vent; and only in communion, can they content it." So the artists and the audience must first have abandoned egoism and become a community, a *Volk*, before they can create the work of art, portray it, and observe it.<sup>178</sup> Wagner had said that it would be the role of the artwork of the future to bring the meaning of the revolution to the revolutionaries, i.e., the understanding of their actions to them. Why, then, would the essence of a hero which the *Volk* by necessity would already have had to embody before the artwork was possible be brought to

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<sup>178</sup> PW I. 204-205. "Who then will be the artist of the future? The poet? The performer? The musician? The plastician? – Let us say it in one word: *the Folk*. *That selfsame Folk to whom we owe the only genuine artwork, still living even in our modern memory, however much distorted by our restoration; to whom alone we owe all art itself.*" See also 209: "However, neither you nor this rabble do we understand by the term, Folk: only when neither ye nor it shall exist any longer, can we conceive of the presence of the Folk. Yet even now the Folk is living, wherever ye and the rabble are not; or rather it is living in your twin midst, but ye know not of it. Did you know that you yourselves are the Folk; for no man can know the fulness of the Folk without possessing a share therein."

them *by* the artwork? The artwork bringing the understanding of this essence is still consistent with the idea of a *Volk*-audience, but not bringing the essence itself to the audience.

The difference between the two views has an immediate impact on the possibility of the artwork of the future existing in the world of the present or only in the world of the future. If it were possible that anything like a new moral sense as found in the hero would have been instilled in the audience at the completion of the artwork, then Wagner could have written *Siegfrieds Tod* for the present as the audience members could have come into the theater without these elements being already ingrained in their collective character and walk out of the performance with them ingrained. This audience does not have to be *Volk*, and so this artwork can be for the present. But if the artwork explains to the understanding the inner nature of the *Volk* to themselves, then the audience must first be *Volk* and the artwork must be for a future world and not the present one.

This inconsistency was a problem Wagner grappled with in his letters from this same period between the time he wrote *Artwork of the Future* and *Opera and Drama*. In these letters he espoused either the one view or the other depending on to whom he was writing. We see, for example, to his revolutionary friends like Uhlig and Röckel he held that the artwork was only for the future and that the artists who would one day perform Siegfried, Wieland and Achilles were yet to be born.<sup>179</sup> To Liszt, however he held a more pragmatic view. This was to his advantage as Liszt was to perform, in the world of the present, *Lohengrin* in Weimar in September of 1850, and had offered him a commission for *Siegfrieds Tod* as well. Wagner suddenly alters his criteria for an audience. He writes to Liszt on July 20, 1850 that

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<sup>179</sup> Letter to Uhlig from February 24, 1850 in: *Letters to My Dresden Friends*, 35.

*Siegfrieds Tod* will be written in order to “communicate to my friends”, and [out of] the wish to give them pleasure.”<sup>180</sup> He reiterates this view of an audience for *Siegfrieds Tod* composed of friends – “those interested in my work” – in a letter to Ernst Kietz in September of 1850; a letter which also outlines the first conception of what would become the Bayreuth festival:

According to this plan of mine, I would have a theatre erected here on the spot, made of planks, and have the most suitable singers join me here, and arrange everything necessary for this one special occasion, so that I could be certain of an outstanding performance of the opera. I would then send out invitations far and wide to all who were interested in my works, ensure that the auditorium was decently filled, and give three performances – free, of course – one after the other in the space of a week, after which the theatre would then be demolished and the whole affair would be over and done with. Only something of this nature can still appeal to me.<sup>181</sup>

Wagner defends this view of the audience in a striking exchange between Liszt and Wagner which later gets carried over into a letter from Wagner to Uhlig. Liszt, on September 16<sup>th</sup>, two days after Wagner’s letter to Kietz writes that not only must the critics change their manner of comprehending Wagner’s operas, but the audience must educate itself in order to properly appreciate them.

[T]he public must be elevated to a level where it becomes capable of associating itself with conceptions of a higher order than that of the lazy amusements with which it feeds its imagination and sensibility at our theatres every day... [I]t is absolutely necessary to make a breach in the old routine of criticism, the long ears and short sight of ‘Philistia,’ as well as the stupid

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<sup>180</sup> *Selected Letters of Richard Wagner*, 210.

<sup>181</sup> *Selected Letters of Richard Wagner*, 216-217. Just before this letter he received a letter from Liszt on September 8<sup>th</sup>, in which Liszt praised his performance of *Lohengrin* in Weimar and the positive response it received from the public. This letter elicited a startling response from Wagner: “Dearest Liszt, was I right when in the preface of my *Artwork of the Future* I wrote that not in the individual but the community alone, could create genuine works of art? You have done the impossible, but believe me, all must nowadays do the impossible in order to achieve what is really possible.” (*Correspondence of Wagner and Liszt*. trans. Francis Hueffer. 2 vols. [1897] (New York: Haskel House, 1969), 96) This would seem to indicate that Wagner believed that the artwork of the future was now possible in the present at Weimar under Liszt. But this view was shortlived, and after some news from Karl Ritter as to the poor quality of one of the Liszt’s piano rehearsals he falls back into his previous view as described in this letter to Kietz.

arrogance of that self-sufficient fraction of the public which believes itself the destined judge of works of art by dint of birth right.<sup>182</sup>

Wagner responds that although Liszt is correct that the philistines are a problem, the public itself is not the problem. All he wants from the public is a “healthy sense and a human heart,” but he views this demand as too great as that sense of the philistine-dominated public has been corrupted to its core and its heart is wicked and cowardly. So he reiterates that until this philistine domination ends, it is enough that “we show each other what we can do, and let us feel highly rewarded if we can give joy to each other.”<sup>183</sup>

So the artwork of the future can be for the present, but only for a select group of individuals “like ourselves.” This sounds like a return to conservatism. But then Wagner comments on Liszt’s “education of the public” to Uhlig in a letter from October 22<sup>nd</sup>, and turns around to revolutionary once again. Wagner says “the people do not need to be taught, they need to be told that they are right.” So the philistine-dominated audience just needs to remove their yoke and trust themselves and then they will become Wagner’s ideal audience. To do this, the public ought to listen to their inner necessity and ignore the voice and influence of evil culture: in other words, engage in revolution. Then he continues with the aesthetic experience for the audience:

True enjoyment, however consists in distilling a specific concentrate out of the general fund of things worth enjoying, so that we can assimilate in an instant what time and the elements have to offer us in a widely divergent context. Who, at the moment of enjoyment, thinks of the permanence of that enjoyment? If we think of permanence, the enjoyment immediately fades. Let us fill our lives with true substance, let us delight in our activities, whether those activities involve the giving or receiving of pleasure, and we shall never be frightened by the thought of those activities coming to an end, for that end will itself be a form of action.<sup>184</sup>

<sup>182</sup> *Correspondence of Wagner and Liszt* I. 107, 108.

<sup>183</sup> *Correspondence of Wagner and Liszt* I. 112-113.

<sup>184</sup> *Selected Letters of Richard Wagner*, 219-220.

The key then to the enjoyment of his work by the audience, is a lack of reflective thinking during the performance. As soon as reflective thinking begins and the desire to hold on to a particular feeling or thing – just as is done in life when the fear of death takes hold – all appreciation of that life is lessened. This recalls the Moral Progression at the beginning of the second stage. To get over this fear one must give up the desire to hold on to a particular feeling or thing, and experience everything as it happens, not reflectively, but intuitively and immediately through feeling. When this happens man no longer fears death, is living through natural-necessity, and thus becomes one with the *Volk*. The change he desires in his audience's way of thinking is the same change depicted in his artwork, and the same goal of the revolution.

Whether or not this audience is possible in the present is unclear. So Wagner is still unclear about the purpose of the artwork and its audience. *Opera and Drama* begins the process of settling this question.

B – *Opera and Drama*<sup>185</sup>

*Opera and Drama* is essentially a reevaluation of *Artwork of the Future*

pertaining to all of the elements of the artwork of the future discussed in section A.

## i. The Faculties Involved in the Artwork of the Future

Much of the treatise is an elaboration of the history of art in Wagner's own peculiar way: through the faculties of feeling and understanding.<sup>186</sup> Instead of poetry appealing to the subjective direct feeling that communicates the specific idea to the heart, it now relates to the faculty of understanding and reflective consciousness, while music still relates to the unsayable feeling that it had since the time of

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<sup>185</sup> He had written *Art and Climate* and *Judaism in Music* in between *Artwork of the Future*, and *Opera and Drama*. But these works do not offer any major philosophical or artistic breakthroughs. In *Art and Climate* he does take up a Feuerbachian position that when man moved away from nature, he did so by use of the creative faculty, he embraced an unnatural speculative God that was above nature, with the objective that man may be protected from Nature by this thoroughly incomprehensible God. "The creative faculty lay therefore ever grounded in Man's independence of Nature – yea, on the overabundance of that quality – and not in any directly productive *operation of natural climate*. But the voiding of that overfill was also the death-knell of this art-creative man: the more he strewed his seed beyond the confines of his Hellenic motherland, the farther he shed this overfill toward Asia, and led back thence its lavish stream into the pragmatic-prosaic and grossly sensual world of Rome: so much the more visibly did his creative force die out; to make place, at his eventual death, for the worship of an *abstract God* who, in melancholy joy of immortality, wandered aimlessly between the splendid works of statuary and architecture which decked the burying-place of this departed Man. Thenceforth God *ruled* the world, – God, who had *made* all Nature for the glory of his name. From that time forward, man's affairs are governed by the '*incomprehensible will*' of God; no longer by the instinct and necessity of Nature, – and it is therefore a highly unchristian action, on the part of our modern Christian art-producers, to appeal to 'Climate' and 'Natural soil' as hindering or favouring conditions for the birth of Art." (PW I. 255.) Thus the Jewish God and all of the evils of property and modern culture are connected and which must be destroyed to give birth to the ideal world of the future. Wagner carries this over in *Judaism in Music* in his description of Ahasuerus, who can only be redeemed by giving up his Jewishness, i.e. the vices of modern culture. (PW III. 100.) He is merely giving the evils which he had always despised, namely plutocracy, and – on the musical front – virtuosity (through Meyerbeer) a new adjective: Jewish.

<sup>186</sup> Nattiez, in his *Wagner Andromyde*, offers an interesting chart of the faculties of understanding and feeling, and their relation to the drama of the future. From feeling stems understanding. When this understanding is combined with feeling, the artwork of the future (whose purpose is to depict the overthrow of the state through love and nature-necessity) is arrived at. This picture is likened to Oedipus's family tree: from Jocasta is born Oedipus, from the union of Oedipus and Jocasta is born Antigone, who (like the artwork of the future) overthrows the unnatural state through love and nature-necessity (92).

*Pilgrimage to Beethoven*. Instead of understanding being the godly consciousness attained at the end of the moral progression, the goal is now union into the community or the universal, which is attained by the use not of understanding itself, but of feeling's understanding brought on by its use in the apprehension of the drama of the future.

In *Artwork of the Future* there had been a *Gesamtkunstwerk* which combined all of the important arts and was to be apprehended by an all-faculty rather than individual faculties. In *Opera and Drama* Wagner has chosen to turn the multiple variables involved in the ideal artwork (composed of many different arts and the all-faculty meant to apprehend it) into a clear dialectic of an ideal artwork composed of two different art-types each to be apprehended by a specific single faculty. He explains that music appeals to the feeling, poetry and drama appeal to the understanding, and thus the ideal music-drama would appeal to the combined faculty, the felt-understanding. Music would be the feminine element in art, poetry would be the masculine, and unified they would be the ideal art just as the unification of the masculine and feminine elements in man result in the idea being.<sup>187</sup> The employment of *stabilem* and *leitmotifs* in this regard is meant to emphasize and exploit every capability of music and poetry to be apprehended by feeling, understanding, and feeling's understanding. Remembrance motives now offer, as Wagner explains: “[A] definite impression on the Feeling, inciting it to a function akin to Thought,”<sup>188</sup> particularly when the melody is “briefly shadowing or hinting [at this implied meaning from the original statement of the melody which was accompanied by word-speech] to the Understanding's recollection.”<sup>189</sup> In Wagner's previous writings, as we

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<sup>187</sup> Here, on this dichotomy, is where Nattiez's analysis of the prose works in *Wagner Androgyne* particularly shines. (See especially Nattiez, 32-42.)

<sup>188</sup> PW II. 329.

<sup>189</sup> PW II. 328.

recall, all art was apprehended by the faculty of feeling, and the poetic art portrayed “definite impressions,” but now Wagner is using this phrase to refer to a particular effect of music alone without the voice, which appeals to a middle ground between the two faculties. The same occurs as a result of *Stabreim*, in which “the kindred speech roots are fitted to one another in such a way that, just as they sound alike to the physical ear, they also knit like objects into one collective image in which the Feeling may utter its conclusions about them.”<sup>190</sup> *Stabreim*, as the first poetic language, could be felt with a feeling’s understanding,<sup>191</sup> while end-rhyming could only be understood. So by using these tools he employs as much overlap of the senses as possible in the faculties that will apprehend his art. This is also a return to his Paris writings: to the ideal work of art that appealed to a combination of faculties that led to universalism upon completion of the artwork. The specific names of the faculties might have changed, but not his idea of a combination of faculties – one directed to specificity, the other directed to universal, broad, and unsayable emotion.

#### ii. The Audience of the Artwork of the Future: Now Possible in the Present

As to the matter of the audience, based on the letters to Uhlig and Liszt, Wagner could have gone in one of two directions. The artwork must either wait until the ideal post-revolutionary audience for which it is meant and which will see itself reflected in that art, or it can be directed to a specific audience available in the present whom Wagner knows will listen and apprehend his works without cultural bias and, as he explained to Liszt, with “a healthy sense and an open heart”; i.e., the audience would be in Wagner’s words “ourselves.” In *Opera and Drama* he explains that the

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<sup>190</sup> PW II. 227.

<sup>191</sup> PW II. 316.

present audience has the potential to be more than just composed of “ourselves,” nor must they be *Volk*; they only have to be open to observing the artwork without employing their critical faculties and so, by proxy, to reject cultural modes of thinking inherent in those critical faculties and accept the artwork as it is.

By this term, ‘the public,’ I can never think of those individuals who employ their abstract Art-Intelligence to make themselves familiar with things which are never realised upon the stage. [Kenner or Kritik] By ‘the public’ I mean that assemblage of spectators without any specifically cultivated Art-understanding, to whom the represented drama should come to their complete, their *entirely toilless Emotional-Understanding*; spectators, therefore, whose interests should never be led to the mere art idea being employed, but solely to the artistic object realised thereby, to the drama as *a represented Action intelligible to everyone*.<sup>192</sup>

This description is a more optimistic version of what he wrote to Liszt on October 2, 1850. He clearly believes that such an intuiting public with a “healthy sense and open heart” is possible in the present.

As the audience for the artwork of the future is now available in the present, Wagner pragmatically alters his belief that the artwork of the future can only be written by the artist of the future or the community of artists-*Volk*, as he had said in *Artwork of the Future*. Now through the very act of longing for the better future, the artist is able to create the future in his work of art. The artwork of the future could now exist in the present as a result of the dream of the artist of the present. The content of this dream is, as it was in *Artwork of the Future*, the ideal past. From it the artist can dream of the future and then create the life of the future in the artwork of the present.

*And just as this verse, will the prophetic Artwork of the yearning Artist of the Present once wed itself with the ocean of the Life of the Future. – In that Life of the Future, will this Artwork be what to-day it yearns for but cannot actually be as yet: for that Life of the Future will be entirely what it can be,*

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<sup>192</sup> PW II. 369-370f.

only through its taking up into its womb this Artwork. *The begetter of the Artwork of the Future is none other than the Artist of the Present, who presages that Life of the Future, and yearns to be contained therein. He who cherishes this longing within the inmost chamber of his powers, he lives already in a better life; – but only One can do this thing: – the Artist.*<sup>193</sup>

Now both artwork and audience are available in the present, and the artwork now firmly has the ability to bring about the revolutionary future. The question only remains, what content can bring about this change?

### iii. Subject of the Artwork of the Future

In *Opera and Drama*, Wagner does not abandon the notion from *Artwork of the Future* that the vital event to be portrayed on the stage is the conscious sacrifice of the hero for the benefit of humanity. But he shifts his focus. Now that the audience is a real present audience who have not yet overturned the corrupt state and its culture, artwork's function is to show to this audience that the state needs to be overturned, so that they will do it in real life: "It all the more necessarily became the poet's task to display the battle in which the Individual sought to free himself from the political State or religious Dogma, as political life."<sup>194</sup> Wagner then assumed that the way to portray the need for the necessary overthrow of the state would be to depict the history of the corrupt state or more specifically, the *process* of its "going under." Wagner felt he could not depict the actual end of the "bad-culture-based" state, because it had not yet occurred in real life. There was no model for a process of a state that was based in selfish, bad-culture becoming an ideal-post-revolutionary state of absolute freedom and love. But there was a philosophical model for this progression in the events of a person's life, from his selfish childish existence, to his

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<sup>193</sup> PW II. 375-376.

<sup>194</sup> PW II. 195.

self-renunciation at the end with all of the necessary vital moments of moral development in between. So Wagner used the moral development of a person from birth to death as a model for his depiction of the “going-under” of the state.

Yet again we can picture those relations in their greatest simplicity, if we take the most distinctive chief-moments [*Hauptmomente*] of individual human life, which must also be the regulator of the life in common, – and sum in them the characteristic distinctions of society itself; such as youth and age, growth and maturity, ardour and repose, activity and contemplation, instinct and consciousness.<sup>195</sup>

As a result, the drama is to be made up of a series of moments; no longer depicting just the end of the state, it now depicts the life of the state leading up to its final moment, its necessary end. The earliest of these would be the initial moment of custom [*Gewohnheit*] which, in that it goes against the freedom of the individual to act as he pleases, is the originator of the law and state. As it was the earliest step for humanity away from nature, it is a necessary aspect of basic humanity, and ought to then have a parallel in the life of the state. Wagner describes it as follows:

The ‘moment’ of *Wont* [*Gewohnheit*], which we have seen at its naïvest in the maintenance of socio-ethical concepts, but in its hardening into a State-political *morale* have found completely hostile to all development of the Individuality, and finally have recognised as a demoraliser and disowner of the Purely-human, – this *Wont* is nevertheless a valid ‘moment’ of instinctive human nature. If we examine a little closer, we shall find in it but one aspect of Man’s manysidedness, which appears in the individual according to his time of life.<sup>196</sup>

Wagner then relates another aspect of this *Wont* or “longing for stability over individuality” in the difference between youth and old age: youth is associated with action and old age with experience and repose:

The human being is not the same in maturity as in youth: in youth we yearn for deeds, in age for rest. The disturbance of our quiet is just as grievous to us

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<sup>195</sup> PW II. 203.

<sup>196</sup> PW II. 203.

in old age, as is the hindrance of our activity in youth. Age's claim is vindicated, of itself, by the gradual exhaustion of the bent toward action, whose profit is *experience*. Experience is doubtless in itself instructive and delectable, for the experienced man himself; for the non-experienced instructee, however, it can only have a determinant result when either his bent-to-action is weak and easily kept down, or the points of Experience are forced upon him as an inexorable standard for his dealings: – but only by such a constraint, is the natural activity of man in general to be weakened; this weakening therefore, which to a superficial glance seems absolute and grounded in sheer human nature, and by whose cause we seek to justify in turn those laws of ours which admonish to activity, – this weakening is but conditional.<sup>197</sup>

The unfolding of this relationship is what Wagner primarily focuses on as a subject to be depicted in the artwork. The important aspect of this dichotomy is that the person in old age desires to give his experience to the youth, and as such, rob youth of its own experience and individuality, thus making the youth into a mere product of the experience of another, a slave. With the groundwork of the relationship laid, Wagner broadens this duality into the realm of the state as a specific stage in the life of the state. Society as authoritarian ruler, limiter of freedom, is the person in old age, and the citizens are those in youth.

Just as human society received its first ethical concepts from the family, so did it acquire its reverence for age. In the family, however, this reverence was one called forth, conducted, conditioned and motivated by Love: the father before all *loved* his son; of love he counselled him; but, also out of love, he gave him scope. In Society this motivating love was lost, in exact degree as the reverence for the person transferred itself to fixed ideas and extra-human things which – unreal in themselves – did not stand toward us in that living reciprocity wherein love is able to requite our reverence, i.e. to take from it its fear. The father, now become a God, could no more love us; the counsel of our elders, now become a Law, could no longer leave us our free play; the family, become a State could no more judge us according to the instinctive forbearance of Love, but only according to the chilling edicts of more compacts. The State – taken at its wisest – thrusts upon us the experiences of History, as the plumb-line for our dealings: yet we can only deal sincerely, when through our instinctive dealings themselves we reach experience; an experience taught us by communications can only be resentful for us, when by our instinctive dealings we make it over again for ourselves. Thus the true, the reasonable love of age toward youth substantiates itself in this: that it does

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<sup>197</sup> PW II. 204.

not make its own experiences the measure for youth's dealings, but points it toward a fresh experience, and enriches its own thereby; for the characteristic and convincing thing about an experience is its individual part, the specific, the knowable, which it acquires by being won from the spontaneous dealings of this one specific Individual in this one specific case.<sup>198</sup>

State, God, and law command the people to live in a certain way, the way that has already occurred through their past experience, history. This is opposed to myth, which is the history – or rather the instinct – of the natural *Volk*, rather than the unnatural state, God, and law. Because of the unreciprocal love between the state and its people, and as love is the only thing that prevents fear from taking hold of the heart, the state, God and law instill fear into the people by their command. In the family, the father figure loves the youth enough to not smother him and make him entirely his own by commanding him to live only through the father's own experiences. Through this love the boy has no fear, and when the father tells him to experience the new for himself, he does so, and by doing so enriches the whole family. Thus when speaking of the ultimate moment to be depicted in the drama, the final “moment” of the destruction of the unnatural state, its depiction in drama functions as the destruction of the loveless boundary between the selfish state and its people, in which the state relinquishes absolute control over its people and allows them to experience what they have never experienced, what has never happened before in history. By doing so the people-audience become free from fear through the power of love.<sup>199</sup>

Wagner includes another version of the battle between age and youth in the state under the guise of the aristocracy. Representative of the evil, reflective consciousness culture, rather than natural-necessity *Volk*, the aristocracy has to be destroyed for the same reasons that the state had to be destroyed in the earlier analogy:

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<sup>198</sup> PW II. 204-205.

<sup>199</sup> See: PW II. 205-206. and also: *Die Walküre* Act II Scene 1. Fricka: Wann ward es erlebt, daß leiblich Geschwister sich liebten? Wotan: Heut – hast du's erlebt! Erfahre so was von selbst sich fügt, sei zuvor auch noch nie es geschehn. (GS VI. 29-30).

to stop the curtailing of freedom. Particularly worthy of Wagner's admonition are those aristocrats who urge *others* to nobly sacrifice for the state, using all of the logic behind studies of ethics and reason to urge others in the name of duty, without consideration for the throngs whose unfree position enables this aristocracy to remain in place. The parallel with the guilt of the Gods for winning mastery of the world only through the slavery of the Nibelungs in Wagner's 1848 *Nibelung Sketch* is unmistakable; by contrast, however, those Gods would not rest until they found a way to free the Nibelungs, while the aristocrats of this analogy are complacent.

Those same sages and lawgivers who claimed the practice of self-restraint through reflection, never reflected for an instant that they had thralls and slaves beneath them, from whom they cut off every possibility of practising that virtue; and yet these latter were in fact the only ones who really restrained themselves for another's sake, – because they were compelled to. Among that ruling and 'reflecting' aristocracy the self-restraint of its members, toward one another, consisted in nothing but the prudence of Egoism, which counselled them to segregate themselves, to take no thought for others; and this policy of *laissez aller* (*Gehenlassen*) – clever enough at giving itself a quite agreeable outward show, in forms it borrowed from those of reverence and friendship – yet was only possible to these gentry on condition that other men, mere slaves and chattels, should stand ready to maintain the hedged-of self-dependence of their masters. In the terrible demoralisation of our present social system, revolting to the heart of every veritable Man, we may see the necessary consequence of asking for an impossible virtue, and a virtue which eventually is held in currency by a barbarous Police. Only the total vanishing of this demand, and of the grounds on which it has been based, – only the upheaval of the most un-human inequality of men, in their stationings toward Life, can bring about the *fancied* issue of that claim of self-restriction: and that, by making possible *free Love*. But Love will bring about that fancied issue in a measurelessly heightened measure, for it is not at all a *self-restraint*, but something infinitely greater, – to wit, *the highest evolution of our individual powers-together with the most necessitated thrust towards our own self-offering for sake of a beloved object.*<sup>200</sup>

Free love brought about by necessity will destroy this state, and the purpose of the drama of the future is to depict this destruction, instill this free love, and thus inspire the destruction of the actual bad-cultured state.

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<sup>200</sup> PW II. 352-353.

In considering the “moments” which Wagner believed should be included in this artwork of the future it is difficult to miss the Moral Progression inherent in them. Wagner says that the life of the state, by analogy with the parallel life of the individual, should be told so that the story could directly relate to the audience through feeling, i.e., by observing the individual, rather than through understanding or reflecting about the state. What Wagner is outlining here is the Moral Progression. Both the individual and the state begin in unconscious equality in nature. This is followed by a necessary separation from nature by the force of custom or authority. Fear is instilled in the individuals of the society through loveless authority. Finally, the ability to love self-lessly and the inner necessity to action that entails make the citizens of the loveless state able to transcend their fear of it, thus guaranteeing its destruction.

#### iv. The Artwork of the Future as Myth and its Revolutionary Purpose

Wagner concludes that the context for such a story must be myth, in part because history is derived from the faculty of reflection, and the drama of the future should be free of as much of this evil as possible.

If, then, we wish to define the Poet’s work according to its highest power thinkable, we must call it something that is vindicated by the clearest human Consciousness, something that is invents itself anew to suit the [changing] perceptions of the ever forward-moving present Life, and something made most intelligible through its depiction in Drama, – the Mythos... TONE-SPEECH is the beginning and end of Word-speech: as the *Feeling* is beginning and end of the Understanding, as *Mythos* is beginning and end of History, the *Lyric* beginning and end of Poetry... The march of this evolution is such, however, that it is no retrogression, but a progress to the winning of the highest human faculty; and it is travelled, not merely by Mankind in general, but substantially by every social Individual.<sup>201</sup>

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<sup>201</sup> PW II. 220, 224.

The drama of the future will be a mythic construct that combines elements of all of the arts together, will be apprehended by all of the faculties, and will outline the Moral Progression – in short, it will accord with the *Frühromantik* description of the ideal mythic drama as a drama which will bring about a new age:

What had been given to early man on a naive level – moral and religious belief, unity with nature and society – had been destroyed by the corrosive powers of criticism; the task now was to recreate it on a self-conscious level through the powers of art. Art could restore moral and religious belief through the creation of a new mythology. It could regenerate unity with nature by ‘romanticizing’ it, that is, by restoring its old mystery magic and beauty. And it could re-establish community by expressing and arousing the feeling of love, which is the basis of all social bonds, the natural feeling joining all free and equal persons.<sup>202</sup>

But more broadly speaking Wagner brings together the mythic background and the necessity of portraying multiple “moments” in the dramatic work, explaining that the more *Hauptmomente* are depicted in the myth, the more complete the myth is and the more necessary the conclusion. Whether that is meant to apply to the internal unity of the dramatic story or the necessity of the lesson – how to bring about the end of the state and the onset of the rule of fearless love in the modern real world – is left deliberately unclear. But his main point is that only the mythic character, the ideal figure, not the historical, is capable of embodying all of these motives behind

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<sup>202</sup> Beiser, *The Romantic Imperative*, 53-4. For a familiar notion of an ideal mythic drama to bring about change in society, see: Friedrich Schlegel “Dialogue on Poetry” trans. Ernst Behler and Roman Struc. *The German Library Volume CXVI German Romantic Criticism*. ed. A. Leslie Willson (New York: Continuum, 1982) 126-7. “Romantic poetry is a progressive universal poetry. Its mission is not merely to reunite all separate genres of poetry and to put poetry back in touch with philosophy and rhetoric. It will, and should, amalgamate poetry and prose, genius and criticism, the poetry of art and poetry of nature, render poetry living and social, and life and society poetic... It embraces everything poetic, from the greatest system of art, which, in turn, includes many systems, down to the sigh, the kiss, which the musing child breathes forth in artless song. It can lose itself in what it represents to such a degree that one might think its one and only goal were the characterization of poetic individuals of every type; and yet no form thus far has arisen appropriate to expressing the authors mind so perfectly, so that artists who just wanted to write a novel have by coincidence described themselves. Romantic poetry alone can, like the epic, become a mirror of the entire surrounding world, a picture of its age... It cannot be exhausted by any theory, and only a divinatory criticism might dare to characterize its ideal. It alone is infinite, as it alone is free; and as its first law it recognizes that the arbitrariness of the poet endures no law above him.”

moments-of-action together, specifically the “poetic figment of wonder.” All of the moments of action come together in one specific moment in one specific character who then becomes larger-than-life as well as an embodiment of the path of nature-necessity and the purely human.

Finally, we saw that this strengthening of a moment of action could only be achieved by lifting it above the ordinary human measure, through the poetic figment (*durch Dichtung*) of the Wonder – in strict correspondence with human nature, albeit exalting and enhancing its faculties to a potency unreachable in ordinary life; – of the Wonder which was not to stand beyond the bounds of Life, but to loom so large from out its very midst, that the shows of ordinary life should pale before it. – And now we have only to come to definite terms as to wherein should consist the strengthening of the Motives which are to condition from out themselves that strengthening of the Moments of Action... The strengthening of a motive cannot therefore consist in a mere addition of lesser motives, but in the complete absorption of many motives into this one. An interest (*Interesse*) common to diverse men at diverse times and under diverse circumstances, and ever shaping itself afresh according to these diversities: such an interest – since that these men, these times and circumstances are typically alike at bottom, and in themselves make plain an essential trait of human nature – is to be made the interest of one man, at one given time and under given circumstances. In the Interest of this man all outward differences are to be raised into one definite thing; in which, however, the Interest must reveal itself according to its greatest and most exhaustive compass. But this is as good as saying, that from this Interest all which savours of the particularistic and accidental must be taken away, and it must be given in its full truth as a necessary, purely human utterance of feeling (*Gefühlsausdruck*).<sup>203</sup>

This idea of “an interest of diverse men and diverse times coming together in one figure because at bottom they are all the same” is exactly what Wagner did with his Siegfried. Wieland, Jesus, Achilles, Friedrich all died, or in the case of Wieland ascended, and left the world with either the means to accomplish the deed which will end the authority of man over man in the loveless state, or accomplished it; they all became Siegfried.

But with this sentiment in mind it is perhaps no surprise that in May, 1851, four months after *Opera and Drama* was published, he started working on the

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<sup>203</sup> PW II. 221.

extension of his Siegfried drama to include more of these “moments” in *Der junge Siegfried*, and by August he had decided upon extending the drama to include all of the moments discussed in *Opera and Drama*, the entire history of the state, i.e., authority, to its necessary end in the form of an adaptation of the *Nibelung Sketch* into a four-part drama. So it seems he felt that there were too many disparate elements that needed to be depicted on stage in order to make the end of the state seem necessary to his audience. He expanded his drama in order to make clear to the audience the absolute necessity for Siegfried’s death and the end of the system of property and authority.<sup>204</sup> There is evidence for this tendency in Wagner’s further description of the portrayal of these “moments.”

Of such an emotional-utterance that man is incapable, who is not as yet at one with himself about his necessary Interest: the man whose feelings have not yet found the object strong enough to drive them to a definite, a necessary enunciation; but who, faced with powerless, accidental, unsympathetic outward things, still splits himself into two halves. But should this mighty object front him from the outer world, and either so move him by its strange hostility that he girds up his whole individuality to thrust it from him, or attract him so irresistibly that he longs to ascend into it with his whole individuality, – then will his Interest also, for all its definiteness, be so wide-embracing that it takes into it all his former split-up, forceless interests, and entirely consumes them. The moment of this

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<sup>204</sup> There is another possibility, namely, that in the time leading up to and during the writing of *Opera and Drama* he had already made the decision to expand *Siegfrieds Tod* into a larger work. This possibility is opened up by the letter to Adolf Stahr from May 31, 1851 after Wagner had started the sketch to *Der junge Siegfried*. He wrote “This [speaking of *Opera and Drama*] is not something I have worked out theoretically – in spite of the fact that you will set eyes on my theory before you encounter the practical demonstration from which it derives: the theory came to me through my poem ‘Siegfrieds Tod’” (*Selected Letters of Richard Wagner*, 225). The same possibility is also revealed in the examples mentioned below concerning the contrary sentiments from March and April 1851 expressed in letters to either Liszt and Eduard Avenarius or to Uhlig (see pages 336-338) which imply that it was not, as Strobel explained, between May 3-10 that Wagner had decided to write *Der junge Siegfried* and expand his drama (Otto Strobel. *Skizzen und Entwürfe zur Ring-Dichtung*. (Munich: Verlag der F. Bruckman, 1930), 65), but rather that the kernel of the idea was probably conceived earlier. Whether it was conceived as far back as 1850, which would then have made the ideas behind the “practical demonstration” of his theory (the expanded Siegfried myth which would include further *Hauptmomente*) pre-date the theory itself (*Opera and Drama*) cannot be revealed without the appearance of what is likely now forever lost: the completed May 1850 draft of the first major revision of *Siegfrieds Tod* titled *Siegfrieds Tod ‘Eine Tragödie.*’ The lack of this draft aside, it still seems likely that the idea for an expansion of the Siegfried story was conceived before this fateful week in May, 1851.

consumption is the act the poet has to prepare for, by strengthening a motive in such sort, that a powerful moment-of-action may issue from it; and this preparation is the last work of his enhanced activity.<sup>205</sup>

By the example set in art, by the observance of this object which will drive the self to reject its current divided state, necessity will take over, and this revolutionary person will emerge as one of the ideal *Volk*, led by natural-necessity, free from fear. So in his desire to portray the necessity for the end of the state he felt compelled to include that state's entire history so that the audience would be ultimately be more likely to become ideal *Volk*, reject the current culture, and aim, as per the example set in the *Siegfrieds Tod*, for its destruction.

C – *Der junge Siegfried: The Application of Opera and Drama's Hauptmomente in the Artwork of the Future to Better Achieve the Artwork's Purpose*

i. The Story of Young Siegfried and the *Hauptmoment* of the Defeat of Age by Youth

On May 3, 1851, Wagner wrote to his brother-in-law saying that he was just about to start on the musical composition of *Siegfrieds Tod*, "I'm setting to at the musical composition of my Siegfried now." But by May 10<sup>th</sup> he is writing to Uhlig of the total impossibility of performing *Siegfrieds Tod* at Weimar in its current state. He explains that the audience is not ready that can properly view *Siegfrieds Tod*, a worry which goes back to 1848; however if it were prepared by a simpler drama which portrayed the origins of Siegfried himself, the necessity for his death in the next

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<sup>205</sup> PW II. 222.

drama will have been properly prepared for and explained so that the audience of today can more easily feel this necessity without using reflective reasoning. Now he need no longer worry about an ideal audience. Because the subject of *Der junge Siegfried* is so close to a fairy tale, the audience will apprehend it as such, and so will employ the faculty of feeling and not the faculty of understanding. This is precisely the faculty Wagner wants them to use for his work, and he assumes that once they have started employing their feeling with *Der junge Siegfried*, they will continue to employ feeling rather than understanding in the more philosophically serious sequel, *Siegfrieds Tod*. *Der junge Siegfried* will be both simpler for the audience and the performers than *Siegfrieds Tod*; it will prepare the performers to best portray the important themes of *Siegfrieds Tod*, while putting the audience in the most ideal frame of mind to receive these ideas without calling upon the faculty of reflection. The inclusion of further *Hauptmomente* – beyond the inevitable death sequence – into the Siegfried drama, acts as a means of ensuring that the present non-*Volk* audience can observe the work and become revolutionary *Volk*. He explains:

When I took a closer look at *Siegfrieds Tod* with a serious view to having it performed in Weimar next year, the whole thing inevitably struck me as utterly impossible. Where would I find the necessary performers and an audience for it? – But throughout the whole of this past winter I have been plagued by an idea which finally took possession of me in a sudden flash of inspiration, so much so that I now intend carrying it out... *Der junge Siegfried* has the enormous advantage of conveying the important myth to an audience by means of actions on stage, just as children are taught fairy tales. It will all imprint itself graphically by means of sharply defined physical images, it will all be understood, – so that by the time they hear the more serious *Siegfrieds Tod*, the audience will know all the things that are taken for granted or simply hinted at there – and – I shall be home and dry, – the more so in that a far more popular work, which is much closer to people's perception and which deals less with an heroic subject-matter than with the high-spirited and youthfully human *Der junge Siegfried*, will give the *performers* a practical opportunity to train and prepare themselves for solving the much greater task presented by *Siegfrieds Tod*. – Both works, however, will form totally independent pieces, which only on their first airing will be presented to the public in this particular order, but which can thereafter be given on their own

– according to individual preferences and abilities. And never again shall I have to envisage a general, abstract audience, but a specific public to whom I can communicate my intentions directly in order that I may be understood by them.<sup>206</sup>

By the following week Liszt too knows of the plan for the new drama and is supportive of it. With Liszt accepting that *Siegfrieds Tod* would not be ready for Weimar by the following year, Wagner sends him a copy some time before his letter from May 22 of *A Theater in Zurich*, and explains that he will begin to work on the poem of *Der junge Siegfried* “on the next sunny day,”<sup>207</sup> which occurs two days later on May 24<sup>th</sup> when he writes the first prose outline. By June 1<sup>st</sup> he has completed the complete prose draft, and by June 24<sup>th</sup> he has completed the poetic draft. What concerns him in this story is the direct portrayal of Siegfried’s life and deeds. Wagner’s most significant description of *Der junge Siegfried* in his letters, excluding the discussion he had with Uhlig over the musical aspects of the drama including Fafner’s motive and the relation of the musical phrases to the poetic phrases,<sup>208</sup> is the one he gives to Röckel in a letter of August 24<sup>th</sup>. His discussion of the opera centers entirely on Siegfried, and does not include any mention of the new character of Wotan, recently written in to the drama with an actual speaking role. The important message for Wagner is the Siegfried story, i.e., Siegfried’s heroic, fearless character while he is performing his famous deeds, and the important awakening of his second self, Brünnhilde, “in the most blissful of loves embraces.”<sup>209</sup>

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<sup>206</sup> *Selected Letters of Richard Wagner*, 223. He makes the same point in a letter to Hans von Bülow from two days later, May 12, explaining “I have greatly expanded my plan. *Siegfrieds Death* is at present unproduceable, and, for the public, ununderstandable; so I am going to preface it with a *Young Siegfried*.”

<sup>207</sup> *Correspondence of Wagner and Liszt* I. 156.

<sup>208</sup> See letter to Uhlig September 3, 1851, *Selected Letters of Richard Wagner*, 229.

<sup>209</sup> See letter to Röckel from August 28, 1851, *Selected Letters of Richard Wagner*, 228. This letter includes a summary of the events, excluding the Wanderer, in what would become *Siegfried*. Wagner ends this description with a call to “awake womankind” – a necessary step to revolution. This final statement about womankind was used as one of the centerpieces of Nattiez’s argument for Wagner’s desire to portray the androgynous human being as the perfect ideal human being in the *Ring*. (See: Nattiez, *Wagner Androgyne*, 77.) As long as the story focuses on the character of Siegfried-

The background that the audience will see to prepare for the more advanced *Siegfrieds Tod* will be the cheerful Siegfried and his instinctive following of his own natural necessity, the same character or *Mut* that prevents him from giving the ring to the Wasserfrauen in Act III scene 1 of *Siegfrieds Tod*. But now instead of a mysterious characteristic that prevents him from saving himself, Wagner names this characteristic: his *Mut*, which enables him to achieve his extraordinary and impossible deeds – at least extraordinary and impossible for those who consider the actions that have taken place in cultural history to be the only actions possible in the future.

In his telling of Siegfried's youth, Wagner is able to expand the drama's *Hauptmomente* to now include the youth's [Siegfried's] rejection of the old man's authority in favor of his own individual experiences. Mime, and to an extent the Wanderer, represent this authority of the old man: the authority which must let youth go its own way and act from its own sense of necessity rather than blindly following familial or cultural authority. To fix Balmung – the name of the sword before he changed it to Notung – he must not follow Mime's teaching, the teaching of culture; he must follow his own method. He kills the dragon because he has never learned fear; culture has not indoctrinated it in him. As Wagner had explained in *Opera and Drama*, the youth knows fear only in his capacity as subservient to authority: when youth is freed from this subservience he is no longer fearful and is no longer bound by

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Brünnhilde, Siegfried willing the deed that makes possible a world of moral freedom (and, of lesser importance, the redemption of the Gods) by slaying the dragon, and Brünnhilde fulfilling the deed that frees the Gods, the world, and – in the earlier ending from 1848 – the Nibelungs, Nattiez's argument is sound. But as soon as Wotan is put into the mix, and Brünnhilde becomes his will, the center of the tragedy is no longer the unification of man and woman, but is something else entirely. Wagner continues with the nobility of womankind in the later *Communication to my Friends* in his explanations of his heroines, particularly Elsa's relationship with Lohengrin, (PW I 340, 346-347) as well as numerous letters praising the morality of women such as to his niece Franziska Wagner of October 13, 1852: "I can't bear the [present breed of] males, and should like to have nothing to do with them: no one is worthy his salt, who can't really be loved by a woman; but the stupid asses cannot even love now; if they've talent enough, they fuddle with it, but as a rule they're content with cigar-smoking. The only people I look to for anything still are women, if only there were more of them!" (*Family Letters of Richard Wagner*. trans. William Ashton Ellis. (London: Macmillan and Co, 1911), 186).

the precedent of authority, i.e., history. Siegfried never learned fear, so the struggles between Mime and Siegfried are such that Mime wants Siegfried under his authority, and Siegfried rejects it. This is why Siegfried doesn't learn anything from Mime about smithing, and ultimately why Siegfried is able to forge the sword. Learning from someone means placing oneself under the authority of the teacher, and Siegfried's *Mut* did not allow him to place himself under any authority.<sup>210</sup> The Woodbird, of course, as a representative of nature and so of the same species as the nature-necessity of his inner *Mut*, can offer him instructions and bring them to action without reflection, as he would immediately act on any inclination from his *Mut*.

His confrontation with the Wanderer is similar, and at least at the beginning, the same as in the final version of *Siegfried*. After the Wanderer asks Siegfried a series of questions about why he wants to go to Brünnhilde, Siegfried finally gets impatient with him and calls him an "old questioner"; the Wanderer then responds: "Patience boy! If I seem old to you, then you should pay me respect!"<sup>211</sup> For Siegfried, respecting another old man who doesn't help him is too much to bear. He replies: "That's not bad! As long as I've lived an old man has stood in my way, now I have cleared him away; stand there much longer in the way, watch out that you don't end up like Mime."<sup>212</sup> They then have an exchange similar to that of the final version in which Siegfried asks the Wanderer about his hat and his eye, Siegfried threatens to

<sup>210</sup> This might also explain Siegfried's inability to learn the runes from Brünnhilde; he was only able to place himself under her authority in his love for her, but not in any other fashion. His *Mut* prevents him from obeying and learning from others, he must only do as his *Mut* drives him to do.

<sup>211</sup> Strobel. *Richard Wagner Skizzen und Entwürfe zur Ring-Dichtung*, 90 "geduld du knabe! erschein' ich dir alt, so sollst du mir achtung bieten!" (Note to the reader: all quoting of the Strobel text is case sensitive. The Strobel text very rarely includes capitalizations of nouns, and I did not correct this in quoting from it)

<sup>212</sup> Strobel. *Richard Wagner Skizzen und Entwürfe zur Ring-Dichtung*, 90. "das wär' nicht übel: so lang' ich lebe, stand mir ein alter stets in weg: den hab'ich nun fortgeräumt; stemmst du dich dort mir länger in den weg, so hüte dich wohl, daß dir's nicht wie Mime ergeht." The poetic version completed in late June does not differ from the final wording of this passage in the present *Siegfried* except for "sieh dich vor, mein' ich, daß du wie Mime nicht Fährst" which in the final version becomes "sieh dich vor, sag' ich..." Though longer than the prose sketch, both subsequent versions offer merely a more direct threat to the Wanderer for not getting out of the way than the prose draft's more veiled threat. (Strobel, 177; GS VI. 159-160).

pluck out his other eye, and then the Wanderer explains: “With the eye that is missing from me, you are looking yourself at the eye that remains with me.”<sup>213</sup> In the final version, Siegfried laughs, and then responds bitterly, reiterating that all he wants from the Wanderer is to be shown the way, otherwise the Wanderer has no purpose for him: “for nothing else do I need you.” But in the prose draft Siegfried offers a more friendly response – “You are a funny companion; I like you much more than Mime!” – before asking him again to show him the way and get out of the way. The Wanderer responds in turn saying: “I enjoy chatting with you, your kind I find quite tolerable.”<sup>214</sup> This is followed by Siegfried saying that they would have to chat another time [doch ein andermal] and then that he doesn’t need the Wanderer. This exchange is followed by the Wanderer revealing himself as in the final version.<sup>215</sup> Though the Wanderer may be more likeable than Mime, he is still an old man who is preventing Siegfried from achieving his goal. The Wanderer then explains to him that he is the guardian of Brünnhilde, and that passage of anyone through the fire will make the God powerless to the point that he would be better off dead.<sup>216</sup> When Siegfried explains that what happens to the Wanderer is not his problem, the

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<sup>213</sup> Strobel. *Richard Wagner Skizzen und Entwürfe zur Ring-Dichtung*, 90. “mit dem auge, das mir fehlt, erblickst du selber das auge, das mir blieb.” One important distinction is between the passage in the prose draft so mentioned and the complete poem, is that in the prose Wotan calls Siegfried a boy, whereas as in the poetic draft and the final version his calls him his son. (Strobel, 177; GS VI. 160).

<sup>214</sup> Strobel. *Richard Wagner Skizzen und Entwürfe zur Ring-Dichtung*, 90. “schwatz’ ich gern mit dir; deine art kann ich wohl leiden”. In the poetic draft his love for Siegfried is made plainer. “schwätzt’ ich noch gern. Deine leichte art lieb’ ich wohl: mich freut’s, treffe ich trotz!” (Your nimble kind I truly love, it pleases me to come upon your defiance) whereas in the final version this sentiment is used mixed with a threat to dissuade Siegfried from further defiance. (Strobel, 178; GS VI. 161).

<sup>215</sup> In the poetic draft, with this nebulous phrase concerning “speaking another time” Siegfried himself is less direct in his putting aside of the Wanderer: “Freu’ dich, liebe und schwatze nach lust! Doch alles ein andermal! Jetzt ist mir nichts davon nütz’.” He doesn’t need chatting now, which the Wanderer himself wishes to pursue, so from this impression perhaps one might assume they may talk another time in a friendly manner. (Strobel, 178) This point is made by Daniel Coren in his “The Texts of Wagner’s “Der junge Siegfried” and “Siegfried” *19<sup>th</sup> Century Music*, 6 (1982), 26 “Siegfried does not treat his grandfather with the rudeness that rouses Wotan in *Siegfried*, nor does Wotan lose his self-control when Siegfried becomes impatient to continue on his way. Siegfried is even instinctively attracted to the old man, and would in other circumstances have been glad to stay and chat with him.”

<sup>216</sup> Strobel, 90-91. “wer sie erweckte, wer sie gewänne, der machte mich machtlos immer dar; ein spott wär’ ich allen, und besser mir selber der Tod[.]”

Wanderer shows him the fire which surrounds Brünnhilde, attempts to dissuade him and then disappears as Siegfried goes through the fire. No physical confrontation was present here between the two. Siegfried then proceeds to wake Brünnhilde.

The difference between Mime and the Wanderer with regard to Siegfried is that Mime is the loveless authority of the state which must be set aside so that the individual can be free. Siegfried has no other choice but to stay with Mime as long as he doesn't have a sword. Mime creates in him the false need to learn fear which spurs him on to fight Fafner and which ultimately leads to a direct confrontation to the death between Siegfried and Mime. Mime tried to take away Siegfried's freedom and use it for his own gain, just as the loveless state does with its citizens. Despite the Wanderer's actually having been the ruler of the world and so the representative of authority, the relationship between the two is basically cordial, particularly in the verse draft, and although the Wanderer warns Siegfried of the fire he does not bar his path. In the end his message is this: "learn fear now or never learn it." If the Wanderer could deter Siegfried with words and descriptions, then Siegfried would not be worthy of Brünnhilde or be the fearless hero for whom Wotan had been searching. Siegfried's inner necessity drives him through the flames to wake Brünnhilde ["zu Brünnhilde muß ich jetzt hin!"]. Words cannot stop him; they require reflection and Siegfried only feels. When Siegfried had shown himself ready, like the loving father figure in Wagner's youth vs. age analogy from *Opera and Drama*, Wotan steps aside; his form dissipates into the smoke of the flame, and he allows Siegfried's deeds to shape the world for the better.

The inclusion of this *Hauptmoment* outlines the necessity that youth win out and achieve its own aims and deeds while old age surrenders itself and its influence to youth, whether by force as in the case of the loveless Mime, or by choice as in the

case of Wotan. Because of this addition and expansion of the Siegfried drama to the new bipartite plan – now including the regressive and destructive goals of Mime and Alberich in getting their hands on the ring – the necessity of ending the cycle of authority is made plain, as are the deaths of Siegfried and Brünnhilde.

ii. The First Expansion of the Wanderer-Wotan as an Independent, Central Character

If *Der junge Siegfried* had just been made of up these scenes, perhaps Wagner might have viewed these two operas as complete in and of themselves, and followed through with his goals for a performance of the two works in 1853 for Weimar. But something compelled him to include other long passages with Wotan, particularly a lengthy conversation between him and the Wala on the subject of the guilt of the Gods and their eventual destruction. As we may recall, the original theme of the Siegfried story was to be the end of the swinging pendulum of authority. In *Die Wibelungen* when Siegfried killed the dragon of the night it enabled the possibility for authority itself to be dissipated and also began the cycle of worldly authority which was only to end when a reincarnation of Siegfried-Friedrich returned to destroy it. Wotan's role was to be agent of change.

The quintessence of this constant motion, thus of Life, at last in 'Wuotan' (Zeus) found expression as the chiefest God, the Father and Pervader of the All. Though his nature marked him as the highest god, and as such he needs must take the place of father to the other deities, yet was he nowise an historically older god, but sprang into existence from man's later, higher consciousness of self; consequently he is more abstract than the older Nature-god, whilst the latter is more corporeal and, so to phrase it, more personally inborn in man.<sup>217</sup>

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<sup>217</sup> PW VII. 275.

He is a concept, an expression of the consciousness of Hegel's *Weltgeist* in man. In short, he penetrated every aspect of the pendulum of authority, and is a product – as well as guarantor – of its swing. In Wagner's *Nibelung Sketch*, Wotan and the Gods are a mixture of the conceptual Gods from *Die Wibelungen*, who concern themselves – like the spirit of nature-necessity – with the progression of the human species to a moral consciousness, and mythical Gods who actually rule the earth. Wotan was after all introduced as an actual being in the *Nibelung Sketch*, and so cannot be entirely conceptual. But it is a tricky dichotomy. If they are actual, physical Gods and they are ruling in the end, even if no longer guiltily – which they are if the end of the *Siegfrieds Tod* verse draft is to be taken as the end of the bipartite operas – then there is still some kind of authority present in this cosmology. We are meant to overlook this fact from his treatment of their rule in the *Nibelung Sketch* in which Wagner describes their physical rule *per se* as not as important as the idea of freedom which spurs them on. Wotan under this guise is a concept, specifically the embodiment of necessity and of the pendulum.

But if Wotan embodies change, then he will no longer exist once the pendulum stops swinging. So it is perhaps surprising that in a story whose purpose it was to outline and describe the end of the pendulum swing and the arrival at the goal of nature-necessity, there would be a focus on his eternal rule. As Brünnhilde explains at the end of the *Nibelung Sketch*: “One only shall rule, All-Father! Thou in thy glory! As pledge of thine eternal might, this man I bring thee: good welcome give him, he is worth it!”<sup>218</sup> She enters the flames with her horse, is then transfigured back into a Valkyrie, and leads Siegfried back to Valhalla. Under this guise Wotan is the enlightened monarch ruling through reason alone where all in his kingdom are free.

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<sup>218</sup> PW VII. 311.

The battle for authority ends when the king, Wotan, is declared the absolute ruler, with no further possibility of a change of authority to another party by way of the hoard/ring which is now, as it was in the ideal conception of equal power found in *Die Wibelungen*, being “shared by all under the sun.” This is the republican Wotan who rules forever because his voice is the spirit of the people; he is the First of the *Volk* from Wagner’s *Vaterlandsverein* speech.

But despite the apparent congeniality and moral mission of the God-king to bring freedom, this is a tenuous position: Wagner proposes to destroy authority through Siegfried’s deed while reinstating Wotan’s authority as ruler. This ending was carried over into the first version of *Siegfrieds Tod*.

Nur einer herrsche: Allvater! Herrlicher du! Freue dich des freiesten Helden! Siegfried führ' ich dir zu: biet' ihm minnlichen Gruß, dem Bürgen ewiger Macht! <sup>219</sup>	One alone shall rule: All-Father! Glorious one! Have joy of the freest of heroes! Siegfried I bear to thee: Give him greeting sweet. The warrant of might without end.
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This dual conception did not last long. He crossed out the above passage and offered two “replacement passages”: one to the left of it on the page and one to the right. It is generally assumed that the passage on the right came first, sometime before May 1849.

It reads:

Selige Sühnung ersah ich den hehren heilig ewigen einigen Göttern! Freuet euch Des freiesten Helden! Göttlichem Brudergruss Führt seine Braut ihn zu. <sup>220</sup>	Blessed atonement I perceived for the august, holy eternal Gods! Rejoice in the freest of heroes! His bride brings him to the brother-greeting of the Gods.
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<sup>219</sup> GS II. 392. PW VIII. 50.

<sup>220</sup> Otto Strobel. *Richard Wagner Skizzen und Entwürfe zur Ring-Dichtung*. Plate VI. Translation from Ernest Newman, *Life of Wagner* II. 357.

This ending is more consistent with the notion that in the ideal world at the end of the opera there will exist a moral rule sanctioned by the Gods placing emphasis on freedom and equality, without the exercise of actual authority on the part of the Gods. It is the ideal republic in which all are brothers, as in the message of Beethoven-Schiller in the Ninth Symphony.

On the left side is a passage of a different character:

<p>Machtlos scheidet die die Schuld nun meidet. Eurer Schuld entspross der froheste Held dessen freie Tat sie getilgt: erspart ist euch der bange Kampf um eure endende Macht: Erbleichet in Wonne vor des Menschen Tat, vor dem Helden, den ihr gezeugt! Aus eurer bangen Furcht verkünd' ich euch selige Todeserlösung!<sup>221</sup></p>	<p>Powerless depart, ye whose guilt is forgone. From your guilt sprang the joyfullest hero, Whose free deed has redeemed it: Spared are ye the anxious conflict for your ending might: Pass away in bliss in the face of the human deed, before the hero, whom ye begat! From your anxious fear I proclaim to you blessed death redemption!</p>
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When this passage was written is still a matter of debate. It had been assumed that this new passage was written sometime before or during the spring of 1851 and took the place of the blessed atonement passage, thus bringing this new ending in line with Wotan's relinquishing of authority found in *Der junge Siegfried*, Act III, scene 2.<sup>222</sup> The main issue behind the dating of this passage concerns Wagner's use of German script and Latin script. He stopped using German script in December of 1848, yet the entire page is written in German script. There are two primary reasons why one could hold to this later dating. First, it is likely he would have used the German script anyway, despite abandoning it elsewhere so as to keep the page consistent. Second, philosophically speaking, the death of the old order fits more smoothly with his

<sup>221</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>222</sup> For the first iteration of the 1851 dating for this passage, see: William Ashton Ellis "Verschiedenen Fassungen von *Siegfrieds Tod*" *Die Musik* 11 (1903): 319-320, 320f.

Feuerbachian thinking post-Dresden uprising, than with his thinking before the failed uprising. This would then mean there was a gradual change of the ending of *Siegfrieds Tod* which could be seen as offering a parallel to Wagner's own change in mindset from pro-king to revolutionary: from Wotan ruling the world with supreme authority, to the ruling power in Valhalla being the more republican "united brotherhood," to the more anarchistic and Feuerbachian destruction of Valhalla and the Gods. The other side stands by the script use and so declares that the entire page couldn't have been written after December 1848. Stewart Spencer has recently proposed a new option. He hypothesizes that the two revised endings are meant to go together and do not differentiate between going to Valhalla and greeting Siegfried in brotherhood, on the one hand, and the end of the Gods on the other; the two ideas can be present at the same time.<sup>223</sup>

But no matter when this latter ending is dated or whether the two endings are meant to go together to offer a smooth transition of power, *Der junge Siegfried's* action regarding the Gods' end was consistent from the very first outline of events on May 24<sup>th</sup> with the "Powerless depart" ending. The summary of Act III, scene 1 reads

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<sup>223</sup> Spencer's argument can be found in: Stewart Spencer, "Zieh' hin ich kann dich nicht halten" *Wagner II* 1981, 105. "These two passages may be complementary, rather than mutually exclusive, as is generally assumed: if Wagner had intended the second passage to replace the first, he would have crossed out the first, just as he has deleted seven lines of text which the first addition intended to replace. Taken together, the two passages indicate a peaceful transfer of power from Wotan to Siegfried." But this argument has a fatal flaw which Spencer seems to have overlooked: Wagner did not also cut the following chorus sung by the collected masses preparing the funeral pyre:

Wotan! Wotan! Waltender Gott!	Wotan! Wotan! Ruler of the Gods!
Wotan, weihe den Brand!	Wotan, bless thou the flames!
Brenne Held und Braut,	Burn hero and bride,
brenne das treue Roß:	Burn too the faithful horse;
daß wundenheil und rein,	That wound-healed and pure
Allvater's freie Genossen,	All-Father's free consorts
Walhall froh sie begrüßen	may gladly greet Walhall,
zu ewiger Wonne vereint! (GS II. 228.)	Joined in a bliss without end! (PW VIII. 51.)

Surely Spencer would agree that these lines make considerably more sense with the original "One alone shall rule" ending, and not really with "Powerless depart ye whose guilt is forgone." These lines were eventually cut in favor of a stage direction for "moved expression" by the remaining people on stage, but Wagner did not cross them out as he had done the "One alone shall rule" ending. So not crossing something out doesn't automatically mean that it didn't get cut.

as follows: “Wotan and the Wala: the end of the gods. Wotan’s decision: the Wala returns to the earth.”<sup>224</sup> Below this outline on the original manuscript, Wagner wrote a second outline containing summaries of three of the four scenes in which Wotan appears: the Wanderer and Mime, Wotan and the Wala, and Wotan and Siegfried. The summary of the conversation between Wotan and Wala runs as follows: “Guilt of the Gods, and their necessary downfall: Siegfried’s destiny. – willed annihilation [Selbstvernichtung] of the Gods.”<sup>225</sup> So the Gods choose to destroy themselves in favor of the new world order. Now the original conception of Wotan from *Die Wibelungen* and the beginning of the *Nibelung Sketch* has returned; Wotan is the spirit of change and of shifting authority. When authority ends, so does Wotan and so do the Gods. No one can rule in the world after the gold has been returned to the Rhine, since all then are equal. Morality, the goal of the Gods, has been attained, and they no longer serve a purpose other than to fade away, just as Wotan fades away as Siegfried goes towards Brünnhilde. The culture built on the original guilt fades away before the deeds of the youth Siegfried.

Wagner includes in *Der junge Siegfried* a Wotan who now embodies the spirit of change as well as Gods who are now very human. In Act III, scene 1 of *Siegfrieds Tod*, Siegfried describes a scenario reminiscent of Hercules siding with the Olympians against the Giants. Siegfried explains to the Wasserfrauen that the Gods will find themselves in great care about their end, but they ought not to worry because Siegfried will side with them and so help them to defeat the evil army.<sup>226</sup> In the complete prose sketch of *Der junge Siegfried* this battle and this fear come to the fore in Wotan’s questioning of the Wala. What is interesting about this is that when

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<sup>224</sup> Strobel, 66; Plate VII.

<sup>225</sup> Strobel, 67; Plate VII.

<sup>226</sup> This is as opposed to the Norse version of Ragnarok in which all of the Gods die at the hands of the Giants and children of Loki, and Surtur the giant is the only survivor. Surtur then remakes the world and all are reborn. So Wagner did not get any more than the idea for this battle from his Norse sources.

Wotan is questioning the Wala, he is not asking the questions for himself, as he has made up his mind about how things should go, but rather he is asking them always for the other Gods: it is not Wotan who is filled with fear and care about the end, but his fellow Gods.<sup>227</sup> He asks her if she knows of a solution for the Gods [den Göttern],<sup>228</sup> to which she ultimately replies:

Crazed are the Gods, turned in their foolishness against themselves. They avenge guilt, yet are themselves all guilty. What they have profaned they still call holy: faith they break, yet faith they guard! What must the Gods now will? What they do not want is what they must will: I see the Gods passing away, their end I see before me!<sup>229</sup>

Wotan response is out of place. He does not defend the gods from the Wala's criticism; he merely states his question in another way by offering further background about why the Gods are afraid.

Of the end of the Gods are they concerned since Balder, the most lovely god fell: as long as the world lay in peace; what each [God] knew, that was his will. But then strife broke into the world and care grew greater: since then Wotan begat heroes and instilled in them their own spirit – Ur-mother, Wisest of Women – can you tell me what Wotan wills while will-less others worry?<sup>230</sup>

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<sup>227</sup> The exception to this is the tenuous first question which in the prose draft Wotan is not asking directly, while the complete poem asks the same question he would pose in the final version of *Siegfried*. The first question from the final version of *Siegfried*, asked after Wotan says he will not go to the Norns who are not as wise as the Wala, is “Doch deiner Weisheit dankt’ ich den Rat wohl, wie zu hemmen ein rollendes Rad?” (But from your wisdom I would be glad to learn how to hold back a rolling wheel) (GS VI. 153.). By contrast, in the prose draft, although he asks the question, he never says the answer is for him; this question is “doch aus deiner weisheit errieth sich wohl, wie das rad der zukunft zu hemmen?” (But from your wisdom you may divine how to hold back the wheel of the future). (Strobel, 88).

<sup>228</sup> However, the complete poem reads *waltenden göttern* (ruling gods), which stresses their position as the authority, specifically, the authority which must be extinguished. (Strobel, 171).

<sup>229</sup> Strobel, 88.

<sup>230</sup> Strobel, 88-89. In the poem this passage runs thusly “Of the blessed end [*seligen Ende*] are the gods worrying since loved one fell, he who brought victory through peace. What each knew, that was his will, as the strict battling with might could not coerce the driven will. [*den Willen zum müssen*] But now that strife has struck the world, since only victory still secures peace, since now the fear terrifyingly has grown, fear’s victory has consumed the gods: can you, wise one, tell me what Wotan wills, while will-less others worry.” (Strobel, 172.) This passage matches then prophecies the “*selige Sühnung*” of the so-called first alteration of the ending of *Siegfrieds Tod*, as well as the “*selige Todeserlösung*” from the end of the so-called second alteration, thus indicating an effort on Wagner’s part to be internally consistent between these two operas.

She then rejects him in the manner of the “Vegtamskvidha” from the *Poetic Edda*, when she realises who Odin is and commands him to leave. The passage offers no substantive rebuke as does the equivalent passage in the final version. But then, this question that Wotan asks here is vastly different from the question in the final version: “How can a God conquer his fear?” The question asked in the prose sketch seems rhetorical and self-fulfilling. The other Gods are the ones who are worrying, and Wotan came on their behalf, but he himself has been simultaneously preparing for his own destruction, i.e., attempting to make himself obsolete by creating a race of heroes and breathing into them an independent spirit. So when the Wala tells him to leave even though they seem to be on the same page regarding the fate of the Gods, he proudly exclaims that her wisdom is at an end, and the longed-for end of the Gods is at hand from Siegfried, the fearless hero. “The old depart, the new shall bloom: the Gods shall surrender in blessed delight to youth.”

What is particularly worthy of note in this episode is the connection made between the Gods other than Wotan – the fearful Gods – and Wagner’s description of hypocrisy of the sages and politicians who call for sacrifices from their citizens while being blind to the fact that they are using their citizens immorally, i.e., commanding them to sacrifice rather than allowing them to sacrifice of their own free will.<sup>231</sup> Like the sages, the Gods are no longer prepared to make the sacrifice for the benefit of a moral rule to relinquish their influence over men, and require only that they obey so that the Gods can retain their power. That is the centerpiece of the Wala’s argument against the Gods.

In *Siegfrieds Tod*, the Gods were a united force behind Wotan; they all recognised a moral imperative to freedom of all that was so strong that they would be

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<sup>231</sup> See: Note 200 above, PW II. 352-353.

willing to surrender themselves to Siegfried for it. But when Wagner expands the Siegfried drama to include *Der junge Siegfried*, the slavery of the Nibelungs is no longer what concerns the Gods, and thus, the Gods have lost their moral superiority and have deteriorated into the sages and statesmen from the *Opera and Drama* analogy.<sup>232</sup> What worries them is the new world of strife and egoism. As Wotan explains to the Wala, before this world of strife, whatever one wanted, he got. This was a natural world where one lived without reflection and only in immediate instinctive necessity, in other words, the first stage of the Moral Progression. But then strife and fear came into the world (the second stage) and the Gods now begin to fear for their end. They have taken the place of the fearing Giants from the *Nibelung Sketch* who are incapable of getting past their worries. Wotan stands alone as the planner who created in humanity a moral fearless race, and he stands alone as the fearless god who embodies natural necessity and is capable of looking at himself and others equally and with an independent eye, as we learn from his conversations with Mime, Alberich, and Siegfried.<sup>233</sup> He recognizes the necessity of his race's departing as he recognizes the necessity for an end to authority of all kinds. The men into whom he has breathed life will not follow a state, even his own, but will all follow their own *Mut*. Wotan is the loving father giving way to the deeds of youth so that the world may be improved by the new deeds; he embodies the third and fourth stages of the Moral Progression. So when Brünnhilde's final lines in *Der junge Siegfried* are directed to the Gods and speak of their inevitable downfall – "Live well you eternal

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<sup>232</sup> Only in a crossed-out sketch is the matter of the slavery of the Nibelungs even considered. This occurs at the opening of Act II and was originally intended to have Alberich and the Nibelungs waiting by Fafner's cave. When Siegfried enters the cave and when Mime sees Alberich and his fellow Nibelungs, as the outline goes, he "promises the dwarves freedom, when the Ring falls to him" (Strobel, 67).

<sup>233</sup> For example upon being confronted by Alberich with his own guilt in not returning the ring to the Rhinemaidens when he had the chance Wotan says "pure and guiltless were we all before that ring was forged: what each man was driven to do by need each man did." (Strobel, 79) This offers the same explanation of the previous state of the world without fear, before the gold, as Wotan had offered in his description to the Wala.

Gods, good bye Valhalla! Snap the rope you Norns. The End of the Gods takes effect!”<sup>234</sup> – she is articulating the will of Wotan, having moved beyond selfishness and embraced natural necessity, that it be so.

There are of course still some holes in the character of Wotan. Despite his moral sentiment he still at some point was forced to take away Brünnhilde’s godhead and trap her in magic fire because she broke the covenant between them by protecting Siegmund. If Wotan could do this then he must not have always been a free moral being, free of contracts and restraints – as would seem to be the case in our view of him from the two dramas. This inconsistency dug away at Wagner, along with his desire to portray more *Hauptmomente* such as the initial moment of fear that was induced by the state or authority in the populace, the setting off of the pendulum.<sup>235</sup> Wagner had in Wotan an end point for the moral system, but Wotan’s history as explained over the course of *Der junge Siegfried* includes deeds and plans that were morally compromised. The reason, after all, why Siegfried and Wotan are so comparatively cordial in the prose and poetic drafts by comparison with the final version is because in the earlier version they both represent essentially the same stage of moral development: they both will the necessary action without desire getting in the way. Siegfried would *like* to stay and speak to the Wanderer, but is compelled by necessity to go to Brünnhilde. The difference is that the first moment of fear and law in the drama cannot be portrayed by Siegfried, who is a dead end. Siegfried is and was always fearless and so will not be able to show this early moment of development. So it is to Wotan – specifically a pre-moral Wotan present at the time of Alberich’s fashioning of the ring (the first sin of this universe) – that Wagner had to go if he

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<sup>234</sup> Strobel, 95. “lebt wohl, ihr ewigen Götter! Fahr hin, Walhall! Ihr Nornen, zerreißt das seil! Götterdämmerung brich herein!” In the poem she explains the downfall of Valhalla in the same violent language as that present in the final version of *Siegfried*.

<sup>235</sup> See: Notes 196-197, PW II. 203.

wished to depict this vital first *Hauptmoment* of moral development so described in *Opera and Drama*.

D – *Communication to My Friends* and the Letters up to 1853: The Four-part *Ring*

Wagner completed the poetic draft of *Der junge Siegfried* on June 24<sup>th</sup>. It is unclear how much time he spent on its music before he went to other projects. His main distraction was the essay that would become the Preface to his three opera poems, *A Communication to My Friends*, completed in late August after a visit from Uhlig. It functions as a mixture between a musical-political autobiography,<sup>236</sup> and a statement of purpose. For the most part it is a reiteration of his aesthetic and political ideas.

But one striking aspect of this work is that he revisits the subject of whether the audience must be an ideal post-revolutionary audience, or a real audience of the present; and he revisits it in the form of his two distinct and separate endings to the *Communication*. In the original version of the *Communication*, written in August, Wagner had described seeing a single ray of light in Liszt and the good people of the Weimar theater who would be able to perform both *Siegfrieds Tod* and *Der junge Siegfried*. He wrote:

In that action, with a rejoicing of my entire spirit, that I didn't believe I was capable of feeling, I took up the call, I rapidly sketched and completed a new poem, which I now made up my mind to produce. I wrote this work for my

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<sup>236</sup> One of the more interesting autobiographical aspects of this work, and one most often cited is his discussion of his turn to revolution. It lays stress on Wagner's earliest desire was for theater reform which only later morphed into desire for the true upheaval which must be caused by the lowest *Volk* "from below". But the narrative he presents is not the entire truth as he was spouting the glories of revolution as early as 1846, and the entire reason for addressing German themes in his music was to bring about a change in the people. (See: PW I. 356).

friend Franz Liszt, for the duty-loving artist, who gave up so passionately to me, and for the friends, whom I have won over through my art and I group together under the local concept: Weimar. This pleases me perfectly, that it is singly that which I can wish for not only under the present conditions, but overall, and each will comprehend me in this work[.]<sup>237</sup>

Wagner at this time had high hopes for the ultimate effect the dramas would have on the audience. He described it as “the most far reaching and most elaborate production, which nevertheless is from the simplest and clearest subject”. This is a real present audience of which he is speaking: the theater-going public of Weimar. He concludes this passage with a revolutionary Credo of sorts that again stresses the ability of the artwork to inspire real world revolution.

So I throw myself then with new strength again into an artistic undertaking: whether its goal under the enduring conditions may be based on one last deception on my part does not trouble me, that I am conscious, exactly now, and maybe forever, to achieve the best and my essentially most suitable deed. But never will I seek to preserve myself artistically in a deception, for me, art ought to come face to face with the highest world path just as an egoist ought to come to consciousness: [this path entails] the necessary annihilation of the foundation just as my current artistic activity – Welcome! I do not oppose where I myself as an artist, am contributing to the creative annihilation of the modern world. So if you ask what you are to understand, by that, what I am, I reply I am neither a republican nor a democrat, not a socialist, nor a communist, but – an artistic being and as such, everywhere that my gaze, my desire and my will extend, an out-and-out revolutionary, a destroyer of the old by the creation of the new!<sup>238</sup>

The publisher had misgivings with this ending, as it was too revolutionary, and so working with the publisher through his brother-in-law Eduard Avenarius, Wagner had to come up with an alternative ending. By the letters from this period in late-October one can see he is of two minds on the subject. To Uhlig in October 22, Wagner is expressing doubts about the feasibility of *Siegfried* at Weimar, and as such, the whole project for the modern audience:

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<sup>237</sup> Otto Strobel, “Richard Wagners *Mittheilung an meine Freunde*” *Zeitschrift für Musik* XCI (July) 1931, 564.

<sup>238</sup> *Ibid.*, 565. Despite some minor changes in vocabulary, his emphasis on bringing about a new civilization that we have observed throughout his writings is as present as ever.

Ah! If I could only draw Liszt away from his illusions, it would be grand. It has much to do with my works. My Weimar *Siegfried* becomes more and more problematical, – but not *Siegfried* itself. For this much is certain – I only work for art, for nothing else, unless it be for a little decided humanity.<sup>239</sup>

The operas appearing in Weimar and the unwavering faith in Liszt are the centerpieces of these last pages of the original conclusion to his *Communication*, so a change of this type in his point of view is drastic. He believes the story of Siegfried can be told, but not now, and not at Weimar: thus abandoning his view of the audience from *Opera and Drama* as well as the *Communication*. This would seem to be hearkening back to his ideal audience of the future, and yet, despite these doubts shared with Uhlig, to his brother-in-law Eduard Avenarius he writes, on October 31<sup>st</sup>, that he stands by every word of the original conclusion, and is prepared to go into legal action to defend the publishing of this conclusion.

Accordingly, I hereby declare that I should like best of all to see my Preface appear *unaltered*, as I would really only be able to change very little... If you or – in case you don't care to – another publisher will undertake to bring out the book *just as it is*, I give unconditional preference to such a course.<sup>240</sup>

By proxy, this implies that he stands by Liszt and a performance of the Siegfried operas at Weimar as late as October 31<sup>st</sup>.

But by November 3<sup>rd</sup> he has had another change of heart and begins to write the first sketch of what would become the opera *Das Rheingold*. At this point he must abandon a performance at Weimar in the near future, as his vision for his project has now grown to the point where such a performance would be inconceivable. In a letter to Uhlig from the same day he says outright, without a doubt, that he has expanded the story of Siegfried to three dramas and a Prelude, and more importantly, will abandon Liszt's Weimar project. Of its performance, he explains, "When all is

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<sup>239</sup> *Letters to my Dresden Friends*, 131.

<sup>240</sup> *Family Letters of Richard Wagner*, 175.

ready, I will think of carrying it out in my own manner.” On November 11<sup>th</sup> – the same day he completed the first sketches of what would become *Das Rheingold* and what would become *Die Walküre* – he sends two letters; one to Eduard Avenarius saying that he has changed the ending of the *Communication*, and the other to Uhlig saying that even if he were to have been pardoned by the king of Saxony, he would still not go to Weimar as he had no hope for Liszt’s work there.<sup>241</sup>

Once the two sketches were on paper, he committed himself to breaking the agreement with Weimar. The new ending of the *Communication* – of which he spoke in his November 11<sup>th</sup> letter to Avenarius – functions as an explanation of his abandonment of a near-future performance in Weimar of the bipartite story of Siegfried. In fact, the letter to Uhlig from November 12<sup>th</sup>, the letter to Liszt from November 20<sup>th</sup>, and the new ending of the *Communication* all explain this shift from the bipartite drama to the *Ring* cycle and all use nearly the same language to describe this process.

The focus point of the change had to do with Wagner’s fear that two parts would not have been enough to outline clearly to the “feeling’s-understanding” all of the crucial “moments” which make up the *dichterische Absicht* of the myth. In the *Communication*, Wagner explained:

I had set forth this wide-ranging purpose in a sketch of the Nibelungen-mythos, such as it had become my own poetic property. *Siegfrieds Tod* was, as I now recognise, only the first attempt to bring a most important feature of this myth to dramatic portrayal; in that drama I should have had, involuntarily, to force myself to [merely] *suggest* a host of huge connections (*Beziehungen*), in order to present a notion of the given feature in its strongest meaning. But these *suggestions*, naturally, could only be inlaid in *epic* form into the drama; and here was the point that filled me with misgiving as to the efficacy of my drama, in its proper sense of a scenic exposition. Tortured by this feeling, I fell upon the plan of carrying out as an independent drama a most attractive

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<sup>241</sup> *Family Letters of Richard Wagner, 176-177; Letters to My Dresden Friends, 141.* After the failed Dresden uprising and Wagner’s flight to Switzerland, he was exiled from every state in Germany and thus would not have been able to participate or attend a performance in Weimar.

portion of the mythos, which in *Siegfrieds Tod* could only have been given in narrative fashion. Yet here again, it was the Stuff itself that so urged me to its dramatic moulding, that it only further needed Liszt's appeal, to call into being, with the swiftness of a lightning-flash, the *Der junge Siegfried*, the Winner of the Hoard and Waker of Brünnhilde.<sup>242</sup>

Wagner wished to prepare his audience for the more philosophical *Siegfrieds Tod* by means of a mythical story that could more easily portray itself to the feeling than to the understanding, and would portray the great deeds of Siegfried's youth as actions on the stage, and not merely as narratives. But as has been observed in the analysis of *Der junge Siegfried*, by completing the Siegfried story he felt in turn that it was necessary to include lengthy narratives of Wotan's deeds and history as well as his own willed end in an attempt to include the first *Hauptmoment* of Wagner's description of the ideal drama from *Opera and Drama*. But a narrative was an unacceptable portrayal of a crucial *Hauptmoment* for the myth, so he was in the same position, with an incomplete story, as he had been before. Wagner decried that the most vital of these *Beziehungen* had been left out of the bipartite drama and therefore must be portrayed as “*actual physical moments (wirklichen sinnlichen Handlungsmomenten)*” in order for the complete myth to pass over entirely into the “sensible reality of the drama,” i.e., in order to be fully comprehensible to the audience. So he came up with the now familiar framework:

With the framework of this form I now may make my Friends acquainted, as being the substance of the project to which alone I shall address myself henceforward. I propose to produce my myth *in three complete dramas*, preceded by a lengthy *Prelude* (Vorspiel). With these dramas, however, although each is to constitute a self-included whole, I have in mind no ‘Repertory-piece,’ in the modern theatrical sense; but, for their performance, I shall abide by the following plan: – At a specially-appointed Festival, I propose, some future time, to produce those three Dramas with their Prelude, *in the course of three days and a fore-evening.*<sup>243</sup>

<sup>242</sup> PW I. 390.

<sup>243</sup> PW I. 391. See also Wagner's strikingly lucid explanation of this process from the November 12<sup>th</sup> letter to Uhlig: “But when I turned to its musical execution and was finally obliged to fix my sights firmly on our modern stage, I felt how incomplete was the product I had planned: all that remained of

Once again, he returns to *Momente* for his explanation as to why the two operas did not tell the full story. Unfortunately, he does not clarify the full story and what these moments will be in the *Communication*, however, he does offer a list of them in the November 12<sup>th</sup> letter to Uhlig. He explains that the opera *Die Walküre* is to include “the fate of Siegmund and Sieglinde, Wotan’s struggle with his own inclination and with custom (Fricka); the Valkyrie’s glorious defiance, Wotan’s tragic anger with which he punishes that defiance,” and will necessarily prepare the way for a clear understanding of the two dramas to follow:

[I]magine this as I intend it, with the enormous wealth of moments such as these drawn together in a coherent drama, and what shall be created is a tragedy of the most shattering effectiveness which, at the same time, will make a clear impression on the senses of all that my audience needs to have absorbed if they are to have no difficulty in understanding *Young Siegfried* and *Siegfried’s Death* – in their widest sense.<sup>244</sup>

But the initial *Moment* of which Wagner spoke in *Opera and Drama* does not appear until the Prelude: *Rheingold*. A few lines later he speaks of the nature of the gold that Alberich steals:

[I]n itself this gold is only a glittering trinket in the watery depths (*Siegfrieds Tod*, Act III, Sc. 1), but another power resides within it which can be coaxed from it only by *the man who renounces love*. – (here you have the structural motif which leads up to Siegfried’s death: imagine the wealth of consequences!)<sup>245</sup>

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the vast overall context – which alone can give the characters their enormous, striking significance – was epic narration and a retelling of events on a purely conceptual level. In order, therefore, to render *Siegfrieds Tod* feasible, I wrote *Der junge Siegfried*: but the more imposing a structure the whole thing assumed, the more it was bound to dawn on me, as I began the scenico-musical realization of *Der junge Siegfried*, that all I had done was to increase the need for a clearer presentation *to the senses* of the whole of the overall context. I now see that in order to be fully understood from the stage, I must present the entire myth in visual terms.” (*Selected Letters of Richard Wagner*, 232-233).

<sup>244</sup> *Selected Letters of Richard Wagner*, 233.

<sup>245</sup> *Selected Letters of Richard Wagner*, 233. As mentioned, the letters to Uhlig of November 12<sup>th</sup> and Liszt of November 20<sup>th</sup> both include similar descriptions of the events of the two new operas *Das Rheingold* and *Die Walküre*. But the Liszt letter actually offers a summary of the first scene of *Das Rheingold* which can be compared to the initial summary of that scene from the first draft of *Das Rheingold* completed one day before the Uhlig letter. This offers a window into when Wagner made a particular change to the first scene of *Das Rheingold*. In this draft he offers an explanation of the first scene of the drama in which Wotan is bathing in the Rhine and sees Alberich take the gold. But a week

It is the gold and the theft of the gold that lead to Siegfried's death, making this the first dramatic *Moment* from which the rest of the drama must necessarily follow. All of the *Hauptmomente* are now present in dramatic action and not in narrative; the story of authority can be told from beginning to end. With the inclusion of all of the important moments in human and societal development, the full myth will be told and the *poetische Absicht* of the myth, as long as it is viewed in the right way, will be experienced by the audience. Wagner describes this experience in the concluding passage to the new ending of the *Communication*:

The object of this production I shall consider thoroughly attained, if I and my artistic comrades, the actual performers, shall within these four evenings succeed in *artistically conveying my purpose to the true Emotional* (not the Critical) *Understanding* of spectators who shall have gathered together expressly to learn it. A further issue is as indifferent to me, as it cannot but seem superfluous. – From this plan for the *representation*, every one of my Friends may now also deduce the nature of my plan for the poetic and musical *working-out*; while everyone who approves thereof, will be equally unconcerned with myself as to the How and When of the public realisation of this plan, since he will at least conceive one item, namely that with *this* undertaking I have nothing more to do with our Theatre of *to-day*. Then if my Friends take firmly up this certainty into themselves, they surely will end by taking also thought with me: *How and under what circumstances* a plan, such as that just named, can finally be carried out; and thus, perhaps-will there also arise that help of theirs which alone can bring this thing to pass. – So now I give You time and ease to think it out:-for only *with my Work*, will Ye see me again!<sup>246</sup>

The audience must view the work uncritically and as long the performers are able to portray the work to the felt-understanding of the audience, and the audience receive the work with the felt-understanding the purpose of the work will have been achieved.

This “revolution” then is only in the theatrical point of view of his audience; all reference to the physical revolution – heavily stressed in the original ending to the *Communication* and which his publishers found dangerous enough to refuse

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later in the letter to Liszt, the new summary of the first scene is without the bathing Wotan. So the letter to Liszt allows us to pinpoint when Wagner made this change. The drafts of these two operas will be discussed in the first chapter of Part III.

<sup>246</sup> PW I. 391-392.

publication without edits – has now been edited away and replaced by Wagner’s standard non-revolutionary answer to the purpose of his works found throughout his prose.

But this is not to say that Wagner entirely abandoned his view that a revolution was necessary. He still continued to offer the two contrary positions on the subject throughout this period; to Uhlig and Kietz giving the “after the revolution” answer, and to his family and Liszt giving more humble answers similar to those found in the second ending of the *Communication*.<sup>247</sup> The year following Louis Napoleon’s coup in December 1851, the language Wagner used in his letters became increasingly polarized, particularly to Uhlig and Liszt. He began to abandon writing one solution for one, and another for another and instead started vacillating between the two for both. The difficulty for the reader of his letters comes in trying to follow Wagner’s view at a given moment as his outlook varied so widely from letter to letter. A particularly striking example of this change can be seen in the letters from May 1852 to both Liszt and Uhlig, and the letter from July 22, 1852 to Uhlig. The May letters, coming after he had completed the final prose draft of *Die Walküre* on May 26<sup>th</sup>, stress the possibility of a real performance of the cycle in the present, while the letter from July sees no point to a performance as it views humanity as doomed.<sup>248</sup>

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<sup>247</sup> We see this particularly clearly in the differences between the endings of the letters to Uhlig of November 11 and to Liszt on November 20. To Uhlig he writes that he can only conceive of a performance of his work “after the revolution” as “present day audiences do not understand him”. (*Selected Letters of Richard Wagner*, 234) But to Liszt he reiterates the requirement of the audience to be unbiased and employ “human feeling” in comprehending the work – as he had done in the letter to Liszt of October 2, 1850 (See Note 183, and *Correspondence of Wagner and Liszt* I. 112-113.) – which could be a modern audience, and even offers Liszt the possibility, albeit a small one, of performing these works at Weimar when they are completed after he has performed them himself: “But once I have completed my great work, the rest – I hope – will follow as a matter of course, so that it is staged in accordance with my wishes. If Weimar is still standing then, and if you yourself have been more fortunate in your efforts to produce something decent than now, alas, appears to be the case (and more than simply ‘appears’!), we shall then see what is to be done in the matter.” (*Selected Letters of Richard Wagner*, 239.)

<sup>248</sup> *Correspondence of Wagner and Liszt* I. 209. May 29, 1852: “I am now in the country and feel tolerably cheerful. My work also pleases me again; my Nibelung tetralogy is completely designed, and in a few months the verse also will be finished. After that I shall be wholly and entirely a “music-

What complicates these letters further and limits what we can garner from them regarding his outlook is Wagner's own prima donna personality and, at times, his desire to offend when he views his friends as misunderstanding him.<sup>249</sup> Perhaps no other letter offers a clearer window into this inconsistency than the letter written to Uhlig on March 20, 1852:

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maker," for this work will be my last poem, and a litterateur I hope I shall never be again. Then I shall have nothing but plans for performances in my head; no more writing only performing. I hope you will help me." *Letters to My Dresden Friends*, 230. May 31, 1852 to Uhlig: "After this work I shall write no more poetry! Nothing higher and more complete can my powers produce. Once the verses are finished, I shall from that moment become entirely musician again, only – at some future time – to become *conductor*." Wagner also wrote this same sentiment to Uhlig in October while writing the *Rheingold* verse draft "My principal care is still the Nibelung poem: this is the only thing that really and powerfully elevates me whenever I give myself up to it. The thought of posterity is repugnant to me, and yet this vain illusion comes before me unawares from time to time, when my poem passes from my soul into the world. All I can and all I have is contained in this one thought: to be able to carry it through and have it performed!!" (284). *Selected Letters of Richard Wagner*, 264. July 22, 1852 to Uhlig: "In general, my dear friend, my views on the human race are growing increasingly gloomy: on the whole I cannot help feeling that this race of ours has no alternative but to perish utterly."

<sup>249</sup> Liszt in particular, through his misunderstanding of Wagner, seems to have had the ability to illicit these types of responses from him. There are two particularly notable examples of this. On April 11, 1853 Liszt sent a letter to Wagner rebuking him for always being in a depressed state and offers salvation in Christ in whom he can be happy. (*Correspondence of Wagner and Liszt* I. 273-276) Wagner's letter two days later which espouses an optimistic "ridding the world of lovelessness and attaining freedom by doing so" view of the world, is his response to this letter. Although it could be used as an explanation of his world-view at this time (it does after all highlight the transition from the second to third stages of the Moral Progression), the letter is, at its heart, an angry response to someone who Wagner thought misunderstood him, and to whom Wagner says to essentially keep his Christ to himself. After explaining the importance of love he concludes his discussion with "Now we suffer, now we must lose heart and go mad without any faith in the hereafter: I too believe in a hereafter: – I have just shown you this hereafter: though it lies beyond my life, it does not lie beyond the limits of all that I can feel, think, grasp, and comprehend, for I believe in humanity and – have need of naught else." (*Selected Letters of Richard Wagner*, 284.) The "naught else" is obviously Christ, but that would not be clear outside of the context of the Liszt letter from two days earlier. Wagner does exactly the same thing in 1854 in the often-cited 'World belongs to Alberich' letter of October 7, 1854. It is not an exemplification of Wagner's depression and desire for an end of the corrupt world as Warren Darcy and others hold, but another bitter reaction to Liszt after Liszt congratulated Wagner on making the best of his situation by concertizing and making a greater name for himself. Wagner replies to this notion thusly: "Did you think for a moment that I had conceived the idea of giving concerts in order to make propaganda for myself, or to make music, or what not? Did you not see at once that this plan was purely the result of despair and my miserable pecuniary situation, and that the only question that required an answer was whether or not I could make money by it, money in return for an unheard-of sacrifice, an act of self-abnegation, which probably I should not have been able to go through with after all? How badly I must have expressed myself! Excuse me for having given rise to such a misunderstanding[.]" (*Correspondence of Wagner and Liszt* II. 47). It is only then that he calls the world "fundamentally evil" and says, pathetically, "the world's last song has faded into silence", etc... This is the danger of taking single letters out of their context and claiming that they represent some overall world-view. Wagner lashes out when his friends, particularly Liszt, misunderstand him, and then he gets over it and "amazingly" becomes more optimistic in the proceeding letters or, as is often the case, presents a more optimistic world-view in a letter written to someone else within a few days of the angry depressed letter.

Truly, in our intercourse, if one of us two need to make apology, it is *I*, once and always. Pay no attention, if now and then something in my letters vexes you. Unfortunately I am often in such bitter humor that it almost affords me a cruel relief to offend some one; this is a calamity which only makes *me* the more deserving of pity. Only pay no attention to it! But be ever assured that I love you from my inmost heart, and that you are often my only consolation.<sup>250</sup>

As Wagner's own admission shows, we cannot take every letter as a window into his soul or world-view. But beyond the inconsistencies and attempts at cajoling sympathy out of his friends, the letters to his niece Franzisca Wagner, described by him as the only niece who truly understood him,<sup>251</sup> stand out as reasonable, and realistic. In his letter to her from March 21, 1852, he writes:

It gave me real pleasure through bearing witness to that self-sacrificing zeal I'm able to arouse in individuals. That the multitude leaves me indifferent, you'll find perfectly natural; I know that *it* can't grasp what I am driving at. In the happiest event, our public and our connoisseurs do not feel that through the medium of the artwork a human soul is telling them its joys and sorrow; in one of us they always see only the artist whose business it is to set something before them and reap honour and fame in return (to say nothing of – money); and after duly applauding him, they leave the house to become the self-same callous scamps in life again they were before. I know I am speaking to the winds with my artworks; my only holdfast is the individual in whom I can see that through my art I have preached to his conscience, stung him up to free himself from lies and hypocrisy, and made him thus a fellow-combatant against the good-for-nothing reign of 'worldly wisdom.'<sup>252</sup>

This explanation is consistent with his long-standing opposition to the use of the reflective reason, the wrong type of listening, and the plutocratic elements of culture

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<sup>250</sup> *Letters to his Dresden Friends*, 207

<sup>251</sup> Wagner explains the character of his brother's daughters in a portion of his letter to Uhlig of October 20, 1851 which Cosima edited out of the original before publishing. But Uhlig's daughter Elsa sold the original unedited letters which ultimately ended up in the Burrell collection. "Johanna is a good girl, though with a lack of character and highly dependent on others. However, I like her. Franziska seems to me to be very efficient, she loves and understands me. I remember Marie as a gifted but, spoiled, light-minded, and rather impertinent girl. ... To sum up: do you mind my confession that this whole family is absolutely indifferent to me, with almost the only exception of Franziska, of whom alone I should like to hear more?" (*Letters of Richard Wagner: The Burrell Collection*. ed. John Burk. (New York: Vienna House, 1972), 623).

<sup>252</sup> *Family Letters of Richard Wagner*, 180-181. The next day [May 25<sup>th</sup>] still embarrassed from an offensive tirade directed towards Uhlig (See the letter from March 20, 1852: *Letters to his Dresden Friends*, 207), an almost abnormally even-headed Wagner wrote in the same realistic honest manner using similar vocabulary similar to that we see in the previous day's letter: "For the rest it does not occur to me to expect anything from the paper for myself! [*Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*] – I know that – in all that concerns the practical present – I speak to the wind, and must wait in vain; but I am content if I prove this in effect, and thus ever reveal anew the necessity for the total overthrow of our modern practice – at any rate, to all thinking minds." (*Letters to his Dresden Friends*, 212-3)

which have to be overthrown in order to perceive the artwork in the right way. This also reveals that the purpose of his work is to convert people to his way of thinking by convincing them of the evil elements of society and so making them embody the world-historical spirit of action such as is found in the heroic examples of Jesus and Siegfried. Wagner had described a similar point in *Artwork of the Future*, “To recognize the life stress (*Lebenstrieb*) of the present [which was the purpose of the drama] is to be impelled to put it into action,” and had also said, in the *Communication to My Friends*, that helping others – his audience – with their personal moral progressions was the purpose of both *Jesus von Nazareth* and the prose works in general.<sup>253</sup> And how is this going to be achieved? As he writes to Franzisca in October, “if I ever have my eye on anything in respect of my operas, it is only the chance of a *good* representation, purely for the artistic interest of the thing.”<sup>254</sup>

This is essentially what Liszt was promising to do for his *Lohengrin* and *Siegfrieds Tod* in 1850-1851. In this discussion there is optimism for social change by appealing to the feeling, not educating, but returning the individual to being led by his self-sacrificing natural necessity, as well as pessimism for the cultural supremacy of the *faux* intelligentsia. There is an ideal reaction to his art, and a false reaction to his art. In his letters to Franzisca there are even admonishments of Meyerbeer and the corrupt French culture, as her sister Johanna had a singing contract with him.<sup>255</sup> In short, in these letters to his niece Wagner offers clear and concise summaries of his

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<sup>253</sup> PW I. 380, 382-383.

<sup>254</sup> *Family Letters of Richard Wagner*, 185.

<sup>255</sup> *Family Letters of Richard Wagner*, 182.

musical and philosophical thinking without weighing himself down with extreme mood swings as he tended to do with others.<sup>256</sup>

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<sup>256</sup> One further reason to take his letters to his niece more seriously regarding the purpose of his art than his letters to others is their consonance with his later writings on the performance, i.e. performers and audience of the Ring, in his *Preface to the Public Issue of the Poem of the Bühnenfestspiel "Der Ring des Nibelungen"* of 1863 and his later "*Epilogue*" to the "*Nibelung's Ring*" from 1871. Both stress that if the performers are properly trained, in the case of the Epilogue even if they are singers of primarily Italian opera, to embody the characters they are presenting on the stage, the performance will be good.

## Chapter 5 A Summary of Wagner's Philosophical and Aesthetic Thinking

### Leading up to and at the Completion of the *Ring* Text

From his *Pasticcio* and the Paris writings through *Communication to My Friends*, the artwork is used as the key to enlightenment when it combines instrumental music – by turns nebulous and sublime – and vocal music. The sublimation of the individual arts to each other and so to the greater artwork of the future is the same as the sublimation of the faculties to the felt-understanding, or the godly consciousness, and is the same, ultimately, as the divine sublimation by love of each citizen to the universal. In the earlier works the path to this universal began at freedom from fear and rejection of culture, and it grew, through the embracing of the artistic feeling, to universal love and sacrifice into the universal. The Zürich writings change the vocabulary around, the artistic feeling becomes one of natural necessity, as well as the *Volk* aspect in man who feels this natural necessity changes to a “purely human” aspect and also to a “Universal human” aspect. The rejection of fear and culture in these writings now broadened into a rejection of the state as the initial source of fear in man comes from man’s forced sublimation of himself to the state. Concurrently, this state authority has become associated, in part through Wagner’s experience in Paris and in part through Proudhon, with that same authority from which all contracts, money, and force stem. All authority, past its original inception, is antithetical to the inner drive of natural necessity that inspires love and sacrifice for the universal. Authority is loveless and it causes fear in the previously natural and fearless. This authority must be overturned if fear is going to be excised from the individual in favor of natural necessity. Love, as the most natural, most necessary of all needs becomes the new

guiding principle of the post-culture utopia. All feel through natural necessity, all are part of the universal, all are willfully led by natural necessity to sacrifice themselves to this universal through their selfless love. Wagner outlines in this rough philosophical schema the four stages of the Moral Progression: instinctive nature followed by fear-inducing authority which rules through reflection and false unnatural reason, followed by the rejection of fear and the false state in favor of a conscious return to nature and love of all beings, and concluded by the conscious sacrifice to the universal by the individual through love.

The artwork has had roughly the same place in this schema of moral progression throughout all of his writing. It is the cause of unity, in the Paris writings, whereby love is instilled in all listeners who are led to join together in the spirit of music. In the German works of the mid 1840's, his operas were meant to revitalize the spirit of natural necessity – the spirit of the *Volk* which lived in every person – and direct it to the goal of universalism through art. The artworks and prose of 1848 are literally battle plans for achieving revolution, the downfall of the corrupt, selfish authoritarian culture through the message of universal love and sublimating the individual will out of this love for the universal. The prose works and letters written after the Dresden uprising alternate between a glorification of the already-achieved revolution which will lead the *Volk*, fresh from battle, to universal love; and a depiction of the path to this goal through a clear portrayal of the stages of authority and the human race-consciousness concluding in the necessary overthrow of the authoritarian rule by rejecting it, and so rejecting fear, following necessity and obeying the higher law of universal love.

Art always had the same power for Wagner. The change primarily came only in the specificity of which artwork would actually achieve this love and unity, and

after 1851, Wagner thought this artwork would be the *Ring* cycle. The events depicted on stage would act as a catalyst for the audience members to follow the same progression, reject their own sham authoritarian rule and fear, follow their own natural necessity. This is Wagner's vision for the drama outlined in his letter to his niece, and it is the same vision observed in his letter to Röckel of January 25/26, 1854, where he says:

All that remains for me to indicate here is what, given my present standpoint, I must now feel urged to do if I and the rest of mankind are to draw nearer the goal which I know has been set for mankind - but from which I, as an individual, must necessarily remain cut off as long as others continue to cut themselves off from it... This is where my art must come to the rescue: and the work of art that I had no choice but to conceive in this sense is none other than my Nibelung poem.<sup>257</sup>

The Nibelung poem will convert his audience and give them a unified vision which will enable further moral progress, something no one can achieve on his or her own. The end of the drama is the vital component in which the necessity for the downfall of the current plutocratic culture is revealed to the inner feeling of the audience. This brings about a permanent change and revolution against this authority – just as Wagner described to his niece – that will inspire him to be “a fellow combatant” against this system of authority. Wagner describes the end of the saga:

But if you shudder at the thought that this woman should cling to this accursed ring as a symbol of love, you will feel exactly as I intended you to feel, and

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<sup>257</sup> *Selected Letters of Richard Wagner*, 306. In the letter of August 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1856, Wagner, after becoming enveloped by Schopenhauer, rejects the possibility of this type of progress saying “I had constructed a Hellenistically optimistic world for myself which I held to be entirely realizable if only people wished it to exist, while at the same time seeking somewhat ingeniously to get round the problem why they did not in fact wish it to exist.” He later says that the poem, rather than stirring people towards progress, reveals the world for the nothingness that it is. (357) Yet, to Ludwig II in a poem from August 25, 1870, written in honor both of his birthday and of the victory which Ludwig's placing of his troops at the discretion of Prussia enabled Germany to have over France (See: *The Brown Book*, 178-9, though the poem in its entirety is quoted below in Part III Chapter 3 *Götterdämmerung* and General Conclusion), Wagner explains not only that progress is possible, but that it is possible in a world after the destruction of the Gods at the end of *Götterdämmerung*, meaning therefore that this is not the end of the world. This inconsistency will be brought into focus in the conclusion of this work in the discussion of the ending of the *Ring*.

herein you will recognize the power of the Nibelung curse raised to its most terrible and most tragic heights: only then will you recognise the need for the whole of the final drama *Siegfrieds Tod*. This is something we must experience for ourselves if we are to be made fully conscious of the evil of gold.<sup>258</sup>

When the audience recognizes that evil must be routed out and removed from the ideal culture, they will see the necessity for the ring's return to the Rhinemaidens and the utopia such a relinquishing act would bring to the real world.<sup>259</sup>

The *Ring* is meant to be a transformative experience, both for the individual audience member and for society as a whole. In the earlier drafts Wotan played a conceptual role in this transformation: he represented the change itself, the pendulum of ever-shifting authority, as well as the drive to natural necessity. When Wagner expanded the *Ring* to its final version, Wotan was changed to a physical being who was now himself *led* by the spirit of change. We see in him, by his words and deeds, every stage of development of the life of the human consciousness. We see in him the development of authority in the loveless world, a world partially of his own making, and his attempt to overcome it. The problem of how to create revolutionaries in the audience at the completion of the work, as he believed he could have done with *Jesus of Nazareth*, was solved through the incorporation of *Hauptmomente*: an application

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<sup>258</sup> *Selected Letters of Richard Wagner*, 310.

<sup>259</sup> Years later, in a series for the *Blätter* in 1878 called *Public and Popularity* Wagner again invoked the purpose of the highest art, i.e., his efforts, as the ennobling to an ideal *Volk* of the "popular," a purpose directed once again to the people, through feeling, and inaccessible to the critic, via his understanding. (PW VI. 70-81). All this time later it is his thoughts as transmitted to Franzisca that are retained. The only change is that this art-work is now achieved for Wagner by employing Christian theology, with which the *Publikum* is more familiar with than German saga, and so is able to connect with them in a more direct way that will enable this ennobling. "To act upon the Folk, then, of all the academic faculties there would remain but that of *Theology*... The free understanding of Revelation be opened to us without Jehovaistic subtleties – for which event the Savior promised us his coming back. And this would inaugurate a genuine popularization of the deepest Knowledge. In this or that way to prepare the ground for cure of ills inevitable in the evolution of the human race – much as Schiller's conception of the Maid of Orleans foreran its confirmation by historical documents – might fitly be the mission of a true Art appealing to the Folk itself, to the Folk in its noblest, and at present its ideal sense. Again, to even now prepare the ground for such an Art, sublimely *popular*, and at all times so to prepare it that the links of oldest and of noblest art shall never wholly sunder, our immediate efforts may not seem altogether futile. In any case, to such works of art alone can we ascribe ennobling Popularity; and none save this dreamt-of Popularity can react on the creations of the present, uplifting them above the commonness of what is known today as popular favour." (PW VI. 76,81).

of his theory upon his artwork. When the necessity of the final death of the Gods, Siegfried, and the return of the ring to the Rhine would be shown through a telling of the complete story, the audience was to be converted to revolutionaries, much as through the telling of the complete story in *Jesus*. Now that the complete history of the evils of authority would be portrayed in the *Ring*, the necessity of its downfall would be made plain to the most culturally biased of spectators, convincing them, much as he had described to Franzisca, of that culture's necessary downfall in the real world. That which philosophy was able to bestow upon the understanding in terms of the Moral Progression outlined in Part I and in the terms articulated by Wagner above, the artwork would now bestow immediately to the feeling. Wagner views his artwork as the culmination of the dreams of the *Frühromantiks*: art and myth replace philosophy, just as Schlegel and Novalis had said they would in the new moral world. The truths from philosophy that are necessary for the further moral progress of the human race are now portrayed in the artwork, which can immediately communicate them without the need for the audience to reflect upon them; they need only feel them. As such, they may be immediately instilled and so make the downfall of the current civilization in favor of the new moral order seem inevitable and necessary to all who experience this artwork.

Part III will now explore Wotan's development into this role of authoritarian figure through the sketches of *Das Rheingold* and *Die Walküre*, and this will be followed by a comparative analysis of Wotan's path in the *Ring* and the Moral Progression.

**Part III – Wotan and the Moral Progression**

**Chapter 1. Wotan's Metamorphosis from the Earliest Sketches of  
*Das Rheingold* and *Die Walküre* to their Verse Drafts**

A – A Preference for a Byronic Model over a Moral Progression model for Wotan, in  
the *Das Rheingold* and *Die Walküre* Initial Summary-Sketches

*Das Rheingold* and *Die Walküre* can really be looked at as a single conception of the prehistory of the universe of the two *Siegfried* operas. As Warren Darcy, one of the more recent to touch upon this issue has explained<sup>1</sup>, the two operas were conceived in several phases but always as a unit. When Wagner fleshed out the two operas he grouped them together to form a uniform history of what would be the world into which Siegfried would be born. The first phase consists of the original November, 1851 prose drafts, each written on different sides of the same sheet of paper.<sup>2</sup> The second phase consists of undated additions, fleshing out the plots to each opera, written during the winter of 1851-1852.<sup>3</sup> This was followed by a complete prose draft of *Das Rheingold* called *Der Raub des Rheingoldes* written from March 23-31, 1852,<sup>4</sup> and followed by a complete prose draft of *Die Walküre* written from May 17-26 1852.<sup>5</sup> The verse drafts that followed became essentially the bases for the poems published in the 1853 printing and so with only a few exceptions are the *Die Walküre* and *Das Rheingold* now familiar to us.<sup>6</sup> Wagner began the verse draft of *Die*

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<sup>1</sup> Warren Darcy. *Wagner's 'Das Rheingold'* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 12-16, 39-44.

<sup>2</sup> See: Strobel, Facsimile XII (transcribed on pg 203) and XIII (transcribed on pages 204-205).

<sup>3</sup> See: Strobel, Facsimile XIV and XV for partial copies of these additions and pgs 209-212 for complete transcriptions of these additions.

<sup>4</sup> Strobel, 213-229.

<sup>5</sup> Strobel, 231-251.

<sup>6</sup> The most striking of these associations is between Loge and Fire. As Darcy explained, Wagner returned to the verse draft of *Die Walküre* after completing the *Das Rheingold* verse draft to have Wotan call upon Loge to light the flame around Brünnhilde. (Darcy, *Wagner's 'Das Rheingold'* 43).

*Walküre* on June 1<sup>st</sup>, less than a week after completing its prose draft, and completed it a month later on July 1<sup>st</sup>,<sup>7</sup> then began *Das Rheingold* on September 13<sup>th</sup> and completed it on November 3<sup>rd</sup>.<sup>8</sup> So we observe four separate conceptions of the *Das Rheingold – Die Walküre* story before the “final” 1853 printing.<sup>9</sup>

The first conception was made up of the two November sketches. They were written on the same sheet of paper and were designed to show Wagner’s new conception of the events between Alberich’s theft of the gold and Mime’s brooding over getting the hoard in the beginning of *Der junge Siegfried*, previously described in the 1848 *Nibelung Sketch*. By November 11<sup>th</sup> 1851, Wagner had completed the *Das Rheingold* sketch, and it drastically changed the previous conception of the Gods and the Giants. The Gods now embody the initial selfishness and desire for control that was previously attributed to the Giants in his 1848 *Nibelung Sketch*, and so are more consistent with the fearing Gods described by the Wanderer in his conversation with the Wala in *Der junge Siegfried*.<sup>10</sup> Wagner’s discussion of what would become *Das Rheingold* from this time was limited to a line in his letter to Uhlig from November 12<sup>th</sup>, the day after completing this initial sketch. Speaking of the gold he said:

[I]n itself this gold is only a glittering trinket in the watery depths (*Siegfrieds Tod* Act III Sc. 1), but another power resides within it which can be coaxed from it only by *the man who renounces love*. – (here you have the structural motif which leads up to Siegfried’s death: imagine the wealth of consequences!)<sup>11</sup>

The renunciation of love is what builds the world of authority and fear; this one act is the basis for the setting in motion of the pendulum. So Wagner offers a direct

<sup>7</sup> WWV 86B Text III (*Die Walküre* verse draft).

<sup>8</sup> WWV 86A Text III (*Das Rheingold* verse draft).

<sup>9</sup> There were several minor changes to the verses of these two operas made after the 1853 printing over the course of setting them to music before the final 1863 printing. These changes are outlined and logically explained in: Norbert Heidgen. *Textvarianten in Richard Wagners »Rheingold« und »Walküre«* (Munich: Musikverlag Emil Katzschlarm, 1982).

<sup>10</sup> See: Part II pgs 348-351.

<sup>11</sup> *Selected Letters of Richard Wagner*, 233.

connection between this act of Alberich and the rule of the Gods. First, Wagner describes Wotan as bathing in the Rhine with Fricka, who was at that time a maternal relative of some sort [*Muhme*] to the Rhinemaidens, while Alberich is conversing with the Rhinemaidens and, ultimately, stealing the gold. Then in that context he writes the following outline for the second scene:

Wotan. Fricka. The Giants (Windfahrer and Reiffrost) [not yet Fasolt and Fafner] have built the castle. They demand Freia: but finally settle [*begnügen sie sich*] for as much gold as Freia measures (whom they take as hostage). The theft of the Nibelung hoard is decided upon.<sup>12</sup>

There is nothing in this description of the Giants' jealousy or fear of the Nibelungs nor does it seem that they even know or care about Alberich. Instead, the Gods, or Wotan specifically, of his own accord, seem to have decided to part with Freia in exchange for Valhalla. In this case, the observable events would be that Alberich's theft of the gold by renouncing love in favor of that other power of which Wagner spoke in his letter to Uhlig from November 11<sup>th</sup> – which would ultimately be authority – influenced Wotan in turn to renounce love, in the form of Freia, for his own fortress in favor of that same other power, authority. Wotan's action is the direct result of Alberich's action, and so one of the “wealth of consequences.”

Whether it is the Giants or Wotan who brought up the exchange for the hoard is unclear from the use of the expression “settle” [*begnügen sie sich*], but as it was Wotan who witnessed the explanation of the prophecy as well its fulfillment, it is quite likely that at this stage it was Wotan who would have brought up the trade. Loge, who is introduced now for the first time then accompanies Wotan to Nibelheim where they steal the ring from Alberich. The accompaniment of Wotan by Loge is a nod to the Scandinavian sources in which Loki accompanies Odin on most of his adventures,

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<sup>12</sup> Strobel, *Skizzen und Entwürfe*, 203.

and particularly in the Andvari episode from the Volsunga saga, the closest parallel to the theft of the ring by the Gods. The events unfold in nearly the same manner as in the ultimate version of *Das Rheingold*, except that the sketch is not specific as to how or by whom Wotan was warned about keeping the ring, or about the contents of the warning.<sup>13</sup> After one Giant kills the other in front of Wotan, Wagner concludes this sketch with Wotan “pondering Alberich’s curse.”

Immediately after completing this draft of *Das Rheingold*, he turned the leaf over and began working on a draft of the first two acts of *Die Walküre*. In the first act, Wotan appears, places the sword in the ash tree, and then leaves,<sup>14</sup> after which Siegmund takes the sword from the ash tree, revealing himself by this act to Sieglinde as a Wölsung.<sup>15</sup> This brief appearance with no dialogue is the extent of Wotan’s presence in the first act, but it does offer a more direct connection between Wotan’s will or plan, and his desire for Siegmund to carry it out, than appears in the final version.

The first scene of Act II does not offer the kind of detail that the final version does with respect to Wotan’s inner conflict and reason for having to sacrifice Siegmund. In this early draft Fricka says nothing of Wotan’s plans and merely offers complaints about Wotan’s infidelity, which is her sole concern. Wotan attempts to discuss his concern with her by explaining Alberich’s bribery of Grimhilde and the weakness of women to combat this power which he is attempting to fight, but gets nowhere, as his means for fighting this evil had involved his own infidelity with the

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<sup>13</sup> “Wotan first wants to retain the Ring, but after being warned, finally gives that up as well” [Wodan erst behalten wollte, den er, gewarnt, endlich aber auch giebt].

<sup>14</sup> Though shortly thereafter Wagner decided that Wotan would observe Siegmund and Sieglinde during this scene, as witnessed by his lines to Fricka written in the margin of the draft “warst du Zeuge ihrer liebe? Was weist du wenn du sie nicht sahst un hörtest!” [Were you a witness to their love? What do you really know of it if you saw and heard none of it!]; these lines clearly imply that Wotan had been witness to their love.

<sup>15</sup> „Beim gastmal ist Wodan als fremder eingetreten: – er stößt ein schwert in die esche: Siegmund zieht sie [es] heraus.“ Strobel, 204.

Wala. Ultimately, after castigating Wotan for his behavior and his support of this “immorally bound” couple, at least from Fricka’s or more specifically the Law’s point of view, Wagner describes her final line as; “Fricka demands for the sake of the continuation of godhood, Siegmund’s death,”<sup>16</sup> to which Wotan surrenders and declares that he will kill Siegmund. Wotan’s inner conflict is brought out by the single line, “Wotan’s profound grief that he must ever find himself in opposition to himself: ‘a freer one than we unblessed gods there must be.’ – He longs for the land of ‘Forgetfulness.’”<sup>17</sup>

In the supplementary winter sketches and the prose sketch of May there is no mention of “Forgetfulness.” It is likely that, as Wagner was reading Shelley and Byron at this time,<sup>18</sup> he picked up from them “Forgetfulness” as something desirable to the being who no longer fears, but has sinned greatly in the past. The clearest example of this concept is from Byron’s *Manfred*, the main character of which is not subservient to any power, wishes or outside will but his own, and who wills, through his desire for “Forgetfulness,” his own demise.<sup>19</sup> The parallels between Wotan and

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<sup>16</sup> “Fricka verlangt um des bestehens der gottheit willen, Siegmunds Tod.”

<sup>17</sup> Strobel, 204.

<sup>18</sup> See the letter to Uhlig, January 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1852: *Selected letters of Richard Wagner*, 247, as well as the letter to Liszt of January 30<sup>th</sup>, 1852 which also stresses forgetfulness, “If I now turn to my great work, it is done for the purpose of seeking salvation from my misery [to seek deliverance from my unhappiness], forgetfulness of my life. I have no other aim, and shall think myself happy when I am no longer conscious of my existence.” *Correspondence of Wagner and Liszt* I. 188.

<sup>19</sup> *Manfred* [1817] opens with a description of Manfred’s character. He embodies the third stage of the Moral Progression as he no longer feels passion, fear, or desire. “Good, or evil, life, powers, passions, all I see in other beings, have been to me as rain unto the sands, since that all-nameless hour. I have no dread, and feel the curse to have no natural fear, nor fluttering throb that beats with hopes or wishes or lurking love of something on the earth.” Manfred then calls upon the immortal spirits to solve his despair, and they greet him with offers of immortality and power. In this sense Manfred is like an anti-Faust who succeeds in calling upon the earth spirits and commanding them where Faust had failed. But Manfred wants only one thing from the spirits, “Forgetfulness,” which he also calls “self-oblivion.” His powers make him equal to the highest spirit, and so no spirit holds any power over him. Finally, in his last moments, demons come to take him to hell, but he declares that he alone has willed his death, and is not subservient to any spirit. “My mind which is immortal makes itself requital for its good or evil thoughts, – is its own origin of ill and end and its own place and time: its innate sense, when stripp’d of this mortality, derives no colour from the fleeting things without, but is absorb’d in sufferance or in joy, born from the knowledge of its own desert. *Thou* didst not tempt me, and thou couldst not tempt me; I have not been thy dupe nor am thy prey – but was my own destroyer, and will be my own hereafter. – Back ye baffled fiends! The hand of death is on me – but not yours.” (quotes

Manfred are clear: both take control of their own destiny after some moment of great pain. For Wotan it was the killing of his son and the going against of his will, just as for Manfred, too, it was the extreme guilt and pain associated with the loss of a loved one; and both choose to will their own destruction rather than bow to the wills of others.

The final appearance of Wotan is to kill Siegmund and send Hunding to Fricka. There is nothing extraordinary about this scene as far as Wotan's character is concerned, and it closes Wagner's sketch of *Die Walküre*. There is no known sketch of Act III until the May prose draft, so until one is found there is no way to tell how Wagner ended his initial conception of *Die Walküre*.

This first conception of Wotan's story then runs as follows: upon observing that love can be exchanged for authority by witnessing Alberich's theft of the gold,<sup>20</sup> Wotan does this himself by exchanging Freia for Valhalla. Then the Giants too agree to surrender love for authority when they agree to take the gold in exchange for Freia. Wotan and Loge steal the gold from Alberich, and give it to the Giants in exchange for Freia, after a warning of some kind prevents Wotan from retaining the ring.<sup>21</sup> In the meantime Alberich has cursed the ring, bringing death to whoever bears it. This is followed by one Giant killing the other and Wotan pondering this curse, the reality of which he had just witnessed. Although it is left undiscussed, the direct result of this "pondering" is Wotan's plan for a hero to win back the ring. He essentially gives

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taken from: *The Poetical Works of Lord Byron* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1914), 380-382, 396).

<sup>20</sup> Specifically the gold not the ring: The episode in the sketch runs thus without any reference to the ring being the source of power, only the gold: "The gold shines. 'How might one win it?' 'He who renounces love.' – Alberich robs the gold." (Strobel, 203). Only later in the sketch is the ring mentioned, but it does not have any specific powers, it is only included in the hoard. The ring is only given any special treatment after Alberich curses it and the giant brothers fight over it: "Because of the ring, fighting immediately arises: one of the Giant brothers kills the other."

<sup>21</sup> The warning, though vague, concerns the ring. "The Giants obtain the hoard and then also the ring, which at first Wotan wanted to keep for himself, but after being warned turned it too over, in exchange for which Freia was returned." (Strobel, 203).

Siegmond Balmung, a sword which would not only kill his opponent Hunding, allowing him to take Sieglinde, but would eventually kill the dragon. In the argument with Fricka he offers a brief allusion to true love outside the law – a subject of great interest to Wagner as we observed most notably in his *Jesus von Nazareth* – as opposed to marital false love within the law, which falls on Fricka’s deaf ears. In the end, Fricka gives him an ultimatum: he must choose between godhood, i.e. the law and culture of Fricka, and Siegmund and Sieglinde’s lawless love. He chooses the law, which results in him calling himself unhappy and unfree and wishing for “Forgetfulness,” i.e., an end to his suffering through self-destruction in the *Frühromantik*-Byronic sense. After obeying the law of Fricka by killing Siegmund at the end of the act, his final tie to the law is severed, and he becomes the free, self-sacrificial, third-stage being from *Der junge Siegfried*.

Despite its Byronic leanings, this rough outline incorporates many of the elements of the first two stages of the Moral Progression. Wotan begins in the pre-authoritarian world of nature. He then rejects nature and love, by Alberich’s example, in favor of authority, as does Fricka, who then becomes the embodiment of authority. After considering the curse which lovelessness brings and the “warning” he receives, he then by necessity partially returns to a love tempered by his continued desire for control. He assumes that he can embody both love and power at once, and is mistaken, a problem inherent in the second stage of the Moral Progression that necessitates the third. The moral authority that in the 1848 *Nibelung Sketch* was what the Gods wished to cultivate in man even if it meant their end, is here exchanged for the a rule centering around law and obedience. Only Wotan, through his cultivation of love outside of marriage, both in the Valkyries, the products of his affair with the Wala, which he flaunts before Fricka, and in his blessing of the unlawful love of

Siegmond and Sieglinde, is against this authoritarian law of the Gods. In Wotan's realization that the two cannot work together, he goes through the terrible trial of Schiller and Schopenhauer, the great pain which is often necessary to enter the third stage of the Moral Progression. After killing Siegmund he abandons power in favor of love, and so embodies this third stage. The stage is now set for his conversation with the Wala in Act III of *Der junge Siegfried* in which there is a dichotomy between the fearless Wotan who desires the end of authority and the other Gods who desire a continuation of their authority.

At the same time there are some important elements missing. In this November conception there is no mention of Wotan directly learning fear, either from his warning in the *Das Rheingold* sketch or in the scene with Fricka from the *Die Walküre* sketch. The desire for "Forgetfulness," by its *Frühromantik* definition, implies a freedom from fear, but it is only his acquiescence to Fricka and his obedience to the warning, according to which he does not strictly follow his own will, that can be likened to experiencing fear. Nowhere does it say directly that Wotan fears. So that element is missing from this sketch, and the only trace of a planning stage – often associated with the second stage of the Moral Progression – is the placing of the sword in Hunding's ash tree for Siegmund. There is no mention of the reasons for Wotan's actions or his plans at all. The stages of Wotan's progression are present and can be likened to those of the Moral Progression, but this progression is unclear.

Sometime over the next few months Wagner wrote a supplement to these sketches elucidating further elements of these two plots and at the same time changing some basic elements in Wotan's progression and character. The only point of confusion is that Wagner offered three different elucidations of what would become

scene 2 of *Das Rheingold*. To begin with, he cut the bathing sequence so that Alberich steals the gold without Wotan directly seeing it. Moreover, Wotan now “knows nothing about the power of the gold,” and so Wotan has made the step of abandoning love (i.e. Freia) for power on his own. At least that is how the story runs in the first elucidation of scene 2.

The Giants now have the names that they were to eventually have in the final version, Fasolt and Fafner. This first version of scene 2 then continues with the Giants themselves demanding (*begehren*) the gold in exchange for Freia. Wagner reveals or would have had the Rhinemaidens reveal, that the Giants always wanted the gold. Again no mention is made of Alberich, as no one knows of the theft of the gold until Loge and Wotan go to the Rhine. So when the Giants make this demand, Loge and Wotan go to the Rhine to steal the gold from the Rhinemaidens themselves, only to find that they are too late. When the Rhinemaidens explain Alberich’s theft, Loge and Wotan are asked to help them. It is unclear whether Wotan learns of the power of the ring through Mime, in the next scene, or through the Rhinemaidens, but the end result upon learning of its power is “Wotan desires to win it for himself.”<sup>22</sup>

Wagner completes this summary, the only explanation of the fourth scene in this supplementary material, with something close to the final version of *Das*

*Rheingold*:

When Alberich demands it [the ring] back, and the Giants insist upon it, Wotan is momentarily willing to give up Freia for the sake of the ring: the Wala appears and advises against it – the Gods beseech him: he gives up the

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<sup>22</sup> The passage runs as follows: Wotan und Loke fahren zunächst zu den Rheinfrauen: hier erfahren sie was geschehen und werden um hülfe und wiedererstattung angegangen. Nun fahren sie erst zu den Nibelungen – Alberich empfängt eben den tarnhelm von Mime, und fährt dann in die tiefe, die geißel schwingend. – Sie lernen die gewalt des ringes, Wotan gelüstet es, ihn für sich zu gewinnen.“ (Strobel, 209). Whether he learns this from the Rhinemaidens in their explanation of the theft or from Mime in the following scene is unclear.

ring, Freia returns. (He reflects upon the benefit which, as ruler, he had gained through the fortress.) Lament of the Rhinedaughters.<sup>23</sup>

There is little here on the curse or the death of one of the Giants. Instead of pondering the curse as Wotan had done in the November summary, he now ponders his newly-won rulership; if one were to examine this supplementary page alone, one would have no idea that a curse was ever intended to be put on the ring. The main change is that the Wala is now the one who is warning Wotan to give up the ring, not the Norns, as in the 1848 *Nibelung Sketch*; but the content of the warning is still unclear: “die Wala... rāth ab” is the extent of the warning.

The evil of Wotan knows no bounds in this version. Not only was he never innocent, as he was in the November sketch bathing in the Rhine, not only did he independently decide to reject love in favor of power, but he would have been ready to steal the gold from the Rhinemaidens, implying that he would have been willing to renounce love, in essence, an additional time, in order to pay the bill for Valhalla. Perhaps after some consideration Wagner decided that that would not stand even if Wotan would morally make up for it later. Such evil could not be the basis for a world order, even an imperfect one which would be overthrown ultimately anyway. More importantly, in order for Wotan to eventually reach the fearless stage of moral development which he embodies as the Wanderer in *Der junge Siegfried*, he must not have lost love, the basis for such enlightened thinking. This Wotan would have rejected love twice in favor of power, and not out of frustration, as Alberich had done, causing some to feel some sympathy for the latter. Wotan, by contrast, would have done it twice out of a conspired plan: the type of plan commonly associated with the second stage of the Moral Progression. This Wotan would have been by far the most evil character of *Ring*, and with such origins would have been entirely incapable of

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<sup>23</sup> Strobel, 209-210. Translation from: Darcy, *Wagner's 'Das Rheingold'*, 41.

redemption and of feeling the selfless, fearless love experienced by the Wanderer. So rather than filling in the gaps in Wotan's Moral Progression from the November sketches, Wagner chose to Byronify him further by showing the great sins which Wotan later, as the Wanderer, wishes to forget and for which he desires penance. But this was not ultimately the direction Wagner wished to go with Wotan, and so, beginning in his second note on *Das Rheingold*, he quickly changed to a more Faustian conception of Wotan which would culminate in the prose drafts of the following spring.

#### B – The Faustian Wotan in the Later Sketches

In Goethe's *Faust*, the evil into which Faust is led does not stem from himself, but from Mephistopheles. By merely following Mephistopheles, and not dreaming the evil acts himself, Faust retains enough of his own inherent goodness and love so that he may be saved by his sacrificial act in the end. Faust finally becomes free of Mephistopheles when fear takes a hold of him in Act V, and then Mephistopheles becomes non-functional. Wagner does the same with Wotan. It is now Loge, Wotan's Mephistopheles, who dreams these evil acts, not Wotan, and so Wotan does not, strictly speaking, independently reject love as he had done in the earlier winter sketch, but follows Loge's lead and so hangs on to both power and love. As such, this Wotan is now capable of making the moral progression to the Wanderer. Finally, once fear takes a hold of Wotan, he is no longer under the influence of Loge, just as Faust was no longer under the influence of Mephistopheles.

Wotan no longer independently wills the sacrifice of Freia for Valhalla, i.e., love for power, but is led to this decision by another, Loge. It is still Wotan who

makes the treaties, but it is Loge who places the ideas for the treaties in the minds of both the Gods and the Giants. It is Loge who recommended the initial treaty for Freia: “Where tarries Loge, who recommended the treaty with the Giants.” And it is Loge who now convinces the Giants to exchange Freia for the gold: “The Giants fix the rhinegold as ransom (as Loge had proposed).” So it is Loge who conceived of stealing the gold from the Rhinemaidens to pay for Freia, as the last line of the second scene 2 summary runs: “Wotan and Loge disappear into the twilight to go to the Rhine.”<sup>24</sup> Now Loge is bringing Wotan to the Rhine and convincing him to curse love to pay for Valhalla, just as he convinced him to part with love, Freia, for it initially. It is no wonder Wagner labelled these *Das Rheingold* summaries under the headline “Der Raub,” as it seems multiple parties are interested in stealing the gold from the Rhinemaidens.

But Wotan’s character still has some problems. Wotan still is ready to personally and permanently renounce love, which is the only way to get the gold from the Rhinemaidens for the Giants, and which would mean that he would be incapable of the moral progression necessary to arrive at the Wanderer in *Der junge Siegfried* and so would follow neither the Moral Progression nor the Faustian variant of it. So Wagner offers one final change. By the third description, he has decided that no one aside from Alberich should even intend to steal the gold from the Rhinemaidens. It is this final summary which makes up much of the plot of the final version of scene 2.

The summary reads:

Loge finally arrives: in answer to Wotan’s reproaches over his absence (since he promised to get rid of the Giants) he informs them about the lament of the Rhinedaughters, who have complained to him about Alberich’s theft. The

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<sup>24</sup> The last three quotations all come from: Strobel, 210.

Giants stop short when they hear about the gold; Loge finally offers them the gold in exchange for Freia.<sup>25</sup>

Now the character of Wotan is capable of progressing to his selfless loving Wanderer persona, as he did not have to nor ever intended to specifically curse love in order to obtain the gold. As Alberich has stolen the gold – i.e., renounced love already – and the others do not use the gold as a bargaining chip until love has already been renounced, Wotan would never be placed in a position to actually renounce love in order to gain what he wants, making him still potentially redeemable. To be sure, he still rejects love by making the deal with the Giants even if it was at the suggestion of Loge, but does not entirely renounce it, as he only made the deal because Loge assured him that this would be the way to keep both Freia and Valhalla.

Loge takes to his part as Mephistopheles well. In the last two elucidations of *Das Rheingold* scene 2 Loge has emerged as the prime mover of events, just as Mephistopheles moved *Faust* forward. To understand this new importance for Loge we must go back to the original 1848 *Nibelung Sketch*. There are several important elements here regarding the relationship between the Giants and the Gods in what would become *Das Rheingold*. First there was the initial rule of the Giants by force without cunning or treaties as a starting point for authority. Then there is the fear of the Giants for their lives. They are without the knowledge and creativity that would allow them to save themselves from their own fear. This in turn allows them to be taken advantage of by the moral Gods, who are capable of planning and avoiding disaster and who displace them as rulers of the world because of this talent. There is a specific idea here in line with the Moral Progression: the reaction to fear. The Giants are beings of the initial natural stage before knowledge, where authority fell to the strongest. But when they are faced with destruction they freeze and are incapable of

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<sup>25</sup> Strobel, 210. Translation from: Darcy, *Wagner's 'Das Rheingold,'* 41.

overcoming this problem; they are incapable of moving into the second stage. The Gods, however, begin as beings of the second stage. They change reality and take advantage of the situation as best they can, though ultimately they rule for the benefit of morality and reason, and so move into the third stage. The Gods push the world forward along the Moral Progression by their collective moral will, the first step of which is relieving the Giants of world authority. In this way, by depicting the transition from the rule of the Giants to the rule of the Gods, Wagner in fact showed us the shift from the first stage to the second stage of the Moral Progression.

By the time Loge began to play a part in the drama during the winter of 1851/1852, the Gods no longer represented the second stage from the outset. Now the Gods are shown to be fearful, and moreover, paralyzed by their fear just as the Giants had been in the 1848 sketch, and so belong to the first stage alone. The beginning of what would be scene 2, after Wotan awakes, runs in the second scene 2 description as follows: “Terror: the fortress is completed: Freia is lost. The Gods gather in care [*Sorge*] and fear [*Angst*]: Freia seeks Wotan for protection.”<sup>26</sup> Now when Freia departs with the Giants mist envelopes the Gods as they begin to despair. In *Der junge Siegfried* and *Siegfrieds Tod*, Wagner had already made clear that the Gods, aside from Wotan, took the role of the Giants in the 1848 *Nibelung Sketch* as fearful authoritarians. *Der junge Siegfried* in particular shows Wotan describing the dichotomy between the fear of the Gods and his own fearless will. It is the Gods who are now paralyzed by fear at the loss of Freia, and turn to Wotan to solve their problem. Wotan does not fear, but he too is incapable of solving this problem. His trust in Loge’s ability to deal with it for him keeps him fearless.

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<sup>26</sup> Strobel, 210.

The other Gods are incapable of moral progress. They have faced loss and fear, and have been overcome by it. Rather than reacting to this fear by moving to the next stage of moral development by planning a creative solution to the Freia predicament, they turn, in their fear, to Wotan and Loge to solve their problem for them. They, like the Giants of the 1848 *Nibelung Sketch*, do not move beyond the first stage of development. But Wotan himself does not yet fear: his own inherent superiority to all protects him from this fear and so he has not yet proven himself inadequate to the task which lies before him of morally advancing himself and the world, and eventually cutting the strings of the pendulum of authority altogether. Had he felt this fear and *then* turned to another such as Loge out of recognition of a personal inability to solve the problem on his own, then he would have proven himself inadequate to this task. When Wotan turns to Loge to solve this predicament it is not out of fear or inability to solve the problem, but no more than Wotan allowing Loge to clean up Loge's own mess – the deal was his idea after all.

It takes the conflict between his own desires and his own survival to be brought to his attention to finally make him fear, and this precise moment is not described in any of the three winter *Das Rheingold* elucidations. But it is included in the short description of Act II of *Die Walküre* dating from the same time. It was the Wala (Erda) who first made him fear by warning him not to keep the ring or else the Gods would fall.

After the fight with Fricka Wotan explains – while with Brünnhilde, but as if he were alone – as if lost in a day dream, his relationship with the Wala (Erda): after she warned him about the ring and told him for the first time of the downfall of the Gods (*Götteruntergang*), his fearlessness was taken from him; he strove after the Wala, wishing to know more from her; he finally conquered her, winning from her a pledge; she bore him Brünnhilde.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Strobel, 211.

This is the first time since the 1848 *Nibelung Sketch* that the content of the warning, the downfall of the Gods, has been explained. The specific context is still elusive, and whether the end of the Gods is unavoidable – as it appears to be in the proceeding warnings from Erda from the prose draft on to the final version of *Das Rheingold* – is unclear. Wotan himself finally becomes fearful, but not in the helpless way in which the other Gods were fearful in the *Das Rheingold* elucidations. Wotan has a plan of action. First, he decides that to protect himself and the Gods from the power of the ring; they must prepare for battle. The final line of the second *Das Rheingold* description shows this new direction which the planning Wotan now takes upon feeling fear: “In conclusion: Wotan – ‘we gave away the gold – now we need iron.’” And although much still remains unclear concerning Brünnhilde’s role in this plan from the winter elucidation of Act II, we do know from it that Brünnhilde was given to him by the Wala specifically to assist him; she was a pledge (*ein Pfand*) that Wotan *won from* the Wala, a stance that differs from the final conception of *Die Walküre*, in which giving birth to Brünnhilde and the Valkyries is a condition *imposed* by Erda for giving him the knowledge he sought. We also know from the original November, 1851 sketch that Brünnhilde’s job for Wotan is to collect the dead and bring them to Valhalla to join Wotan’s army. So by including this concluding line “we gave away the gold – now we need iron” Wagner is placing a greater potential for moral development in Wotan than with any other character. By this line, Wotan shows himself facing the possibility of his death and reacting to it by trusting his own creative ideas to save himself: his destiny and salvation are in his own hands, and he no longer needs Loge to plan for him, just as Faust no longer relied on Mephistopheles once he was visited by *Sorge*. It is true that he does turn to the Wala for confirmation of this plan some time between *Das Rheingold* and *Die Walküre* –

just as he turns to her for confirmation in *Der junge Siegfried* after he has decided upon the end of the Gods – but this is not the same as asking her to plan for him when he is in need of saving, which the other Gods do of Wotan. He comes up with his plan for salvation before conferring with the Wala between *Das Rheingold* and *Die Walküre*, and so comes to at least the most decisive part of the plan that he hopes will save the Gods from destruction – the building of the army of heroes – entirely on his own. This moment, then, in which a fearless Wotan, faced with a choice between fulfilling a desire and continuing to live, gains fear and so chooses life, which is then followed by independent planning and a desire for control, is the very moment of transition between the first and second stage of the Moral Progression, and so with it a crucial missing piece is filled in of the moral progression through which Wotan would proceed. Wotan moves forward, the other Gods stagnate. The winter sketch has little to say of Wotan's transition from the second to the third stage – his realization that he is not in complete control of his destiny and will never be – but this is filled in by the time of the May prose sketch.

#### C – Solidification of Wotan as Faust in the Prose Drafts

The next phase of the development of the stories of *Das Rheingold* and *Die Walküre* constitutes the two prose sketches: *Das Rheingold*, written from March 23-31, and *Die Walküre*, written from May 17-26. Much of the *Das Rheingold* and *Die Walküre* prose drafts is similar enough to the final libretto versions, and includes lengthy portions of dialogue which were incorporated into those final versions; so a full analysis of them in this context is unnecessary. Only the important evolutionary changes will be discussed here, and by far the most important change made in the *Das*

*Rheingold* prose draft to that of the story outlined by the previous two drafts is Wagner's new emphasis on the law and contracts as the basis for Wotan's authority. There is no spear, no physical object that represents these contracts yet, but Wotan's authority now specifically stems from the contracts he makes. When Fasolt and Fafner come to claim Freia after building Valhalla, and are received by Wotan with "Consider another price, Holda you have not won," Fasolt, after being rebuked by Fafner saying he was foolish to trust the Gods, says to Wotan:

Be advised, Son of Light, [of what it is] to break contracts: What you are, you are only through contracts. Consider how you came to us and what gave you [this] power. You are wiser than we, and you bound us in peace, but I will curse your wisdom and all the peace it achieved if you do not know to remain faithful [to your agreements]: this [message] is told to you by me, the stupid giant.<sup>28</sup>

To stress this point further, before Loge arrives and when Donner is threatening to make war upon the Giants unless they give up the demand for Freia, Wotan steps in. Wagner describes this exchange as follows: "Wotan steps in-between them: not through violence: the agreement he must protect."

So here in this prose draft it is made plain that Wotan's rulership stems from contracts – not strength of morality, but contracts – and Wagner portrays the inherent flaws in a system of authority based on contract by explaining the dishonesty under which both parties entered into this particular contract. As in the second and third descriptions of *Das Rheingold*, scene 2 from the winter elaboration, Wotan explains that Loge had assured him that he (Loge) would find a way out of this contract:

Where spirit and truth are used, there is stubbornness by all: but to overcome one's foe by the use [of their own powers], this requires intelligence and

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<sup>28</sup> Strobel, 217-218. "Hüte dich, Lichtsohn, verträge zu brechen: was du bist, bist du nur durch verträge. Bedenk, wie Du zu uns kamst und was dir hier macht verlieh. bist Du weiser, als wir und bandest Du uns zum frieden, so verfluch' ich dein wissen und um allen frieden ist's getan, wenn du nicht treue zu wahren weißt: das sei dir von mir, dem dummen riesen gesagt."

deceit, and of these no one is as good a master as Loge. He recommended this contract and promised to find a substitute for Freia.<sup>29</sup>

This comment is revealing: not only does it show that the Gods never had any intention of surrendering Freia and following through with the agreement which Loge devised, but the ultimate purpose for this agreement was to conquer the Giants through their own powers, through Valhalla. Fafner is of exactly the same mind, as now Wagner offers an explanation for the fog that weakened the Gods in the second scene 2 description from that winter. Fasolt might have made the agreement for love, as he does in the final version, but Fafner made it for power. Fafner explains to Fasolt that when Holda is gone the Gods will wither away: “the pride would fade: if Holda would be taken away from them, then they all would become old and pale.”<sup>30</sup> It is still unclear what about Holda-Freia’s loss would make the Gods weak except in one line at the end of scene 2, where Holda is ascribed with the “magic of youth”<sup>31</sup> that keeps the Gods young as long as “she is in their company.” So essentially Wagner has at the heart of this first agreement on which civilization is based: a contract in which both parties are only making the agreement so that the other party will be ultimately powerless and rulership over the world will be achieved for themselves. Even the revised contract, the compromise, only comes about because both of the main parties on either side of the agreement, Fafner and Wotan, desire Alberich’s gold. So it is self-serving power that they agree upon, not peace. As in the final version of *Das Rheingold*, Fafner probes Loge on the power of the gold, and Wotan probes Loge on how one achieves this power. At the same time they both desire [*reizen*] the gold for themselves. Fafner, after convincing Fasolt of the advantage of

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<sup>29</sup> Strobel, 217. “Wo Mut und Wahrheit helfe, da trotze er jedem: doch den feind sich selbst zum Nutzen zwingen, dieß vermöge nur schlaueit und list, und darin sei keiner meister wie Loge. Er habe ihm zu dem Vertrage gerathen und versprochen, Freia aus der Verpfändung zu lösen.”

<sup>30</sup> Strobel, 218. “die übermuthigen zu verderben: denn alle sie müßten altern und bleichen, wäre erst Holda ihrer mitte entführt.”

<sup>31</sup> Strobel, 220. “daß Holda den Zauber der Jugend besitze.”

the gold, tells the Gods that they will trade Freia for it, while Wotan desires to get the gold and the ring for himself. But after Freia leaves and the Gods become weakened by her absence, he promises to get the gold to exchange for Freia.

The last major distinctive aspect of Wotan in the prose draft is Erda's (no longer "the Wala's") warning and Wotan's reaction to it in scene 4. Previously, Wagner offered limited information about this warning. Perhaps the most thorough description of it up until this point was from the 1848 *Nibelung Sketch*, when the three Norns warn him of the "downfall of the gods themselves." This is probably the origin of the winter description of *Die Walküre* Act II, which contains Wagner's next substantive description of the warning. There Wotan explains to Brünnhilde that "after [the Wala] warned him about the ring and told him for the first time of the downfall of the Gods, his fearlessness was taken from him."<sup>32</sup> Now Wagner gives us Erda's warning, which according to the *Die Walküre*, Act II description from that winter, finally takes away Wotan's fearlessness. "Yield Wotan, Yield! I warn you for your own sake! Let the ring go: never will you annul the curse, which clings to it: it will doom you to destruction." After Wotan asks her who she is, she replies:

What has been, I know, what will be, I know: At the world's beginning I bore three daughters: they recite what I know, all that I saw and see; listen now to the Norns' advice, which I pass on to you! Terrible you Gods stand, if you lie about your agreements, but more terribly [will you stand] if you keep the ring; slowly you [Gods] near an end, but it will be an imminent violent downfall, if you do not let go of the ring.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Strobel, 211. "sein verhältniß zur Wala (Erda): nachdem sie ihn vor dem ringe gewarnt und ihm zum erstenmale den götterdämmerung angedeutet hatte, war ihm die sorglosigkeit benommen[.]"

<sup>33</sup> Strobel, 227. "weiche Wodan, weiche! dich mahn' ich zum eigenen heil! Laß fahren den reif: nimmer tilgst du den fluch, der an ihm haftet: er weiht dich dem Verderben! [...] was war, weiß ich, was sein wird weiß ich: drei töchter gebar ich, urerschaffene: sie künden was ich weiß, die ich alles sah und sehe; höre von heut ab der Nornen rath, die ich dir sende! Schlimm steht's um euch Götter, wenn ihr verträgen lügt; schlimmer um dich wahrst du den reif; langsam nahet euch ein ende, doch in jähem sturz ist es da, lässt du den ring nicht los!"

Wotan attempts to discover what else she knows, “Of secret knowledge you speak, in time I will seek [you out] and know what you know,” to which she replies, “I warned you, you know enough!” and then descends. Wotan then exclaims, “But I want to know more! – she has sunk – so must I conquer her to gain this knowledge.” All stand unnerved and Wotan stands still for a long time sunk in deep thought before calling to the Giants and giving over the ring.

Before getting to the rest of the scene there are a few points worth noting here. As Darcy has pointed out, even in this version of the warning there is no escape for Wotan and the Gods.<sup>34</sup> When Erda explains, “Terrible you Gods stand if you lie about your agreements,” it is simultaneously a subtle indictment of the entire dishonest system of contracts which Wotan has constructed and by which he wishes to rule; but more directly, it is a dire warning to Wotan personally, reminding us of Fasolt’s statement that if Wotan were to break his contract with them he would be powerless. Being powerless as a result of breaking his contracts would be terrible and have severe consequences, she says, but not as terrible as those that would result from your retaining the ring. Given this situation, Wotan is faced with two choices – two roads both ending with his death. When Wotan gives up the ring, he stops walking on the path that will lead to a violent and immediate end, as Erda warned it would be, and instead chooses the other path, one which ends the way of the “Pre-Spring 1851” ending to *Siegfrieds Tod*: “Powerless depart, ye whose guilt is foregone...” In this scenario, then, the Gods reach their end without “the anxious conflict for [their] ending might,” instead passing away in “blessed death-redemption from [their]

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<sup>34</sup> Darcy, ‘*Das Rheingold*’, 198. “Apparently Wotan can no longer prevent, but only postpone, the end of the Gods.” But all things being equal, the original warning of the three Norns in the 1848 *Nibelung Sketch* was ambiguous concerning whether the end of the gods could be avoided “Wotan weicht auf den Rat der drei Schicksalsfrauen (Nornen), die ihn vor dem Untergange der Götter selbst warnen.” (GS II. 157.) (“Wotan yields to the counsel of the three Fates (Norns), who warn him of the downfall of the Gods themselves.”)

anxious fear [*bangen Furcht*].” Thus Erda’s warning to Wotan was written with *Der junge Siegfried* and this “final” ending of *Siegfrieds Tod* in mind: connecting with Brünnhilde’s concluding statement to the Gods, in the latter, to “pass away in bliss,” and the Wanderer’s fading away in the face of Siegfried’s determination to win Brünnhilde.

But a clear transition for Wotan from the first to the second phase of the Moral Progression is still missing as there is little said in this draft of Wotan’s fear upon learning of his end. While Wagner does say that all of the Gods stand “*erschüttert*” after her departure, he then tells us that Wotan himself is “deep in thought.” More explicitly, he tells us that Wotan wants to learn from Erda as much as he can, and resolves upon following her for that end. In other words, he saw something he did not have, Erda’s knowledge, and decided that he wanted it, which is not implicitly the act of a fearful person, but rather a continuation of the ever-desiring, pre-fear, first-stage creature which Wotan had been throughout *Das Rheingold*. The only indication that he feels fear is his relinquishing of the ring to avoid imminent and violent death. The true moment when Wotan begins to feel fear in the prose sketch is when Fasolt is killed by Fafner. When this happens, Wotan experiences another deep moment of feeling, upon learning the true meaning of Alberich’s curse. He realizes that he really is unable to get the ring without suffering the same fate as Fasolt, just as Erda had explained, and so his desire to live exceeds his desire to satisfy his wants, and fear comes about. Wagner writes after Wotan has witnessed this event “Wotan is deeply unnerved [*erschüttert*]; he cannot restrain an anxious feeling and resolves to seek out the counsel of Erda.” This second desire to seek out Erda now clearly stems from fear.

Then something extraordinary happens. Wotan in the midst of his newly-acquired fear does not turn to Loge, as the other Gods had turned elsewhere when

they had acquired fear. Wotan comes out of his anxiousness with a new resolve. He offers a blessing to the castle itself:

You mighty structure, I won for myself; as payment [for you], I paid with cursed gold! So the curse spreads quickly, I cannot undo it; but through you, you exalted place, I will band together noble companions, to keep the world joyful for me: greedily and enviously have the Giants and dwarves bound themselves: to there [Valhalla] now I summon a new race.

To this, Wagner added a marginal note reading: “and I name the castle Valhalla. –

Fricka asks about that name’s meaning. – Wotan: When the ones are born who I will call together there, then you will know the meaning of the name.”<sup>35</sup> This, in an adjusted form, is the only line to survive from this explanation in the final version.

And yet, this transition of Wotan is still not to the second stage of the Moral Progression. First, though Wotan does seek out Erda, he says outright in his christening of Valhalla that he will not be able to stop the curse from spreading throughout the world. This is not the “going against the power of nature” and “attempting to build a world on new systems” of the second stage, but the pragmatic stoicism of the third stage. He recognizes his limits, which is something absent from second-stage thinking. But his plan is even more difficult to pin down; “schaar’ ich mir edle genossen, die welt mir froh zu erhalten” offers two possible interpretations. The first, more direct interpretation is that Wotan wishes to spend his remaining days in the company of “noble companions” which will make the world happy for him despite the prophesized death in the future. These are not the words of a world conqueror, which Wotan now is, but rather the words of a resigned soul attempting to fill his days with as much joy as possible before the inevitable end. The other

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<sup>35</sup> Strobel, 228. “dich, herrlichen bau, gewann ich mir; als lohn zahlt’ ich mit verfluchtem golde! So rase der fluch denn hin, ich kann ihn nicht mehr wenden; doch in euch, ihr hehren räume, schaar’ ich mir edle genossen, die welt mir froh zu erhalten: gierig und neidisch banden sich selbst zwerge und riesen: dorthin nun ruf’ ich ein neues geschlecht... und Walhall tauf’ ich die burg. – Fricka frägt nach der bedeutung des namens. – Wotan: Wenn die geboren, die ich dorthin berufe, dann sei dir der name gedeutet.”

possibility is that these noble companions will actually make the world happy, i.e., free the world by nullifying the ever-spreading and penetrating curse which Wotan himself cannot stop. These noble companions will comprise the “new race,” untainted by the greed of the Dwarves and Giants, who will achieve this. In this case he is already declaring that though he may be master of the world for now, he will use his power solely to create a race that will replace him and be able to save the world. This too is third-stage ego-less thinking.

Loge himself does not reject the Gods, but seems to join them in Valhalla. He does not stand away from them and declare their falsity, and with good reason; this Wotan is no *Weltsieger*, but rather a *Welterlöser*. So when the Rhinemaidens cry of their lost gold, Loge does not tell them that they will never see it again, nor does he tell them “what Wotan wishes”<sup>36</sup> as if it is from some point of view foreign to his own; rather, he tells them now from the unified point of view of the Gods to look to the new light that shines from them and their fortress. Loge, who once controlled the events, now becomes a non-entity, following Wotan into the fortress much as the other Gods do. In truth, in this prose draft any God could have told the Rhinemaidens to look to the castle for their light, with the same effect as Loge. Wotan is now in command of his destiny, and no longer follows Loge’s lead.

The effect of the Rhinemaidens’ cries of “falsch und feig,” referring to the light from the Gods’ new fortress is diminished because Wotan knows that it is “falsch und feig.” He knows that the power that comes with it is a means to an end so that the world can be redeemed from the curse that he allowed to spread into the world. In the light of this knowledge the cry from the deep of “falsch und feig” does

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<sup>36</sup> GS V. 268. “Ihr da im Wasser,/ was weint ihr herauf?/ Hört, was Wotan euch wünscht.”

seem to be closer to what Wotan describes as “necken,”<sup>37</sup> one of the words which Siegfried bitterly uses to describe Mime, and further from the revealed truth from the creatures of nature which it is in the final version.

By the last day of March, Wagner had completed the prose draft of *Das Rheingold*, and postponed working on *Die Walküre* due to, at first, the weather, and then a Zürich performance of *Der fliegende Holländer* which he prepared in late April and early May. Shortly thereafter, on May 17<sup>th</sup>, he began his prose draft to *Die Walküre* and completed it just over a week later on May 26<sup>th</sup>. As in the earlier sketches, Wotan appears as the Wanderer mid-way through the first act to place the sword into Hunding’s tree only to disappear shortly thereafter. Slightly before Wotan disappears and after Hunding fails to pull the sword from the tree, Siegmund takes the sword out in front of all present. But this is the last draft in which this takes place. In a marginal note meant to accompany the point just after Sieglinde returns to speak with Siegmund alone after drugging Hunding, Wagner wrote the following: “She returns in order to show him Wotan’s sword. At the moment of the [telling of the] story of the sword, she explains her own story.”<sup>38</sup> This then eliminates Wotan from the act altogether as, if she has to explain the history of the sword to Siegmund, then Wotan had not come in to place the sword in Hunding’s tree while Siegmund was present, as is the case in the prose draft proper. The following month when Wagner was writing the verse draft, the act no longer included Wotan, and that scene is as Wagner described it in the marginal note, with the climax of the act – the pulling of the sword and the recognition of the sibling-lovers’ relationship between Siegmund

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<sup>37</sup> Strobel, 229. “Wodan ‘Was klagen die Frauen?’ – Loke ‘um das gold, das Alberich ihnen raubte. Von dir fordern sie’s zurück!’ Wodan: ‘wirst du mich immer necken? laß sie schweigen!’”

<sup>38</sup> Strobel, 236. “Sie ist gekommen um ihm das Wodansschwert zu zeigen. bei gelegenheit der geschichte mit dem schwerte erzählt sie ihre eigene geschichte.”

and Sieglinde – occurring at the end of the act, and not at the beginning as it had been up to that point.<sup>39</sup>

The much-extended sequences between Wotan and Fricka followed by Wotan and Brünnhilde do much to elaborate the change already present in Wotan's character at the end of the prose draft of *Das Rheingold*. Wagner incorporates many of the ideas for the argument between Wotan and Fricka found in the original November sketch of *Die Walküre*, particularly his praise, à la *Jesus von Nazareth*, for the “true” love which is only possible outside the bounds of the law and contract, i.e., marriage. While the support for this argument is present in the earlier sketches – the false love of Alberich and Grimhilde and his wooing of her through bribery – this example, which also functioned in the previous drafts as the reason his actions were necessary, is relegated to a marginal note which itself is gone by the time of the verse draft. Instead, the focus of this fight and its final turning point are centered around the love and marriage of Fricka and Wotan, not on any inherent inconsistency found in Wotan's plan for Siegmund, as is the case in the final version.<sup>40</sup>

Fricka enters explaining to Wotan that the sanctity of marriage has been broken and she wishes revenge. Wotan does not understand Fricka's complaint: “What is so terrible about what happened? A young couple became inflamed by love: what is there in that to be annoyed with?” To this Fricka rebukes him, “How can you stand impartial... The sanctity of marriage is violated: insult is spoken of the law which is my soul.” Wotan replies to this by changing the subject to a retelling of his statement on love and marriage from *Jesus von Nazareth*.

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<sup>39</sup> Ernest Newman was grateful to Wagner for this change. See: Newman, *The Wagner Operas*, 442-443.

<sup>40</sup> However, there is a marginal note, found just before Fricka's final argument, that makes Wotan change his position. It reads “Fricka's contempt for the heroes, they are nothing on their own but are everything they are through Wotan alone.” [Fricka's *verachtung vor den helden, die für sich ja garnichts seien, sondern alles nur durch Wotan.* (Strobel, 239.)] This becomes the basis for Wotan's final logical conversion against Siegmund in the proceeding Verse draft and the final version.

Do not speak to me of marriage when we are talking about the power of love. Hunding courted Sieglinde without them becoming lovers: unholy is the marriage which unifies those who do not love each other.<sup>41</sup>

Fricka replies by going further off topic, explaining that it is the nature of the warlike and wandering traits that Wotan instills in warriors that make this type of love impossible, and so the conversation switches to a comparison between the attributes of peace and stability in culture and its institutions, i.e., marriage, as endorsed by Fricka, and the constant strife and striving so endorsed by Wotan. The hypocrisy of which Fricka attempts to accuse Wotan is that when Hunding was robbing and murdering, committing all kinds of sin, Wotan did nothing to stop him, and in fact encouraged him. It is only now that he has settled down and submitted himself to the laws she holds dear that suddenly Wotan cares for morally right and wrong. After explaining that marriage and custom increase morals, saying that those who follow them will follow the Gods as opposed to those who follow wild instinct (which Wotan advocates) who do not bend towards the Gods, she concludes:

If Hunding was violent and thieving, it was your fault, because you could have restrained him; but he atoned for his crimes through his marriage vows, this was my work; so I forget what happened and that which I could not restrain him [from doing], in order that morals can bloom anew.<sup>42</sup>

Still consistent with *Jesus von Nazareth*, Wotan responds that any binding that occurs in custom, especially marriage, limits freedom, and if that custom is based on a lie, as it is with the marriage of Hunding and Sieglinde, only force can reveal this lie.

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<sup>41</sup> The last three quotes are all from: Strobel, 238: “was sie denn do schlimmes in dem falle sähe? Ein junges paar sei in liebe entbrannt: was sei darob zu zürnen?” [...] “will stelle sich W. doch unbefangen...Der ehe heiligthim sei entweiht: hohn sei dem gesetzte geschprochen, das ihre (Fr.’s) seele sei.” [...] “Sprich mir von ehe nicht, wo vom zwang der liebe rede ist. Hunding freite Sieglinde ohne von ihr geliebt zu werden: unheilig sei die ehe, die unliebende eint[.]”

<sup>42</sup> Strobel, 238. “War Hunding gewaltsam und räuberisch, so war dein die schuld, denn du konntest ihm wehren; sühnte er aber seinen frevel durch ehebund, so war dieß mein werk; so vergeß’ ich was geschehen und ich nicht hindern konnte, um von neuem die sitte zu pflanzen.”

Have I troubled you in your reign? Holding together marriage vows, but for me strength is absolute, to grant might if it is roused against a lie: down with your peace, I open the way for war. The kind of blessing you created, you now see for what it is: only timidity and weakness preserve your peace, spirit and strength reveal the lie. Now you come to me, and solicit [my] powerful strength for that, what you call peace: with force I should achieve what you cannot unite. Leave me be!<sup>43</sup>

It is a valid point on some level. If her peace and her power to make peace are so great, in fact greater than Wotan's preferred strength and courage, then why are strength and courage needed to keep the marriage of Hunding and Sieglinde – representative of Fricka's power – together? Wotan is trying to show Fricka her own contradictions, in that she disapproves of force except when it serves her purposes.

Fricka then continues much in the way of the final version of *Die Walküre*, saying that brother and sister have never been married, giving Wotan the opportunity to say “never say never”: “Today you have witnessed it: so learn, that a thing may come about entirely of itself, though it has not yet happened before.”<sup>44</sup> She asks him why he disdains the laws that they made together to guide the world, to which he replies; “There is one law by which I rule, where strength animates itself, there I bring about joy.” Wotan's law is that to be happy and free, one must be independent and strive ever onward and not be content to settle – in other words, Faust's maxim. In response, Fricka begins to lament not just the loss of her dignity that Wotan's decision brings, but the coming end of the rule of the Gods.

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<sup>43</sup> Strobel, 238. “stört’ ich dich in deinem walten? knüpfe du ehebünde, doch mir laß unbestritten die macht, der kraft zu gewähren, wenn sie gegen die lüge sich empört: heuchelt ihr frieden, ich gewähre offen dem krieg. Was für segen du schufest, das siehst du nun wohl: nur zagheit und schwäche wahrt deinen frieden, muth und stärke deckt die lüge auf. Jetzt kommst du zu mir, und begehrt gewaltsamen zwang für das, was frieden du nennst: Mit gewalt soll ich leimen, was du nicht einen konntest. Laß mich damit!”

<sup>44</sup> Strobel, 238. “heut’ hast du’s erlebt: erfahre so, was ganz von selbst sich fügen mag, wär’ es noch nie zuvor auch geschehen.” This is close to the final version, the only difference being that the third phrase now reads “was von selbst sich füt” ([a thing] comes about of itself). This deletes the old German use of “mag” as a conditional verb as well as the emphasis which “ganz” brings, but otherwise it is the same statement. In the proceeding analysis of the final poem through the lens of the Moral Progression this statement will be discussed in reference to the second stage of the Moral Progression: bringing about unnatural new events through will.

So is this then the end of me, since you birthed the wild Wälsungen! I say it bluntly, did I hit upon your meaning? What are the gods to you, what wife, brother, and sisters? You throw it all away, sever all connections, the order of the world you would laughingly destroy so that your dishonest licentious spawn, these twin brats, can do as they please according to their moods and desires!<sup>45</sup>

Fricka responds to this as she had in the previous drafts, with jealousy. She asks how he could possibly understand anything other than this ideal freedom, as Wotan has been adulterous himself. Wotan then tries to explain to her that the gods need a hero free from their influence and protection:

You have gained no profit, from what I wanted to teach you, so you never can recognize a deed before it is completed: only what is customary are you able to understand, but what has not yet come to pass, is what I strive after. A hero is needed, one free from divine law, and so free from their protection.<sup>46</sup>

At this point Wagner places a marginal note which foreshadows the conversation which will appear in the verse draft the following month and in the final version. In the final version, Fricka takes apart Wotan's argument by telling Wotan that Siegmund is beyond divine control, and this leads to Wotan's recognition of his flawed system and subsequent appeasing of Fricka by withdrawing his protection from Siegmund. But that does not happen here. Instead of logic, Fricka uses guilt to get Wotan to follow her.

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<sup>45</sup> Strobel, 239. "So ist es denn zu ende mit mir, seit du die wilden Wälsungen zeugtest! – Heraus sagt' ich's: traf ich denn sinn? Was sind dir die götter, was weib und brüder und schwestern? Hin wifst du alles, zerreißt alle bande, das haft der welt zerbrichst du lachend, um deiner untreue zuchtlose frucht, diese zwillingsbrut, nach lust und laune walten zu lassen!" The emphasis here, as opposed to that of the final version, is on Wotan casting aside Fricka herself first, then the Gods and the world second, as opposed to her purely cold and calculated stance in the final version, where the emphasis is placed on the end not of her in particular, but of the rule of the gods. As a side note, Wotan's response to this, "nach Lust und Laune – im wildesten Leid!" is similar in verbiage and likely musical contour to his illustration of Stabreim and musical contour in *Opera and Drama* "die Liebe bringt Lust und Leid". (See: GS IV. 152-153).

<sup>46</sup> Strobel, 239. "Nichts hülft es, wollt' ich dich lehren, was nie du erkennen kannst, eh' es nicht volle that: gewohntes nur kannst du verstehn, doch was noch nie war, darnach tracht' ich. Ein held thut not, der frei von der götter gesetz, wie frei von ihrem schutz."

If you're not lying, look me in the eye: you are unbound to me, I can neither stop you nor force you; you have given me worries, so talk with me further. Show that I am not entirely discarded by you; give me a pledge of that old love, that love through which we won the world. Much have I suffered by you; show me, that you still think of that hour when you won from me that first bliss.<sup>47</sup>

It is for his love of Fricka that he relents and kills Siegmund.

Wotan could do one of two things. He could show his wife for whom he declared love and with whom he won the world, that he does not and did not love her. This would place himself at the level of an immoral scheming wretch who used her to gain power, and mean that his authority and everything which separates the Gods from the Giants and Dwarves would be based on lies and deceit. Such a being would not care for the world, but only for himself and his own power. Accepting this option would mean a rejection of love and, much like the situation that brought on Erda's warning in *Das Rheingold*, would mean that the moral Wanderer would not have been a possible future for Wotan, and so such a choice would be impossible. This leaves one option: turn against the Wälsungs, or the purer Nazarene love, and so sacrifice his hope of a better, freer world. Neither option leaves Wotan whole, and had it been a choice between the custom, with law and power as its basis, and freedom, with love as its basis, Wotan would have chosen freedom, as the beginning of his conversation with Fricka makes clear; but when Fricka equates Wotan's acquiescence to her will with Wotan's capacity to love, Wotan has no choice but to give in or reject love, and so any chance at moral progression, forever.

Wotan's immediate response to this necessity is found when Brünnhilde asks him what is wrong, and is a criticism of the Gods: "The need of the Gods and insult I

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<sup>47</sup> Strobel, 239-240. "blick' mir in's auge, wenn du nicht lügst: unbändig bist du mir, ich kann dich nicht halten noch zwingen; schufst du mir sorge, so sei doch redlich mit mir. Bezeuge, dass ich dir ganz verworfen nicht scheine; gieb mir ein pfand deiner alten liebe, der liebe, durch die die welt wir gewannen. Vieles litt ich um dich: zeige mir, dass du der stunde noch gedenkst, da du erste freude von mir gewannest." How exactly Wotan and Fricka's *love* conquered the world is unclear.

must bear, the saddest of all am I.”<sup>48</sup> He must give in to the will of the other Gods, and the bitterest insult to his ideas and vision, and this makes him, in his own eyes, the saddest and most unfree of creatures. The Gods stand separately from him, just as they had in the Wanderer’s conversation with the Wala in *Der junge Siegfried*, written in June of 1851, and in every draft since. The Gods must hold on to their authority, their custom, while Wotan wants – just as he had implied after Erda’s exit in the *Das Rheingold* prose draft of a few months earlier – to end domination in favor of freedom. We observe this in his explanation of his goals, which begins with the characteristically third-stage honest look at the self, “Dishonestly and deceitfully I won godly power: the crafty Loge planted the seed, the fruit of which I now reap,” and continues:

I paid the Giants with Alberich’s curse: that curse which I must annul, before it spreads further and withers the blossoming earth! But I ought not to win back the gold; not break the contracts: because in the law of contracts lies my godly power, only a hero can bring about that most individual free deed.<sup>49</sup>

There is nothing here of saving the authority of the Gods, but only of saving the world itself. And even when Wotan does speak of defending the Gods from Alberich, in part in a marginal note which eventually carried over into the final version, the focus is on defense from destruction, not retention of rule: “[Erda explained that] the end of the Gods would be brought about by Alberich when he won back the ring... through you Valkyries I wanted to change the end of the Gods.”<sup>50</sup> The end for the Gods he wishes to come about is found in another marginal note, perhaps epitomizing Wotan’s

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<sup>48</sup> Strobel, 240. “götternoth und schmach duld’ ich: der traurigste bin ich von allen!”

<sup>49</sup> Strobel, 241. “treulos und trugvoll gewann ich göttermacht: Loke der listige pflanzte den samen, des’ frucht ich nun ärnte... ich bezahlte den riesen mit Alberich’s fluch: den fluch muß ich lösen, eh’ er weiter frisst und der welt blüthen alle verdorrt! Doch das gold darf ich nicht wieder gewinnen, verträge nicht brechen: denn im gesetz der verträge liegt meine göttermacht; nur ein held kann eigenst frei die that vollbringen.”

<sup>50</sup> Strobel, 241. “[D]as götterende droht durch Alberich, wenn er den ring wiedergewinnt... durch euch Walküren wollt’ ich der götterende wenden.”

third-stage/fourth-stage state: “Oh, if I could press all godhood into one seed from which a freer man could spring! In such a way would I gladly annihilate godhood”.<sup>51</sup> This is followed shortly by a description of why Siegmund is also not free, citing the reasons given by Fricka in the final version, and culminating in the familiar “I desire only one thing – the end” followed in a marginal note by “and for that end the Nibelung concerns himself: I let him do as he pleases!”<sup>52</sup>

The remainder of the draft closely matches the final version, particularly regarding Wotan, except for his final line of the opera. After adhering to Brünnhilde’s wish that only the bravest of men should win her and, to that end, surrounding her with fire he declares: “No one unlike myself shall dare [to walk] through this fire that I walk across.”<sup>53</sup>

Upon considering Wotan’s change, from Erda’s warning in *Das Rheingold* to his relinquishing of the world to Alberich in his monologue, it is clear that upon learning fear Wotan does not typify the selfish nature-conquering second-stage thinking as might be expected. Instead, he immediately recognises the flaws in his system, declares that a solution to save the world is not in his power, but rather with another, and so works to bring this other into being and so save the world. In order to bring about this being he has rejected the law, the foundation of his power, and embraced lawless instinctual love, and freedom. It is not to save the Gods or his power that he finally surrenders his dream of Siegmund the hero, but for love itself. By disavowing Siegmund he in fact gives himself over to love, and shows his willingness to sacrifice his dreams for another.

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<sup>51</sup> Strobel, 241. “O könnte ich alles götterthum in einen sammentropfen drängen, aus dem ein freier mensch entsprosse! so möchte ich das götterthum vernichten”

<sup>52</sup> Strobel, 242. “nur eines noch will ich: – das ende! Und für das ende wird der Nibelung sorgen: ich laß’ ihn gewahren!”

<sup>53</sup> Strobel, 251. “Durch das feuer, das ich durchschreite, wage sich keiner der mir nicht gleich!”

The marginal note in which Wagner describes Wotan's desire to destroy all godhood if it would mean giving birth to a free hero who could save the world, is further evidence of Wotan's self-sacrifice for the benefit of others. Rather than the direct Moral Progression, one sees Faust after being blinded by *Sorge*. Faust's final monologue includes a sentiment quite similar to this self-sacrificial line of Wotan, whereby Faust explains that he would achieve the bliss for which he would ask the moment to tarry upon seeing his community of free individuals without a master after his death. Before Faust was cursed by *Sorge*, he followed Mephistopheles' recommendations blindly, and so was a servant to whim, just as Wotan had blindly followed Loge and was a servant to the same whim. Much like Faust, when Wotan learned fear he employed the second-stage, independently-willed plan, but only to the effect of making a better world by sacrificing himself. And just as for Faust, at the moment the world-bettering plan was conceived occurred the realization that self-destruction was necessary in order to achieve this world-bettering. It is in this necessity for self-destruction that we are meant to understand Wotan's final line of the *Die Walküre* draft, "none but one like me may pass through this fire," as both Siegfried and Wotan take guilt upon themselves and sacrifice themselves for the betterment of the world,<sup>54</sup> just as Siegfried and post-*Die Walküre* Wotan are to an extent free in that neither of them follows any law of custom which would limit their freedom and capacity to follow their individual *Mut*.

From the following it is clear that Wagner shifted his original conception of Wotan. He began as the spirit of change from the 1848 draft, then became a Byronic hero in the earliest sketches of *Das Rheingold* and *Die Walküre*, and then became Faust in these prose drafts from the spring of 1852. But these drafts too have their

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<sup>54</sup> Brünnhilde obviously conforms to this model, but she is already through the fire, and cannot awaken herself.

problems, the foremost being the problem of Wotan's – or the Gods' – end. Erda warns of two possibilities:

Terrible you Gods stand, if you lie about your agreements, but more terribly [will you stand] if you keep the ring; slowly you [Gods] near an end, but it will be an imminent violent downfall, if you do not let go of the ring.

In other words, she says immediate violent destruction will follow if Wotan keeps the ring, and prolonged, presumably non-violent destruction if he relinquishes it. And yet, Wotan reveals in the *Die Walküre* draft that a violent destructive end still could await the Gods by Alberich's hands if he were to regain the ring. Wagner not only didn't solve this problem of consistency in the verse draft of *Das Rheingold* which followed that autumn, but seems to have made worse, as the warning there reads: "A gloomy day dawns for the Gods: but your noble race will end in shame if you do not give up the ring."<sup>55</sup> Erda's distinguishing between imminent and prolonged destruction is now cast aside in favor of a shameful end and a presumably non-shameful end. This change is then completely inconsistent with Erda's second warning concerning the violent shameful end of the Gods if Alberich regains the ring. It is for this reason that Wagner changed the warning to "Alles was ist, endet." Now, the ending of the Gods is not only seen as inevitable, as it had been already in the other warnings except for that of the 1848 draft, but it is no longer limited to one of two possibilities based on whether or not Wotan gives up the ring: the Gods could still end in shame even if they do relinquish the ring. This way the inconsistency of Erda's warning is nullified.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> "Ein düster tag dämmert den göttern: in schmach doch endet dien edles geschlecht, lässt du den Reif nicht los!" (Verse Draft of *Das Rheingold*: Wahnfried archive; NA A IIg3: pg 40. (translation from: Darcy. 'Das Rheingold,' 198.))

<sup>56</sup> As unpopular as this position may be, I side more towards Ellis's view from his *Life of Richard Wagner IV* than any of the more recent opinions on this change. Ellis holds that it was made not as a philosophical statement, but as a simplification of an already established idea, as better poetry. He explains "if you wish to regard her (Erda) symbolically, you may call her "the fear of the Lord that is the beginning of wisdom"—by no means its end; but her character and office remain unaffected by the changed wording of her oracular utterance." (14) In other words, the wording offers no change to the idea, but it does improve the poetry. Ellis blames Wagner's January 25, 1854 letter to Röckel for the

But this problem aside, the *Die Walküre* draft, though offering a complete Faustian picture of Wotan in conjunction with the *Das Rheingold* draft, is a transitional work. For whatever reason, Wagner was still making up his mind about what he wanted the character of Wotan to say and mean to his audience. His marginal writings in this draft give us a hint to both the past and future of Wotan's argument with Fricka in Act II. One particular point, that began at first as only a marginal note, was Fricka's critique of Wotan's plan. But this idea is anything but simple, and when Wagner employed it in the verse draft of *Die Walküre*, begun not even a week after the prose draft was completed, it necessitated a complete change to Wotan. The Faustian Wotan from the prose drafts made his change from the first stage to the third stage of the Moral Progression essentially in a single stroke. This is a Wotan who was capable of looking calmly and objectively at the world from the moment Fasolt was killed, and was capable of looking at the world on a long-term basis recognizing the need for the end of his race and power. Even killing Siegmund was a decision that was forced upon him through the love of his wife – a lower moral being incapable of looking beyond her own interests. This Wotan is a high moral being. But the problem is why this being does not see the flaw in his own plan, namely that Siegmund himself is not free, until after he has been forced into killing Siegmund. In the prose draft this realisation is presented in almost a throw-away line, unimportant

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misunderstanding and overemphasis on this change that was causing so many problems in Wagner scholarship on this issue. Kurt Hildebrandt in his *Wagner und Nietzsche, ihr Kampf gegen das neunzehnte Jahrhundert* from 1924 was one of the primary sources for this problem when he associated the two options Erda offered Wotan in the verse draft with being damned and being saved: giving up the ring meant that the Gods would be saved (See: Newman, *Life of Wagner* II 350-2). Thus according to Hildebrandt, when Wagner changed Erda's warning to "Alles was ist endet" and closed the way the Gods could be saved, it had to be as a result of a political or philosophical change in Wagner, specifically, a change described in the 1854 letter to Röckel. Hildebrandt's successors including Newman, Heidigen and most recently Darcy cite this letter as proof of a philosophical change in Wagner that necessitated this change in Erda's warning (See: Norbert Heidigen, *Textvarianten in Richard Wagners »Rheingold« und »Walküre«* (182) and Darcy, "Alles was ist, endet": Erda's Prophecy of World Destruction" *Bayreutherfestspiel Programmheft II Das Rheingold* (76.)). My own discussion of the Röckel letter below reevaluates this connection and the change in the warning.

to the plot, when Wotan explains to Brünnhilde that his plan would not have worked anyway. But it was the objective Wotan, the being morally superior to all, who realized this, and no one else. By Wagner making Fricka reveal this truth to him, Wotan's position as high moral objective being is lost. The idea might have begun as a way to better dramatize the problem of Wotan's plan, making the flaw in the plan the crux of Wotan's conversion rather than an arbitrary answer to Brünnhilde's question on the inherent freedom of Siegmund compared to Wotan's other, less free, creations. In this way this progression appears much like that whereby he altered the first act of *Die Walküre* – again, based on a marginal note in the prose draft – so that the crux of the climax of the action, Siegmund's taking the sword and the vows of sibling love, fall at the end of the act. But at the core of this change is a renewed fallibility in Wotan. Wotan, under this change, would not be capable of looking at objects objectively: he would only be interested in his plan, his power, himself, and so he would become a planning, selfish being of the second stage of the Moral Progression, rather than the selfless being of the third and fourth stages. The moment another must reveal to him his own flawed ideas, he is no longer a morally advanced being.

*D – Wagner's Instinctive New Course for Wotan: The Moral Progression in the Verse Drafts*

It is from here that every other change fell into place. When Wagner changed how Wotan was able to realize the inherent flaw in his plan, or more specifically, was taught to realize this flaw, the character of Wotan transformed. The verse draft of the sequence between Fricka and Wotan is the same as in the final copy with the sole

exception of a lengthy passage carried over from the prose draft focusing on Wotan's desire to cultivate strength in opposition to Fricka's cultivation of law-abiding servants. But what is perhaps more revealing is that Wotan's monologue is nearly identical to the final version, with only a few minor grammatical and rhyming differences to be found between the two texts. We remember that it was this monologue in the prose draft that revealed his most innermost desires for his end, the means to that end of his own devising, and his selflessness. He did not speak of his rulership of the world or his power except to say that it was dishonestly obtained, came through contracts, and that his goal was to free the world from Alberich's curse by whatever means necessary, even if it was to require an end of the Gods.<sup>57</sup> Now Wotan's words are of a different character. Instead of condemning the failings of the other Gods and the insult he must bear from them (referring to Fricka and her trickery) he says that the binding contracts which he had made are responsible for his predicament, and then cries out, just as in the final version, of the shame which his futile plan has brought him, and that have made him the "saddest of all." Then, instead of opening his monologue with a description of his dishonest power and ultimate goal of freeing the world, he opens it with the following:

Als junger Liebe  
Lust mir verblich,  
verlangte nach Macht mein Mut:  
von jäher Wünsche  
Wüten gejagt  
gewann ich mir die Welt!  
Unwissend trugvoll  
übt' ich Untreue  
band durch Verträge  
was Unheil barg;  
Loke verlockte durch List,  
Seine Saat ärnt' ich nun ewig.<sup>58</sup>

When the pleasure of youthful love  
began to wane,  
my spirit sought after power:  
spurred on by the fury  
of ever-new and fluctuating desires,  
I won for myself the world!  
Unknowingly deceitful,  
I practiced treachery  
and bound by treaty  
that which contained evil;  
Loke tempted through craft,  
his seed now I reap eternally.

<sup>57</sup> See notes 49-51 above.

<sup>58</sup> From the verse draft of *Die Walküre* in the Wahnfried Archives: NA A II h2, transcribed from this text by Kristina Unger of those Archives, for whose help I am thoroughly indebted. This passage from

The third-stage Wotan of the prose draft is nearly unobservable here. Wotan explains that his was an active choice to turn away from love and towards power, and that he personally conquered the world. None of this is in the prose draft. Moreover, the way in which he “won the world” was through satisfaction of his ever-fluctuating desires: a clear reference to Wotan’s first-stage thinking uniformly characterized as such by the writers in Part I above. But perhaps the most pathetic notion here is the extent to which this Wotan believes in his own innocence. His desires conquered the world, which he views as good, but it was Loge who tricked him into forging dishonest contracts, as he was unaware of the deceit inherent in them as “Unwissend trugvoll [etc...]” implies. Now he lays the blame for being bound by contract, whose fruit Wotan now reaps, at Loge’s feet. Wagner has changed the previous line describing how Wotan knowingly came to rule through dishonesty and Loge’s help beginning “Treulos und trugvoll”<sup>59</sup> by making Wotan say that he didn’t know “Unwissend” that he was being dishonest, and was tricked into his situation by the guilty Loge. This Wotan is subjectively looking at former events, deluding himself, and decrying his own personal situation. Wotan is not in the third stage of the Moral Progression as he had been at this time in the prose draft.

For the first time, Wagner places Wotan, upon learning fear from Erda, clearly in the second stage of the Moral Progression. Wotan is capable of planning and is independent of Loge, so he is beyond the first stage, but he is still selfish and ultimately still looking out for his personal interests, not those of the world. He has

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“Loke verlockte” to the end is a varied form of the earlier example from the prose draft “Loke der listige pflanzte den samen, des’ frucht ich nun ärnte,” and which in the final version changes to “listig verlockte mich Loge, der schweifend nun verschwand.” This is the only excerpt in this passage which represents a transition in Wagner’s thinking between the prose draft and the final version. For more on the importance of this change see below.

<sup>59</sup> See Note 49. “treulos und trugvoll gewann ich göttermacht: Loke der listige pflanzte den samen, des’ frucht ich nun ärnte”

not yet learned the futility of this line of thinking which, as we know from the Moral Progression, comes when an individual is forced to realize the contradictory nature of his own desires. Wagner has abandoned Byron and Goethe as models for Wotan and has supplanted them with the model of the Moral Progression. This model was so ingrained in him that it penetrated every aspect of his writing from *Pasticcio* of 1834 on, a progression that, against the backdrop of these literary models, would seem instinctive, as it is so entrenched in the culture of which he is a part.

One of the direct results of this change in Wotan can be observed in the *Das Rheingold* verse draft, written that autumn, as it places firmer emphasis on the fear which now envelopes Wotan, and takes away mention of a noble plan. This plan, to be achieved using Valhalla, was to create a free race and save the world from the curse. These third stage characteristics which Wotan associates with Valhalla are supplanted by a focus on Wotan's fear and the protection which Valhalla itself, as symbol of power, will bring the Gods. Wotan's is now a long-term plan inspired by his new-found fear, and so what Wotan now desires to achieve using Valhalla is now firmly based in the second stage of the Moral Progression. "So greet I the fortress which is safe from all fear and dread – Follow me wife: in Valhalla reign there with me!" Wotan then explains the meaning of Valhalla in a way that stresses its origin in his newfound fear:

[W]as bangen gezeugt  
und mut gebar  
wenn siegend es lebt,  
legt so den sinn dir dar!<sup>60</sup>

[W]hat fear produced  
and mettle bore,  
when victoriously it comes to pass  
then will the name be clear to you!

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<sup>60</sup> See: Darcy. 'Das Rheingold' 209 This was later emphasized in the same verse draft as, "Was in mächt'gen bangen / mein muth mir gebar..." [What by powerful fear my spirit bore] which adds a far more selfish element to even this passage, and finally in the 1853 printing "Was, mächtig der Furcht mein muth mir erfand..." the meaning of which does not substantially differ from that of the previous version despite the wording.

But the most consequential change found in the *Die Walküre* verse draft is in Wotan's final line of the opera, which now reads :

Wer meines Speeres Spitze fürchtet, durchschreite das Feuer nie! <sup>61</sup>	He who fears my spear's point will never pass through the fire!
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Written a little over a month after the completion of the prose draft, this sentence has drastic consequences for the entire *Ring* and its ending. The spear has finally become a symbol of Wotan's contract-based authority. But more importantly, it became such a specific symbol that it, and Wotan's authority with it, could be destroyed. Here, Wotan is requiring as a condition of freeing Brünnhilde from the fire that his spear, and so his authority, be broken. This Wotan will not go gently into that goodnight as the Wanderer from *Der junge Siegfried* did upon Siegfried passing through the fire, but he will purposefully force a raging battle between his dying light and the young fresh light of Siegfried which will end in his own powerlessness: he is purposefully willing his own destruction. The fire that Wotan commanded to consume Valhalla and the Gods in the new ending of *Siegfrieds Tod*, which followed shortly after the completion of the *Rheingold* verse draft in the winter of 1852-3, has its origins in this moment, in this conception of Wotan's character. As Wagner said in his letter from January 25/26 1854 to Röckel,

[W]e must learn to *die* and to *die* in the fullest sense of the word...the poem is concerned to show how necessary it is to acknowledge change, variety, multiplicity and the eternal newness of reality and of life, and to yield to that necessity. Wotan rises to the tragic heights of *willing* his own destruction. This is all that we need to learn from the history of mankind: *to will what is necessary* and to bring it about ourselves.

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<sup>61</sup> From the *Die Walküre* verse draft, again thanks to Kristina Unger.

By this single act Wotan brings about his own active destruction, and so this line serves as the basis for all the re-workings brought to the remaining three parts of the *Ring*.

This fact, that the re-working of the *Ring* coincides with this change in *Die Walküre*, tells us that the change from the Goethean Wotan to the present Wotan – from passing away to self-willed destruction – did not occur either through philosophizing, or as a result of a new book with which Wagner had become acquainted, or even because of one of his bitter depressions of the kind he experienced in the late summer of 1852 on his trip through Italy.<sup>62</sup> This change came about from within, through his inner intuition, and not from without.

When Wagner tells Röckel in his letter of August 23, 1856 that in writing the poem he was originally “working in direct opposition to my own underlying intuitions” he is explaining that he had originally in mind foreign literary models for the universe of the *Ring*, which were not consistent with the moral progressions outlined by philosophers before and during his time which penetrated his outlook of the world. He is likely referring to these same intuitions, intuitions which brought him to the decision that the Wotan ought to willfully destroy himself and the Gods, in the following passage from the January 1854 letter to Röckel. He goes on:

While, as an artist, my intuitions were of such compelling certainty that all I created was influenced by them, as a philosopher, I was attempting to find a totally contrasting explanation of the world which, though forcibly upheld, was repeatedly – and much to my own amazement – undermined by my instinctive and purely objective artistic intuitions... Well I scarcely noticed how, in working out this plan, nay, basically even in its very design, I was unconsciously following a quite different, and much more profound intuition, and that, instead of a single phase in the world’s evolution, what I had glimpsed was the essence of the world itself in all its conceivable phases, and that I had thereby recognized its nothingness, with the result, of course – since I remained faithful to my intuitions rather than to my conceptions – , that what

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<sup>62</sup> See: *Letters to my Dresden Friends*, 243, 246.

emerged was something totally different from what I had originally intended.<sup>63</sup>

The story Wagner felt drawn to tell of Wotan was one based on his inner intuition, his inner philosophy, a moral philosophy we have observed him consistently enunciating whatever the period of life he was in. Wagner tells us that he was led astray by philosophy, but not the philosophy that was consistent with his intuitions, such as that described by the Moral Progression, which placed such high emphasis on the elimination of the self in favor of the world, but rather the philosophy in which the restoration of monarchy and the status quo was possible mixed with Byronic and Goethean models. In the month of June of 1852 Wagner intuitively made Wotan the embodiment of the changing world outlined by the changing phases of the world and simultaneously of the moral development envisioned by him in his personal philosophy, based on the common view of moral-societal progress from his times. This is why the final form of the drama was able to come so quickly to him.

The following analysis of Wotan's development in the *Ring* will show how closely Wagner's final conception of Wotan follows the Moral Progression.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Letter to Röckel, August 23, 1856 in *Selected Letters of Richard Wagner*, 357.

<sup>64</sup> This analysis will be by no means complete, as it is Wotan centric, and will skip over a great deal non-Wotan material in the later operas.

## Chapter 2. Wotan Embodies the Moral Progression: *The Ring of the Nibelungen*

### *Précis*

The thesis that Wotan, or Wotan in combination with Siegfried and Brünnhilde, embodies a moral-philosophical progression is hardly new. Aside from Wagner's own explanations, the volumes of *Bayreuther Blätter*, the *Richard Wagner Jahrbuch*, and *Die Musik* contain numerous explanations of the character development of Wotan, philosophical and otherwise, in the years immediately following the premiere and on into the first decades of the twentieth century. Among the earliest of these is Otto Eiser's "Andeutung über Wagners Beziehung zu Schopenhauer und zur Grundidee des Christenthums" which summarized the *Ring* by saying "The essence of Wagner's Nibelung work is the tragic transformation from the affirmation of the will to the denial of the will."<sup>65</sup> and Josef Schalk's "Vom Naturmythischen im Ringe" which stresses the transition from unconsciousness to consciousness that Wotan makes, the role of Loge in making the Wotan no longer strictly abide by the rules of nature, and the idealism of pure unconscious nature and the necessity of a conscious return to this way of thinking so characterized by Erda's unconscious dreaming knowledge.<sup>66</sup> Others, such as Alois Höfler, in his "Schopenhauer 1919-2020", equate the four parts of the *Ring* with the four philosophical stages embodied in Schopenhauer's *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, albeit generally.<sup>67</sup> But, for the most part, what occurs in these studies and in several ways continues to occur today, is that the progression embodied throughout the cycle is compared to a single other progression of the author's choosing found elsewhere. One of the earliest and most scholarly examples of such a comparison is Robert

<sup>65</sup> *Bayreuther Blätter* I. (1878): 222-230, 226.

<sup>66</sup> *Bayreuther Blätter* XIX. (1896): 120-131.

<sup>67</sup> *Jahrbuch der Schopenhauer Gesellschaft* (1920): 85-147, 121.

Petsch's "Der Ring des Nibelungen in seinen Beziehungen zur griechischen Tragödie und zur zeitgenössischen Philosophie" which compares Wotan's moral progression to similar progressions described by Droysen in his edition of Aeschylus's works from 1832, particularly focussing on the myth of Prometheus, though it also gets into some aspects of Hegel and Feuerbach in his discussion.<sup>68</sup> This type of comparison served as a model for analyses like Donington's, which compares the development in the *Ring* to ideas in Jungian psychology and Erich Neumann's theories on human development outlined in *The Origins and History of Consciousness*, and Paul Loos's *Richard Wagner: Vollendung und Tragik der deutschen Romantik*, where he makes associations between Wagner and the *Frühromantiks*.<sup>69</sup>

Recent examples have tended to offer a more philosophical approach though limiting themselves mostly to Feuerbach and Schopenhauer. One sees this in analyses by Dahlhaus and Adorno, who each offer only occasional references to Hegel. Sandra Corse's work *Wagner and the New Consciousness* breaks away from this mold by relating the *Ring* specifically to Hegel, and more recently, Köhler in his recent biography *Richard Wagner: Last of the Titans* defines the *Ring* in terms of Schelling's philosophy. Occasionally there are examples of comparisons using other systems outside of early nineteenth century philosophy such as Roy Noon's "'Know You What Wotan Wills': Wagner's Ring and Moral Development" in which he employs Lawrence Kohlberg's six-stage system for moral development (which in a few respects resembles the Moral Progression outlined in Part I above) from the then recent book *Philosophy of Moral Development*.<sup>70</sup> But the general pattern and format for these analyses remains the same. A comparison is made between some

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<sup>68</sup> *Richard Wagner Jahrbuch* II (1907): 284-330.

<sup>69</sup> This work was itself the product of a lengthy tradition possibly beginning with Ettliger's broad essay "Die romantische Schule in der deutschen Litteratur und ihre Beziehungen zu Richard Wagner" *Richard Wagner Jahrbuch* I (1886): 112-131.

<sup>70</sup> *Wagner* VIII, no. 4 (1987), 122-142.

philosophical system and the progressions found in a combination of characters in the *Ring*. No single character in these analyses embodies all the stages of development in any given system. Writers tend to begin with Wotan and then move to Siegmund, Siegfried, and Brünnhilde in order to round out all the stages of development in their philosophical-psychological systems. The *Ring* is so adaptable that scholars from any number of fields seem to find parallels between what they are working on and the *Ring*. While Dahlhaus, in his discussion of philosophical influence, views this as a negative,<sup>71</sup> if anything, the *Ring*'s ability to be so easily applicable to any number of systems of development strengthens the argument for a common basis in these systems which I believe can be found in the Moral Progression. Through awareness of this history, the analysis here will in many respects seem familiar from those analyses due to the reasons so explained. It would be nearly impossible to offer a bibliographic origin for every utterance having to do with a philosophical progression found in the *Ring* or with Wotan specifically, so I must unfortunately ask for leniency and understanding, (or perhaps feeling) in this regard. Many aspects of the following analysis have been discussed over the past 130 years or so, but with differing conclusions and informed by different degrees of scholarship, and not in the way that shall be outlined here. That being said, this analysis, unlike its predecessors, is capable of viewing Wotan as the central character of the cycle without having to shift to another character in order to complete the progression to which the cycle is being compared. This is owed to the author's unique perspective regarding the Wanderer and the relationship between Brünnhilde and Wotan. With these points in mind, I offer the following analysis of the Wotan's progression in the *Ring*.

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<sup>71</sup> See Part I, Note 89.

A – *Das Rheingold*i – Scene 1<sup>72</sup>

The first scene of *Das Rheingold* does not include Wotan, but it is crucial to him. In the first sketch of *Das Rheingold*, a natural bathing Wotan appeared to observe Alberich prefer power to love, the first man in history to do so, and then we find Wotan in scene 2 following his example. In this way Alberich could be blamed for having inspired greed over natural love in the universe as Wagner had said in numerous letters dating from this time, including that to Uhlig from November 12<sup>th</sup> describing the “wealth of consequences” which stem from this act of Alberich that ultimately leads to Siegfried’s death. In other words, Alberich’s act is the first necessary *Hauptmoment* of the drama.<sup>73</sup> But Wagner abandoned this notion of Wotan learning from Alberich in the subsequent sketches and every following version. Instead, he preferred to have Wotan make the decision to abandon love on his own, being spurred on to it by means of the desireless Loge, through his own desire for power. This change makes the flaw that allows Alberich to sin one inherent in all

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<sup>72</sup> Much of the discussion of this scene is in reaction to a statement in Joachim Hertz’s “The Figure and Fate of Wotan in Wagner’s *Ring*” *Wagner XV*, no. 2 (1994), which reads as follows: “Nor does the world of the Rhinedaughters seem entirely inviolate: not only do the Rhinedaughters themselves expect a suitor to be in a position to catch them, but there are creatures evidently disadvantaged by Nature, foremost among whom is Herr Alberich, who is roundly mocked in spite of the fact that his approach to them is loving, tender and flattering. And, as a manifestation of Nature, the Rhinedaughters are already aware of being threatened.” (70) This statement offers a good summary of the problem of this scene; the cruelty of nature, the knowledge and premonition present in creatures who are supposed to be purely natural, and the unnatural recommendations of the natural creatures in favor of conquering without love. These inherent problems, I believe, are the primary reason, generally speaking, for the lack of attention this scene is given, particularly from a philosophical point of view. The extra attention I give it below is my attempt to remedy this.

<sup>73</sup> *Selected Letters of Richard Wagner*. 233.

creatures, not just one that spread itself throughout the world from Alberich. As

Wagner explained in the January 1854 letter to Röckel:

Alberich and his ring could not have harmed the gods unless the latter had already been susceptible to evil. Where, then, is the germ of this evil to be found? Look at the first scene between Wodan and Fricka – which leads ultimately to the scene in the second act of *Die Walküre*. The firm bond which binds them both, sprung from the involuntary error of a love that seeks to prolong itself beyond the stage of necessary change and to obtain mutual guarantees in contravention of what is eternally new and subject to change in the phenomenal world – this bond constrains them both to the mutual torment of a loveless union. As a result, the remainder of the poem is concerned to show how necessary it is to acknowledge change, variety, multiplicity and the eternal newness of reality and of life, and to yield to that necessity.<sup>74</sup>

In the attempt to retain anything, even love, past its time one sins against nature, and this sin is called custom or the law, and is the root of Wagner's, as well as Proudhon's, fundamental critique of marriage. The Alberich episode offers the clearest example of the consequences that follow from unnatural retention when he attempts to make a Rhinemaiden his longer than she wants to be his.

Alberich is unable to obtain love through natural means, and just in his moment of failure the gold appears and shines its brilliant light upon all present. This is the light of equality of which Wagner spoke in *Die Wibelungen* in which all authority shines equally on all who view it. Here it exists only in this ideal primitive state of nature before inequality and authority have surfaced, but in *Die Wibelungen* it is the end result of an authority previously limited and so given only to the “dragon of the night,” the selfishness inherent in inequality and rulership. The ruler must be separate from the rest, and so the light of authority shines on the ruler alone and is obscured through his “dragon's shadow” to all others. But such a person must actively wish to take away from others for the benefit of himself, which is exactly what is at the core of the curse on love.

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<sup>74</sup> *Selected Letters of Richard Wagner*, 307.

The power of the light of the gold is that it brings love. After merciless mocking and toying with Alberich, when the gold begins to shine the Rhinemaidens change their tone and accept him by saying the following:

Lieblichster Albe,  
lach'st du nicht auch?  
In des Goldes Schein  
wie leuchtest du schön!  
Komm', Lieblicher, lache  
mit uns!<sup>75</sup>

Loveliest Dwarf,  
do you not also laugh?  
In the golden radiance  
how beautifully you shine!  
Oh come, lovely one, laugh  
with us!

The gold in this pre-cursed state brings a universal love and mutual respect of sorts. As was explained in *Die Wibelungen*, this light, once it shines equally on all, negates the old system of limited authority and so embraces the love that comes as a necessity for equality. But here, the “old” system of inequality has not yet come into being. For Alberich, though, it is already too late: the rejection has done its damage, and he now wishes for something to be his, to be all to himself. That something happens to be what the Rhinemaidens themselves prize, the gold, so that by taking it and with it their joy away from them, he returns their cruelty, robbing him of what he desired, in kind.

Further, if the Rhinemaidens experience taught him anything, it is that to be satisfied he must be in control. The brief periods of time during which he was able to hold on to Wellgunde and Flosshilde were brief because he was not in control, they were only as long as the nature of the Rhinemaidens would allow, and so were unsatisfactory to one who wished to hold on to a Rhinemaiden in loving embrace

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<sup>75</sup> Richard Wagner. *Das Rheingold: In Full Score*. (Dover: New York: 1985, 66-68 As Heidgen points out in his *Textvariationen* (26), Wagner changed the first line of this passage “Lieblichster” after the 1853 printing during the musical composition. In GS V. 212 it reads “Lieblicher Albe” and is otherwise the same.

As far as translations of Wagner's verse is concerned, unless otherwise indicated, they are my own. I conceived them not as direct translations of the verse, but with the purpose of portraying and clarifying the inherent philosophy within the verse. Because of this, often times the phrases do not match from the German to the English, but I view it, as I hope you will, as a small price to pay for philosophical clarity.

indefinitely, beyond natural limits. The final lesson of the Rhinemaidens to Alberich runs thus:

Schäme dich, Albe!	Shame on you Dwarf!
Schilt nicht dort unten!	Don't scold [us] down there!
Höre, was wir dich heißen!	Listen to what we bid you!
Warum, du Banger,	Why, you fool,
bandest du nicht	did you not hold on
das Mädchen, das du minnst?	to the girl that you were wooing?
Treu sind wir	Faithful are we
und ohne Trug	and without deception
dem Freier, der uns fängt!	to the free one who catches us.
Greise nur zu	Just grasp
und grause dich nicht! <sup>76</sup>	and be not afraid!

In other words, they in essence tell him that possession is the means by which he can retain what he wishes indefinitely: “You may keep us, and we will be loyal, but only if you force yourself upon us.” Alberich began the scene looking for a mutual embrace between himself and a Rhinemaiden,<sup>77</sup> viewing the Rhinemaidens as shining lights to be admired much as they viewed the gold, only to be told that to attain anything he must use force, a force that must come singly from him. By contrast, the feelings of the other ought to be disavowed in favor of this grasping: they tell him

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<sup>76</sup> GS V. 208. Sandra Corse has interpreted this passage to mean exactly the opposite of what it seems: that holding tightly, i.e. wanting to possess, is what prevents Alberich from finding a love. “The Rhinedaughters also sing about the free one they will be true too – freedom and love are already firmly entwined. They mock Alberich because he wants to possess rather than love and does not understand the difference.” (Sandra Corse. *Wagner and the New Consciousness: Language and Love in the ‘Ring’* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1990), 79). Though her argument certainly appeals to one’s common sense, it has no basis in the text. The logic behind its application here stems from a single falsely interpreted exchange between Alberich and Wellgunde: “Alberich: (*sucht sie mit Gewalt zu halten*) Gefall ich dir nicht, dich faß ich doch fest! [Alberich: (trying to hold her by force) Though I don’t please you, I hold on to you tightly!] Wellgunde: (*schnell zum mittleren Riffe auftauchend*) Nur fest, sonst fließ ich dir fort!” [Wellgunde: (swiftly diving away to the middle rock) [often translated as “So tight, I slip from your hands!” as we find in Porter’s translation (9), but is actually closer to “Just that tight [implying: it had better be tighter] otherwise, I’ll vigorously flee from you”] So this passage stresses the same point as the later one: one must hold on tight in order to retain anything. In this case, the proper meaning of this passage is consistent with the Rhinemaidens’ later advice to Alberich.

<sup>77</sup> He initially wants to just join in their game but, then he begins to chase them after they start trying to get him to chase them. But still he wants to be loved as well as love; to Wellgunde he says “Wind those slender arms around me, so that I may provocatively tease your neck, nestling against your swelling breast with fawning passion” (“Die schlanken Arme / schlinge um mich, / daß ich den Nacken / dir neckend betaste, / mit schmeichelnder Brunst / an die schwellende Brust mich dir schmiege.” (GS V. 204-5.)) He wants to be embraced not merely to embrace.

that they may be owned, but not loved.<sup>78</sup> Alberich, faced with this reality, sees the world through a new light: one-sided possession, not equal love, is the key to gaining anything in the world. So when the Rhinemaidens explain the gold and its power for he who rejects love in favor of possession, this is thoroughly consistent with the message they had been giving him from the beginning – reject love and gain possession – but with a bonus: absolute power not just over a Rhinemaiden, but over the world. Faced with two loveless choices he chose the gold and absolute power over the world.

This explanation might seem to be contradictory regarding the Rhinemaidens as creatures of nature, but they, like that other creature of nature Loge, only offer possibilities. It is the rest of the world that chooses to act on these choices presented to them, and if the Rhinemaidens are looked at as vixens, as Fricka would have us view them, it is logical to assume that they would inspire men to desire and retain them for an unnaturally long time, thus breaking away from nature on the path to custom and ultimately destruction.

Alberich follows their advice, he becomes an unnatural creature, he takes what he wants at the expense of others and so creates the first unnatural authority. The gold no longer shines to all now that it is under Alberich the authoritarian's dragon's wing. Now that the Rhinemaidens have taken away the illusion of love, he is capable of making the necessary bargain with himself: reject others so that I may rule them. He rejects equality and caring for others – in the form of the Rhinemaidens – by cursing love in all its forms, and so embraces the power that comes from this rejection. The first selfish man in a world full of natural selflessness will be king: that is the essence of the Rhinemaidens' prophecy.

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<sup>78</sup> See: Sandra Corse. *Wagner and the New Consciousness*, 79. Corse comes close to the point made here with, "The Rhinedaughters represent women who are willing to sell love", though ultimately she draws a very different conclusion seen in Note 76 above.





(Scene 1 measure 141, Woglinde)

The fact that this figure appears here, over nothing but natural nonsense *stabileim*, implies that whatever this figure does mean, it is both central to and inherent in the character of the Rhinemaidens and is not then simply “joy in the potentiality of the gold.” In order, then, to understand Alberich’s transformation – the transformation from love to its rejection in favor of authority – we must trace the transformation of this dotted triplet figure, the motive that will represent not merely Alberich’s authority over the Nibelungs, but authority in general. In this connection it should be noted that a further transformation of the motive appears in the Valkyrie theme: the Valkyries are servants of Wotan.

When Alberich first uses it in his first call to the Rhinemaidens, he describes them from the point of view of an outsider. He calls them “*neidliches Volk*”<sup>79</sup>:

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<sup>79</sup> The translation of “*neidliches Volk*” has been consistently inconsistent. A few examples of this are: Forman’s “approved” translation from 1877, which translates it as “neighborly”; the Decca translation from the Solti *Ring* which translates it as “desirable”; and Andrew Porter’s translation of the whole sentence as “what a delightful delicate sight.” The difficulty with “*neidlich*” stems from the fact that it is not a proper word. If “enviable” was meant, the proper word would have been “*neidisch*” which would have scanned equally well and performed the same alliterative function. If “pretty” was meant as so many translators seem to believe, the word that should have been used would have been “*niedlich*” which is just as functional as “*neidisch*.” This is obviously an important distinction. If “*neidisch*” was meant, then Alberich’s initial description of the Rhinemaidens is as a people who others would envy, making the use of the dotted figure on that description imply that the emotion of longing-desire is at the heart of the Rhinemaidens and the feeling that they instill in others. Inherent in their characters would be their ability to make others want to possess them. The Rhinemaidens would then only be representatives of the natural world in its capacity as something that inspires others to move beyond its constraints, as Alberich eventually does. If it was meant as “*niedlich*” then the part of nature they represent is pure beautiful nature, in contrast to the ugliness of Alberich and his people. The music unfortunately supports both interpretations to an extent: as the next page shows, the motive repeats both when he is saying how he desires them (indicative of “*neidisch*”) and also when he is praising their beauty, and they are mocking the difference in appearance between themselves and him (both indicative of “*niedlich*”). I have chosen to base the succeeding analysis on the latter, “*niedlich*” meaning, as I believe the change in character by the Rhinemaidens when the gold begins to shine, who now want Alberich to join them, i.e., to fulfil his initial desires, implies to me that unachievable desire is not the *sine qua non* of their characters: which now, in this “light,” they appear more like creatures of



(Scene 1 measure 187, Alberich)

His next use is after the Rhinemaidens ask what he is doing there. He explains “Do I disturb your game, when, astoundedly I stand here still? Then come down here, the Nibelung would gladly romp and banter with you”:

Stör' ich euer Spiel, wenn stau . nend ich still hier steh'?

tauch . tet ihr nieder, mit euch toll . te und neck . te der Niblung sich gern.

(Scene 1 measures 205-211 of Alberich)

The figure is used throughout, though ominously. The opening two bars also foreshadow the ring and Valhalla motives; the last bar triplet figure on “Niblung sich gern” outlines the diminished 7<sup>th</sup> chord, which is the basis for the ring motive. It is perhaps no accident that this chord is outlined on the lines “the Nibelung wants.” Alberich returns to this chord again and again in this scene, particularly after each rejection, and so it comes to represent Alberich’s inability to be loved, and his frustration at the recognition of that fact.

Alberich’s next line, in which he likens the beauty of the Rhinemaidens to that of a shining light, is sung to a descending motive similar to that later used by Fasolt, when he exclaims that in exchange for the work they were promised the “wondrous

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natural beauty than of desire. But that being said, Alberich’s development from creature of love to selfish creature of control progresses the same way, and for the same reasons, with both interpretations of the word.

woman in pledge,” and by Loge, when he explains that no one in the world prizes anything more than “woman’s beauty and grace.” Alberich sings here:<sup>80</sup>



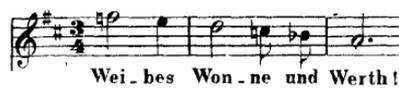
(Scene 1 measures 213-219 of Alberich)

Fasolt sings:



(Scene 2 measures 1088-1090)

and Loge sings:



(Scene 2 measures 1338-1340, Loge)

The major differentiating feature in the last example is that the final note no longer jumps upward somewhere between a fourth and an octave, but rather continues downward. The importance of these motives is to note that Alberich did prize love and woman’s worth at the beginning of the scene as the most highly prized things in the world, just as Fasolt later does, and as likewise Loge explains that all creatures, aside from one, do.

<sup>80</sup> He also sings the same figures, though now more dissonant, highlighting the diminished 7<sup>th</sup> chord, as he begins to woo Flosshilde, from “Holder Sang singt zu mir her!” to “Soll ich dir glauben, so gleite herab!”

But returning to the origin of the Nibelung theme, the triplet figure really becomes identified with Alberich when Wellgunde and Flosshilde use it repeatedly to describe Alberich's features.

Wellgunde:



(Scene 2 measures 305-308, Wellgunde)

and with Flosshilde's description the figure appears also in the orchestra:

Dei-nen ste-chen-den Blick, dei-nen strup-pi-gen Bart, o-äh' ich ihn, fasst' ich ihn stets! Dei-nes stach-lichen Haa-res stram-mes Ge-lock, um-flöss' es Floss-hil-de e-wig! Dei-ne Krö-ten-ge-stalt, dei-ner Stimme Gekräehz, o float round Flosshild' for ev-er! And thy toad-al-lied sta-ture, thy stri-dulous tones, O

(Woglinde und Wellgunde sind nahe herab getaucht.)

dürft ich stau-nend und stumm sie nur hö-ren und seh'n!  
might I 'stonished and still sate with these ev-ry sense!

(Scene 1 measures 387-400, Flosshilde and orchestra)

So a motivic figure that began as something representative of beauty and naturality in the form of the Rhinemaidens, is now forcibly being used by those Rhinemaidens to describe the hideousness of Alberich. They mock him with his own dissonant intervals and this highlights how different and incompatible they are from him. In this way they bring inequality into the world, the source of the servitude to come.

Then all three join in together in the lengthy message to Alberich “Schäme dich Albe!...” in which the Rhinemaidens explain to Alberich that he must possess and hold them tight if he is to have his way. The repeated use of the dotted triplet figure while the Rhinemaidens tell him that he must not love but possess is an important step in the shifting meaning of this figure. The dotted triplet which has now come to refer to both him and them is heavily employed in a passage that explains how the two can relate to each other: by means of unnatural servitude. This passage segues into “Heiajaheia,” which was Cooke’s source for the motive. But it is at this moment, after this realization that love is impossible and only selfish possession will get him what he needs, that the motive begins to expand and come closer to the full-length Nibelung servitude rhythm. It begins in the orchestration to the chase sequence leading up to Alberich’s possessive line “Fing’ eine diese Faust!” [I will grab one in my fist]. For the first time we see the second and third triplets of the Nibelung motive combined with the first, albeit only in the combination of two motives of the Rhinemaidens: the “Heiajaheia” in the oboes and D horn, and a triplet version of the tail of the original Rhinemaidens motive in the flutes and clarinets, but nonetheless, the Nibelung rhythm can be heard in this combination:

The image shows a musical score for the 'Heiajaheia' section, featuring the combination of the Nibelung motive and the Rhinemaidens' 'Heiajaheia' motive in the woodwinds. The score is written for Flutes (Fl. 2 u. 3), Horns (Hb. 1 u. 2, Hb. 3), Clarinets (Cl. 1, Cl. 2 u. 3), and Horns in D and C (Hr. (in D), Hr. (in C)). The music is in 3/4 time and features a dotted triplet figure. The dynamics range from *p* (piano) to *fp* (fortissimo piano) and *cresc.* (crescendo). The score is divided into three measures, with the first measure starting with a *p* dynamic and the second measure starting with a *fp* dynamic. The third measure continues the *cresc.* dynamic. The woodwinds play a complex rhythmic pattern that combines the Nibelung motive and the Rhinemaidens' 'Heiajaheia' motive.

(Scene 1 measures 470-472)

The next example of the extension of the Nibelung theme only adds one triplet, not two, but in it the contrasting two-triplet figure stands alone, unaccompanied by any other instrument in such a way as to highlight this change. It is played by cello and viola, the instruments which primarily accompanied Alberich from the beginning:



(Scene 1 measure 478, violas and cellos)

This two-triplet figure is then repeated and becomes the primary theme used to contrast with the Rhinemaidens' opening theme, and so to simulate the cat and mouse game between Alberich and the Rhinemaidens in music. Alberich is beginning to get the idea of what the Rhinemaidens are telling him, and this comes across in his adoption of this new two-triplet figure – as we see in its repeated use with the violas and cellos side by side with his original thirty-second note motive<sup>81</sup> from measures 495-505 – and in its ultimate destination and incorporation into the rhythm of the Nibelung servitude motive. His relation to them is becoming closer to that of one who wishes to make others his servants rather than not to make others to love him. His last few lines, in reaction to their exhortation to him explaining that they must be caught not loved, make it clear that he has been listening:



81

Example of Alberich's original theme.

Wut und Minne  
 wild und mächtig  
 wühlt mir den Mut auf!  
 Wie ihr auch lacht und lügt,  
 lüstern lechz' ich nach euch,  
 und eine muß mir erliegen!

...  
 Fing' eine diese Faust!<sup>82</sup>

Rage and love,  
 wild and strong,  
 excite my spirit!  
 The way you laugh and lie  
 makes me lustfully yearn after you,  
 and one of you must succumb to me!

...  
 I will grab one of you with my fist!

This is no longer about being held by them while he in turn nestles against them in love: this is about them surrendering themselves to him while he takes them; in other words, Alberich making them slaves to his will. This is reflected by this theme – now clearly associated with Alberich – being a triplet, and hence closer to the Nibelung servitude theme used to depict the servitude of the Nibelungs to his will. This game lasts until the appearance of the gold, at which point both contrasting themes give way to the gold theme, and the meter changes to 9/8, the meter of the Nibelung theme.

It is this passage that brings to mind Cooke's "joy in the potentiality of the gold" as the Rhinemaidens sing "Rheingold, Rheingold [etc...]" not only in 9/8, but, in numerous places, with the two-triplet figure expanding to one made up of three-triplets. Particularly the accompaniment and conclusion to the Rhinemaidens' "Lieblichster Albe! [etc...]"<sup>83</sup> offers the dotted triplet figure on the first and the last beats of the 9/8 and so highlight the pattern of the Nibelung theme. One can observe this in the last two measures of the message to Alberich from the Rhinemaidens beginning "Lieblichster Albe!" on the words "lieblicher lache mit uns," as the first two measures in the following example of the horn parts accompanying this passage show. But the last two measures of the example accompany their "Heiajaheia," and when the two horn parts combine their rhythms on these measures, the rhythm to the Nibelungs' servitude theme is revealed in its entirety:

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<sup>82</sup> GS V. 208.

<sup>83</sup> See: Note 75.

komm', Lieblicher, lachemituns! Hei-ja, hei-a! hei-ja, hei-a!

(Scene 1 measures 651-654 in horns, with approximate text underlay from the Rhinemaidens' parts)

Their passage concludes with a modally altered form, particularly in Wellgunde's part, of the melody of the Nibelung motive that is meant to harmonize with the gold motive, heard in the C trumpet and shown below in the bass line:

**WOGL.**  
 Wal-la-la la la lei-a ja hei!

**WELLG.**  
 Wal-la-la la la lei-a ja hei!

**FLOSSH.**  
 Wal-la-la la la lei-a ja hei!

*f* *p* *f*

(Scene 1 measures 655-656)

Aside from the final triplet and the modal alteration in the second triplet to major as opposed to the corresponding figure in the minor in the Nibelung motive, Wellgunde's line is the Nibelung motive. This passage reveals a switch in the Rhinemaidens personae: they now, under the influence of the gold, which has now brightened their world, have asked Alberich, who now seems handsome [*schön*] under

this light to join them and share in the light. The light of the gold – in this form representing freedom and equality – has made Alberich their equal where previously he was not. They have asked him to love them, but it is too late for Alberich. After an entire scene of the Rhinemaidens telling him that he must take what he wants by force, he does not quickly return to his previous state – in which he would have gladly frolicked with the Rhinemaidens – merely because he has finally received what he had wanted at the beginning, namely, *them* calling to *him* and asking *him* to join *them*. It ought to be attributed to nothing but the influence and power of the equality-inspiring gold that the Rhinemaidens have now, with their words, made gestures of love towards Alberich; but musically speaking, nothing has changed. The heavier and heavier emphasis on the Nibelung rhythm throughout this passage finally culminating in the combination between the Nibelung motive and the gold motive on the final “Wallalalala leiajahei” does not sound out love, but rather, tells him that he must take the gold, and he must take it by force, which he proceeds to do. Immediately thereafter, Alberich makes his decision to seize the gold, rule the world, and make slaves of his people. After this the next time we hear of Alberich and the Nibelungs it is from Loge, at which point we hear in the orchestra, appropriately, the final Nibelung motive, as by this point he has placed the other Nibelungs into servitude, just as we will hear it during the scene change between scenes 2 and 3.

This is not the only motive which Alberich, through his deed of theft, has altered. As we observed in measure 210, on the line “Nibelung sich gern,” Alberich’s music tends towards the diminished sonority. By his theft of the gold he alters the foreboding partially melodically- diminished Rhinemaidens’ figure:



(Scene 1 measures 599-603)

This becomes transformed into the fully melodically-diminished version of the “gold formed into a ring,” often simply referred to as the ring motive, and appearing in the English horn, clarinet and bassoon to accompany Alberich’s “World inheritance I would win for myself through you [the Ring]?”<sup>84</sup>



(Scene 1 measures 666-667)

The F# in the upper example becomes an F natural in the lower.

There is also the major second of the Rhinemaidens’ “Rheingold, Rheingold” exhortation, which becomes a minor second in Alberich’s exhortation of his power, and which is given various labels, both “Servitude” and “The Power of the Ring” by Cooke, “Woe” by Donington, and numerous others. They all come down to a glorification of power and authority for the sake of oppression, as opposed to that which the Rhinemaidens’ gold represents, namely freedom and love. Deryck Cooke said of it, “Here the Rhinemaidens’ joy in the gold has become Alberich’s sadistic pleasure in wielding the all-powerful ring he has made from the gold.”<sup>85</sup> The gold motive – the rising arpeggio – also shifts modally once Alberich steals the gold into progressively dissonant iterations of the theme, beginning in measures 692-3, with the

<sup>84</sup> GS V. 212. “Der Welt Erbe gewänn’ ich zu eigen durch dich.”

<sup>85</sup> Deryck Cooke. *An Introduction to Der Ring Des Nibelungen* (New York: The Decca Record Company, 1968).

theme now shifted to C minor, then moving to E<sup>°</sup>7 in measures 695-6, and finally to A<sup>°</sup>7 in measures 697-8.

Ultimately, nature does not make decisions, but it is capable of presenting choices. The Rhinemaidens present Alberich with such a choice. Once Alberich's desires exceed the bounds which nature has allowed for them, the Rhinemaidens suggest a way beyond the natural by which he can obtain what he wants. This is the foundation of the transition between the first and second stages of human and moral development in the Moral Progression. As long as our wants do not go beyond those nature provides for us we can live contentedly under her domain, but the second this changes the natural is rejected in favor of the unnatural, and the primary impetus becomes, as Wagner says, that of wishing to hold on to something, particularly love, past the time nature allots for you to have that object. The focus on this transition is on the self. When the self takes control and wishes for things outside of nature, it wishes to be in control and dominate, and ultimately, to take the place of the authority which was once held by nature. This episode offers an explanation, via the use and transformation of the dotted triplet figure, for how this transition in human consciousness came about. According to the Moral Progression, the means of progress into the second stage stems from desire, and the inability to immediately get the desired object thus requiring coercion or force. The triplet figure represents at first nature, then the reason why Alberich cannot get his desired object / Rhinemaiden / love – the inherent inequality between himself and them as outlined in the descriptions of him which Wellgunde and Flosshilde sing – and then later how he might obtain them – by unnatural force. The progression, i.e., the successive transformation of the triplet figure, stems from cause and effect and observable nature, just as it does in the beginning stages of the Moral Progression.

Yet we read repeatedly that there is something which arises in man associating itself with desire that is beyond the realm of nature and, simultaneously, necessary for moral progress: freedom in the case of Kant, and imagination in the case of Hume, to name two examples. Wagner offers us this as well. The origin of the gold is clouded in mystery, but it has something to do with the father of the Rhinemaidens, an equally ambiguous character, who explained the power of the gold to his daughters at some point in the past. But at the same time, though the Rhinemaidens do represent some primal natural element, the notions from their father are fundamentally unnatural. It is likely that Wagner placed these words in the father's mouth to make a Goethean point about the eternal feminine being associated with contentment in nature and its opposite, masculinity, being associated with unnatural desire, or striving beyond nature. Nevertheless, the father's voice rings out as the single unnatural voice in a natural world and so is the fount from which imaginative and free thinking and action beyond nature occurs: the nebulous source which allows humanity to progress beyond the natural.

After having been brought to the limits of reason facilitated by cause and effect, and being left dejected and unsatisfied, Alberich hears the mysterious unnatural voice of the father channeled by the Rhinemaidens, describing the unnatural deed which will free him from his prison of stagnation in dissatisfaction, and allow him to achieve his every selfish want. This is the symbolic voice of the imagination or freedom spurred on by desire, and the source of all moral growth as well as all error.

Alberich is left with two primary musical motives: that of the Nibelungs' servitude, which represents his authority over others, which has displaced natural authority, and that of the ring, which is the tool by which he is able to do this and so

represents the desire for control and authority. Both of these themes, in their status of representing the first step on the path to moral growth out of the stagnation of purely natural living, are vital to the rest of the *Ring* and the development of its characters, particularly Wotan. This episode is the only example of this initial breaking away into the second stage of development, and yet it is incomplete. Fear is a crucial part of the second stage, and Alberich is not afraid. Equally, though it is necessary to reject nature/ love-of-others in favor of self-love in order to begin moral progress, it must not be permanently rejected as the natural must be returned to at a later time in order that further progress may occur. Without the potential for this return, stagnation will follow and moral progress is still-born in the individual, as it is for Alberich. So in truth this episode only shows the first potential to break away from the grasp of nature into the second stage without fully placing Alberich in the second stage. Wotan and Fricka have experienced something similar in their desires to retain something beyond its natural capacity to be retained. For Fricka, it is Wotan's fidelity that was the initial cause of her wanting a home:

Um des Gatten Treue besorgt  
 muß traurig ich wohl sinnen,  
 wir an mich er zu fesseln,  
 zieht's in die Ferne ihn fort:  
     herrliche Wohnung  
     wonniger Hausrath  
     sollte dich binden zu  
     säumender Rast.<sup>86</sup>

Concerned over my husband's fidelity,  
 sadly, I had to consider,  
 how to shackle him to me,  
 though he was pushing away:  
     Lordly Home,  
     Glorious Hearth  
     ought it to bind you  
     to linger in repose.

And for Wotan it is power, as the opening of his monologue in *Die Walküre* informs us:

Als junger Liebe  
 Lust mir verblich,

When the pleasure of youthful love  
 began to wane,

<sup>86</sup> *Das Rheingold in Full Score*. 95 „sollte dich binden“ altered from „sollten mit sanftem Band dich Binden“ [ought with a gentle bond to bind you to linger in repose]. GS V. 214. See: Heidgen, 37.

verlangte nach Macht mein Mut: von jäher Wünsche Wüten gejagt, gewann ich mir die Welt! <sup>87</sup>	my spirit sought after power: spurred on by the fury of ever-new and fluctuating desires, I won for myself the world!
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But neither of them, unlike Alberich, had to face the denial of this unnatural want; instead a solution was offered by another aspect of nature, Loge, which would keep them from having to face the rejection which unstoppably propels moral development. So the only example of this change from love to authority before our eyes and ears, as well as the only description (musico-philosophical) of how it is attained is found here, in scene 1, which must now serve as a model in many respects for the progression already partially underway in Wotan when we see him in scene 2.

## ii – Scene 2

The transition between the two scenes focuses on the transformation from the ring motive<sup>88</sup> to the Valhalla motive:



(Scene 2 measures 769-770)

The connection between these two motives, musically and symbolically, is immediately clear to the ear and almost unnecessary to mention. Wolzogen's original analysis of the *Ring* and its motives, *Thematischer Leitfaden durch die Musik zu Richard Wagners Festspiel Der Ring des Nibelungen*, published the year of the Bayreuth premiere, describes the ring and valhalla motives and concepts as representatives of the same idea present in both Wotan and Alberich: *Macht und*

<sup>87</sup> GS VI. 37.

<sup>88</sup> See figure above of measures 666-7.

*Pracht* over love<sup>89</sup>; and this connection has played a large part in numerous summaries and philosophical analyses of the *Ring* since.<sup>90</sup>

There is general agreement as to the state of Wotan's mind and development in *Das Rheingold* before his warning from Erda. Wotan is viewed as selfish and power-hungry as Wolzogen had originally said. Some argue that he is not malicious and only wishes to organize the world and so improve it as we see in Paul Shofield, Philip Kitcher and Richard Schacht, and Roy Noon, which follow the lead of Alois Höfler's "Wotan: Eine Studie" from 1920, in which he equates the actions of Young-Wotan in building his empire as natural and stemming from his *Mut*, with Siegfried's own natural behavior after his own *Mut*.<sup>91</sup>

On the other side, there is a faction, including Michael Buckley in his "Form and Meaning in the *Ring*"<sup>92</sup> and particularly Joachim Herz in his "The Figure and Fate

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<sup>89</sup> Wolzogen equates Wotan and his desire for power over love with Alberich right at the beginning of his study, "His [Wotan's] ambition also, since the joy of young love was for him no more, lay in possession and power." (3).

In describing the Ring motive and Alberich's renunciation Wolzogen explains, "This union of motives in the formula comprises the whole tragedy of the Ring of the Nibelungs; henceforth there is universal yearning after Might and Pomp [Macht und Pracht]; and the sacred power of Love, forsworn and sold for the sake of it..." (18) On Wotan and Valhalla, he notes "Between these periods, however, the Ring-motive is repeated in its simple, most plastic fundamental form, gracefully returning to the beginning, and thus represents the ideal connection between the two scenes. For there also on the heights, among the blessed Gods into whose presence we now come, a sensual desire for might and pomp [Macht und Pracht] has been awakened, from the time that the germ thereof, slumbering in Wotan's heart, was brought to maturity by Loge counselling him to enter into a stipulation with the Giants to build him the Castle in exchange for the Goddess of Love. Thus the Ring-motive dying away into pianissimo, passes immediately into the Valhalla-motive, which is the same, only rhythmically transformed, and which introduces the second scene, describing with majestic splendor the concrete ideal of the highest divine power imagined by Wotan, and embodied in the Castle of Valhalla." (19-20). [Quoted from the English translation by Nathan Haskell Dole as: Hans von Wolzogen. *Guide to the Music of Richard Wagner's Tetralogy: The Ring of the Nibelung: A Thematic Key* trans. Nathan Haskell Dole (New York: G. Schirmer, 1895)].

<sup>90</sup> For one example among many, see: Joachim Herz "The Figure and Fate of Wotan in Wagner's 'Ring'" *Wagner* XV, no. 2 (1994), 73.

<sup>91</sup> See: Paul Schofield *The Redeemer Reborn: 'Parsifal' as the Fifth Opera of Wagners 'Ring.'* (New York: Amadeus Press, 2007), 61; Philip Kitcher and Richard Schacht *Finding an Ending: Reflections on Wagner's Ring.* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 114; Roy Noon. "'Know You What Wotan Wills': Wagner's Ring and Moral Development." *Wagner* VIII, no. 4 (1987), 129; Alois Höfler "Wotan: Eine Studie" *Bayreuther Blätter* XLIII (1920), 83-107 (particularly 94-7). Though elsewhere in the study he also stresses the power-grabbing of Wotan in *Das Rheingold* as evil, just as Noon does later in his study (126).

<sup>92</sup> Michael Buckley "Form and Meaning in the 'Ring'" *Wagner* XXV, no. 2 (2004). "It is sometimes stated or implied that Wotan has some noble plan for the world, but unfortunately chooses to further it

of Wotan in Wagner's 'Ring'" which believes Wotan is malicious in his desire for power to the point of specifically, in the case of Herz, gambling with the universe by not getting Loge to check first for a way out of the contract for Freia before making it.<sup>93</sup> This stipulation of Herz gets at the heart of the issue of Wotan's basic character in scene 2 of *Das Rheingold*: Wotan's intellectual and moral abilities. S.K. Land, in his discussion of Wotan's development, is particularly clear in his description of Wotan's earliest stage in *Das Rheingold*.

The first stage is that covered in *Das Rheingold*. Here Wotan is under the influence of Loge, a creature of great wit and versatility, but with no apparent values or commitments. In *Das Rheingold* Loge is still Wotan's trusted friend, and it is he who is responsible for the god's ill-considered contract with Fasolt and Fafner... It is because of Wotan's reliance on Loge's impossible promise that he becomes embroiled in the contradictory affairs of the ring and the spear. To enshrine the spear's authority he builds Valhalla; but to pay for the fortress he must win and relinquish the ring, thus undermining the very power he would establish. Loge really represents the early stage in Wotan's progress prior to the awareness of responsibilities and deeper meanings which forces itself upon the god's attention in the fourth scene of *Das Rheingold*, a state of child-like willfulness which sees the world as unconditionally subject to its own desires.<sup>94</sup>

As Land rightfully describes, Wotan is incapable of the kind of planning which Herz criticizes him for not doing. As long as Wotan does not fear he has no need to plan, and as long as Loge is taking care of him and leading him hither and yon in an attempt to satisfy Wotan's desires, Wotan need not consider anything but these desires. He is not prepared to lose Freia in this deal or prepared to lose or give away anything for

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by wrongful means. Of this 'noble plan' there is not the slightest hint in *Das Rheingold* – or anywhere else. His sole motivation is portrayed as a wish for power for its own sake." (85) Roy Noon's comment quoted from Note 79 above also fits into this description to a certain extent.

<sup>93</sup> Joachim Herz "The Figure and Fate of Wotan in Wagner's 'Ring'" *Wagner XV*, no. 2 (1994). "In his obsessive regard for power, Wotan acts with such precipitate haste that he fails to send out Loge in advance to find a substitute for "woman's delights and worth" (GS V 225) He acts like a genuine gambler: the giants wisely, if for highly disparate motives, stipulated Freia, and Wotan agreed, even though there was a very real risk that Loge would find nothing. He has promised the giants Freia as a reward for their labours with the firm intention of not handing her over – one ruse in response to another." (73)

<sup>94</sup> S.K. Land: "The Rise of Intellect in Wagner's Ring" *Comparative Drama V* (1971). 31-32.

that matter; loss does not figure into his vocabulary.<sup>95</sup> He is, as Land concludes, in a state of “child-like willfulness which sees the world as unconditionally subject to its own desires.”

This stage of development is just as clearly the first stage of the Moral Progression, but it is different from our view of Alberich from scene 1. When we saw Alberich, he at first wished only to love, and then he specifically forever denied love for eternal power with a deed: his forsaking of love. Wotan and Loge play within the cracks of this dichotomy. Wotan has the help of his spear, by which he can make promises to act without yet acting. In order to gain the eternal power inherent in Valhalla, he has promised to surrender Freia in a contract with the Giants, as an example of the same concept – repudiation of love – which is behind Alberich’s actual act; yet love, despite this contract, would not be wholly forsaken until the transaction is complete, which Wotan and the Gods conclude must never take place, and never had any intention of allowing to taking place. This contract, as it was in the earlier drafts, was a charade from the beginning. Both parties – Fafner and Wotan – were using it as a means of defeating their enemy without having to battle, through trickery alone, and the one pulling the strings on both sides was Loge, who had a stake in neither party. This is the position in which we find Wotan; he is prepared to receive, to temporarily satisfy his ever-shifting and expanding desires, but not to give up anything. This is what the spear has given him: contracts, and this contract in particular, this promise for future giving, have made it possible for him to reach for his highest desire, eternal power and control over the universe. At the same time he is

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<sup>95</sup> This argument is a refutation of one used by Magee in: Bryan Magee. *The Tristan Chord: Wagner and Philosophy*, in which he judges that Wotan does have the capacity for such preparation. (113-114). An argument could be made that Wotan had already sacrificed his eye, and so was indeed capable of sacrifice. But as the proceeding pages show, the Wotan who sacrificed his eye was a naturalistic, pre-selfish Wotan, much as Alberich was pre-selfish before the Rhinemaidens convinced him to be otherwise. Once he heard the call of “mine” that the well of wisdom, the spear, and contracts were able to instill in him, he no longer was capable of personal sacrifice.

enabled not yet to have to face the inherent contradiction between his desires: life and youth through Freia, and power through Valhalla.

Lending context to this scene are a few episodes of Wotan's life which are hinted at, but about which we still know little. We know that at some point in the past he married Fricka, and that, at least according to the *Das Rheingold* monologue on the matter; he surrendered his eye so that they would be man and wife.<sup>96</sup> By contrast, in *Götterdämmerung* we learn that Wotan surrendered his eye to drink from the well of wisdom, after which he tore off a branch from the world ash tree from which the spear was made. There is no mention here of Fricka or marriage. Höfler, in his "Wotan: Eine Studie," combines these two ideas. He postulates that the first contract on the spear was the marriage contract of the first marriage in the world, that between himself and Fricka.<sup>97</sup> This reconciles the two stories, to an extent, and places a narrative pre-*Das Rheingold* history, of sorts, at our disposal. Wotan, in an act parallel to Alberich's interaction with the Rhinemaidens and theft of the gold via his sacrifice of love, learned of possession and contracts by sacrificing his eye. He may have begun as a creature entirely of love, but after surrendering his eye and drinking the water, he became a creature of desire. In order to fulfill his desires, he made the spear as a means of binding what he wants to him, and the first being he bound with his new tool of desire was Fricka. This act of binding is the same as that described by the Rhinemaidens: the unnatural holding on to a thing by force past the point at which nature and mutual fancy would have retained the connection. Donington refers to it as libido, Schopenhauer calls the concept that of the primal Will wishing to fulfill all desires, but all told, the spear meant that Wotan had become awakened to his urges

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<sup>96</sup> GS V. 216. "Um dich zum Weib zu gewinnen, mein eignes Auge setz' ich webend daran."

<sup>97</sup> Alois Höfler "Wotan: Eine Studie" *Bayreuther Blätter* XLIII (1920). Of course, this theory also has its problems. If marriage is a contract engraved in the spear, then Wotan's infidelity would mean that that contract was broken, thus making him powerless, just as, according to Fasolt, the breaking of the contract with the Giants would have made the spear powerless.

for control and satisfaction; like the fruit from the tree of knowledge, the only knowledge that comes is that which causes one to desire. The spear represents the first dull urge of “Mine!” and is Wotan’s means of binding objects to himself.

We know of only one other contract, if in fact marriage was a contract, on the spear, and that is the contract for Valhalla. But Wotan would not have made the contract without an assurance from Loge that ultimately he would not have to give up Freia in order to keep the castle; in other words, the contract was written without any intention of fulfillment, and on Loge’s advice. Wotan offered nothing to these plans except his desire. His desire for control led to his relationship with Fricka, not any well-established or thought-out plan. These two pieces of information about Wotan in his life before the commencement of scene 2 show that despite the fact that he drank from the well of wisdom, the only thing he seems to have learned is the nature of possession as opposed to natural free living. Thus he did not become particularly wise except to the extent that he began his moral progression with this first step of possession, without which he would have happily stagnated in nature, libido-less.

The first conversation with Fricka is enough to set the scene for Wotan’s state of mind and stage of development. His opening line is said against the Valhalla motive, a mutation of the ring motive, and so refers to the dream of absolute power, just as the ring had done.

Der Wonne seligen Saal  
bewachen mir Tür' und Tor:  
Mannes Ehre,  
ewige Macht,  
ragen zu endlosem Ruhm!

The rapturous blessed hall  
is guarded by gate and door  
The glory of man,  
eternal might,  
rises to endless renown!

He then continues, after Fricka tries to wake him:

Vollendet das ewige Werk:

Completed is the eternal work:

auf Berges Gipfel  
 die Götter-Burg,  
 prachtvoll prahlt  
 der prangende Bau!  
 Wie im Traume ich ihn trug,  
 wie mein Wille ihn wies,  
 stark und schön  
 steht er zur Schau:  
 hehrer, herrlicher Bau!<sup>98</sup>

atop mountain's peak  
 the Fortress of the Gods  
 magnificently shines forth  
 this impressive structure!  
 As I designed in my dream,  
 as my will indicated,  
 strong and beautiful  
 it stands for all to see:  
 sublime lordly structure!

After Fricka chastises him for forgetting about the cost of the castle, he tells her that not only did he not forget, but that she ought to follow his example and not worry about the cost.<sup>99</sup> She replies by again complaining about his making the deal without the consent of the women, and further explains her reasoning for wanting a home<sup>100</sup>, to which he replies:

Wolltest du Frau  
 in der Feste mich fangen,  
 mir Gotte mußst du schon gönnen,  
 daß, in der Burg  
 gebunden, ich mir  
 von außen gewinne die Welt.  
 Wandel und Wechsel  
 liebt wer lebt:  
 das Spiel drum kann ich nicht  
 sparen.<sup>101</sup>

Wife, though you wanted  
 to trap me tightly,  
 you must allow me some leeway,  
 though, I may  
 be trapped in the castle,  
 I can only win the world if I am out in it.  
 All who live,  
 love renewal and change:  
 that sport I cannot relinquish.

First he speaks of the castle in terms of eternal might for “Man,” i.e., himself, which will gain him “eternal power” and “endless renown.” This structure, he explains, stems from his “Will” or desire, and is a direct product of it. But perhaps most clearly he explains that he must be permitted to go away from the castle from time to time, so that he may go out into the world and conquer it for himself. This is the present tense Wotan is using. Valhalla is to be a base of operations from which he is to go out and satisfy his “ever-changing and renewing” desires which, he explains, all creatures

<sup>98</sup> GS V. 213-4.

<sup>99</sup> GS V. 214. “Die steht nun – Dank den Starken: / um den Sold Sorge dich nicht.”

<sup>100</sup> See: Note 86 above for her explanation.

<sup>101</sup> GS V. 215-216.

have, and love. Essentially his plan would have been, if not for the pesky matter of paying the Giants, to have Valhalla, his new jewel, and then go out into the world, conquer it, and fulfill his every desire. Despite his line “The eternal work is completed” he does not mean, as Herz holds,<sup>102</sup> that he would have been satisfied by attaining this castle and that after this point his striving would cease, but rather that this castle is to be a starting point for the satisfaction of his desires, the desires which he first had a means to satisfy when he obtained the spear and drank from the well.

The music itself also supports this interpretation through the continued use of the valhalla motive, in this context representing both the castle Valhalla as an object, and the satisfaction of Wotan’s desires, particularly those for power. First, Wagner offers us a philosophical dichotomy between nature and the law in the motive of the spear. After this, the following upward-moving theme is associated with the Rhine and with nature:



(Scene 2 measures 81-82)

By contrast, the downward-moving theme of the spear represents the law and the evil to which Wagner was referring in the letter to Röckel from January 1854. Wagner

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<sup>102</sup> Joachim Herz, “The Figure and Fate of Wotan in Wagner’s ‘Ring’” 72-3: “At a certain moment, Wotan had wanted his power to last for ever and his life’s work to be over ‘The everlasting work is ended’ (*Das Rheingold* Scene 2 GS V. 214) Wotan’s first words already mark the onset of the twilight of the gods... Freia signifies the ability to remain eternally youthful, to be flexible, to be able to adapt, not to atrophy, to be spontaneously creative, to put forth new shoots and to be open to all that is new, in a word, ‘change and renewal.’ And Wotan seeks to sweep away all these things by building Valhalla. It is wonderful how the orchestra contradicts what he says: when he sings the words ‘All who live / love renewal and change’ (GS V. 216), we hear none of the obvious themes, but the motif associated with his absolute power, the Valhalla motif. ‘Eternity’ cannot function without constant rejuvenation in other words, without Freia.”

had said repeatedly that the law and custom were violations of nature, its opposite, with which they were at odds, and eventually had to be destroyed by nature and natural necessity. This disparity between the two is a point stressed further by the spear's origin in the destruction of the World-Ash tree. So here, Wagner gives the spear motive exactly the opposite motion from that which we find in the nature motive:



(Scene 2 measures 831-833)

The importance of the Valhalla theme as representative of Wagner's striving and the base from which he wishes to conquer the world is made clear by the use of the Valhalla theme at the moment of his explanation of Fricka wishing to trap him in the castle. The first half of the statement, "Wife, though you wanted / To trap me tightly, / You must allow me some leeway," is performed accompanied by Fricka's "herrliche Wohnung" theme in which she had described her desire to keep her husband at home in a house which would alleviate his desire to strive. "Lordly Home, / Glorious Hearth / Ought it to bind you / to linger in repose."



(Scene 2 measures 872-876)

Wotan sings the same theme when he is speaking of being trapped – “Wolltest du Frau...” – and is accompanied by this theme as well. But then on the line “daß in der Burg gefangen ich mir von aussen gewinne die Welt” the accompaniment switches to that of the Valhalla theme.

**WOTAN.**

gön.nen, daß in der Burg ge.fan.gen, ich mir von aus.sen ge.win.ne die Welt:

Wan...del und Wech.sel liebt wer lebt; das Spiel drum kann ich nicht spa.ren!

(Scene 2 measures 888-896)

At first we hear merely the rhythmic accompaniment, but then, on the words which most stress his inclination to explore and conquer – “ausen gewinne die Welt” – the orchestral accompaniment expands to include the melody of the tail of the Valhalla motive, which continues until the end of the passage. In this context then, he is using the theme to indicate that from Valhalla, he will be able to satisfy his desire for freedom and domination, but not if he is forced to stay there indefinitely. Valhalla is one desire in a chain of desires that will lead to world domination. With and from Valhalla, he will be able to conquer the world, just as with the ring Alberich can use his power to conquer the world. Owning the ring does not make him master; it is only

in the use of the power of the ring that he becomes master, and it is the same with Valhalla.<sup>103</sup>

Unfortunately for Wotan, despite the contract's ability to postpone payment and as such to postpone the relinquishing of love – Freia – for power, the time for payment does come, and this puts a damper on Wotan's dreams. However, he does not fear the Giants' arrival as the other Gods do, because of his complete faith in Loge to make sure that Freia will not have to be relinquished. When Freia comes asking for help and explaining that Fasolt is coming for her, Wotan answers only with "Let him threaten! Didn't you see Loge?"<sup>104</sup> which is then followed by a discussion between Fricka and Wotan over the trickster Loge's merits. Fricka is amazed that Wotan would trust him with Freia's fate, and Wotan explains that only Loge has the ability for trickery that is needed to ensure that Wotan gets what he wants without paying any consequences.

Wo freier Mut frommt,  
allein frag ich nach keinem;  
doch des Feindes Neid  
zum Nutz sich fügen  
lehrt nur Schlaueit und List,  
  
wie Loge verschlagen sie übt.  
Der zum verträge mir rieth,

Where free spirit is used,  
I need ask no one [for help]:  
but to direct the need of one's enemy  
for one's own use  
can only be done through intelligence  
and deceit,  
such is the craft practiced by Loge.  
He recommended this contract to me,

<sup>103</sup> What Wotan himself sings at this moment is another interpretive matter entirely:



Wotan sang this same figure at the end of his opening line "ragen zu endlosem Ruhm!" So the appearance of this figure here could simply indicate a connection between winning the world and endless renown. The problem with simply doing this is that this figure is an important one found throughout the *Ring*: an archetypal arpeggio figure associated with nature similar to the themes of the Rhinemaidens, the golden apples, and also, in an altered form, the Ride of the Valkyries. As such, the use of this figure here offers us a pregnant moment of interpretation as all of these concepts then become associated with Wotan's striving after stewardship of the world. The melody indicates that striving and change are natural, as per Erda's warning. It refers to the golden apples which Wotan is giving up by buying this castle, and so the motive is simultaneously meant ironically. It also refers to one of the major products and results of Wotan's conquering and desiring: the Valkyries, and so can be construed as an example of foreshadowing.

<sup>104</sup> Lass' ihn droh'n! Sah'st du nicht Loge GS V. 217



The next time we hear this same passage is not at the arrival of Loge, but after Wotan tells the Giants that he will not give Freia to them. Fafner says to Fasolt, “My trusting brother, perceive now, fool, the deceit” and he sings a close variant of this line using the same augmented motive of Loge that Wotan had used in accompanying his description of Loge’s craftiness:

The image shows a musical score for a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line is in bass clef with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The lyrics are: "Ge - treuster Bru - der, merkst du Tropf nun Be - trug?". The piano accompaniment is in bass clef with a key signature of two flats and a dynamic marking of *fp* (fortissimo piano). The score consists of two systems of staves. The first system shows the vocal line and the beginning of the piano accompaniment. The second system shows the continuation of both parts. The piano accompaniment features a prominent augmented motive in the bass line, which is a close variant of the one mentioned in the text.

(Scene 2 measures 1037-1040)

The use of this motive here reiterates what we had heard earlier from Wotan: that this switch of the wage, a display of craftiness of which only Loge is capable, was Loge’s plan all along. Fafner, unlike Fasolt and like Wotan, is a servant of his own wants and possession. He does not want Freia for love as Fasolt does, but for power. With Freia gone, the Gods will weaken, and the Giants will rule the world. But he too is caught in Loge’s web.

After Loge arrives he eventually gets to tell both parties of the theft of the Rheingold, and the ring made from it that grants its owner absolute power. To this Fafner, Fricka, and Wotan all have the same reaction; they must make it theirs. Why these three? Because these are the three characters in whom desire has taken hold; desire for ownership and control. We learned from earlier in the scene that Fricka desired a hearth to keep Wotan from escaping. She wanted to contain Wotan and control the relationship between them past its natural threshold, so when Loge

explains the controlling power of the ring, Fricka asks if it could also be used by a woman, to which Loge replies:

<p>Des Gatten Treu' ertrotzte die Frau, trüge sie hold den hellen Schmuck, den schimmernd Zwerge schmieden, rührig im Zwange des Reif's.<sup>106</sup></p>	<p>A wife could enforce the faithfulness of her husband, if she carried the charm, the glittering wealth that the busy dwarves smelt, who are ruled under the power of the ring.</p>
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She asks the question to the accompaniment of the “herrlicher Wohnung” theme, a theme which Loge picks up, but transfigures from 3/4 to 9/8 and which is ultimately accompanied with the Nibelung servitude theme:

**LOGE.**  
Des Gat - ten Treu' er.trotz.te die Frau, trü - ge sie  
hold den hel - len Schmuck, den schimmernd Zwerge schmie - den, rührig im Zwan - ge des

(Scene 2 measures 1472-1479)

The use of this theme reveals the true nature of Fricka's desire for control over her husband.

Fafner too, when he realizes that the ring can gain him the power and control which he also wants, explains to Fasolt that they no longer need Freia and her golden

<sup>106</sup> GS V. 227.

apples.<sup>107</sup> This realization is also seen musically in the accompaniment to Fafner's explanation to Fasolt:

**FAFNER** (zu Fasolt.)  
(to Fasolt.)

Glaub' mir, mehr als Frei - a frommt das glei - sen.de Gold: auch

ew - ge Ju - gend er - jagt, wer durch Gol.des Zau.ber sie zwingt.

*pp* *p*

Scene 2 measures 1567-1582

From measures 1568 to 1576 we hear a deformed version of the love-Freia motive, Fasolt's desire from the deal with the Gods. This motive gives way in measure 1578 to the golden apples motive, Fafner's original desire from the deal with the Gods in that the Gods would no longer have the golden apples, grow old, and die. This in turn gives way to the final desire, the desire for the Gold, in measure 1580. Musically, the former desires as represented by their motives, give way to their new desire.

Clearest of all, though, is Wotan's reaction to the ring. Immediately after Loge's response to Fricka mentioned above, the first violin enters with the love motive. This gets transformed after Fricka says to Wotan, "Might my husband win this gold?", at which point the accompaniment switches to the gold motive, played

<sup>107</sup> GS V. 229. "Glaub' mir, mehr als Freia / frommt das gleißende Gold: / auch ew'ge Jugend erjagt, / wer durch Goldes Zaubersie zwingt." [Trust me, we will profit more from the glistening gold than from Freia, and eternal youth shall be won, by he who controls the gold's magic power.]

twice in the brass, once in G major though the resolution on D is imperfed by a C in the triangle, and once in G minor, when the D is imperfed again by a C, this time in the cymbal, and all of this against a chromatic descending line in the strings.

Wotan then says “To hold sway over the ring seems to me only appropriate,” but this line is accompanied not by Valhalla or even by a pure statement of the ring or the gold motive, but instead by a warped version of the first half (the descending half) of the diminished ring motive. While Wotan sings these words the ring motive sinks deeper and deeper.

**FRICKA.**  
Ge\_wän - ne mein Gat - te sich wohl das

*Reif's.  
Ring.*  
*p molto dolce* *più p* *pp*  
*Pod*

**Gold?**  
*trem.* *pp*  
*p poco marcato* *poco marc.*

**WOTAN.**  
Des Rei - fes zu wal - ten, räth - lich will es mich dün - ken...

*pp* *più p*

(Scene 2 measures 1480-1494)

For Fricka this transition explains her shift from love to gold, i.e., force, for the benefit of keeping her husband monogamous. We can see love literally being forsaken by her in favor of force, by the replacement of the love motive by that of the

gold. But in Wotan, the ring is the culmination of his desire for absolute power and world domination – the counterpart to the castle – and so when he dreams of taking control of it, his previous desire for power in the guise of Valhalla, in which he forsakes love in favor of power, combines with this new desire for power before his eyes, and so, in essence, he forsakes love a second time. The similarity between this figure – the descending thirds – and the scalar descending passage after Erda’s warning referred to by Cooke as the “Twilight of the Gods” motive is also noteworthy. This then could be interpreted as a foreshadowing of the destruction of the Gods if they were to get the ring. But primarily, it shows Wotan to be completely under the spell of his desire for power in its combination of the two power-based, desire-driven motives into a dark ominous descending figure. This figure is far darker than anything observed during Alberich’s theft of the gold and curse on love, and so reflects the dark desire for power, untempered by reason and fear, that is Wotan’s current state.

Wotan however is limited in his ability to do any more than desire the ring. Three times over Loge’s summary of Alberich’s theft and the power of the gold Wotan says that he wants it, each time more vehemently than the last. After his second expression of his desire, seen in measures 1489-1494 above, Loge explains that in order to forge the gold into a ring one must forsake love, to which Wotan “turns away in disgust.” Seeing the negative aspects of the ring in Alberich’s hands, Donner then fearfully exclaims that the Gods will be slaves to Alberich as long as he holds this power. But Wotan responds differently. With his most vehement statement of desire toward the ring he says “I must have the Ring!” This is certainly a more overt statement of desire than “To hold sway over the ring seems to me to be only appropriate,” his second statement of desire for the ring. Wotan sees in the situation

only his desire – a stage one characteristic – not the reality of events. He is incapable of looking at the scenario rationally – as a stage two consciousness would – so that he may obtain the ring, only emotionally, in his lust for it. He does not know how to get it; he is incapable of that type of planning, and so must ask Loge. After Loge and Froh speak of the ring being more easily attainable now that Alberich has already cursed love, Wotan asks what Loge would do to obtain the ring, “So rate wie?” and it falls to Loge to get the ring through his craftiness. He enlightens Wotan with “By theft!” Again in this series of events, Wotan is shown to exist only in his child-like want of objects and power, with no ability to plan to get these objects. Loge must do it all.

Despite the stage directions for the Gods to turn to Wotan for leadership after the Giants leave with Freia – “They look inquiringly at Wotan” and then again as they begin to grow old “[F]earful, they all stand gazing expectantly at Wotan, who is lost in thought, his eyes fixed on the ground” – this relies on Loge’s plan, and it is Loge alone who carries it out. Wotan, in his limited view of the world through his own desires, tells the Gods, first, that Loge should come with him to Nibelheim, and second, that he, Wotan, will win the ring.<sup>108</sup> The winning of the ring for Wotan has to do with who will ultimately take possession of it, not who will actually procure the ring, which is Loge. But Wotan knows enough that he cannot get the ring without Loge and so Loge brings him to Nibelheim to get the ring for him, much as children are brought by their parents to the store to get a toy. Without his “parent,” Loge, Wotan would be lost and incapable of getting his desired object. When the scene ends and Loge and Wotan go on their way to Nibelheim, we hear Loge’s theme along with the “woman’s beauty and grace” figure. It is clear from this that scene 3 will be Loge’s show. Wotan follows him down to Nibelheim, and in the following scene, he

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<sup>108</sup> GS V. 233. “Auf, Loge! / hinab mit mir! / Nach Nibelheim fahren wir nieder: / gewinnen will ich das Gold.”

stands essentially idly by as Loge tricks Alberich. Loge might as well have told Wotan to be quiet while the grown-ups are talking.

### iii – Scene 3 and Scene 4 until Erda’s Warning

The third scene solidifies the impression we have of Wotan and Loge: Wotan is led to every action and is incapable of the independent action of the second stage of the Moral Progression, and Loge is capable of such action. After Mime explains the extent of the power of Alberich, and Loge warns him that the theft might not be too easy, Wotan is quick to reaffirm. Again channeling the child who knows that his mother can get him what he wants, he says “But the fiend will succumb thanks to your cunning.” His confidence in achieving his desire through Loge is most clearly shown after Mime warns Loge and Wotan of Alberich’s coming, when Wotan declares, with the full force of the Valhalla motive behind him, that he will stay and not flee before Alberich, “Sein’ harren wir hier.”<sup>109</sup>

Wotan at first attempts to play Loge’s cunning game with Alberich, but is unable to keep his ego at bay. His desire gets the best of him after Alberich explains of how he will conquer Valhalla itself. In anger he says “Be gone, you outrageous fool!”<sup>110</sup> which results in Loge having to backpedal quickly, commanding Wotan to “Be mindful!”<sup>111</sup> after which Wotan says next to nothing for the rest of the scene and completely follows Loge’s commands. It is Loge who convinces Alberich to transform into a toad, and it is Loge who commands Wotan to catch him, hold him while Loge binds him, and go back up to Valhalla accompanied at first by Loge’s

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<sup>109</sup> GS V. 240.

<sup>110</sup> GS V. 244. “Vergeh, frevelnder Gauch!”

<sup>111</sup> GS V. 244. “Sei doch bei Sinnen!”

theme, now augmented with French horns, to announce the victory of his plan.<sup>112</sup>

Wotan is incapable of independent action and must simply follow instructions so that he may satisfy his desire.

When they all return to Valhalla it is Wotan who takes control of the conversation with Alberich, particularly after Loge asks Wotan to name his price for Alberich's freedom. Once the conversation has turned to satisfying Wotan's desires, he is only too happy to speak for himself and name his ransom demands. He wishes the gold first. When he gets this Loge demands the Tarnhelm for himself; the "Listige Wehr," as Alberich describes it, could only be asked for by "Listiger Loge." Wotan would have little purpose for it. Finally, Wotan demands the ring itself. He says, after suffering through Alberich's logic-gymnastics, "Yield the ring, No chatter can prove your right to it"<sup>113</sup> and forcibly takes the ring. From here until Erda's warning he holds the ring to be the highest of all objects, as it grants him the power he so longs for – the power to control the world. He cares for nothing but this new object, of which he says "Now I hold what elevates me from one of the mighty to the mightiest lord."<sup>114</sup>

Although he is aware of the importance of Freia, and so is willing to give up the hoard for her, he draws the line at the ring. When Fasolt sees the eye of Freia and Fafner demands the ring Wotan says at first, innocently, "What, this ring?" which, after Loge explains that he is giving it back to the Rhinemaidens, is followed by

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<sup>112</sup> GS V. 247-248. Loge: (zu Wotan.) Dort die Kröte, / greife sie rasch!

(Wotan setzt seinen Fuß auf die Kröte: Loge fährt ihr nach dem Kopfe und hält den Tarnhelm in der Hand.)

Alberich: (wird plötzlich in seiner wirklichen Gestalt sichtbar, wie er sich unter Wotan's Fuße windet.) Ohe! Verflucht! / Ich bin gefangen!

Loge: Halt' ihn fest, / bis ich ihn band.

(Er hat ein Bastseil hervorgeholt, und bindet Alberich damit Arme und Beine: den Geknebelten, der sich wüthend zu wehren sucht, fassen dann Beide, und schleppen ihn mit sich nach der Kluft, aus der sie herabkamen.)

Loge: Schnell hinauf! / Dort ist er unser.

<sup>113</sup> GS V. 253. "Her den Ring! / Kein Recht an ihm / schwört dein Schwatzen dir zu."

<sup>114</sup> GS V. 253. "Nun halt ich was mich erhebt, / der Mächtigen mächtigsten Herrn!"

“What are you saying? What I took with difficulty without fear I keep for myself!”

When pushed further by Fafner he says “A shameless demand, whatever [else] in the entire world you want, I will guarantee, but I will not let go of the ring.” To this the Giants start walking off with Freia, and the Gods in terror all ask Wotan to surrender the ring, to which he replies “Leave me in peace! I will not give up the ring.”<sup>115</sup>

Wotan alone among the Gods – excluding the half-God Loge, to whom the problem the other Gods face is merely academic – is without fear in the idea of losing Freia because he has the power of the ring. The other Gods have fear, but like Wotan with Loge in scene 3 are incapable of the independent action and problem solving that would allow them to move beyond their fear.

In truth, throughout this entire passage, from the moment he receives the ring Wotan stands outside the action and dialogue. When Fricka asks if they have the ransom, it is Loge who responds. All Wotan does in this section is tell the Gods to do what the Giants told them to do: pile the gold. Wotan’s delivery and its accompaniment are equally non-active. He sings pure recitative throughout this section and is accompanied neither by one of the leitmotives associated with him nor by the ring motive. The music describes the scene: the Giants’ theme, the contradiction between love and the golden apples, both embodied by Freia, and the hoard fill the scene, but there is nothing from the absent Wotan. He is no longer

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<sup>115</sup> GS V. 260-261. The entire exchange runs thus: Wotan: Wie! diesen Ring?

Loge: Laßt euch rathen! / Den Rheintöchtern / gehört dieß Gold: / ihnen giebt Wotan es wieder.

Wotan: Was schwatzezt du da? / Was schwer ich mir erbeutet, / ohne Bangen wahr' ich's für mich.

Loge: Schlimm dann steht's / um mein Versprechen, / das ich den Klagenden gab.

Wotan: Dein Versprechen bindet mich nicht: / als Beute bleibt mir der Reif.

Fafner: Doch hier zur Lösung / muß du ihn legen.

Wotan: Fordert frech was ihr wollt: / alles gewähr' ich; / um alle Welt / nicht fahren doch lass' ich den Ring!

Fasolt: (zieht wüthend Freia hinter dem Horte hervor.) Aus denn ist's, / beim Alten bleibt's: / nun folgt uns Freia für immer!

Freia: Hilfe! Hilfe!

Fricka: Harter Gott, / gieb ihnen nach!

Froh: Spare das Gold nicht!

Donner: Spende den Ring doch!

Wotan: Lass't mich in Ruh'! / Den Reif geb' ich nicht.

concerned with the action as he has the ring and is prepared to watch the world burn rather than surrender the satisfaction that comes with obtaining his newest desire; until, that is, the arrival of Erda.

#### iv – Scene 4: After Erda’s Warning

Wotan believes he has found something which will satisfy him and keep him safe for all eternity, and so is utterly fearless and stalwart about retaining it. But Erda’s warning changes this. The specific contents of the warning have been discussed above,<sup>116</sup> but the consequence of this warning is that for the first time Wotan feels fear.<sup>117</sup> Whereas previously the ring meant power and security, now it means “irrevocably dark perdition”<sup>118</sup> for he who retains it. Where before he was “without fear” in retaining the ring he would now be filled with fear. Wagner accentuated this message of fear from Erda more than he did in the earlier drafts of

<sup>116</sup> See pg. 404. The addition of the nature and “twilight of the gods” motives throughout this passage adds little to enlighten us as to the change which Erda’s warning brings about in Wotan save the diminished 7<sup>th</sup> outlined in the words “Rettungslos dunklem Verderben” and the use of a syncopated accompaniment figure on “Doch höchste Gefahr / führt mich heut / selbst zu dir her:”



(Scene 4, measures 3490-4)

This figure, long associated with Alberich but particularly now associated with the opening of Alberich’s curse (“Bin ich nun frei? / Wirklich frei!”) lets us know that because of Alberich and his curse, Wotan should be pondering in care and fear.

<sup>117</sup> Sandra Corse, in her Hegelian analysis of the *Ring* briefly outlines the importance of this fear in Wotan’s potential for growth, “Erda brings Wotan the fear for his own existence that generates the suffering that finally enables him to come to understanding, and his character begins to change, even in the remainder of *Das Rheingold*... Erda brings doubt and fear to Wotan because she does not fit into Wotan’s world. Safe in his own common sense rationality and reliance upon masculine dominance, ignoring the curse and Loge’s and Fricka’s criticism, he has not yet been shaken out of his complacency.” *Wagner and the New Consciousness*, 104.

<sup>118</sup> GS V. 261. Erda: Flieh! des Ringes Fluch! / Rettungslos / dunklem Verderben / weihst dich sein Gewinn.”

this scene by making Erda conclude “I warned you, you know enough” with “ponder in care and fear!”<sup>119</sup> Wotan has now been commanded to think for himself and to fear. Both commands he obeys. His immediate reaction is to follow Erda so that he may learn more of the reason for his caring and fearing, but Fricka and Froh stop him. He is unaware of who this person is who just instilled fear in him, as the others must explain to him who Erda is,<sup>120</sup> but he is now aware of the fact that as a direct result of his desires, his life is in jeopardy. From this new-found knowledge, after a few moments of contemplation in which we hear Erda’s nature motive, the spear motive then follows and he surrenders the ring to the Giants: the contract is complete, the agreed-upon substitute for Freia will pay for the fortress and this decision was reached not through the hopeful statements and exhortations of the other Gods, but through contemplation of Erda and her warning:

The image shows a musical score for a scene. The top staff is a vocal line for Wotan, starting with a fermata and then singing "Zu mir,". The bottom two staves are piano accompaniment. The piano part begins with a *pp* (pianissimo) dynamic and features a complex, rhythmic bass line with many chords. The tempo and mood markings include *f* (forte), *f molto* (f molto), and *risoluto* (determined). The key signature has one flat (F major or D minor), and the time signature is 4/4.

(Scene 4 measures 3543-3551)

But as in the prose drafts, the curse and fear of it do not fully grip Wotan until he has witnessed the power of the curse via the murder of Fasolt. He exclaims after witnessing it “Terrible now, I discover the power of the curse.” Then, “deeply agitated,” he says:

<sup>119</sup> GS V. 262. “Sinne in Sorg’ und Furcht!”

<sup>120</sup> GS V. 262. Specifically Froh after Erda leaves explains: “Stop Wotan! / fear the exalted one, / obey her words!” But the others seem to know her when all Wotan can see upon her arrival is: “Who are you, exhorting woman?”

Wotan: (tief erschüttert) Wie doch Bangen mich bindet! Sorg' und Furcht fesseln den Sinn; wie sie zu enden, lehre mich Erda: zu ihr muß ich hinab! <sup>121</sup>	(deeply agitated) Now fear binds me! Care and fear bind my reason; how to end this Erda will teach me: to her I must now descend!
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Despite Fricka's attempts to comfort him with the knowledge of their new home, accompanied by her "House and Hearth" motive, he still broods on the curse, as we hear the motive of the ring, and he speaks of "the horrible wage which paid for the new home". It is then left to Donner and Froh to clear the skies and create the bridge that will allow them into Valhalla while Wotan continues to silently ponder in his changed state.

The other Gods are left unaffected by the near-death experience and ominous warning from Erda; they happily enter the castle to make the best of their situation. Wotan does not choose to do this. Once all is prepared Wotan offers a blessing to the castle and christens it Valhalla:

Abendlich strahlt der Sonne Auge; in prächt'ger Gluth prangt glänzend die Burg: in des Morgens Scheine mutig erschimmernd lag sie herrenlos hehr verlockend vor mir. Von Morgen bis Abend in Müh und Angst nicht wonnig ward sie gewonnen! Es naht die Nacht: vor ihrem Neid biete sie Bergung nun. So - grüß' ich die Burg, sicher vor Bang und Grau'n.	The sun's setting rays gleam a magnificent glow on the now shining castle: in the morning it proudly shone, enticingly standing there masterless and exalted before me. From morning until evening in toil and trouble, distastefully was it won. Now the night nears: before its enemy it now offers shelter. So I greet the fortress, safe from all fear and dread.
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<sup>121</sup> GS V. 265.

He then tells Fricka to follow him into their new home which he names Valhalla.

When she asks about its meaning he says:

Was, mächtig der Furcht,  
mein Mut mir erfand,  
wenn siegend es lebt -  
leg' es den Sinn dir dar!<sup>122</sup>

What by powerful fear  
my spirit bore,  
when victoriously it comes to pass,  
then will the name be clear to you!

The music accompanying Wotan's blessing of Valhalla portrays Wotan's progression to the second stage of the Moral Progression. This blessing goes over the events of Das Rheingold in microcosm; Wagner offers us a compact summary of Wotan's progress ending, for the moment, at this moment. The chronology starts from the events of the beginning of scene 2, as we hear the tail of the Valhalla motive as Wotan explains the glorious enticing shine he experienced when viewing the castle in the morning. He is still blissfully unaware of what he would have to do to ultimately win his castle, having merely promised payment through the spear without considering what it would mean to actually give payment:

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<sup>122</sup> GS V. 266-267.

**WOTAN.**

In des Mor-gens Schei - ne mu - thig er - - schimmernd lag sie

her-ren-los, hehr - - ver - lo - ckend vor mir.

*dim*

*più p* *p*

(Scene 4 measures 3755-3762)

Then the accompanying motive shifts to the darker ring, as he explains the inglorious way he had to buy the castle from the Giants:

mir. Von Mor - - - gen bis A - - bend, in

Mü - und Angst, nicht won - - - nig

ward sie ge - won - - - nen!

*p* *p*

*più p*

*dim*

(Scene 4 measures 3762-3770)

Just before he speaks of the “approaching night,” the evil from which the castle will protect him, we hear the Erda motive, implying that the evil is the one that she had mentioned:

**WOTAN.**

won - - - nen! Es naht die  
Nacht: vor ih - rem Neid bie - te sie Ber - gung nun.

*dim.* *pp* *cresc.* *f*  
*trem.* *pp* *cresc.* *molto cresc.*

(Scene 4 Measures 3770-3777)

That brings us to the present time. We then hear a new theme, followed by Wotan saying – “as if he was just seized by a grand thought” – that the hall will keep them safe, similarly accompanied by this new motive, which now also includes the falling-fifth tail of the new motive first sung by Wotan on “sicher vor Bang”:

(Wie von einem grossen Gedanken ergriffen, sehr entschlossen)

Molto risoluto.

So grüss'ich die Burg, si - cher vor Bang' und  
Graun!

*ff* *p* *fp*

(Scene 4 Measures 3778-3787)

After Fricka asks about the meaning of the name Valhalla, rather than answering her directly, he tells her of a victory yet to come. Wotan sings a rhythmic variant of the first four notes of this new theme, only to break away from the theme on the word “lebt” while the orchestra accompanies this passage with the Valhalla theme<sup>123</sup>:

Was mach - - - tig der Furcht mein Muth mir er - fand. wenn  
sie - - - gend es lebt, leg' es den Sinn dir dar.

*non legato* *p* *cresc*

(Scene 4 measures 3796-3806)

<sup>123</sup> The melodic variation after “lebt” of the new figure can be viewed as yet another way that Wagner foreshadows the failure of his plan to keep the Gods ultimately safe. The melody changes at the end of the phrase “wenn siegend es lebt,” referring to his plan, which he assumes will be victorious. But since the theme breaks down at that point, Wagner is telling us that this plan will never be victorious, and will not save the Gods.

We do not need to know that this new theme represents specifically the sword, only that it represents a plan brewing in Wotan's mind – his first independently constructed plan – and that he thinks it will save the Gods from destruction. At the end of the “approaching night” Wagner could have used the Valhalla theme, avoided any talk of future events, and had the Gods walk over the bridge into Valhalla. This Wotan would then be nearly where he was at the beginning of scene 2 when he wanted to use Valhalla as a base of operations from which he could go out into the world and satisfy his desires. But this does not happen. Instead we hear a completely new theme, and Wotan speaks of a future plan that will save them all. Wotan explains that the victorious plan stemmed from his new-found fear, instilled in him by Erda, to whose motive this new theme bears a striking resemblance. What is being shown here by this new motive is that Wotan is now capable not only of independent thought but of long-term planning. He is capable of creating something from his own will, a new theme that will save the world from Alberich's curse and cruel nature's entropy, and bring victory to the gods. His fear has brought him the power to create and shape the world as he sees fit by a plan which we have yet to see or understand, but we know exists and is perfectly clear in his mind. We observe Wotan shift from a blind follower of his desires in the first stage of the Moral Progression, to a planning, creating being, mindful and fearful of the world and the dangers in it, and so inspired to change that world for what he sees as the best. Wotan has entered the second stage, and Wagner has shown us this transition through the emphasis on his experiencing fear, and his creating a long-term new plan, represented by the new motive, to stave off what he will only later learn after further moral progress, is certain destruction.

But as Wagner told Röckel, this progress only opens the door for destruction.

The plan is based upon fear, specifically “fear of the end” which Wagner described in his letter to Röckel of January 1854 as:

[T]he source of all lovelessness, and this fear is generated only when love itself is already beginning to wane. How did it come about that the feeling which imparts the highest bliss to all living things was so far lost sight of by the human race that everything that the latter did, ordered and established was finally conceived only out of a fear of the end? My poem shows the reason why.<sup>124</sup>

The waning place love holds in the world, which all of the characters are experiencing by their placement of gold and power above Freia, gives way to a new system of order through Wotan’s desire to avert the end because of his fear. Although fear is a necessary stage of moral development it is equally, as Wagner explained, the source of the imperfect system that Wotan creates in his attempt to save himself from the curse, and so must be conquered for further development to take place.

Further moral progress is necessary, as he is not looking to stop the curse and save the world, as we observe in the prose draft, but rather to be victorious over it and save himself, seemingly unaware that the very power he will be using to conquer the curse, the ring, and his enemies is also the source of the power of the ring: Valhalla and the ring are both representations of authoritative power over universal love. The plan is imperfect from the beginning as it is still based on selfish desire; only the means at Wotan’s disposal have changed.<sup>125</sup> Both Loge and the Rhinemaidens are aware of this contradiction. Where the Gods see the noble castle reflected by the

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<sup>124</sup> *Selected Letters of Richard Wagner*, 306-7.

<sup>125</sup> See, among other similar explanations: Warren Darcy. “Redeemed from Rebirth: Evolving Meaning of Wagner’s Ring” in *Wagner in Retrospect: A Centennial Reappraisal*. ed. Leroy Shaw, Nancy Cirillo, and Marion Miller (Amsterdam: Rodopi Bv, 1987.) “Donner’s subsequent dispersal of the mists of old age symbolizes Wotan’s emergence from the moral darkness he entered in Scene 2; he is reborn with a “grand idea” – to fill Valhalla with armed warriors, and create a free hero to win back the ring. However, because this plan is still founded upon power and aggression, the inseparable attributes of human egoism, it will ultimately prove as fruitless as the rainbow’s illusory promise of hope.” (52).

Valhalla motive, Loge sees the root of Valhalla in authoritarianism which is reflected by the ring motive accompanying his premonitory speech about the inevitable destruction by fire of Valhalla and the Gods:

<p>Ihrem Ende eilen sie zu, die so stark im Bestehen sich wähnen. Fast schäm' ich mich mit ihnen zu schaffen; zur leckenden Lohe mich wieder zu wandeln spür' ich lockende Lust. Sie auszuzehren, die einst mich gezähmt, statt mit den blinden blöd zu vergeh'n – und wären's göttlichste Götter – nicht dumm dünkte mich das! Bedenken will ich's: wer weiß was ich tu'!<sup>126</sup></p>	<p>They are hastening to their end, though they presume themselves strong by what they have endured. I am almost ashamed to act with them; I feel an alluring desire to transform myself back into a destructive flame. To consume those who once tamed me, instead of stupidly passing away with the blind – though they be the most godly of gods – would not be foolish of me! I will consider it: who knows what I'll do!</p>
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The alteration to the Valhalla motive that we hear juxtaposed with his own fiery motive up until “Fast schäme ich mit...” is enlightening. It incorporates the diminished sonority of the ring with the minor 7 sonority of Valhalla, in effect revealing the imperfection of Valhalla, and its origin in the ring, all while Loge is explaining to us the same thing verbally: that the Gods are too caught up in authority and greed to see that they cannot defeat it as long as they are using it themselves. The rest of the example below outlines the unequivocal ring motive itself while Loge explains how filled with shame he is to be participating in this authority-based debacle.

But the final word is that of the Rhinemaidens. They were the keepers of the gold that shone on all equally, the symbol of the non-authoritarian world of equality. When Loge tells them that Valhalla has replaced their gold, and so they should now

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<sup>126</sup> GS V. 267.

bask in its glory instead of their gold's, they do not see a shining castle in whose light they can bask, but the darkness of the dragon's wing, the darkness of authoritarian rule, and so they dissonantly declare it and all who live above the Rhine "falsch und feig." The creatures of nature recognize that the Gods' rule is still an authority divorced from the natural: it only remains for Wotan to recognize this.

Ih - rem En - de ei - len sie zu, die so stark im Be - steh - en sich wähnen.

Fast schäm' ich mich mit ih - nen zu schaf - fen; zur

le - ckenden Lo - - he mich wie - der zu wan - - deln, spür' ich lo - ckende Lust: sie

(Scene 4 measures 3806-3815)

#### v – Motives of Wotan and Fricka: A Post-Script to *Das Rheingold*

One of the more intriguing musical devices Wagner uses to portray Wotan philosophically is the character's complete lack of an independent motive. The absence of a formal motive for Wotan is surprising, but not against the backdrop of

the Moral Progression. In stages one and two of the Moral Progression, the individual exists only in the desire for objects and does not distinguish between himself and the outside world. The objects of his desire are his world, and make up who he is. So when we see Wotan at the beginning of scene 2, we hear the motive associated with his most recent desire, Valhalla. This motive symbolizes his desire for power and authority, much as the ring theme does for Alberich. The other motive we often hear associated with Wotan is the spear, which also does not refer to Wotan the person, but to the law-contracts by which he rules, and his ability to rule. The spear is another object of his desire that was necessary in order to satisfy further desires. By the end of scene 2 Wotan, during his three separate statements of desiring the ring, begins to associate himself with the ring motive: another desire for another object.

As long as he exists solely in the satisfaction of his desires, the desires are all that exist, not the individual; so we hear just the desires, not the man. It is only when Wotan gives up desiring and becomes the Wanderer that we hear a motive, independent of his desires, which represents the individual. Now that he has separated himself from desire, and is able to look on the world objectively, he exists outside of the objects in the world; and this state is reflected by the Wanderer theme.

Fricka has a motive that is associated with her, but it too represents a desire. The “House and Hearth,” motive appears when she is explaining her desire to settle and to end striving; to hold on to her husband and prevent him from leaving. Though Valhalla is often associated with the Valhalla motive, to Fricka it is her “House and Hearth,” as we observe when she is telling Wotan just after he saw Fafner kill Fasolt:

Wo weil'st du, Wotan?  
 Winkt dir nicht hold  
 die hehre Burg, die des  
 Gebieters  
 gastlich bergend nun harrt?<sup>127</sup>

What are you waiting for Wotan?  
 Doesn't the lofty castle  
 pleasingly beckon you, the  
 comfortable shelter  
 which only awaits its master?

This is accompanied not by the Valhalla motive, but by the “House and Hearth” motive, as that is what the castle is to her, a promise of security and fidelity. Fricka, then, also only exists in her desire. Fricka and Wotan represent the two sides of the Hegelian dialectic that comes into play after the initial separation from nature: striving and complacency. Yet Fricka’s characteristic is expressed within an oxymoron: she represents complacency, but she is striving for complacency. In *Die Walküre*, much as in *Das Rheingold*, she is incapable of independent action and comes to Wotan to get him to act for her. She is ultimately limited in her safe view of the world. As long as the law is in place, she has her complacency and so her striving is at an end, her desire satisfied, and therefore, she is incapable of further development. It is only from the realization of the impossibility of satisfying all desires that progress to objectivity and a return to a natural state becomes possible, and that does not happen for her. But without her, it would not have happened for Wotan. So she, as “antithesis” to Wotan’s “thesis”, must not have a motive, just as Wotan must not have a motive. She exists only in her striving after the opposite of what Wotan is striving after.<sup>128</sup> That is the only way, through conflict of contrasting desires, that Wotan can progress to an objectively natural state as the Wanderer in *Siegfried*.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> GS V. 265.

<sup>128</sup> In Jungian language, Donington offers a similar view of Fricka: “She stands for a part of Wotan’s inner femininity which knows better than he does himself what, after all, he needs to know, since it is profoundly true and important to him.” (*Wagner’s ‘Ring’ and its Symbols*, 150). Nattiez, preferring to focus on the human relationships in the *Ring*, does not discuss the Wotan-Fricka relationship except to echo Donington in calling her Wotan’s negative anima: “In Fricka, Wotan sees an aspect of the eternal feminine, albeit a negative aspect – the anima that has borrowed male logic and inflexibility from the animus...Siegfried exists only as a product of Wotan’s will, which is thwarted by the negative animus embodied by Fricka.” (*Wagner Androgyné*, 220).

<sup>129</sup> There is another motive associated with Fricka, which will be discussed in further detail in the analysis of Act II of *Die Walküre*. Deryck Cooke, among others names the following theme from *Die*

B – *Die Walküre*

## i – Preliminaries

Because of the nature of *Die Walküre* it will be impossible to discuss it in the systematic way in which *Das Rheingold* was discussed. In *Das Rheingold*, nearly everything that is going on occurs on stage. It is an action opera, and the few narratives there are concerning past events are limited in scope and are viewed with a singular point of view. But in between *Das Rheingold* and *Die Walküre*, Wotan and his plan have gone from the realm of mere idea to the verge of completion, and as such an entire universe of plans within plans has intervened. And yet, when Wotan finally realizes that his plans are doomed to failure, we all must know why. What this means is that there is little action occurring in this opera, with a substantial portion of it being spent on narrative and explanations, both of what has occurred in the interim and of the logical fallacies of the events and the thinking behind them that led to the plan's failure.

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*Walküre*, “Fricka in Valkyrie”: first heard just before Fricka’s arrival on Wotan’s lines “The old storm, the old strife.”



(*Die Walküre* Act II m. 158-161) But in truth this theme is a sequencing of the end of the sword motive on which Wotan said “sicher vor Bang” juxtaposed against a slow, descending, spear-like figure underneath it, and so, as will be explained below, is not a theme representing Fricka herself, but rather, her role as defender of the Gods and law, just the role Wotan had indicated with that figure in *Das Rheingold*.

Moreover, nearly every narrative, with the exception of Wotan's monologue, constitutes a contradictory perspective on those events offered by another character on stage; and so the inherent truth of the events discussed is less important than the perspective according to which they are framed. During Siegmund's narrative in Act I, Hunding interjects with his own contrary perspective on these events and on Siegmund's character, as he views Siegmund's own perspective as wholly foreign. In Act II, Fricka and Wotan discuss the events of Act I from their contradictory perspectives of solidified custom and striving desire. Finally in Act III, Wotan and Brünnhilde argue over her siding with Siegmund in the battle with Hunding in Act II, and over whether she was acting as a representative of Wotan's "will," as Brünnhilde claims, or a traitor, as Wotan claims, at least initially.

The events that have occurred both between and during the two operas are constantly being reevaluated in dialectic fashion, and so time does not move in the same linear fashion as it had in the action-oriented *Das Rheingold*.<sup>130</sup> *Die Walküre* is a psychological opera entirely devoted to Wotan and the vital realization that takes place between the second and third stages of the Moral Progression when desires are seen to be contradictory and absolute subjective selfish victory impossible. Each side of the three dialectical oppositions of the narratives in *Die Walküre* is an aspect of Wotan's will, freedom and custom: the first between Siegmund and Hunding ending with no resolution, the second between Wotan and Fricka ending with renunciation of one of the sides – freedom – and the third between Wotan and Brünnhilde ending in a

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<sup>130</sup> See for example Wotan's description to Fricka of the necessary hero of the Gods, in which being outside the law is stressed: "We need a hero, who is separated from godly protection and so is outside the laws of the Gods." Compare this with the description of the necessary hero to Brünnhilde, stressing how detached he personally must be from the hero: "a hero whom I have never guided; One unfamiliar with the Gods, but freely of his own will unconsciously, without being bid, from his own need with his own ability does the deed, which I must avoid though my counsel never advised him, but who also desires my single desire."

synthesis of the two sides that brings Wotan to the third stage of the Moral Progression.

A different approach is necessary, then, in dealing with *Die Walküre*, and particularly Wotan's progression. Rather than looking at the opera linearly, it will be looked at thematically, i.e., through Wotan's moral progression. By way of review, a summary of the transition between the second and third stages of the Moral Progression will offer a guideline for how *Die Walküre* can be discussed thematically. The transition in the Moral Progression between the second and third stages is consistent throughout the writings of those discussed in Part I, but it is most fleshed-out in the writings of Hegel, and as such, our review will focus on this expanded version.

As mentioned in the discussion of *Das Rheingold*, the onset of the second stage is the beginning of fear, which in turn brings on the ability to plan long-term, in other words, the putting off of the satisfaction of desires so that they may more fully be satisfied in the future: short-term suffering for long-term pleasure. The primary characteristic of the type of thinking employed in this stage is conscious reflection independent of the natural state. Desire is still what spurs on all action, but the will now views its own desires as those also desired by the world as a whole and assumes everything will be better if only these desires are allowed to be satisfied. This is essentially what Hegel described as his "the law of the heart": subjectivity becomes a universal, which Hegel himself broadens, adding an important wrinkle to this law, namely, a version of natural necessity. Hegel explains that when the law of the heart takes over, its law stems not from rules, but from a type of inner necessity that is felt by each individual. It is not the natural necessity that occurs when the individual gives up his self-centered view of the world in favor of an objective self-less one, as

the law of the heart rejects all necessity that goes against itself, but rather a necessity that works in conjunction with and is limited by the rules brought about by the law of the heart. He explains:

This individuality therefore directs its energies to getting rid of this necessity which contradicts the law of the heart, and also the suffering caused by it. And so it is no longer characterized by the levity of the previous form of self-consciousness, which only wanted the particular pleasure of the individual; on the contrary, it is the earnestness of high purpose which seeks its pleasure in displaying the excellence of its own nature, and in promoting the welfare of mankind... *Individuality and necessity are one; the law is the law of the heart.* Individuality is not as yet dislodged from its seat, and the unity of both has not yet been brought about by the mediating agency of the individuality itself, has not yet been achieved by discipline. The realization of the immediate undisciplined nature passes for a display of excellence and for bringing about the well-being of humanity.<sup>131</sup>

For Hegel, as for the others in the *Zeitgeist*, the problem of this stage is that desires inevitably conflict with each other. Given the limited knowledge of the self, there is no way of knowing whether the actions envisioned to be the best from the selfish subjective perspective would actually attain the goal sought after. So inevitably, the self comes into a contradiction after which the ego lies broken. Hegel describes a separate stage here. First he calls the stage in which this realization occurs the “unhappy consciousness,” then he explains that rather than move on to an objective perspective as Schopenhauer, Kant, Schiller, and Schelling do, the self immediately adopts the exact opposite of selfishness as the system which it lives by, “the way of the world,” which, rather than being an objective perspective – a synthesis in dialectic terms – is a not-self, merely the antithesis, and abiding by exactly those rules from which the self wished to revolt when it followed the “law of the heart,” and so of itself also imperfect. It is only when the self makes a conscious choice to surrender its

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<sup>131</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 221-222. See Part I: Note 318 for a note on the translation.

subjectivity and to live through objectivity and natural-necessity, that the third stage of development is reached.

There are two primary details that Feuerbach adds to this stage which, aside from his use of non-spiritually focused language, are the same as in Hegel's outlining of it. The first concerns how the subjective self views the world: "the subjective man is not guided by the wearisome laws of logic and physics, but by the self-will of the imagination; hence he drops what is disagreeable in a fact, and holds fast alone what is agreeable."<sup>132</sup> The being of the second stage, particularly during the "law of the heart" stage, is willing to ignore facts that are inconsistent with his desires, the main desire being immortality. To achieve this goal man follows the example of an imagined God, which is at its core an unreal ideal outside the limiting laws of the world, and through which all things, including immortality, are possible. Naturally, in dialectical terms, God is considered a "Not-I"; the very opposite of the things in the world. So this leads to the second detail which Feuerbach adds: in order to be immortal and live beyond the means which the world allows, one must abandon, in a manner akin to Hegel when one abandons the hedonistic life style for the "law of the heart," all the natural laws in favor of their opposite – grand plans and dreams. This way, the hoped-for un-reality, immortality, with its un-real anti-rules, will become reality. The ludicrousness of this stage is made transparent by Feuerbach, and so he adds that this stage is not one in which even the most subjective of beings can remain for long.

With this glance back to Part I in mind, let us delve into *Die Walküre* and Wotan's transition from the second stage, from the "law of the heart," through the

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<sup>132</sup> Feuerbach, *Essence of Christianity*, 137. See also: Part I: pgs 187-188.

“way of the world,” and finally, to the third stage in his conscious decision to abandon selfishness and take up objective natural necessity.

ii – Wotan and the Law of the Heart: The Text

Wotan’s transition between Stages 1 and 2 in scene 4 of *Das Rheingold* has already been established. Wotan takes conscious control of his destiny away from Loge and conceives a grand, long-term plan to take back the ring. We now know the nature of this plan: Wotan explains to Fricka what the Gods need to be saved from the terrors of the end: someone other than themselves holding on to the ring:

Eines höre!  
 Not tut ein Held,  
 der, ledig göttlichen Schutzes,  
 sich löse vom Göttergesetz:  
 so nur taugt er  
 zu wirken die Tat,  
 die, wie not sie den Göttern,  
 dem Gott doch zu wirken  
 verwehrt.<sup>133</sup>

Hear this alone!  
 We need a hero,  
 who is separated from godly protection,  
 and so is outside the laws of the gods.  
 Only he is capable  
 of accomplishing the deed  
 which, although the Gods need [it to be  
 done],  
 they are themselves prevented  
 from doing.

The deed is the slaying of Fafner, and it can be accomplished by this singular hero by means of the sword, which, when united with the hero, culminates in the proud presence of the “grand idea” motive from *Das Rheingold*: the idea fulfilled. This is what Wotan believes will save the Gods: a hero operating outside their laws. But how to create such a creature?

First, Wotan must ignore the blatant fact, which Fricka exposes to him, that such a hero cannot be created and influenced by a God. The way Wotan chooses to look at this problem is more specifically that the hero must not be under the influence

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<sup>133</sup> GS VI. 32.

of the laws of the Gods. Once this step is taken, Wotan goes one step further. He places himself and his desire, the law by which he governs men, at the diametrically opposite pole from that of the rule or order of the Gods and the spear which embodies that order. The laws engraved on the spear shape the reality of the world; a reality where the power of the individual is limited and in which Wotan is not able to achieve his goal of gaining the ring and warding off doom, in short, this reality is Hegel's hedonistic natural world, or Feuerbach's world in which immortality is not possible. Wotan rejects this reality in favor of one based on his will, a reality shaped by his "law of the heart," a fantasy world where he can ignore facts that don't agree with his view – "drop the disagreeable in a fact", as we see in Feuerbach's view of the second stage.

This shift in Wotan is most apparent at the opening of the monologue in Act II. As was mentioned in the above discussion of the verse draft, he is twisting the facts of his own history so as not to admit to himself the depth of the conflict within him. He explains, "When the pleasure of youthful love began to wane, my spirit sought after power: spurred on by the fury of ever-new and fluctuating desires, I won for myself the world! Unknowingly deceitful, I practiced treachery and bound by treaty that which contained evil; Loge craftily tempted me, now he's wandered off for good."<sup>134</sup> In Wotan's mind, it is Loge who is responsible for the laws of the current world; he himself is innocent of them by reason of ignorance – he was deceitful, but he was unknowingly so. He assumes that it is through his desire and the constant wish to fulfill desire that he won the world. Yet even here, some reality still is not lost on him as he explains that it was the contract with the Giants that brought peace with them,

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<sup>134</sup> See pgs 407-8.

and it was a contract with the humans that brought them under the authority of the Gods:

<p>Daß stark zum Streit uns fände der Feind, hieß ich euch Helden mir schaffen: die herrisch wir sonst in Gesetzen hielten, die Männer, denen den Mut wir gewehrt, die durch trüber Verträge trügende Bande zu blindem Gehorsam wir uns gebunden – <sup>135</sup></p>	<p>So that our foes would find us strong and ready for battle I bid you to bring heroes to me: ones who we control who are bound by our laws, men whose spirit we bridled through dark contracts deceitful bonds, we bound them in blind obedience –</p>
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But despite this bit of reality sinking in, he views his winning the world as a result of chasing his own desire and satisfaction, and not of his contracts which he admits on some level actually bind the world to his will. Wotan's delusion is clear as is his readiness to "drop what is disagreeable in a fact."

Now he takes his final deluded step, one which he thinks will fulfill his goal of gaining the ring. Since he and his rulership of the world are based on will and striving and not on the unjust laws of Loge, it is perfectly acceptable for him to cultivate will and striving in others – particularly Siegmund – against Loge's unjust laws. He need not instill respect for the law as that has nothing to do with how he feels the world is governed; he can instill independence and free will through personal striving, the elements which he feels do govern the world and by which he feels he won the world. Siegmund can then simultaneously be with Wotan, and against the laws of the Gods. But this is only possible as long as Wotan is deluding himself into thinking that he has nothing to do with the law.

By being such an influence on Siegmund and humanity as a whole, he has become his own antithesis of his role as lawgiver in *Das Rheingold*, the God who

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<sup>135</sup> GS VI. 39.

protected the world of contracts by calling to Donner, “No violence,” when he was about to strike the Giants with his hammer. Now he wishes to go against the world of contracts and incite violence against it. In the 1853 published edition of the poem, which was carried over into the *Gesammelte Schriften*, first published in 1871, Wagner included a supplementary 127 lines of text for the scene between Fricka and Wotan in Act II which he ultimately decided not to set to music, but that he felt nonetheless were important enough to carry over into the written edition of the poem. In this extension, Wotan admits that he is stirring violence in men against the law so as to reveal the inner lies which inhabit all peace brought on by force, an idea of the law familiar from Proudhon and his own *Jesus von Nazareth*. Fricka’s summary of Wotan’s influence runs as follows:

<p>Wenn blinde Gewalt trotzig und wild rings zertrümmert die Welt, wer trägt einzig des Unheil's Schuld, als Wotan, Wüthender, du? Schwache beschirm'st du nie, Starken steh'st du nur bei: der Männer Rasen in rauhem Mut, Mord und Raub ist dein mächtig Werk;<sup>136</sup></p>	<p>If blind force insolent and wild from all sides tears apart the world who alone would carry the unholy fault, than, you, Wotan, the ruthless? The weak you never protect, you only aid the strong: the rage of men, their course spirit, murder and theft is the work of your influence.</p>
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To which Wotan responds gladly that he would inspire war wherever the false peace of the law can be revealed for what it is: a lie. Wotan, by his actions, is reliving the moment of the making of the bargain with the Giants, but now is not stopping Donner from revealing the true nature of the bargain. The bargain with the Giants created peace, but a more warlike and dishonest peace than one that could have resulted from actual battles between the Giants and Gods, with each party assuming that upon the

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<sup>136</sup> GS VI. 26-27.

completion of the bargain they would be ruler of the world. So now he incites others to avoid exactly this type of peace which he made and so takes up a position of independent anti-law violence against his previous position from *Das Rheingold*, which now Fricka is forced to take up in his stead.<sup>137</sup>

His call and creed is now “violence” but it is a call to others. Like Loge in *Das Rheingold*, he does not commit violence himself, but only inspires others to do so by placing the idea of it in their minds. He still recognizes that he cannot be violent, as he is bound by his own laws, though in his grand plan he carefully ignores this fact, as he must if he is to continue to believe it possible. But unlike Loge, who merely inspired deeds out of their possibility and unrealized potential, Wotan inspires these deeds out of pure selfishness. The words accompanying the motive of the grand idea in scene 4 of *Das Rheingold* have to do with protecting the Gods, which means ultimately retrieving the ring, which is what Wotan’s plan and inspiring of humanity is ultimately about: nothing nobler than selfish self-preservation against the end prophesized by Erda. He has become the anti-law for the express purpose of gaining immortality, just as occurs in the mind of the “believer” in Feuerbach’s version of the second stage of the Moral Progression, and has manufactured a world inhabited by cohorts of individuals to act in the interests of that purpose.

As distasteful as this may be, Siegmund and Sieglinde, and Hunding and his tribe, are all pawns of Wotan. Kitcher and Schacht may be correct in pointing out that the love between Siegmund and Sieglinde is “the most complete and appealing expression of human love in the entire work,”<sup>138</sup> but no matter how pure that love may

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<sup>137</sup> This is a conception of Fricka as Custom to which Wagner had kept consistently since his earliest drafts and explanations of these earlier operas. See: Letter to Uhlig November 12, 1851 in Part II: pg 358, Note 245.

<sup>138</sup> Kitcher and Schacht. *Finding an Ending*, 8.

seem, it came about as a direct result of Wotan's manipulation of the world. As

Wotan says elsewhere in the cut scene:

<p>Des Urgesetzes walt' ich vor Allem: wo Kräfte zeugen und kreisen, zieh' ich meines Wirkens Kreis; wohin er läuft, leit' ich den Strom, den Quell hüt' ich, aus dem er quillt:<sup>139</sup></p>	<p>By one ancient law do I rule before all else, where forces come forth and stir is where I cultivate my desired work, wherever it flows I am directing it, I cherish the source from which it originates.</p>
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They are servants, extensions of Wotan's will led by a seeming necessity, but with roots in Wotan's desire. Siegmund and Sieglinde's love did not arise naturally, or through natural necessity, but through Wotan's own desire. Wotan informs us of this in his discussion with Fricka, first with his grand answer to Fricka's question:

<p>Wann – ward es erlebt, daß leiblich Geschwister sich liebten?</p>	<p>When did it ever happen that brother and sister were lovers?</p>
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This he answers with:

<p>Heut' – hast du's erlebt: erfahre so was von selbst sich fügt, sei zuvor auch nie es gescheh'n.<sup>140</sup></p>	<p>Today, it has come to pass! And know now that something may happen, though it has never happened before.</p>
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This argument would seem to speak in favor of their spontaneous, necessary true love were it not followed by Wotan's lines:

<p>Nichts lerntest du, wollt' ich dich lehren, was nie du erkennen kannst, eh' nicht ertagte die Tat. Stets Gewohntes nur magst du versteh'n: doch was noch nie sich traf, danach trachtet mein Sinn! –<sup>141</sup></p>	<p>You never learn what I would teach you, to try to conceive a deed before that deed comes to pass. Your concern is for things that have been; but what is still to come – to that all my thoughts turn!</p>
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<sup>139</sup> GS VI. 30-31.

<sup>140</sup> GS VI. 29-30.

He tells Fricka here that the deeds that have not yet occurred and do not occur in the culture with which she is familiar are of his own design, thus taking credit for the love of Siegmund and Sieglinde as well. As he had explained, he is the source from which all strength and change occurs in the world, so these new unnatural deeds which are occurring are of his own design, and are inherent to a world ruled by second stage thinking.

Then despite the moving stress that Siegmund places on need – requiring “a sword in the hour of need” and finally naming the sword itself “need” for his own survival and that of his beloved – it was Wotan who created this need and this situation, and single-handedly put Siegmund and Sieglinde in this position, as Fricka reminds Wotan in her argument that finally convinces Wotan to abandon his plan:

<p>Du schuf'st ihm die Not, wie das neidliche Schwert: willst du mich täuschen, die Tag und Nacht me, auf den Fersen dir folgt? Für ihn stießest du das Schwert in den Stamm; du verhießest ihm die hehre Wehr: willst du es leugnen, daß nur deine List ihn lockte wo er es fänd'?"<sup>142</sup></p>	<p>You created this need in him, just as you gave him the enviable sword: do you want to deceive me, who day and night follows your tracks? For him did you thrust the sword into the tree, as you had promised him the exalted weapon: Will you deny that your cunning alone lured him to where he could find it?</p>
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Cunning-deceit or *List* was a tool reserved for Loge in *Das Rheingold*, as it is associated with planning and stage two thinking. That it is through Wotan's *List* that all of these events took place is consistent with the new mentality that Erda instilled in

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<sup>141</sup> GS VI. 31. The translation of this passage was taken from: *Richard Wagner: The Ring of the Nibelung* trans. Andrew Porter (New York: WW Norton: 1976), 100. This translation is often unreliable, as Porter himself admits, as far as a literal translation of the Ring is concerned, but in this case, Porter does a particularly excellent job of interpreting the passage, which is confusing to German and English speakers alike, and so it is employed here for clarity's sake.

<sup>142</sup> Richard Wagner. *Die Walküre in Full Score*, 220. The line “auf den Fersen dir folgt?” was in GS VI. 33, “bang auf den Fersen dir folgt” [anxiously follow your tracks] See: Heidgen, 178-180, who notes several possible reasons for the change, from scansion to the fact that Fricka, knowing she is right, does not have anything to be anxious about from Wotan.

Wotan in scene 4 of *Das Rheingold*. But how far back does this cunning go to ensure that the events originally envisioned in scene 4 occur according to Wotan's design; so far that he controls Siegmund directly as his father-mentor, and indirectly as the controller of the events which shape Siegmund and lead him to the sword?

We learn from Siegmund and Hunding that Siegmund's father raised him in the forest and taught him a code of morality directly opposed to that of the rest of the world, which made him hated by all.<sup>143</sup> Wotan later corroborates this when he "speaks aloud to his will" that he raised Siegmund specifically to be against the laws of the Gods:

Wild durchschweift' ich  
mit ihm die Wälder;  
gegen der Götter Rat  
reizte kühn ich ihn auf –  
gegen der Götter Rache  
schützt ihn nun einzig das  
Schwert,  
das eines Gottes  
Gunst ihm beschied. –<sup>144</sup>

Wildly I wandered  
with him in the forests;  
I boldly incited him  
against the rule of the gods –  
now against the rage of the gods  
only a single sword protects him,  
a sword given to assist him  
by a god. –

One day, according to Siegmund's narrative, his sister was kidnapped by a band of ruffians and his mother was killed while he and his father were in the forest. Shortly afterwards, his father too disappeared leaving only a wolf's skin behind, but not before telling his son that one day he would be in direst need, and that day his sword would appear to him, and it would make him unstoppable. Then Siegmund imparts the recent event of his break-up of a wedding. He saw a woman crying because she was being forced into a loveless marriage, so he took arms against those who were doing this to her. But to his surprise, as he killed the members of her and her no-longer-future-husband's family, rather than being on his side, as he was on hers:

<sup>143</sup> Siegmund: Unheil lag auf mir. / Was rechtes je ich rieth, / Andern dünkte es arg; / was schlimm immer mir schien, / And're gaben ihm Gunst. (GS VI. 9). Hunding: Ich weiß ein wildes Geschlecht, / nicht heilig ist ihm / was And'ren hehr: / verhaßt ist es Allen und mir. (GS VI. 11).

<sup>144</sup> GS VI. 41-42.

[D]ie Leichen umschlang da die Maid;	The maid embraced the bodies;
den Grimm verjagt' ihr der Gram.	rage was driven out by grief.
Mit wilder Tränen Flut	With wildly flooding tears
betroff sie weinend die Wal:	she sobbingly regarded the warriors
um des Mordes der eig'nen Brüder	as she mourned the murder of her own brothers –
klagte die unsel'ge Braut. – <sup>145</sup>	that unblessed bride.

On the line “The maid embraced the bodies; rage was driven out by grief,” we hear the descending line of the ring motive in the horns:

die Leichen umschlang da die Maid, den Grimm verjagt' ihr der Gram.

(*Die Walküre* Act I measures 621-624)

This itself outlines the same D half-diminished 7 chord as the first half of Hunding’s “Heilig ist mein Herd” motive used throughout *Die Walküre*, particularly by Fricka to represent the laws of culture:

**HUNDING.**

Hei-lig ist mein Herd: hei - lig sei dir mein Haus.

This is particularly poignant here, as it informs us that even the girl who was begging for help is trapped in her cultural mind-set. The ring and spear have penetrated this culture of loveless authority to the point where even those being wronged will fight to defend their right to be wronged against those trying to free them from oppression. It shows the extent to which a hero outside of the law is needed to make the world better, as all those living under the law, good and bad, are incapable of understanding what

<sup>145</sup> GS VI. 10.

needs to be fixed and that it needs to be fixed. If this motive of Hunding and Fricka and its connection to the ring tell us anything, it is that the lovelessness of the ring is the lovelessness of the law, and it is lovelessness that must be overthrown by the hero.

This offers further information as to the nature of the human culture and laws under which all save the Wälsungs abide. As we observed from Wotan's comment above concerning the heroes which the Valkyries had been collecting to protect Valhalla – "I bid you to bring heroes to me: ones who we control who are bound by our laws, men whose spirit we bridled through dark contracts, deceitful bonds, we bound them in blind obedience" – it is clear that the humans are nothing more than slaves to the will of the Gods, and though they might be excellent warriors, are incapable of the kind of deed which Wotan and the Gods need to see accomplished. But this also offers a logical connection between the diminished chord of Hunding's "Heilig ist mein Herd," representing the law of custom, and the diminished sonority of the ring motive. The ring represents authority over others. Alberich became the first authoritarian by becoming master of the Nibelungs, making them his slaves by taking away their choice and freedom. This is exactly how Wotan describes his authority over these quasi-heroic humans: they are slaves under the authority of the laws of custom bestowed upon them by the Gods, and so the philosophical connection between the two ideas is transferred into a musical idea as well.

The kinsmen then fought Siegmund off until he was defenceless, and as he was running away, weaponless, he saw the girl killed. He then was led by the storm to the house in which all of the loose ends of his life are now about to be tied together. On the surface, it has a woman who was forced into a marriage just as the poor girl in his story had been, and so it gives him a second chance to save, in a sense, the girl he was unable to save. But as we look more deeply, we find that Hunding is the very

representation of all that Siegmund holds wrong with the world. It is Hunding who kidnapped the first girl he was not able to save, his sister. It is Hunding who is the head of the very clan from which he was running. All of Siegmund's woes stem from Hunding. When Hunding discovers that Siegmund is his arch-enemy, he challenges the weaponless man to a duel in the morning. In the midst of Siegmund's extreme depression at having found his greatest enemy only to be unable to kill him because he has never been able to find the weapon his father promised him, Sieglinde appears and shows him that very weapon. With it, he will be able to save his sister-lover from the man who had caused all of their woe. Then when all this is completed, as Wotan had planned, Siegmund with sword in hand will be able to slay the dragon Fafner and retrieve the ring for his father.

But without Sieglinde this would have been impossible. Although this is Siegmund's chance at redemption for not being able to save the woman in his story, Sieglinde, unlike this woman, wants to be saved. She is no weak-willed woman bridled by the laws of the Gods, but an equal child of Wälse, just as heroic as Siegmund, with the same disgust for the law; otherwise, she would not have betrayed her lawful husband by instructing this stranger to take the sword, a reiteration of her father's call to violence against custom. Her participation was absolutely necessary to achieve Wotan's aims.

No one can deny that this plan, the plan of Siegmund's life and its culminating moment in the removal of the sword from the tree, is entirely of Wotan's doing, and was worked out expressly to achieve what he willed, a free hero beyond the influence of the Gods who can do what they cannot: get the ring. But Wotan also shaped the nature of his children's lives by being responsible for the surrounding events, not merely as a fatherly influencer. Particularly damning evidence in this regard is that

pointing to Wotan's acquiescence to Hunding, his sanctioning of the murder of the twins' mother, and the suffering of the twins that this caused. Again returning to the cut sequence between Fricka and Wotan, Fricka condemns Wotan for not stopping Hunding when he was committing all manner of violent atrocities, one of which we now know to have been the kidnapping of Sieglinde and the killing of the twins' mother, but then after all of these sins only drawing the line at his use of force in marrying Sieglinde. The key ideas behind this argument are carried over from the May prose draft and into the verse draft:

<p>Übte Hunding einstens Gewalt, was ich Schwache nicht wehren konnte, du ließest es kühn gewähren: sühnte er dann des Frevels Schuld, Freundin ward ihm da Fricka durch heiliger Ehe Eid: so vergess' ich was je er beging, mit meinem Schutze schirm' ich sein Recht. Der nicht seinem Frevel gesteuert, meinen Frieden stör' er nun nicht!<sup>146</sup></p>	<p>At one time Hunding took up violence, from which I was too weak to deter him, you boldly allowed: but then he atoned for his crimes and Fricka became a friend to him through the holy bond of wedlock: So I forget what transpired, with my patronage I protect his rights. He who is not driven by his wickedness Does not now disturb my peace!</p>
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Then, as in the prose and verse drafts, Wotan explains that to use force to support peace against force, which is how he views Fricka's request, would be an oxymoron, and that he spurs on conflict because it reveals the truth that Fricka's peace only hides. War helps reveal truths. In other words, he used Hunding for his own benefit in purposefully making his son's life miserable, and so preparing him for this day of power and revenge. Taking this passage into consideration, it becomes clear that Wotan is responsible for Hunding's violence, even that directed against Siegmund and

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<sup>146</sup> GS VI. 27-28.

Sieglinde. If he had truly loved his human family as he claims to have done, then this is further evidence of his stage two thinking: he is willing to endure pain in the present, the pain of killing his family and making his children suffer, for the greater payoff in the future, re-obtaining the ring. But Wotan had a particular idea in mind on how to induce a free individual to do the deed which no God or servant of God could do, and this plan involved an elaborate mapping out of what would become Siegmund's life, in which pain and suffering, along with his conviction against the rule of custom, were his only companions which, along with a promise in the shape of a sword, offered him the prospect of one day holding the power to suffer no longer.

What has become clear is that Wotan is consciously ignoring facts that do not fit into his hopes for accomplishing immortality. The purpose of the sword and the grand plan is to save the Gods from destruction, but the way he chooses to do that is to diminish the authority of the Gods, which would lead them to destruction. But on a more immediate level for Wotan's plans, he ignores the fact that the laws of the world stem not from Loge or from any God other than himself. So when he is fighting these laws by instilling aggression and apathy towards the law in humanity, he is only fighting against himself. He is the law, and so anything that comes from him will be affected by that law.

### iii – Wotan and the Law of the Heart: The Music

Wotan's desires are conflicting, and he chooses to ignore this fact so that he can convince himself that the means by which he may attain immortality is possible, rather than inevitably doomed to failure. This is perhaps made most clear by the

music itself. A crucial theme in this regard is the following which Deryck Cooke refers to as the “Frustration of Wotan’s Will.”



It has often been observed that up until the moment when Fricka forces Wotan to realize the futility of his plan he is essentially trying to straddle the fence between order and chaos, with one foot grounded in the laws of the universe by which he rules and which are inscribed on the spear, i.e., custom, and the other foot on the side of free will. If what Wotan desires to achieve, or what he wills, involves aspects of both authoritarianism and freedom, then how can his will be “frustrated”? How can there be a theme called “Wotan’s frustration, or the “Frustration of Wotan’s Will,” as Wolzogen et al. through Cooke have said, if some aspect of his will is appeased no matter what occurs?

The flawed view on which this idea is based is that there is something or someone outside of Wotan that is frustrating Wotan’s will. Deryck Cooke,<sup>147</sup>

<sup>147</sup> Deryck Cooke puts forward a good example of this misconception, which is the reason he was chosen here. There are studies beyond number which push forward the idea that Brünnhilde somehow frustrates Wotan’s will in *Die Walküre*, which is in clear contradiction to Wagner’s thoughts on the matter. That being said, in Cooke’s *I Saw the World End* he does put forward the possibility of viewing these first scenes in Act II of *Die Walküre* “schematically,” in which case, he explains, there would be “only one character in the Fricka and Brünnhilde scene in Act II of *The Valkyrie*, and that is Wotan, with his dreadful conflict between his old and new selves, of which Fricka and Brünnhilde are merely the embodiments[.]” (Deryck Cooke. *I Saw the World End: A Study of Wagner’s Ring*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 328) But then he goes on to see Fricka and Brünnhilde still as independent characters. We find essentially the same argument in Dahlhaus’ *Richard Wagner’s Music Dramas*, with the same reservation about going all the way, as Wagner had done, and calling them extensions of Wotan outright, rather than characters *per se*: “The Wotan action in *Die Walküre* is a monodrama or a psychodrama (which is why attention centers on the Wälsung drama in the theater, though that is the less important so far as concepts are concerned); Brünnhilde and Fricka almost fade to allegorical figures representing the two different forces at war in Wotan. If Brünnhilde is his will – a will that turns against itself and tries to rescue Siegmund, who it knows must be sacrificed – Fricka is his conscience, forcing him to recognize the contradiction which he has tried to ignore; Wotan has to yield to Fricka because she says aloud what, without admitting it to himself, he knows in his heart of hearts to be true.” (*Richard Wagner’s Music Dramas*, 120).

reasoning from the standpoint that the spear motive does not merely represent the laws that govern Wotan's society but Wotan's will as a whole, explains that the other characters in *Die Walküre* are going against his will throughout the entire opera. His description runs as follows:

Along another more complex line of transformation, the spear motive



continually generates new motives throughout *Die Walküre*. These are derived from the opening six-note segment of the spear motive.

They are those of the 'Storm':



and of 'Siegmond',



Wotan's son and unwitting agent, who at the beginning of *Walküre* is running through the storm for his life. In each of these motives, the descending scale motion of the complete spear motive is checked and opposed. After the first

<sup>148</sup> This version of Siegmund's motive was taken from bars 162-164 of Act I. When Cooke describes Siegmund's motive in his *Introduction to the Ring*, he gives the first appearance of the motive in bars 122-124 of Act I, with the scalar rising figure at the end rather than the diminished triad seen above:



But Cooke neglects to mention that the final upward figure varies tremendously and is changed from its original form here, to octave upward leaps as in measures 131 and 133, and to the upward-moving diminished arpeggio first seen in measures 162-164. This latter, due to its consistent repetition in this section, perhaps carries more credence as a "definitive form" of the motive throughout this section, especially as it parallels the upward-moving arpeggios which make up the first half of Sieglinde's theme (see below).

descending six-note segment, a rising motion contradicts it. Indeed, throughout *Walküre*, the repressive authority of Wotan's will is to be continually challenged by the other characters and eventually neutralized.<sup>149</sup>

Cooke later includes among the motives based on this falling and rising figure, supposedly representing a “check” to Wotan's will, the motive of Sieglinde,



which too involves an upward and downward pattern, though it is the reverse pattern to that found in the Storm and Siegmund motives: and ultimately, the motive of “Wotan's frustration” as well as the series of transformations of it during the final act of *Die Walküre* which result in the “Brünnhilde's compassionate love” motive:



But as Wagner himself said, it is not a question of others challenging Wotan's will, but of his own desires challenging themselves. Valentina Serova describes her first visit to Tribschen in July 8, 1869 as including a brief explanation of certain aspects of the plot and philosophy behind the *Ring*, along with an even briefer and begrudgingly drawn-out question and answer period. One of the questions is particularly illuminating on this issue:

Someone made so bold as to ask why Wotan could rejoice in Siegfried's protest, yet punish his daughter so cruelly for her disobedience. Wagner glanced fiercely at the questioner. ‘Because’ he replied ‘Brünnhilde herself is no more than Wotan's desire (his *Wunschkind*). When his desire begins to contradict his own will, in other words when he has lost the power of free will, the violence of his anger is directed not against Brünnhilde but against himself.

<sup>149</sup> *An Introduction to Der Ring Des Nibelungen* (New York: The Decca Record Company, 1968).

Brünnhilde may be the outward manifestation but its essence lies in Wotan's inner discord.<sup>150</sup>

Wotan is undermining and contradicting himself with his contradictory desires. So Cooke's view of Siegmund and Sieglinde as representing simultaneously tools of Wotan's will by the employment of the spear-like descending figure, and also the challenge to that will, by employing an upward motion – Cooke's so-called “check” to the spear's power – gives too much independence to the tools of Wotan's will. It is Wotan himself who is contradicting his own will. The actions of the Walsung pair are merely the outward embodiment of this contradiction, and this is ultimately the reason for the upward inflecting “check,” because they, as tools of his will, must represent both the authority on which his will is based, and something approaching the nature-necessity free-will which he desires.<sup>151</sup>

The motives of Siegmund and Sieglinde, then, represent this duality. A portion of each of their motives is a falling scalar pattern derived from the motive of the spear, i.e., custom, law or the authority of the Gods. But the other half of their motives is an ambiguous ascending diminished triad. Cooke offers a hint as to his view of the possible meaning of this ascending figure in his discussion of the motives

<sup>150</sup> Originally from: Valentina Serova “Rikhard Vagner: Otryvok iz moik vospaminanii (pervaya poezdka zagranitsu v 1864 g.)” *Artist* xii (1891) 64-72: but here quoted from *Wagner Remembered* ed. Stewart Spencer (New York: Faber and Faber, 2000), 203.

<sup>151</sup> Another reason to consider this motive as embodying the contradiction of desires rather than the will being frustrated by outside force is the use of the opening figure of this motive in Siegfried Act II, when Mime, in the nicest way possible, is trying to convince Siegfried to drink the sleeping potion, but Siegfried only hears the truth behind the facade, particularly at the moment when Mime confesses that he had always hated Siegfried and intends to kill him, but used abundantly throughout this section. The contradiction between words and thoughts is represented by the opening fragment of the motive and does not represent a “frustration from outside” as the contradiction is solely within Mime:

(Siegfried Act II measures 1485-1489)

associated with what he calls “heroic humanity”: a whole separate family of motives for all of Wotan’s creations inspired by his meeting with Erda, primarily the Valkyries and the Wälsungs. Succinctly, he explains the motives in the family of what he calls “heroic humanity” as follows:

They are all offspring of Erda by Wotan in one way or another. Brünnhilde is literally so; and the Wälsungs, though born to Wotan by a mortal woman, are begotten by him out of the inspiration of his first encounter with Erda in scene 4 of *Rheingold*; and the basic motive or basic phrase which generates the basic family of motives associated with these heroic characters is the last three-note segment of the motive of Erda herself. Erda’s motive is in the minor key and so are the heroic motives derived from it, but they are all powerful brass motives, and so the minor key here is an expression, not so much of pure tragedy, as of tragic heroism. These motives all begin where Erda’s climbing motive leaves off, as it were. They take the last three notes of it as a starting point.<sup>152</sup>



Cooke describes the “Valkyrie” motive:



and “Siegfried” motive



as “springing boldly” out of this final segment, whereas the “Wälsung” motive “rise[s] slowly” from this segment.

<sup>152</sup> *An Introduction to Der Ring Des Nibelungen.*



Each of these motives, built as they are from the final three notes of the Erda motive, share a feature implying to Cooke that everything represented by them is a result of Erda's influence on Wotan. But Cooke's logic has a major defect. Putting aside the fact that dividing melodies into families based on whether they include a triad is basing those families on fairly thin evidence, each of these motives, with the possible exception of Siegfried's motive, has further features which show how it relates to Wotan, quite independently of the opening "Erda" segment. In truth the opening portion's similarity to the final segment of the Erda motive merely shows that they are also products of nature – the Rhine-nature melody from the prelude to *Das Rheingold* being the actual root motive – or some twisted form of natural necessity.

In the case of the Valkyrie theme, there are two additional features that let us perceive the relationship to Wotan. First is the rhythm. The meter returns to 9/8, the meter of the Nibelungs' servitude, and the rhythmic pattern bears a striking resemblance to the repeated Nibelungs' servitude theme from scene 3 of *Das Rheingold*. Not only does this rhythm appear in the "Ride" of Act III, but it permeates the prelude to Act II beginning in measure 54 as a segue into the appearance of Wotan and Brünnhilde, as if to reiterate that all – Nibelungs and

Valkyries alike – are slaves of Wotan.<sup>153</sup> Similarly, the descending Spear-like figures that permeate the Act III prelude which are combined with the opening Erda figure seem to imply that the Valkyries stem from Erda, but they are in fact slaves of Wotan and ultimately the law of the Gods.<sup>154</sup>

Siegfried, on the other hand, has neither the servitude rhythmic pattern, nor descending scales that last for more than three notes. So the only stem for his motive is the “Erda” – nature stem.<sup>155</sup> He is a child of earth and otherwise independent of the Gods, just as his motive shows.

But the motives associated with the Wälsungs individually as well as the Wälsung race are, purposely, more ambiguous than these other motives. The ascending arpeggios in the Sieglinde and Siegmund motives are diminished chords, not minor. The Wälsung motive, as Cooke said, does not open with a forceful enunciation of the Erda arpeggio fragment, but instead makes use of a scalar passage.

<sup>153</sup> Under Brünnhilde’s first words (after “Hojotoho”) in Act II Scene 1, describing Fricka’s oncoming storm:



(Act II Scene 1 measure 113)

we hear the melody of the of the Nibelung servitude theme fragmented and repeated in the cellos and contrabasses as a further reminder of the servitude of all to Wotan.

<sup>154</sup> Fricka explains during her argument with Wotan that Wotan bound the Valkyries to her will “in gehorsam der Herrin du gabst” (GS VI. 30) and so this offers a further explanation as to the presence of the spear descending figure in their motive at a time when Wotan is mostly ruling in a way which undermines the laws of the spear.

Along a similar line, Sieglinde’s “Dies Haus und dies Weib sind Hundings Eigen” are sung to a variant of the melody of the Nibelungs servitude theme with the exact same notes aside from the two D’s on “Weib and “-gen”:

Musical notation for Sieglinde's song. The top staff is the vocal line in treble clef, starting with the lyrics "Dies Haus und dies Weib sind Hundings Eigen;". The bottom staff is the piano accompaniment in bass clef. The melody is a variant of the Nibelung servitude theme.

(Act I measures 237-240)

We hear the spear motive introducing this statement, indicating that it is through the law that she was made property, and then we hear the servitude theme variant, indicating that she is a slave to the law, and to Hunding himself.

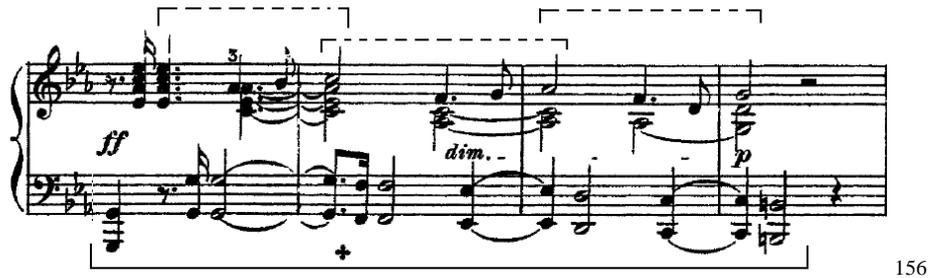
<sup>155</sup> For a look at the specifics of Siegfried’s motive see below: Note 227.

Then in the second half of the motive we hear the descending fifth and upward scalar motion which accompanied Wotan's "Sicher vor Bang und Grau'n" in scene 4 of *Das Rheingold*, showing that the Wälsungs are meant to keep the Gods safe. But like their individual motives, it too is deformed. The descending fifth is a diminished fifth, and the three note upward scalar pattern following it is broken up by a skip. Unlike the perfections of Siegfried and the Valkyrie motives, the Wälsung motives represent a deformed nature, a nature tempered by Wotan. They will not succeed in Wotan's grand plan. They are too touched by Wotan and so the natural necessity they feel is not genuine in the same way as that felt by the true children of this necessity, Brünnhilde (as Valkyrie) and Siegfried, whose themes appear with the pristine form of the last fragment of Erda's motive. But the deformed section in the Wälsung theme of "Sicher vor Bang und Grau'n" is most revealing as it shows that as tools of Wotan to gain safety, the Wälsungs will not keep him and the Gods safe. The motive portrays an attempt at obtaining this safety from them, but one doomed to its own necessary failure by its imperfections. Their deformed motives reveal both their own deficiencies and that of the plan to use them.

The motives of the characters associated with Wotan's will melodically indicate his will's dual nature. They all combine elements of the motive associated with Wotan's authority, the spear, with the upwardly inflected nature motive, indicating the presence of natural necessity. But in addition to portraying this duality, they also portray, by their imperfections and variations of these motives, the flaws in Wotan's "grand plan" without us having to be told about them by Fricka. Both worlds are Wotan's and because he chose not to reconcile them, he went down the vain false path of selfishness only to be crushed by the realization of his neglect.

## iv – Wotan and Fricka: The Last Stand of the Law of the Heart

The greatest slap in the face for Wotan’s plan and the purpose behind it – saving the Gods – is embodied in the motive often assigned to Fricka in scene 1 of Act II:



Fricka confronts him and his plan with this motive, a combination of the descending spear figure, and the “Sicher vor Bang und Grau’n” now in the original pristine form from scene 4 of *Das Rheingold*. Her defense of the law, and her position, is then *the* legitimate defense of the gods, unlike the illegitimate and flawed defense of the gods, the Wälzung twins, so imagined by Wotan to be something more, and who Fricka shows are to be the cause of the end of the gods if they are allowed to continue unchecked. Although we hear the theme upon her entrance, the next time it is pronounced with force is after Wotan’s defense of Siegmund and Sieglinde’s love despite the fact that sibling love and infidelity are against custom, on Fricka’s line: “So are the eternal Gods now at an end since you created the Wälzungs?”

<sup>156</sup> See: Note 129 above.

(In höchster Entrüstung ausbrechend.)

**FRICKA.**

So ist es denn aus mit den ewigen

Bund.

Sehr lobhaft.

*p cresc. - ff dim. -*

Göttern, seit du die wilden Wälsungen zeugtest?  
*godhood since thou be-gatt'et the ri- o- tious Wälsungs?*

(Act II measures 253-259)

This is musically and rhetorically reminiscent of and consistent with Wotan's rejection of Freia as payment to the Giants in scene 2 of *Das Rheingold*. In both cases, he is rejecting the laws of the spear and custom. After this rejection, Fricka enters on her motive and declares outright that the safety of the Gods is at an end as long as the Wälsungs are as they are. This is followed by a re-evaluation of the sword motive, previously representing the grand idea to save the Gods, not sounded during her cries of:

Nichts gilt dir der Hehren  
 heilige Sippe;  
 hin wirfst du alles,  
 was einst du geachtet;  
 zerreiest die Bande,  
 die selbst du gebunden;  
 lösest lachend  
 des Himmels Haft –

Your high and holy kin  
 matter no more to you;  
 you throw everything away  
 which you once held sacred;  
 destroy the bonds  
 which you yourself forged,  
 you gladly loosen  
 your hold on heaven: [Sword motive]

daß nach Lust und Laune nur  
 walte  
 dieß frevelnde Zwillingspaar,  
 deiner Untreue zuchtlose  
 Frucht! –<sup>157</sup>

so that your dishonest licentious  
 spawn,  
 these twin brats,  
 may rule guided only by their  
 moods and desires.

In this context, the sword motive, which was meant in scene 4 to solidify power and safety, now refers to its destruction. We hear Fricka refer to the Valkyries, who according to Wotan are meant to protect Valhalla and the Gods by creating an army of heroes, as “those terrible maidens which your lawless love bore to you,” accompanied by the diminished sonority of the curse. Fricka turns everything that Wotan holds as a way to immortality and ultimate safety into its polar opposite, making it destructive and something that will lead the Gods to ruin.

Wotan, according to the music, has just lost the argument: though he continues his futile attempts to convince Fricka, the music is undermining him at every turn. His accompaniment is generally quiet, weak, and stresses free recitative to a greater extent than Fricka’s heavy, leitmotivically-intense accompaniment. But when Wotan attempts to share his grand plan with Fricka to the words:

Eines höre!  
 Not tut ein Held,  
 der, ledig göttlichen Schutzes,  
 sich löse vom Göttergesetz:  
 so nur taugt er  
 zu wirken die Tat,  
 die, wie not sie den Göttern,  
 dem Gott doch zu wirken  
 verwehrt.<sup>158</sup>

Hear this alone!  
 We need a hero,  
 who is separated from godly protection,  
 and so is outside the laws of the gods.  
 Only he is capable  
 of accomplishing this deed  
 which, although the gods need [it to be  
 done],  
 the gods are prevented from doing it.

the otherwise consistent sword motive now overshoots its high note, much as Wotan is overshooting in his attempt to convince Fricka:

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<sup>157</sup> GS VI. 28-29.

<sup>158</sup> GS VI. 32.

Sinn. Ei - nes hō - rei

*pp* *p* *pp* *P*

(Act II measures 356-359)

She takes his argument apart piece by piece, finally demolishing Wotan's final hope for convincing her of his plan by claiming that Notung was not given to Siegmund by Wotan as a gesture of support, but was won by Siegmund in his hour of need. As Fricka takes this final argument apart we hear for the first time the following theme repeated and sequenced:

*ff* *pp*

Siegmund's need was a false need, she says, implanted in him by you. If the need was illegitimate, then the plan, the hope of a hero free from Wotan's control, falls apart. Siegmund cannot be both guided wholly by Wotan and free from godly influence; and while Fricka explains this, we hear a motive which, if it is to be called anything, should reflect Wotan's inner contradiction, much like the disjunct upward and downward motion embodied in it, and should be called, "the Contradiction of Wotan's Desires." This motive becomes the clearest representation of Wotan's inner battle, which was hitherto only alluded to by the disjunct motion in the motives of Wotan's various servants.

From this moment, Wotan surrenders his rule by desire, his hope in the force of the new and the never-before-seen to allow him to satisfy his ultimate desire for immortality and power, in favor of its opposite: custom and the law, the way of the world.

v – Wotan: The “Unhappy Consciousness” and the “Way of the World”

After the appearance of this new motive of Wotan’s Contradiction, Wotan no longer attempts to give reasons as to why Fricka should let his plan take its own course, and instead only offers weak resistance to each of her points while this new motive predominates the texture. His last rebellion is on the matter of Brünnhilde’s freedom. Fricka tells him that Brünnhilde ought not to favor Siegmund in battle, to which Wotan replies “The Valkyrie is free to choose.” This is his final delusion, as Fricka explains, “No! She brings about your will alone: so forbid her to give Siegmund victory!” Wotan does not argue with this truth, as she is indeed nothing more than his will, and his silence here as Fricka tells him to weaken the power of the sword so that Hunding may be victorious is his final surrender. Her final speech is to secure Wotan’s surrender:

<p>Von Menschen verlacht,          verlustig der Macht,          gingen wir Götter zu Grund,          würde heut' nicht hehr          und herrlich mein Recht          gerächt von der muthigen Maid. – <sup>159</sup></p>	<p>Men would deride          the power of the Gods          which would then be absolutely forfeit:          if today the spirited maid          does not obey my high and holy law.</p>
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This is the end of the plan. It is definitively revealed that the Gods and their power and safety would have been at an end had Wotan’s plan to save them come to

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<sup>159</sup> GS VI. 35.

completion. The great flaw of second-stage thinking mentioned by all in the *Zeitgeist* is that when one surrenders the natural in favor of the subjective, one is incapable of telling whether a given action will yield the desired results or the opposite. Wotan now knows that his will was in danger of bringing about the opposite of what it desired.

The monologue that follows Fricka's exit is Wotan's reevaluation of the events that led to his failure, and rightly begins with the motive associated with Wotan's contradictory desires, as what Wotan is speaking of in this monologue is essentially the story of his contradictory desires. Still clinging in many ways to his illusions, he refuses to admit that he is himself responsible for the law: "When the pleasure of youthful love began to wane, my spirit sought after power: spurred on by the fury of ever-new and fluctuating desires, I won for myself the world! Unknowingly deceitful, I practiced treachery and bound by treaty that which contained evil; Loge craftily tempted me, now he's wandered off for good."<sup>160</sup> But the music knows the truth. This line is barely accompanied, beginning with the contrabasses alone and expanding to include the cellos at "Unwissend Trugvoll." But at the end of the line "der schweifend nun verschwand" we hear the reiteration of the motive of Wotan's contradictory desires. The music reveals the truth, that the laws are not Loge's responsibility but Wotan's and that these laws – perhaps guided by Loge but stemming ultimately from Wotan's desire to control – are his first desire against which his later desires vie for supremacy, but which ultimately lead Wotan to this moment: the realization of the unattainability of his every whim and the contradiction inherent in subjective desire:

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<sup>160</sup> See: Note 58 above.

(mit gänzlich gedämpfter Stimme.)

Noch langsamer. Streng im Zeitmass.

Als jun-ger Lie-be

Lust mir verblich, verlangte nach Macht mein Muth: von jäh-er Wünsche Wüthen gejagt, gewann ich mir die

Welt; un-wissend trug-voll, Un-treu-e übt' ich, band durch Ver-trä-ge was Un-heil barg:

lis-tig ver-lock-te mich Lo-ge, der schweifend nun verschwand.

(Act II measures 687-702)

The monologue continues highlighting *Das Rheingold* with the usual suspects of motives accompanying the salient plotlines – the ring, Valhalla – until Wotan gets to his meeting with Erda, accompanied by Erda’s motive. After he explains that she warned him of the Gods’ end and then left, we again hear the motive associated with Wotan’s contradictory desires on the line “I lost my light-hearted spirit, and desired only to know.”

Von dem En - de wollt' ich mehr noch wissen; doch schwei-gend ent-schwand mir das Weib... Da ver-

lor ich den leichten Muth, zu wis-sen begehrt'es den Gott.

(Act II measures 724-728)

Rather than accepting Erda's statement, he entered into the second stage of the Moral Progression and sought only the knowledge to prevent this natural end, later saying of his Valkyrie daughters – whom he obtained from Erda – that they would prevent the shameful end of the immortals.<sup>161</sup> This moment of surrendering his “leichten Mut” in pursuit of knowledge led to his grand plan which placed him in direct opposition to his previous desire: the spear, its laws, and worldly authority. So the purpose of the motive of contradictory desires here and during the earlier discussion of the laws of the world is to portray the foundation of the dialectic opposition within Wotan between his contradictory desires, and to highlight those desires.

It is at this point in the retelling of what the Gods need to be saved that he now recognizes that every being he created is influenced by his will, and so is unfree and cannot be used to achieve his aims, just as he realizes that, though viewing the laws of the world as not his own, he forged and is bound by them. This is in contrast to his former belief, articulated during the argument with Fricka, that as long as his creations were not influenced by the laws of the Gods, they would be independent; he

<sup>161</sup> Mir acht schwestern / zog ich dich auf; / durch euch Walküren / wollt' ich wenden / was mir die Wala / zu fürchten schuf: / ein schmähhliches Ende der Ew'gen. (GS VI. 38-39).

now sees himself and his will as the root of the problem. The new, more objective conception of the problem of himself and the law runs as follows, as a part of him begins to realize that he does not rule through his desires, but through contracts:

Fafner hütet den Hort,  
um den er den Bruder gefällt.  
Ihm müßt' ich den Reif entringen,  
den selbst als Zoll ich ihm zahlte:

doch mit dem ich vertrug,  
ihn darf ich nicht treffen;  
machtlos vor ihm  
erläge mein Mut.  
Das sind die Bande,  
die mich binden:  
der durch Verträge ich Herr,  
den Verträgen bin ich nun  
Knecht.<sup>162</sup>

Fafner [alone] guards the hoard  
since he killed his brother.  
I had to rob the ring from him [Alberich]  
And I myself gave it to him [Fafner] as  
payment:

But because of the contract,  
I am not permitted to harm him  
Powerless before him,  
my spirit defeated:  
these are the chains  
which bind me:  
though I rule through treaties:  
by those treaties am I also enslaved.

These lines discussing contracts and Wotan's rule by contract are accompanied by a combination of the spear motive and the motive of the contract with the Giants, which is repeated and sequenced. But when Wotan now speaks of the hero the Gods need there is a new composite motive, usually referred to as "the need of the Gods":



(Act II measures 821-823)

This motive reflects the new attitude Wotan has to this need. In the time from scene 4 of *Das Rheingold* to the argument with Fricka, the need of the Gods – i.e., their safety and immortality – was simplistically and idealistically represented by the sword motive. Now that Wotan's delusions are gone, he can see the problem for what it is and not for what he'd like it to be. His description of this need runs as follows:

<sup>162</sup> GS VI. 40.

Nur Einer dürfte  
 was ich nicht darf:  
 ein Held, dem helfend  
 nie ich mich neigte;  
 der fremd dem Gotte,  
 frei seiner Gunst,  
 unbewußt,  
 ohne Geheiß,  
 aus eig'ner Not  
 mit der eig'nen Wehr  
 schüfe die Tat,  
 die ich scheuen muß,  
 die nie mein Rat ihm rieth,  
 wünscht sie auch einzig mein  
 Wunsch. –

Der entgegen dem Gott  
 für mich föchte,  
 den freundlichen Feind,  
 wie fänd' ich ihn?  
 Wie schüf' ich den Freien,  
 den nie ich schirme,  
 der in eig'nem Trotze  
 der traueste mir?  
 Wie macht' ich den And'ren,  
 der nicht mehr ich,  
 und aus sich wirkte,  
 was ich nur will? -  
 O göttliche Schmach!  
 O schmäbliche Not!  
 Zum Ekel find' ich  
 ewig nur mich  
 in Allem was ich erwirke!  
 Das And're, das ich erschne,  
 das And're erseh' ich nie;  
 denn selbst muß der Freie sich  
 schaffen -  
 Knechte erknet' ich mir nur!<sup>163</sup>

Only one may accomplish,  
 what I may not:  
 a hero whom  
 I have never guided;  
 One unfamiliar with the gods,  
 but freely of his own will  
 unconsciously,  
 without being bid,  
 from his own need  
 with his own ability  
 does the deed,  
 which I must avoid  
 though my counsel never advised him,  
 but who also desires my single  
 desire. –

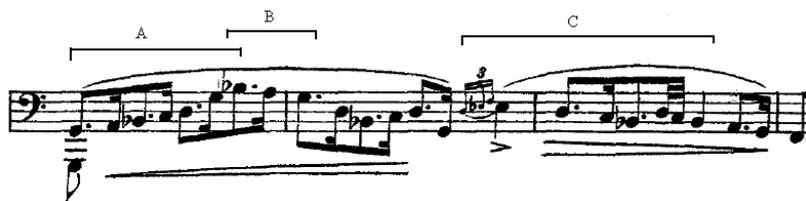
One against the god [me]  
 is the one I beg for,  
 the friendly enemy  
 how can I find him?  
 How can I create the free one,  
 who I never protected,  
 who through his own defiance  
 is most trusted by me?  
 How can I create one,  
 who is not another me,  
 and who achieves on his own,  
 what I alone only desire?  
 Oh godly need!  
 Oh sorrowful shame!  
 With disgust I always find  
 only myself  
 in everything that I bring about!  
 This other that I seek,  
 this other, I will never find;  
 the free one must create himself –  
 slaves are all I can create!

Cooke views this composite motive as a combination of three separate motives:

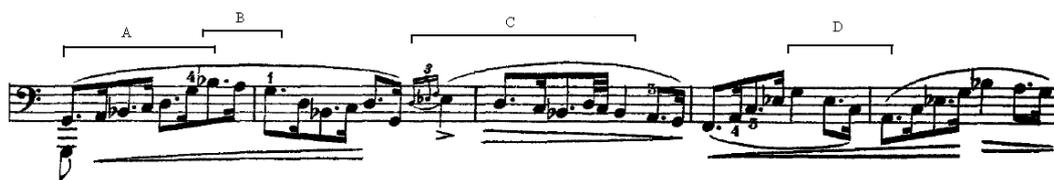
“Erda” (A), the “end of the gods” motive or Erda in retrograde (B), and the motive of what is referred to here as Wotan’s contradicting desires (C):

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<sup>163</sup> GS VI. 40-41.



But this is not the complete motive, which also includes two further measures which highlight the familiar half-diminished 7<sup>th</sup> chord of the ring (D)<sup>164</sup>:



From simply examining the themes with which it is presented in combination, a story emerges from this motive. The “need of the Gods” can be described as a way out of the end of the Gods (B) announced by Erda (A) which involves obtaining the ring (D). Unfortunately, because such a need cannot be willed by the god Wotan or achieved by his creations because of the inherent contradictions necessary to fulfill it (C), the need is left unfulfilled.

This section is ultimately followed by Wotan’s famous cry of willing “the end”. But it is not the end *per se* that he wishes for here. He believes that he is under the Nibelung’s curse, the result of which is that he is forced to forswear the love he has for his son. So the curse motive and the renunciation motive play a prominent part in this section. Then he desires that all of his work, his failed preparations to prevent the end, fall apart, as Erda prophesied.

Zusammenbreche,  
was ich gebaut!  
Auf geb ich mein Werk;  
nur eines will ich noch:  
das Ende,  
das Ende!<sup>165</sup>

Fall apart  
everything that I built!  
I surrender my work;  
but one thing I still want:  
the end,  
the end!

<sup>164</sup> The repetition of this theme with these final two measures both in this act and in the Prelude to Act III of *Siegfried* makes it clear that they are indeed a necessary part of the theme.

This is then followed by an explanation of what Alberich has been doing; the siring of a son whose birth, according to prophecy, means the end of the Gods is near. But his view is still self-centered even here, after he has just wished for the end.

Des Hasses Frucht hegt eine Frau; des Neides Kraft kreiß't ihr im Schooße: das Wunder gelang dem Liebelosen: doch der in Liebe ich frei'te, den Freien erlang' ich mir nie! – <sup>166</sup>	The brood of hate A woman now shelters; The power of envy Stirs in her womb: This miracle befell the loveless one: While I who wooed in love Was never able to acquire a free son! –
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He is comparing his own quest for security with Alberich's and viewing the completion of the latter with this first step taken by Alberich. He cries out "unfair" that the world would allow Alberich a son to achieve his goals, but not Wotan one to achieve his. Wotan is claiming that this is love, but it is in fact a confession: he wanted to use Siegmund for his own gain and finds it unfair that Hagen might be used for Alberich's own gain. But what Wotan bequeaths is not the world and not love, rather, his own failure to achieve what he wanted, the uselessness of authority, and the frustrations therein.

So nimm meinen Segen, Niblungen-Sohn! Was tief mich ekelt, dir geb' ich's zum Erbe, der Gottheit nichtigen Glanz: zernage sie gierig dein Neid! <sup>167</sup>	So take my blessing, Nibelung son! What deeply disgusts me, I give to you as inheritance, the futile lustre of godhood: is being eaten away by your envy!
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This is not the free, selfless act of giving away the world to a successor, but a depressed angry act of selfishness: a sacrificing of the world because he was unable to get what he wanted and make his authority meaningful.

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<sup>165</sup> GS VI. 42.

<sup>166</sup> GS VI. 43.

<sup>167</sup> GS VI. 43.

After this, Brünnhilde asks about Siegmund, but surprisingly, Wotan's character and demeanor change completely, as he takes up the authoritarian personality and role of Fricka and the law in commanding her to kill Siegmund. When she refuses, Wotan follows with an uncharacteristic outburst, the first of many throughout the rest of the opera:

Ha, Freche du!	Ha, You insolent one!
Frevelst du mir?	Would you rebel against me?
Was bist du, als meines Willens	Who are you, but the blind
blind wählende Kür? –	obedient tool of my will?
Da mit dir ich tagte,	When I made myself clear to you,
sank ich so tief,	did I sink so low,
daß zum Schimpf der eig'nen	to be defied
Geschöpfe ich ward? <sup>168</sup>	by my own creation?

This is Fricka's attitude about humanity and the Valkyries: they are servants who must obey, not anything to be glorified, and – more importantly – nothing to be loved. The renunciation of love for Siegmund that Wotan was forced into by Fricka now becomes a part of his new “way of the world” self as he rejects the “independence” of Brünnhilde as well.<sup>169</sup> Wotan has abandoned his view of his creations as free beings, following their own spirit, going against the laws of the Gods and showing the truth of the world through strife, and instead now takes up the cause of the law and the punisher. He embraces the laws of the world, against which he so strongly fought and cultivated others to fight; he has now become the antithesis of himself, and taken up Hegel's “way of the world.”

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<sup>168</sup> GS VI. 44.

<sup>169</sup> When Wotan exclaimed to Fricka that he would not order Brünnhilde to allow Hunding to kill Siegmund, but said that she was free, he was making the same mistaken assumption about Brünnhilde and the other Valkyries as he had done about Siegmund. He had assumed they were all free because they didn't follow the laws of the gods. So the false freedom that Wotan believed Brünnhilde had is taken away by Wotan's realization, pronounced during the monologue: “slaves are all I can create”, at which point he knows that his creations were never free.

Wort!

**WOTAN.**

Ha, Freche du! Fre-velst du mir? Wer bist du, als meines Willens blind

*p* *più f* *sempre f*

wäh - len-de Kür?

(Act II measures 1037-1046)

Not surprisingly, the accompaniment figure here is arguably the most forceful entry of the spear motive yet heard in the act, stating clearly that Wotan is the law now, and his request to Brünnhilde was an order. When Brünnhilde threatens to go against his order we hear the inverted spear motive in the cellos and contrabasses, but Wotan interrupts this figure with his threats and so reminds Brünnhilde that she is not independent, but a slave of his will. Once this is done, the forceful spear motive appears in the horns, bassoons, cellos and contrabasses. His point now made, and his position representing the law clear, he departs and leaves Brünnhilde, who now, as Wotan's will, is torn between the two messages, one, from the father she had always known to help her brother, and the other, from a frightening stranger, embodying the exact opposite of what she had always been taught. We hear the "conflicting desires" motive and then Brünnhilde says:

So – sah ich  
Siegvater nie,  
erzürnt' ihn sonst auch ein Zank!

I have never seen  
the father of victory this way,  
though quarrels have provoked him

<p>Schwer wiegt mir der Waffen Wucht: – wenn nach Lust ich focht, wie waren sie leicht! –</p> <p>Zu böser Schlacht schleich' ich heut' so bang! – Weh', mein Wälsung! Im höchsten Leid muß dich treulos die Treue verlassen!<sup>170</sup></p>	<p>before. My weapons weigh heavily upon me. It was so easy to fight when it was done by my own inclinations! Fear crawls about me because of this horrible battle. Woe my Wälsung With deepest sorrow, this faithful one must be unfaithful and betray you!</p>
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The Valkyrie motive and conflicting desires motive permeate this passage. She recognizes the inner conflict within Wotan, and also that by going down the path of the “way of the world,” and so being unsympathetic to love in favor of authority, he has become someone she has never known. It ought to come as no surprise that she in due course follows the order of the man she had always known, and not this mad stranger, especially when Siegmund forces her to choose between her being responsible for the deaths of both Siegmund and Sieglinde – not through battle with Hunding but through her loveless words – and gladly following her own inclinations instilled in her by her father. To make either of these choices would have meant disavowing Wotan’s orders, and so she chooses the path more acceptable to both she herself and the father she had always known.

The final appearance of Wotan in this act is first to the sound of the spear, as Siegmund dies, and then to “Heilig ist mein Herd,” the theme of Fricka’s custom, as he instructs Hunding to tell Fricka of her victory by her instrument, Wotan. After a moment of contemplation highlighted by the contrasting desires motive as he sees his son, the embodiment of his dream of security and immortality, dead before him

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<sup>170</sup> GS VI. 45. An argument could be made for this moment being Brünnhilde’s moment of progression out of the first stage of the Moral Progression. She uses similar language to that used in Wotan’s explanation of his conversion by Erda in the monologue particularly regarding her no longer having a “leicht” spirit: she is no longer permitted to follow her inclination as she had done previously, and fear has embraced her for the first time.

essentially by his own hand, he cries out against Brünnhilde and leaves the stage.

Wotan, as the loveless instrument of the “way of the world,” must punish those who do not follow the laws of custom and reject any feeling of love that he might have for his daughter, and so he seeks to pronounce justice upon her in Act III.

#### vi – Wotan’s Transition from the “Way of the World” to the Third Stage of the Moral Progression

Act III places Wotan in another binary opposition. In order to continue the rule of the Gods, he has rejected the true love that can only be found outside the law and for which he had fought so hard against Fricka in Act II. Brünnhilde, his will, was then forced to do this as well, but when she was put in a situation where she had to choose between being personally responsible for the death of the Wälsungs and embracing love in its purest form – sacrifice for the benefit of another – she chose the latter. Wotan and Brünnhilde, then, are now diametrically opposed, one embracing ego-less love over power and authority, and the other power and authority over ego-less love. The act portrays the slow conversion of Wotan from the love-less power and authority of the “way of the world” to the objective, ego-less love of Brünnhilde.

The first two scenes again solidify for us Wotan’s philosophical placement squarely in the loveless “way of the world,” while Brünnhilde entrenches herself immediately in the selfless love of the following stage. Brünnhilde’s first cry upon joining the other Valkyries is “Protect and help me in highest need.” Unlike the need of Siegmund, contrived by Wotan, this need is legitimate. It is the need of one following her own spirit for the benefit of love. She explains to her sisters that she has disobeyed her father and, despite the order to kill Siegmund, has in fact protected

him. On the words “doch Siegmund schützt’ ich” Brünnhilde’s otherwise panicked and rhythmically disjunct vocal line and accompaniment slow down. Over a G m7 pedal chord Brünnhilde sings the motive of “woman’s worth”: a motive that held dual contrasting meanings in *Das Rheingold* between love being incomparable and inexchangeable as Loge uses it in scene 2, and love being something to exchange for power, as Alberich uses it in scene 3.



(Act III measures 318-320)

Its use here denotes the former, and informs us of Brünnhilde’s position that love is higher than any authority including the authority of Wotan, and therefore worth abiding by no matter what punishment may befall her.<sup>171</sup>

As Sieglinde runs for her life towards Fafner’s lair in the East, where Wotan will never look for her,<sup>172</sup> Wotan approaches searching for Brünnhilde to punish. The Valkyries themselves have never seen him so angry and are terrified by him. Right from the start he accuses them of working against him and takes every question from them as undermining his authority. He concludes this barrage with:

Weichet von ihr,  
der ewig Verworf’nen,

Get away from her  
from the eternal outcast,

<sup>171</sup> Sieglinde too is willing to sacrifice herself for compassionate love, though hers is perhaps not as great as Brünnhilde’s. At first, she demands death from her rescuers but when Brünnhilde tells her that she is carrying Siegmund’s child, she is willing to live and begs for assistance, but not for herself, but only for her son. Both characters are willing to sacrifice themselves for the benefit of others. There is a lot of material of importance for the development of Brünnhilde in this exchange, particularly her naming of Siegfried, as Sieglinde had named Siegmund, but it has little to do with Wotan’s progression here under discussion. Her great sacrifice for Sieglinde, and her unborn child represented by what Wagner called the “glorification of Brünnhilde” motive, is repeated at the end of *Götterdämmerung* when she sacrifices herself for the benefit of the world.

<sup>172</sup> This is implied by Brünnhilde’s description: “But before Wotan’s rage / the forest will certainly protect her / the mighty one fears it / and avoids that place.” (GS VI. 68).

wie ihren Werth  
von sich sie warf!<sup>173</sup>

since she cast  
her worth away!

We then hear the “contrasting desires” motive in the accompaniment, the first of many appearances of this motive that permeate this passage. Brünnhilde, as Wagner had said, is his wishmaiden and so his desire, and as such she has now turned against the law aspect of his will. Every mention of Brünnhilde’s sin against Wotan is, in truth, a description of his own will tearing in two. When Wotan says her worth is cast away, it is the first example in which he describes Brünnhilde’s action as following something separate from that required of her, i.e., as something that did not reflect his will, which is really Fricka’s will and the “way of the world.”

The Valkyries then beg Wotan to show mercy on Brünnhilde, in and of itself an act of compassionate love for their sister. Wotan angrily rebukes them, but the melody he sings during the two specific examples of this rebuke affirms their words with the “woman’s worth” motive – a particularly brilliant example of the dichotomy between words and music, where the two sides represent Wotan’s two conflicting halves. The words criticize them for being weak willed, and not having learned such a deficiency from him:

So matten Mut  
gewannt ihr von mir?

...  
daß ihr wilden nun weint und  
greint,  
wenn mein Grimm eine Treulose  
straft?<sup>174</sup>

Such a weak spirit  
you got from me?

...  
You wild ones now whine and wail  
when my fury punishes a faithless  
one?

But the music affirms that they did learn to hold love above all other things from him, again the latter meaning of the motive:

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<sup>173</sup> GS VI. 70-71.

<sup>174</sup> GS VI. 71.

So mat-ten Muth gewantt ihr von mir?  
dass ihr Wil-den nun weint und greint,

(Act III measures 653-655, 659-661)

Again, at the next mention of punishment after “my fury punishes a faithless one” the strings firmly pronounce the “contrasting desires motive”; as if to say, she was not faithless, she just held faith in Wotan’s other side. Throughout the speech we hear the “contrasting desires” motive repeatedly, not to emphasize her act of “betrayal” but to emphasize his own will and desire. He says:

Keine wie sie	No one but her
kannte mein innerstes Sinnen;	knew my innermost feelings:
keine wie sie	No one but her
wußte den Quell meines Willens;	knew the source of my will!
sie selbst war	Through her alone
meines Wunsches schaffender	my desires took shape in the world:
Schooß: –	

In between each clause is a firm enunciation of the “contrasting desires” motive in the strings. But after he speaks of her act of betrayal, concluding with:

gegen mich selbst die Waffe	she turned the weapon against me,
gewandt,	
die allein mein Wunsch ihr	which by my will alone she bore!
schuf! – <sup>175</sup>	

we hear the act itself presented in the music. The weapon turning against him is portrayed by the spear motive being sounded in an inverted form while the conflict between the two sides of him that comes from a part of Wotan turning his weapon on

<sup>175</sup> GS VI. 71-72.

himself is represented by the opening figure to the “contrasting desires” motive which precedes the inverted spear motive.

The image shows a musical score for Act III, measures 694-698. The top staff is the vocal line, featuring a triplet of eighth notes followed by a quarter note and a half note. The lyrics are "Waf-fegewandt, die mein Wunsch al-lein ihr schuf!...". The bottom staves are the piano accompaniment, with a forte (f) dynamic marking and a pizzicato (pizz) marking. The piano part includes a complex rhythmic pattern with many sixteenth notes and a series of chords.

(Act III measures 694-698)

Wotan then commands Brünnhilde to come forth and accept her punishment. While she is stepping forth Wagner offers us another dichotomy between Brünnhilde and Wotan, which is continued until the end of the act: the textural dichotomy between strings and woodwinds, which, introduced here, is heavily employed in the exchange between the two characters in the final scene. Her stepping forward is accompanied by weak chords in the clarinets periodically interrupted by the contrasting desire motive of Wotan by the strings, first from the viola and ultimately from the cello:

Langsamer.

Klar. in B. I. II.

Baßkl. in A.

Pk. in D

Br. pizz. Bog. Langsamer.

W. Kläger, daß feig du der Straf' ent-flühst? (Brünnhilde tritt aus der Schar der Walküren hervor, schreitet demütigen, doch.

Vel. pizz. Bog.

K.B. pizz. Bog.

Klar. in B. I. II. III.

Baßkl. in A.

I. II. Fag. III.

Br.

B. festen Schrittes von der Felsenspitze herab und tritt so in geringer Entfernung vor Wotan.) Brünnhilde.

Vel. Hier bin ich, Va-ter:

(Act III measures 711-727)

Wotan then begins to list her crimes. He explains all that she was to him and how by her betrayal she is no longer what she was, and no longer bound to him. He gives her four names (Wishmaid, Shieldmaid, Solution-finder, and Hero-rouser),<sup>176</sup>

<sup>176</sup> As an interesting side note, the rhythmic figure accompanying the first two of these names:

Wunsch - maid war'st du mir. Schild - maid war'st du mir. (Act III 746-7, 750-1)

is the same rhythmic pattern repeated by Siegmund, only in an augmented form, when he is describing the names that he too should not be called:

Friedmund darf ich nicht heissen; Frohwalt möcht ich wohl sein: (Act I 482-5)

There are also melodic similarities, most strikingly the falling fifth in all cases, but also intervallically, when looking at the first of Siegmund's names we see a falling fifth, followed by a falling second, followed by a rising minor third, which is essentially the same as the first four notes of Wotan's naming of Brünnhilde.

Wagner often does this, offering a parallel melodic pattern to a parallel situation. Elsewhere in *Die Walküre*, he gives Wotan the same opening melody for his monologue as Sieglinde had had for hers in Act I, scene 3.

followed by a way in which she betrayed each role. With each of the first three names he calls her, which describe an aspect of their former relationship, we hear the first part of the spear motive as he says “warst du mir” (you once were to me); this is then suddenly cut off in favor of a more free flowing dissonant recitative figure, which functions as a literal portrayal of the moment when she broke away from his (really Fricka’s-Custom’s) command. On the final name, her betrayal against the law of Custom – in rousing the hero Siegmund against Wotan – is vividly portrayed by the inverted spear motive as he says:

Helden-Reizerin  
war'st du mir:  
gegen mich doch reiztest du  
Helden.

The Hero-rouser  
You once were to me:  
but you roused the heroes  
against me.

He then pronounces the first part of his sentence: she is to be banned from Valhalla forever, and the ban is made into law when the spear motive is sounded with the full strength of the low brass while he says:

gebrochen ist unser Bund:  
aus meinem Angesicht bist du  
verbannt!<sup>177</sup>

Our bond is broken  
From my sight you are banned!

This highlights both the bond, and the law of custom which now requires her banishment:

(Act III measures 823-829)

<sup>177</sup> GS VI. 73.

But then he tells her the second half of her punishment, the half that completely aligns him with the laws of custom and the “way of the world” over love. He now inflicts the punishment of a loveless marriage upon her, the type of marriage against which he so virulently fought in his argument with Fricka in Act II. But far worse, he equates this marriage, wherein a man conquers her and she must be his servant, with love itself. This is only made clear in several steps. He says that her punishment will make her what she had made herself, i.e., a follower of love rather than of orders and Custom, and then explains her punishment:

<p>Der dich zwingt, wird dir's entzieh'n! Hieher auf den Berg banne ich dich; in wehrlosen Schlaf schlieÙe ich dich; der Mann dann fange die Maid, der am Wege sie findet und weckt.</p> <p>...</p> <p>Du folgtest selig der Liebe Macht: folge nun dem, den du lieben muÙt!<sup>178</sup></p>	<p>He who will overcome you, will take it away from you! I banish you here on this mountain; in defenceless sleep I will tightly enclose you: the maid will belong to the man who finds her on the path and wakes her.</p> <p>...</p> <p>You followed in delight The power of love: now follow it, to the one whom you must love.</p>
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The idea of love in Wotan’s mind at the pronouncement of her sentence is not the love that Brünnhilde defended against Fricka’s marriage and Custom. This love is not real love but that same unholy loveless marriage brought about through force. Wotan, in this pronouncement, is solidly the representative of Fricka’s Custom, the way of the world, in every way. To make the point clearly and beyond doubt, the music accompanying Wotan’s line “the maid will belong to the man who finds her on the path and wakes her,” Wagner changes Wotan’s meter, as well as that of the cellos, contrabasses, and bassoons, to 6/4, while the rest of the orchestra remains in 4/4. The

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<sup>178</sup> GS VI. 80.

purpose of this is to sing and play on those lines a version of the spear motive that employs the first two triplets of the Nibelung servitude rhythm, thereby associating Brünnhilde's marital punishment with the law and slavery. The same figure again appears, with the same meaning, at the end of his explanation of her punishment in front of the Valkyries on the lines "she will sit and spin by the hearth, her end and actions will be ridiculed by all."

WOTAN.  
dich. der Mann dann fan - ge die Maid, der am We - ge sie fin-det und weckt.

*un poco riten.*  
*p* *cresc.* *f* *p*

(Act III measures 849-852)

Finally, Wotan forces the Valkyries to leave with a warning: never return and give sympathy to Brünnhilde, or you will share her fate. The Valkyries are thus forced to choose between the way of the world and the laws of custom on the one hand, and the compassionate love which Brünnhilde had shown the Wälsungs, Wotan had taught to them all, and that – to an extent – the Valkyries had shown towards Brünnhilde at the beginning of this scene. They fly off as we hear the contrasting desires motive, highlighting the two sides of Wotan from which the Valkyries are here forced to choose.

After they leave, the dialectic battle between Wotan's desires begins in full with the beginning of a new motive which is a transformation of the contrasting desires motive, a transcending of it, called by Cooke "Brünnhilde's compassionate love":



This motive continually appears in the woodwinds, most often the clarinets,<sup>179</sup> in opposition to the “contrasting desires” motive, which appears in the low strings and brass and is doubled by the bassoons. The introduction to this scene informs us of this dialectical opposition, texturally and (by proxy) philosophically. The similarity between the two motives is important in showing that they are both the result of the realization that one cannot achieve one’s every desire. The story of this scene is the transcending of the contrasting desires motive into the compassionate love motive, just as it is the transcending of the “way of the world” / “unhappy consciousness” Wotan into the third-stage, compassionate Wotan.

The groundwork for this is laid by the textural and motivic opposition of the two motives in the introduction to the third scene:

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<sup>179</sup> A long-standing topos within romantic opera when referring to or accompanying the “innocent girl.”

**Dritte Szene.**  
Etwas langsam.

(Wotan und Brünnhilde, die noch zu seinen Füßen hingestreckt liegt, sind allein zurückgeblieben. Langes feierliches Schweigen: unveränderte Stellung.)

(Act III measures 977-989)

Brünnhilde then enters with a variant of this compassionate love motive, accompanied primarily by woodwinds and with only sporadic string sixteenth notes, and asks whether her transgression was so great that she deserves such a shameful punishment. But after this, she gets to the root of Wotan's trouble. She knows that the person who raised her would not punish her for following her *Mut* in this way, with love for the Wälungs as the focus, and so taking that as a given and thus knowing that he is being forced into punishing her by an inner contradiction, she asks:

O sag', Vater!  
Sieh' mir in's Auge:  
schweige den Zorn,  
zähme die Wut!  
Deute mir hell  
die dunkle Schuld,  
die mit starrem Trotze dich  
zwingt  
zu verstoßen dein trautes  
Kind!<sup>180</sup>

Oh speak Father  
Look into my eyes:  
Silence your rage,  
Restrain your fury  
and enlighten me  
as to the dark guilt  
which forces you with inflexible  
obstinacy  
to cast away your most loving  
child.

<sup>180</sup> GS VI. 75-6.

All the while this passage is accompanied by the melody representing the reason for this punishment: the contradicting desires motive. When she is done, the low strings, Wotan's side of the dichotomy, enter again on the contrasting desires motive as the woodwinds cut off and the horns come in. There is a brief exchange between the two culminating in the return of the woodwinds when Brünnhilde tells Wotan that he was forced to follow Fricka's will, not his own, when he told her to give victory to Hunding. Repeating what Wagner had said in Serova's memoir, she says to him:

Als Fricka den eig'nen  
Sinn dir entfremdet:  
da ihrem Sinn du dich fügtest,  
war'st du selber dir Feind.<sup>181</sup>

When Fricka alienated  
your own mind from yourself,  
you then had to follow her mind,  
and you became your own enemy.

This is the core problem: Wotan's abandonment of his own will to love and strive, in favor of the way of the world. Brünnhilde continues and reveals the complete dichotomy within Wotan:

Nicht weise bin ich;  
doch wußt' ich das Eine –  
daß den Wälsung du liebtest:  
ich wußte den Zwiespalt,  
der dich zwang,  
dieß Eine ganz zu vergessen.  
Das And're mußtest  
einzig du seh'n,  
was zu schauen so herb  
schmerzte dein Herz –  
daß Schutz du Siegmund  
versagtest.<sup>182</sup>

I am not wise,  
but I knew one thing,  
that you loved the Wälsung.  
I recognized the conflict [within you]  
which forced you,  
to forget this entirely.  
The other thing alone  
you had to see,  
but the sight of it was so bitter  
it made your heart ache:  
that you renounced the protection  
for Siegmund.

She sees Wotan for what he is, knows his problem. This passage opens with the "Brünnhilde's compassionate love" motive underlining the most important lesson that her father taught her, to love the Wälsung, while on the actual words "I knew one

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<sup>181</sup> GS VI. 76.

<sup>182</sup> GS VI. 76-77.

thing, that you loved the Wälsung” the lower strings enter with a variant of the “contrasting desires” motive. This then fades, the woodwinds drop out, and are replaced by string tremolos until the words “Das an’dre,” at which point she is accompanied by Wotan’s low strings on the original form of the contrasting desires motive, now sequenced:

ring wärst du mei-nem Grimm.

*Etwas breit, wie im Anfang.*

**BRÜNNH.**

Nicht wei - se bin ich, doch wusst' ich das Ei - ne, dass den

*Belehend.*

*p espress. cresc.*

**BRÜNNH.**

*rit. molto lento bewegt. with animation.*

Wäl - sung du lieb - test. Ich wuss-te den Zwie - spalt, der dich

*riten. lento a tempo.*

*f dim. p dolce p*

zwang, dies Ei - ne ganz zu ver-gessen. Das And' - re musstest ein - zig du

*fp cresc.*

seh'n, was zu schau'n so herb schmerz - te dein Herz. dass Sieg - mund

(Act III measures 1077-1102)

The purpose of this is clear; she is now portraying the other side of Wotan – the side which he is currently embodying, the “way of the world.” Wotan finds it too painful to see the love he has for Siegmund. She is saying that this person that he is now, and the false will, which is in truth his own worst enemy, is not his true self. If he would be able to see that, then everything would be well between them.

But Wotan is not yet capable of looking at himself this way. He again follows Feuerbach’s “ignoring what is unpleasant in a fact” and latches on to the one comment in her speech that describes his ultimate order to Brünnhilde, ignoring her lucid and enlightening description as to the nature of and reason for that order. He merely says “You knew that was so [“that”, referring to his order to renounce protecting Siegmund] and yet you still dared to shield him?”

This forces Brünnhilde to reiterate her point: she learned to love from Wotan, and she was following this commandment when she fought on the side of the Wälzung. She explains the scenario in which she found herself while speaking to Siegmund. Being ashamed by his pride in the face of death, she knew:

Sieg oder Tod  
mit Siegmund zu teilen –  
dies nur erkannt' ich  
zu kiesen als Loos!  
Der mir in's Herz  
diese Liebe gehaucht,

Victory or death  
I would share with Siegmund:  
this thought alone possessed [me],  
in choosing my fate!  
He who breathed  
this love into my heart,

dem Willen, der mich  
dem Wälsung gesellt,  
ihm innig vertraut –  
trotzt' ich deinem Gebot.<sup>183</sup>

for me combined his will  
and the Wälsung's,  
to him was I earnestly true –  
though I disobeyed your command.

On “this thought alone possessed me in choosing my fate” we hear a compacted version of the “woman’s worth” motive, indicating that love as the highest commandment was what possessed her to stand with Siegmund. This is followed by the contrasting desires motive in the cellos and contrabasses, which then transforms into the “Brünnhilde’s compassionate love” motive, now not only in the clarinets, but in the horns, and eventually in the strings, as Brünnhilde again explains to Wotan what his will truly is: compassionate love. The instruments previously associated with Wotan and his contrasting desires now join with Brünnhilde and her compassionate love motive as an affirmation of Wotan’s true will, and so offer a beginning to the transfiguration of Wotan himself:

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<sup>183</sup> GS VI. 78.

Hob. I. II. *poco f* *più f*  
 Engl. II. *poco f* *più f*  
 Klar. I. II. in A. *poco f* *più f*  
 Baßkl. in A. *poco f* *più f*  
 Fag. I. II. *p cresc.* *poco f* *più f*  
 III. *f*  
 Hörn. in E. I. III. *poco f* *più f*  
 II. IV. *poco f* *più f*  
 Trp. I. II. in E. *p* *cresc.*  
 Viol. I. *poco f* *più f*  
 II. *poco f* *più f*  
 Br. *poco f* *più f*  
 B. *te - - len: dies nur er - kannt ich zu kie - - sen als*  
 Vol. *poco f* *più f*  
 K. B. *poco f* *più f*

*rallent.*

Hob. I. II. *ff*

Engl. H. *ff*

Klar. I. II. in A. *ff*

Baßkl. in A. *ff*

I. II. Fag. *ff*

III. *ff*

I. III. Hörn. in E. *ff*

II. IV. *ff*

Trp. I. II. in E. *f* *dim.*

*rallent.*

I. Viol. *ff*

II. *ff*

Br. *ff*

B. (langsam) *ff* *dim.* *più p*  
 Lös! Der die-se

Vol. *ff* *dim.* *più p*

K. B. *ff* *dim.* *più p*

*Etwas breit.*

Gr. Fl. I. II. *p* *p cresc.*

Hob. I. I. *(ausdrucksvoll)* *p* *p*

Engl. H. *p dolce* *p*

Klar. I in A. *p dolce* *p*

Baßkl. in A. *p dolce*

Fag. I. *p dolce*

II. III. *p dolce*

Hörn. in E. I. II. *p*

III. IV. *p*

Pk. I. *in H* *p dolce* *pp*

Br. *Etwas breit.* *get. trem.* *pp*

B. *Lie - - - - - be mir ins Herz ge - haucht,* *pizz*

Vcl. u. K. B. *pp* *pp*

11498

Gr. Fl. I. II. *p* *p cresc.*

Hob. I. *(ausdrucksvoll)* *p* *p cresc.*

Klar. I in A. *p* *p cresc.*

Baßkl. in A. *p* *p cresc.*

Fag. I. *p* *cresc.*

II. III. *p* *cresc.*

Hörn. in E. I. II. *p* *p cresc.*

III. IV. *p* *cresc.*

Pk. I. *in E* *p*

Br. *cresc.* *p*

B. *dem Wil - len, der dem Wai - sung mich ge - sellt, ihm in - nig Ver -*

Vcl. u. K. B. *pp* *cresc.*

Gr. Fl. I, II. *pp* *cresc.* *f*

I. *pp* *cresc.* *f*

Hob. II, III. *pp* *cresc.* *f*

Engl. H. *pp* *cresc.* *f*

Klar. in A. I. *pp* *cresc.* *f*

II, III. *pp* *cresc.* *f*

Fag. I, II. *pp* *cresc.* *f*

III. *pp* *cresc.* *f*

4 Hörn. in E. *pp* *cresc.* *f*

4 Pos. *pp* *cresc.* *f*

Pk. *poco cresc.* *mf*

Viol. I. *p cresc.* *f* *p*

II. *pp* *cresc.* *f* *p*

Br. *pp* *cresc.* *f* *p*

B. *traut,* *B Dieses e länger halten.* *f breiter* *dim.* *trotzt ich* *dei-nem Ge-*

Vcl. *pp* *p cresc.* *f* *p*

K. B. *pp* *p cresc.* *f* *p*

(Act III measures 1173-1198)

Wotan's conversion is highlighted by the complete lack of the contrasting desires motive on his next lines:

So tatest du  
was so gern zu tun ich begehrt –  
doch was nicht zu tun

So you would do  
what I longed so dearly to,  
But which conflicting necessity

die Not zwiefach mich zwang?<sup>184</sup> Forbade me from doing?

Instead we hear “Brünnhilde’s compassionate love” motive in *his* cellos and contrabasses, while in *her* woodwinds we hear, of all things, a slight variation of the opening theme from Liszt’s *Faust Symphony*, as in its appearance in the recapitulation of the first movement when it is heard in conjunction with Faust’s second slower theme.

Liszt:

X

Klar. *mf espress.*

Fag. *mf espress.*

*p* sempre con sord.

*p* sempre con sord.

*p* sempre con sord.

*p* sempre con sord.

(*Faust* recapitulation measures 382-383)

<sup>184</sup> GS VI. 78.

Wagner:

Lebhaft. So tha-test du, was so gern zu thun ich be-

gehrt; doch was nicht zu thun, die Noth zwiefach mich zwang!

(Act III measures 1199-1207)

At the end of 1854 Wagner was working on Act I of *Die Walküre* and Liszt had finished the symphony, and as soon as Liszt mentioned that it was done, Wagner asked to see it.<sup>185</sup> Whether he was able to see it is unclear. We know from Liszt's letter of January 25, 1855 that he was going to send the proofs of *Les Préludes* and *Orpheus* to him to see<sup>186</sup>, while Wagner wrote, ambiguously, in his letter of February 15, that Wagner's *Faust Overture* was insignificant compared to Liszt's *Symphony*, and that he was "extraordinarily looking forward to it". Then, in an undated letter from around March 20<sup>th</sup> he asks when he may experience or learn [erfahren] something of this symphony. No further mention is made of it in the letters, an odd fact considering he had asked to see or hear it in nearly every letter since Liszt told him that it was nearing completion; but we know that he was finally able to hear it

<sup>185</sup> See: from Liszt to Wagner January 1st, and from Wagner to Liszt January 19<sup>th</sup>, when Wagner laments that he will have to wait so long (until the summer) to hear it, and asks if they could go through it together on the piano. (*Correspondence of Wagner and Liszt* II. 58) This meeting would be postponed for another year.

<sup>186</sup> *Correspondence of Wagner and Liszt* II. 61.

when Liszt came to visit him on October 13, 1856.<sup>187</sup> That would have been after Wagner had completed the third act. If Wagner was able to get a look at it sometime before this October meeting is not known.

But whether he saw it or not, the points of coincidence between the two are striking. The first augmented chord is the same in each case, down to the note beginning on beat two, only Wagner's version is rhythmically augmented. The second triad, though different – A minor in Liszt's and A diminished in Wagner's – has the same rhythm and has the same chordal accompaniment: an A minor triad. But if we look at the passage as a whole, Liszt does go from an augmented triad to a diminished triad; it just takes him twice as many chords to do it as Wagner uses. That being said, this shift from augmented to diminished triads only occurs in the recapitulation, which places the two motives of Faust together. As Alan Walker said in his discussion of the symphony, "it is perceptive of Liszt to attempt a reconciliation of Faust's themes at this later point by telescoping them – as if to say that they are but opposite sides of a single personality."<sup>188</sup> It is particularly noteworthy that this theme – which appears at the moment when the two sides of Wotan are beginning to reach a consensus in favor of selfless compassionate love over desire and its inevitable conflicts – is not only rhythmically and melodically similar to the Liszt theme in the recapitulation, but represents the same moment of reconciling opposing aspects of the personality of the main character. Had Wagner seen the symphony, this would have been an appropriate melodic segment to quote at this point. From this time on we no

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<sup>187</sup> *The Brown Book*, 106; *My Life*, 537-8.

<sup>188</sup> Alan Walker, "Liszt, Goethe, and the "Faust" Symphony" in *The Romantic Tradition: German Literature and Music in the Nineteenth Century*. ed Gerald Chapple, Frederick Hall and Hans Schulte. (New York: University Press of America, 1992), 252.

longer hear the contrasting desires motive: it has been displaced by Brünnhilde's compassionate love.<sup>189</sup>

Wotan finally breaks down and realizes the truth in Brünnhilde's words while simultaneously recognizing that it was much simpler for her to turn against her bargains than for him to turn against his own in favor of love:

<p>So leicht wähtest du Wonne der Liebe erworben,  wo brennend Weh' in das Herz mir brach, wo gräßliche Noth den Grimm mir schuf, einer Welt zu Liebe der Liebe Quell im gequälten Herzen zu hemmen? Wo gegen mich selbst ich sehrend mich wandte, aus Ohnmacht-Schmerzen schäumend ich aufschob, wüthender Sehnsucht sengender Wunsch den schrecklichen Willen mir schuf, in den Trümmern der eig'nen Welt meine ewige Trauer zu enden: –<sup>190</sup></p>	<p>So you supposed that the joys of love could be captured so     simply while burning woe broke my heart, while horrible necessity awoke my rage, when for the sake of the world, I imprisoned the spring of love in my tortured heart? When I turned against my self I became injuriously twisted, from impotent pain I ragingly rose, maddening desire dangerous wish drove me to a terrible decision,  in the ruins of my own world I would end my eternal sadness: –</p>
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While Brünnhilde was able to enjoy and embrace the love that he had taught her, Wotan was destroyed by it and so, he explains, was forced to cut that part away from himself. He portrays the world he created as empty and an unsuccessful experiment, just as he had in the monologue; and also just as he had in the monologue he declares that he wants his pain to end, and the way to do this was to cut off the desires which were giving him pain, the source of his contrasting desires. But Brünnhilde refused to

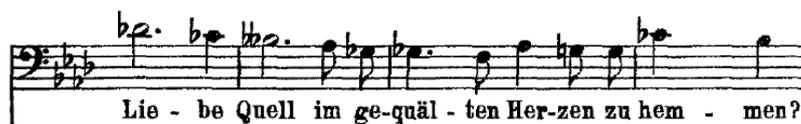
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<sup>189</sup> Strictly speaking, this is actually the second appearance of this *Faust* motive. The first appearance was in Act II in between Scenes 4 and 5 after Brünnhilde was convinced by Siegmund to support him against Hunding, thus representing her own reconciliation between her command from Wotan and her selfless love for Siegmund. So the second use of this motive here in Act III corroborates this view that the motive represents a synthesis or reconciliation of two opposing views.

<sup>190</sup> GS VI. 78.

give up what was giving him pain, namely love, and so had to be cast away so he could forget in peace.

To stress this relinquishing of love, Wagner uses the “woman’s worth” motive, now in its other meaning as renunciation of love, on the lines “for the sake of the world, I imprisoned the spring of love in my tortured heart,” and then later, when he explains the result of this renunciation of love, on “I would end my eternal sadness.” But after this line we hear Alberich’s curse on the ring, just as we had in the monologue when Wotan was explaining that he no longer wished to rule this broken world, but would leave it to Alberich and his brood, believing that he had no other option.



(Act III measures 1217-1220)

(Act III measures 1234-1241)

Wagner then shows us that Wotan does have an option, and his creations were not for nothing. Brünnhilde responds to Wotan’s depressed words with the following:

Wohl taugte dir nicht  
die tőr'ge Maid,  
die staunend im Rate who,  
nicht dich verstand,  
wie mein eig'ner Rat

Truly I am of no value to you  
I the foolish maid,  
stunned by your counsel  
did not understand you,  
as I only followed

nur das Eine mir riet –  
zu lieben was du geliebt. –<sup>191</sup>

my own command:  
to love what you had loved.

On the line of her single most important command – to love what Wotan loves – we hear the “sicher vor Bang und Grau’n” motive, originally from *Das Rheingold* scene 4 but also associated with Fricka and the Wälsung in *Die Walküre*. In all cases this motive is associated with Wotan’s or Fricka’s ideas on how to keep the Gods safe. In this way Wagner musically tells us that it is through compassionate love that the Gods can be saved, and Wotan, ultimately, hears this message as well.

The image shows a musical score for Act III, measures 1293-1295. The top staff is a vocal line in G major, with the lyrics "zu lie - ben was du ge - liebt." The bottom staff is a piano accompaniment in G major, featuring a melody with dynamics "p" and "dolce". The piano part includes a fermata over the final measure and a "P." marking at the end.

(Act III measures 1293-1295)

Brünnhilde then begs Wotan for a kinder fate if she must be separated from him. She desires that only the greatest hero should wake her and become her husband, and then reveals that the Wälsung race still has one hero left who will be the greatest of all heroes, and it is that man alone who she would like to waken her. Upon discovering this, Wotan says that neither Sieglinde nor the child Siegfried will receive any help from him.<sup>192</sup> This is directed in part to himself, as by declaring that Siegfried will receive no help he is guaranteeing that he will be the free agent that he needs. But still he does not give in to her demands. What finally breaks Wotan’s “way of the world” mentality and makes him give in to the third stage of the Moral Progression, associated with objective and compassionate love, is the same thing that

<sup>191</sup> GS VI. 79.

<sup>192</sup> This is accompanied by the Siegfried motive, showing that the only person who will help Siegfried is himself, and so he will be the most free of beings.

had converted Brünnhilde. Brünnhilde was about to take Siegmund to Valhalla when he threatened to kill himself if he did not get to take Sieglinde with him. This was an unacceptable alternative for her, and so she selflessly assisted Siegmund rather than allow Siegmund to kill himself. Brünnhilde forces Wotan's hand in the same way. She forces him to make the choice either to allow her the hero Siegfried for a husband, by placing the worst kind of terrors around her sleeping place, or to kill her right then with the spear, a line accompanied by the spear motive in the horns, oboes, bassoons and low strings. She thus tells Wotan, in the texture normally associated with him, that that is how far he will have to go if he truly believes that authority is higher than love. To this point Wotan has found it necessary to push her away, so as to relieve himself from the pain of his contrasting desires, though in essence she embodied that part of himself that believed in compassionate love. But to kill his most loving daughter for the sake of the law? Custom did not have a chance.

In the final "Wotan's Farewell" he gives in to her demands and speaks of her lovingly. The transfiguration begun at the opening of this scene is now complete: the full orchestra, both Wotan's and Brünnhilde's instruments, sound out the "Brünnhilde's compassionate love" theme. Wotan gives in to love, but equally, he gives in to freedom over the laws of custom when he embraces the hero who is to come. Wagner confirms this act by accompanying Wotan's line:

denn einer nur freie die Braut, der freier als ich, der Gott! <sup>193</sup>	Only one shall free the bride, One who is freer than I, the God!
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with the Siegfried motive, showing that Siegfried will be freer than the God, and then following it with the compassionate love motive, telling us that embracing Siegfried – someone independent from Wotan who would be led purely by his own spirit and not

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<sup>193</sup> GS VI. 83.

achieve any goal that was not of his own or natural-necessity's design – would be an act of selfless compassionate love, rather than love mingled with self-interest as was the case in his love for Siegmund, Sieglinde, and the Valkyries, who could only achieve specifically *his* goal for him.

When Wotan says farewell, he doesn't just say it to Brünnhilde but to his desires. He rejects his desire in favor of love, here depicted by Brünnhilde's radiant eyes:

<p>[D]ieser Augen strahlendes Paar, das oft im Sturm mir gegläntzt,  wenn Hoffnungs-Sehnen das Herz mir sengte, nach Welten-Wonne mein Wunsch verlangte aus wild webendem Bangen: – zum letzten Mal letz' es mich heut' mit des Lebewohles letztem Kuß!<sup>194</sup></p>	<p>These beaming eyes so often shone brightly to me in the storm when hopeless striving consumed my heart, and worldly pleasures stemming from [my] wild active fear were all I wished for: – for the last time they comfort me today with this last farewell kiss!</p>
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Wagner couldn't have offered a clearer example of the surrender from fearful desire to compassionate love.

The completion of this transformation is the metamorphosis of the meaning of the spear and its purpose. The original purpose of the spear was as a means to give Wotan the ability to satisfy his own desires; his desire became law, and ultimately a means of authority over others. But after he puts Brünnhilde to sleep and the motives of sleep and compassionate love begin to die down, the strings offer a sharp transition, preparing the way for a full brass announcement of the spear motive, as Wotan uses it to call forth Loge and place the magic fire around Brünnhilde. This is the first act in which the spear is not used to satisfy a desire that would lead to gains for Wotan, but

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<sup>194</sup> GS VI. 83-84.

rather, to satisfy Brünnhilde's desire. He abandons his selfishness and uses his power for the benefit of another, and never again uses the spear to satisfy his own subjective desires and wants.

The final line of the opera is the most telling regarding this transition, and it is another command to the spear, as we know from Wagner's stage direction, "He stretches out the spear as if casting a spell":

Wer meines Speeres	He who fears
Spitze fürchtet,	my spear's point
durchschreite das Feuer nie! <sup>195</sup>	will never pass through the fire!

This, for obvious reasons, is sounded to the Siegfried motive:

**WOTAN.**

Wer mei - nes Spee - res  
Spit - ze fürch - tet durch -  
schrei - te das Feu - er nie!

(Act III measures 1590-1597)

This moment serves numerous functions. Wotan, by commanding the law into the spear, is finally embracing the natural necessity of the third stage of the Moral Progression as he rejects the desire of the second. Summarizing this natural-necessity, Wagner wrote to Röckel, "Wodan rises to the tragic heights of willing his own destruction. This is all that we need to learn from the history of mankind: *to will what is necessary* and to bring it about ourselves."<sup>196</sup> This is Wotan's first step towards the total renunciation of his self.

<sup>195</sup> GS VI. 84.

<sup>196</sup> *Selected Letters of Richard Wagner*, 307.

Schiller offers us a way to further clarify the meaning of this moment through his concepts of *Anmut* and *Würde*. When Wotan commands Loge to place the fire around Brünnhilde, it is for the benefit of another. The tool used to satisfy his desires is being used for loving compassion, and so in essence, Wotan himself is desiring objective compassionate love. Wotan is then following Schiller's concept of "grace," in that Wotan has taken up a "second nature" by which he has aligned his inclinations with the inclinations of others, and so his "desire" fulfils these wishes of others and is aimed at pleasing these others. But by "willing what is necessary," i.e., the destruction of his spear and means of fulfilling desire, he is preparing for his final act of "dignity": the complete annihilation of his objects-sensual aspect, which is not willed from desire, but comes about from Kant's duty, and natural necessity. To paraphrase Feuerbach, he is preparing for his "final act of communication" in which he will rid himself of all the objects after which he lusted, all the aspects of his subjectivity, all of the sensuous parts of the self, and exist only in the pure essence of love. So from this viewpoint, the Wanderer would then be a representative of grace with the destruction of the first of these objects, the spear: by his confrontation with Siegfried, which he wills here, he enters the state of dignity, which will only be completed when his final sensual aspect, Valhalla, is also consciously destroyed by his will at the end of *Götterdämmerung*.

All told, Wotan has become, by abandoning desire in favor of compassionate love, an objective third-stage being, using the law which had been his means of achieving desire for the greater good of others regardless of their connection to his will. As Schopenhauer put it,

Nothing can distress or alarm him anymore; nothing can any longer move him; for he has cut all the thousand threads of willing which hold us bound to the world, and which as craving, fear, envy, and anger drag us here and there in

constant pain. He now looks back calmly and with a smile on the phantasmagoria of this world which was once able to move and agonize even his mind, but now stands before him as indifferently as chess-men at the end of a game, or as fancy dress cast off in the morning, the form and figure of which taunted and disquieted us on the carnival night. Life and its forms merely float before him as a fleeting phenomenon, as a light morning dream to one half-awake, through which reality already shines, and which can no longer deceive; and, like this morning dream, they too vanish without any violent transition.<sup>197</sup>

In *Die Walküre* he did this for the benefit of his daughter, a gesture which, as the philosophers of the *Zeitgeist* explained, is the first step to embodying love. The route which love takes on its path of objectification first goes from the self to the members of one's family, and afterwards to the world as a whole, including one's enemies. The Wanderer's role in *Siegfried* is just this, to objectively help others despite how they might relate to his will, a common theme in the third stage of the Moral Progression, and to assist in bringing about the goals of these others in whatever way he can. He has moved beyond helping his own family and entered the sublime third stage. The incredible dialectical "terrible trial" of Wotan that has been observed in *Die Walküre* has finally ended with the transcending of the fierce dialectical opposition of his own desires into compassionate love.

## C – The Wanderer in *Siegfried*: Five Dialogues

### i – Preliminaries

One of the common themes in Wagner scholarship on the subject of the character of the Wanderer is whether or not his intentions are sincere when he is confronting his enemies. Joachim Herz, for example, says that Wotan and Mime are both using the unknowing Siegfried to achieve their own ends and that Wotan's

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<sup>197</sup> Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation* I. 390-1.

thinking has “not progressed since the time he took his leave of Brünnhilde.”<sup>198</sup> The fact that Siegfried is able to get the ring and thus fulfill Wotan’s desire from *Die Walküre* makes many assume that Wotan actually wished to facilitate this and so guided Siegfried as well. Perhaps the worst example of this interpretation is the 1992 Barenboim-Kupfer *Ring* cycle at Bayreuth in which Wotan takes a position above the stage in Act II and is seen guiding and controlling the woodbird; thus it becomes through Wotan, not through the voice of nature, that Siegfried is directed to take the ring and Tarnhelm, and to head to Brünnhilde. This portrays Siegfried as unfree, and Wotan as a manipulator of events, a do-er not just a watcher, as he had claimed in his discussion with Alberich, and so also dishonest.

But this argument goes against what Wagner said about the Wanderer in *Siegfried* to Röckel:

By insisting, for ex., that Wodan’s appearance in ‘Young Siegfried’ should be invested with a greater sense of motivation than is at present the case, you risk destroying the intentional sense of instinctiveness in the development of the whole which I have been at pains to achieve. Following his farewell to Brünnhilde, Wodan in truth, is no more than a departed spirit: true to his supreme resolve, he must now allow events *to take their course*, leave things as they are, and nowhere interfere in any decisive way; that is why he has now become the ‘Wanderer’: observe him closely! He resembles us to a tee; he is the sum total of present-day intelligence, whereas Siegfried is the man of the future whom we desire and long for but who cannot be made by us, since he must create himself on the basis of *our own annihilation*. In such a guise, Wodan – you must admit – is of extreme interest to us, *whereas he would inevitably seem unworthy if he were merely a subtle intriguer, which is what he would be if he gave advice that was apparently meant to harm Siegfried but which in truth was intended to help not only Siegfried but, first and foremost, himself: that would be a deceit worthy of our political heroes, but not of my jovial god who stands in need of self-annihilation.*<sup>199</sup>

Wagner here shows that his intention regarding Wotan was to portray his actions as stemming from instinct and not from the reflective planning of *Die Walküre* and the

<sup>198</sup> Joachim Herz, “The Figure and Fate of Wotan in Wagner’s Ring” *Wagner* XV, no. 2 (1994), 89-90.

<sup>199</sup> *Selected Letters of Richard Wagner*, 308. My emphasis.

second stage. As such, his scenes throughout *Siegfried* ought therefore not to be viewed as Wotan attempting to help or guide Siegfried in any way, even indirectly through his communications with other characters such as Mime.

Still Herz does offer an interesting argument in favor of the deceitful Wotan during his initial conversation with Mime. Herz notes that the world described by Wotan in the question and answer sequence is not the world as it is at that moment, but the world as Wotan would like it to be. He says:

How does the Wanderer see the world as it now is? ‘On the earth’s broad back / weighs the race of Giants’ (GS VI, 103). No doubt it did once weigh there, but, according to his own testimony, Fafner the dragon was the last remaining giant. That Wotan himself once gambled with the ring is something he omits to add: only the Giants had quarrelled with the Nibelungs, he says with staggering finality. Does Wotan still rule the race of the gods, as he claims? He has abdicated and roams the world as the Wanderer. Though the trunk of the World Ash may wither, the spear shall never fail: ‘With the point of that weapon / Wotan governs the world’ (GS VI, 104). ‘Governed’ would be more accurate. ‘He who wields the spear / [...] / holds within his hand / control over all the world.’ But this too relates to the past, before Wotan voluntarily abdicated. The Nibelungs’ host bowed down before him: they bowed to the ring, not to the spear. The brood of Giants was tamed by his counsel: he attempted basely to betray them. ‘Forever they all obey / the mighty lord of the spear’: but Wotan has known that this is not so at least since his first confrontation with Erda and certainly since Act II of *Die Walküre*. What he is offering here is a bowdlerised version of his biography as bedtime reading for little Valkyrie children and would-be heroes.<sup>200</sup>

This is a good summary of the arguments often offered by those who do not believe in Wagner’s description of the Wanderer in the first act. But they do not stand up upon scrutiny. First, there is the issue of the progress of Wotan. In *Die Walküre* he refused to take responsibility for the spear, and instead said that the world was won by his desire; but the reality was that the contracts advised by Loge that were on the spear truly were the reason he ruled the world. He now freely admits this exactly, even using no egoistic language when discussing who the ruler of the world is: it is not

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<sup>200</sup> Joachim Herz, “The Figure and Fate of Wotan in Wagner’s Ring”, 90.

Wotan who rules the world, but the “holder of the spear.” The power is in the spear and the rule of law which the spear embodies.

Did he voluntarily abdicate? If so, how can he order the heroes to cut down the world ash tree, and why do the Gods sit around him in fear just waiting for the world to end, as Waltraute relates to Brünnhilde in *Götterdämmerung*? Wotan is still in control of the Gods even to the bitter end. None of them leave Valhalla, and all burn with him.

But what of humans and Nibelungs, do they also obey him? During this scene after the Wanderer answers Mime’s questions, he declares that Mime, by the law, must now answer his own three questions or else forfeit his own head, and Mime goes along with this; so at least Mime, as far as Dwarves go, accepts the law of the spear as something he must abide by, and so something under whose sway he is. But Wagner offers us more information on this world and the sway of the law in *Götterdämmerung*. The humans we see, and Hagen, the only example of a Dwarf aside from Alberich whom we see in the opera, follow the laws of Wotan and the Gods to a tee, particularly Hagen, who when the wedding is announced in his “call to the vassals,” is sure to command that all the appropriate sacrifices be made, and carefully plans the death of Siegfried so that it is right and just according to the laws of the spear. He makes certain that Gunther and Siegfried swear an oath of loyalty to each other so that inevitably when Siegfried “wrongs” Gunther by having an “affair” with his wife, the law is on Gunther’s side, and therefore, on Hagen’s as well.<sup>201</sup>

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<sup>201</sup> Hagen also has learned from Wotan’s example and is sure not to get involved in any of these contracts himself. The clearest example of this is when Siegfried asks Hagen if he would like to join in the blood brother oath, and the latter sheepishly replies that his blood is not good enough. That is not it at all. He is wronging Siegfried from the very first moment he sees him and greets him with the motive of Alberich’s curse. If he gets into a bloodbrother oath with him, then the law will no longer be on his side as he too will have been dishonest with his bloodbrother. Hagen has read enough to know that the conspirators do not drink a toast with their victim, or else the law will punish them, as it did Cassius and Brutus in *Julius Caesar*. Hagen has learned from Wotan that the law is an invaluable tool by

Then in Act II, he is the first to offer his spear on which Siegfried and Brünnhilde swear oaths of fidelity and by which, if shown to be dishonest, they ought to be killed. Hagen lives by the laws of Wotan; he is their servant, though he is a masterful manipulator of them. So they follow the laws of the spear, not necessarily of Wotan specifically, which is no more than the Wanderer had said to Mime.

Just because the law is absent from Mime's lair does not mean the world is not run by it. In truth, Siegfried had to grow up in such a lawless place, otherwise he would not have been free from Wotan's influence. Wotan, then, in this discussion with Mime, is showing a degree of honesty to both Mime and himself above anything that he said about himself in *Die Walküre*, even without the most telling statement about himself, that he ought to be called "Light-Alberich," the kind authoritarian. Thus he is able to look at himself independently of any of his desires, and, as Schopenhauer, speaking of his version of the third stage of the Moral Progression, said, as a "clear mirror of world" and a "clear will-less subject of knowledge."

The sections involving the Wanderer involve conversations with five other characters. The first three all desire or desired the ring, while the last two are free from this desire, but in every case, as in the two dialogues in *Die Walküre*, he faces the antithesis of himself and by facing each antithesis he is able to exorcise a part of his selfish nature. It is generally agreed by those discussed in Part I that the transition to the aesthetic life of the third stage is not something that happens, but rather something which needs constant reaffirmation. These dialogues serve this purpose. He must continue to face his desires in order to totally relinquish desire from who he is.

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which to rule, but only if one does not get caught up in one's own laws. Being bound is something for others.

ii – The Wanderer and Mime, i.e., The Wanderer and the Planning Second-  
Stage Wotan

The first of these dialogues is with Mime, who, as the mirror of the Wotan we see after he conceived his “grand idea” at the end of *Das Rheingold* and beginning of *Die Walküre*, has in place every part of his plan to conquer the dragon and gain the ring for himself by use of a hero, except for the sword that could do it. When Wotan conceived his grand idea, the sword was the only thing he did have, as Porges’s account shows,<sup>202</sup> but as yet he had no hero. However, both Wotan and Mime had a master plan involving stage two thinking by which to get their creations to win the ring for them. Wotan’s plan collapsed because of his conflicting desires and his inability to see a solution to his problem. As Siegfried leaves at the end of scene 1, Mime is in the same situation. He has one day to fix the sword – otherwise Siegfried will leave without it and never kill the dragon for him – and he does not know how to fix it:

Not und Schweiß	Nibelungs envy
nietet mir Notung nicht,	Need and sweat
schweißt mir das Schwert nicht	Cannot reforge Notung for me!
zu ganz! <sup>203</sup>	

Accompanying this passage, we hear a three-fold sequence of the “woman’s worth” motive that is similar to the one we heard when Wotan was describing his own debacle at the end of his monologue in *Die Walküre*:

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<sup>202</sup> Heinrich Porges. *Wagner Rehearsing the ‘Ring’: An Eye-Witness Account of the Stage Rehearsals of the First Bayreuth Festival*. Translated by Robert Jacobs (New York: Cambridge U Press. 1983), 38-9. “Wagner instructed Fafner, while he was gathering up the treasure to leave behind a worthless-looking, worn-out old sword... As the new theme is sounded [sword motive], signifying a new deed to be accomplished in the future Wotan, seized by a great thought, picks up the sword left by Fafner and, pointing to the castle, cries, ‘So grüss ich die Burg, sicher vor Bang und Grau’n!’”

<sup>203</sup> GS VI. 99.

[W]as ich liebe, muß ich verlassen, That which I love, I must forsake,  
 morden, was je ich minne, Murder, he who I love,  
 trügend verrathen Basely betray  
 wer mir vertraut! –<sup>204</sup> He who trusts me!

Wotan's version runs thusly:

(*Die Walküre* Act II measures 904-916)

Mime's version runs as follows, without the rests in between statements of the motive:

(*Siegfried* Act I measures 1282-1287)

The woman's worth motive makes no sense in the context of what Mime is saying, while it is a necessary part of what Wotan is saying. So the use of this figure must be taken not as "woman's worth" as such, but to assist the audience in recalling this exact moment with Wotan in *Die Walküre*, and thus to make the connection between the two passages. Wotan was lost and realized that his plan would be for nothing at

<sup>204</sup> GS VI. 42.

precisely this moment in *Die Walküre*, after which he declares that he wants “the end” and surrenders to failure. The same thing is happening with Mime, but at the moment when it seems that Mime is about to fall into the same deep depression, the Wanderer enters with an offer to solve his problem and answer any question he might need answering. The Wanderer saves him from the pain of futility that he experienced after his similar moment. But he is rejected. Again and again the Wanderer tries to get him to ask the right question. The first earnest effort runs as follows:

Viel erforscht' ich,  
erkannte viel:  
wichtiges konnt' ich  
manchem künden,  
manchem wehren,  
was ihn mühte,  
nagende Herzens-Not.<sup>205</sup>

Much I've explored,  
and much have I learned:  
to some  
I was able to tell important things  
and for some  
I fended off what troubled them,  
nagging at their hearts' distress.

Mime refuses, but Wotan tries again:

Mancher währte  
weise zu sein,  
nur was ihm not tat,  
wußt' er nicht;  
was ihm frommte,  
ließ ich erfragen:  
lohnend lehrt' ihn mein Wort.<sup>206</sup>

Many imagine  
themselves to be wise,  
but the only thing they needed,  
they did not know;  
I make myself useful,  
I let them ask me their questions:  
I give my counsel to their benefit.

Before the words “but the only thing they needed, they did not know,” the orchestral accompaniment stops completely. The stark contrast of silence calls attention to the seriousness of those words, but again Mime refuses the help. Then the Wanderer stakes his head and challenges him to a game of knowledge, which Mime ultimately loses because, as the Wanderer says, “you gave no thought to your need when you asked your questions.” As Mime concludes his failure to know who will forge *Notung* anew, again we hear the sequenced “woman’s worth” motive as above, and

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<sup>205</sup> GS VI. 100-101.

<sup>206</sup> GS VI. 101.

again the Wanderer interrupts him at the same place, this time offering him the answer to that question even though it was not necessary to give Mime that answer according to the rules of the challenge. Then the Wanderer leaves, saying that Mime's head will be forfeit to the one who doesn't know fear.

This episode portrays Mime going through the same trouble that Wotan went through, but with the opposite problem: he was not able to make the sword that would kill Fafner, but had the hero who could do it. The Wanderer faced a version of himself in Mime, the version from *Die Walküre* who was capable of long-term planning. By giving this version of himself the answer which Mime longed to hear, the answer that would make his plan achievable, the Wanderer was able to exorcise the part of himself that attempted to fill his desire for the ring with intricate plans and trickery.

Much has already been said of the significance of the substance of what Wotan says to Mime in this dialogue, so only one feature remains to be discussed: the Wanderer motive. The initial segment of it:



(*Siegfried* Act I measures 1288-1291)

does appear to stem from Loge's chromatic figure representing both himself and the magic fire, as well as the magic sleep motive, as Cooke and Donington, among others, have pointed out. This might indicate that the Wanderer follows the same natural-instinctive path free from care as Loge had done (having no personal stake in any of the events of *Das Rheingold*); which is consistent with Wagner's explanation of him

to Röckel in the January letter of the Wanderer as a being of instinct without forethought. But the second segment's derivation is less clear.



(*Siegfried* Act I measures 1292-1293)

Adorno, without pointing to any derivation, said of it, “His leitmotif is reminiscent of lullabies, as if his archaic physical self had been reduced to a shadow and relegated to the realm of dream, a fate which also befalls Alberich.”<sup>207</sup> Sandra Corse, in her discussion, believes that the second half stems from “a rhythmic diminution of the Erda motive.”<sup>208</sup> The usually erudite Cooke is silent on the subject. It would seem, then, that this is an original motive now meant to portray Wotan free from his objects, no longer viewing the world and himself as the fulfilment of desires, but as a pure objective being, and so represented by a new motive of his own. The connection to Erda’s motive does not detract from this interpretation: it merely reiterates the Wanderer’s abandonment of desire in favor of nature.

But in truth, the melody does have a derivation, and to identify it we must turn again to Liszt. As has been discussed, when Wagner was still writing *Die Walküre*, Liszt sent him two of his symphonic poems: *Les Préludes* and *Orpheus*; and of the latter Wagner said “I have always accorded [it] a special place of honor among Liszt’s compositions”<sup>209</sup>. His symphonic poem *Orpheus* did not have its basis in the Greek myth, but rather in Ballanche’s novel in which Orpheus “leads humanity into a

<sup>207</sup> Theodor Adorno. *In Search of Wagner*. trans. Rodney Livingstone. (New York: Verso, 2005), 123.

<sup>208</sup> Sandra Corse. *Wagner and the New Consciousness*. 104

<sup>209</sup> *My Life*, 542.

modern age by introducing civilized law, intended as a new philosophy for Europe.”<sup>210</sup> The following theme:



(*Orpheus* measures 38-43)

as Shulstad says, “represents Orpheus’s voice, and is static hovering between major and minor.” Liszt portrays the character of Orpheus as someone who has come to bring a new order but ultimately fails, and so “disappearing into the clouds leaves mankind with the task of developing the teachings of civilization.” The connection to Wotan must have struck Wagner hard upon seeing the score, and the major elements of this theme of Orpheus’s voice got incorporated into the Wanderer theme. The opening rhythm and pitch of the Orpheus theme are the same as those of the Wanderer; plus, in the last three notes of the five-note fragment in measure 40, which lead up to the repeat of this initial rhythmic figure by Liszt in measure 41, we see a leap of a minor third (G#-B) and then a descent down a step (B-A). The same intervals occur in the Wagner, albeit more compactly, as the last note of the bassoon and horn line, which accompanies the opening rhythmic figure, becomes the first note of this three-note segment in measures 1293 and 1295:

<sup>210</sup> Reeves Shulstad “Liszt’s Symphonic Poems and Symphonies” in *Cambridge Companion to Liszt* ed. Kenneth Hamilton. (New York: Cambridge U. Press, 2005), 209.



The image shows a page of a musical score for Siegfried Act I, measures 1288-1301. The score is for a full orchestra and a vocal soloist (Wotan). The instruments listed on the left are: Hör. (Horns), Tromp. (Trumpets), 3P. (3 Trumpets), Puk. (Percussion), Viol. I and II (Violins), Viola, Cello, and Bass. The vocal line is for Wotan, with lyrics in German. The score is marked with dynamics such as p, pp, sf, and p. The tempo is marked 'Belebt.' (Allegretto). The lyrics include: 'Wer ist's, der im wilden Walde mich sucht? Gast gönne hold des Hauses Herd!'.

(Siegfried Act I measures 1288-1301)

But the motive has still more to offer. Hidden away in the motive we hear, from measures 1295-1298 in the cello line, the motive of the spear, the usual instrumentation for the motive, which is then followed by the woman's worth motive, again in the cello and sung by Wotan in a varied form, though both lines are doubled by the horns. Placing all of these ideas together, a clear picture of the meaning of the second half of this motive emerges. Wotan is now following a new moral law of compassionate love. At the end of *Die Walküre* the law of the spear was transfigured from a means for Wotan to attain his desire to a new, objective, self-less law by which he achieves the desires of others. The appearance of the spear and woman's worth motives here, then, indicate how the law and love – the latter as the most valuable thing in the world – incorporate themselves into this overall objective law by which Wotan now lives. So this composite motive of the Wanderer shows how Wotan has

developed both as an independent being free from desire, and how he has transfigured his desires into actions of objective, compassionate love.

iii – The Wanderer and Alberich, The Wanderer and Fafner: i.e. the Wanderer and Desire

The next meeting is between the Wanderer and Alberich, in which Fafner also makes an appearance. Now the archenemies finally meet again. But much to Alberich's disappointment, the Wanderer refuses to fight with him. Alberich throws insult upon insult as the Wanderer, which might have led to conflict had the Wanderer still been Wotan from *Die Walküre*, but that time has now passed. The Wanderer instead treats Alberich like a colleague offering assistance rather than insults and threats.<sup>211</sup>

The music aligns with this description. Alberich musically depicts the Wanderer in his old guise as Wotan from *Das Rheingold* and *Die Walküre*, while the music accompanying the Wanderer depicts him as he is, using the Wanderer and nature motives. There is a constant back and forth between the orchestra depicting Wotan as Alberich sees him, with the Valhalla, spear, and contrasting desires motives, i.e., the conflicted, manipulative, unsure and unresolved Wotan from *Die Walküre*, and the orchestra depicting him as the Wanderer views himself, so that we can literally see and hear Alberich's perspective on Wotan.

The accompaniment is loud and violent whenever Alberich speaks, which is in contrast to the bare, calm accompaniment the orchestra offers whenever the Wanderer speaks. The Wanderer attempts to reveal to Alberich his intentions when he says,

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<sup>211</sup> See also: Donington. *Wagner's Ring and its Symbols*, 187.

accompanied by the Wanderer motive, “I came to watch, not to act,” but this falls on deaf ears. Alberich finally thinks he has Wotan’s intentions clear when he explains to him:

<p>Hab' Acht: deine Kunst kenne ich wohl; doch wo du schwach bist, blieb mir auch nicht verschwiegen. Mit meinen Schätzen zahltest du Schulden; mein Ring lohnte der Riesen Müh', die deine Burg dir gebaut; was mit den trotzigem einst du vertragen, dess' Runen wahr noch heut' deines Speeres herrischer Schaft. Nicht du darfst was als Zoll du gezahlt den Riesen wieder entreißen: du selbst zerspaltest deines Speeres Schaft; in deiner Hand der herrische Stab, der starke zerstiebt wie Spreu.<sup>212</sup></p>	<p>Beware! Your methods I know well; but where you are weak, is also unhidden from me. With my treasure you paid your debts; my ring paid for the giants' labor in building your castle. What once you promised the foolish Giants remains still today on the runes of your spear's mighty shaft. You are not permitted to retrieve from the Giants What you once paid to them: Or else you would then shatter your spear's shaft; In your hand, the mighty staff so strong, would crumble to dust!</p>
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This is at first accompanied by the contrasting desires motive:

Hab' Acht! Dei-ne Kunst ken-ne ich wohl, —

*Hefzig.*  
*f*

*p*      *f*

(Act II measures 206-209)

and then followed by the motive associated with the contract with the Giants:

<sup>212</sup> GS VI. 124-125.

Spee-res her-rischer Schaft: nicht du darfst, was als Zoll du ge-zahlt, den

*p* *poco cresc.*

(Act II measures 226-231)

using the same motives and patterns in exactly the same manner in which Wotan had used them when explaining his same impotence during his monologue. But this still gets nothing out of Wotan, whose response is accompanied by the first segment of the Wanderer motive in the brass, and then again in the woodwinds. Only when he speaks of Alberich not being bound by his spear do we hear the spear motive, and ironically at that.

Alberich's final attempt to portray the Wanderer as he was occurs when he claims that the Wanderer's confidence in the face of his enemy stems from his having "raised a boy":

der klug die Frucht dir pflücke, die du – nicht brechen darfst[.] <sup>213</sup>	who will skilfully pluck for you the fruit which you are not permitted to take[.]
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This passage is accompanied by the contrasting desires motive, which by itself answers Alberich in the negative as Wotan, having learned the truth behind Alberich's words, recognizes the conflict between those two positions beyond which he has moved. The circumstance described by Alberich, though accurate in reference to Siegmund, is completely unfounded in the case of Siegfried. Wotan has learned that he may not influence the hero or else the spear will fall to dust, as Alberich had said.

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<sup>213</sup> GS VI. 126.

Wotan merely says that he no longer desires the ring, and it is Mime who is sending Siegfried to the cave to gain the ring, not he.

Alberich repeatedly attempts to represent Wotan as he was, and every time the Wanderer responds with composure and honesty. Alberich's understanding of Wotan has changed from contempt and the belief that he is the lying god from *Das Rheingold* and *Die Walküre*, to utter disbelief, as when the Wanderer offers to help Alberich by waking Fafner and thus giving Alberich a chance to convince Fafner to give him the ring to save his life. Alberich says to this offer:

Was beginnt der Wilde?  
Gönnt er mir's wirklich?<sup>214</sup>

What is this wild one doing?  
Would he really allow it [the ring]  
to me?

In assisting Mime, Wotan helped him to complete his plan. Mime's attempt to get the ring centered around an idea, and did not focus on the actual specifics of physically taking the ring. Mime was a preparer, not a doer, just as Wotan was a preparer in *Die Walküre* when he was focused on the alignment of all of the factors which would have permitted the hero to conquer the dragon, and not actually on the physical gaining of the ring. To Alberich, who only desires the ring and has no intricate plan, at least in this scene, the Wanderer offers help with getting the ring itself. In each case Wotan uses his sympathy to discover what each needs and wants, and attempts to get it for them. He does the same here with Fafner. Fafner never had a desire for world domination, as we know from *Das Rheingold*, but was only interested in security and safety. It is in using this language that the Wanderer makes his appeal to him:

Gekommen ist einer,  
Noth dir zu künden:

One has come,  
to warn you of danger:

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<sup>214</sup> GS VI. 127.

er lohnt dir's mit dem Leben, lohn'st du das Leben ihm mit dem Horte, den du hütest. <sup>215</sup>	he will repay you with your life, if for your life you will pay him with the treasure that you guard.
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The language is simple: it does not bog Fafner down with specifics: it simply says if you want to live and be safe, give up the ring. It is Alberich who gets into the specifics, and so it is Alberich whom Fafner rejects when he says that he will return to sleep.

Wotan then leaves with a warning about Mime, but gives Alberich one piece of advice:

Alles ist nach seiner Art; an ihr wirst du nichts ändern. <sup>216</sup>	Everything goes its own way; You will not be able to change anything.
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With this final line, the Wanderer is attempting to help his evil second self, Alberich, a representative of the old part of him that only wanted to conquer and control. The point that nothing can be controlled, and that everything must go its own way, is accompanied by Erda's nature motive. He is attempting to educate Alberich to give up control in favor of instinct, in the same way that he was himself educated by Erda in *Das Rheingold* and by Brünnhilde at the end of *Die Walküre*. This is more right than Alberich knows, as his own plan, that Hagen will get him the ring, is equally doomed to failure because Alberich cannot control Hagen. In Act II of *Götterdämmerung* Alberich speaks to Hagen, telling him that the ring will belong to both of them once it is stolen, but independent Hagen says: "I shall have the ring: expect it in silence!" Alberich attempts to get him to swear to share the ring with him, and Hagen responds "To myself I swear it". So Alberich will never hold the ring again, and his plan, which rests on his authority, is doomed to failure much as all

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<sup>215</sup> GS VI. 127.

<sup>216</sup> GS VI. 128.

plans based on egoism are doomed. Wotan attempts to save him from his inevitable fate, by instilling a modicum of fear in Alberich as to his plan: “he [the Wanderer] leaves me with fear and scorn,” much as Wotan was left with fear by Erda in *Das Rheingold*. But Alberich wishes blindly to continue with his plan as if nothing had happened.

But the meeting between Dwarf and God is not about Alberich, it is about Wotan facing his opposite. Just as he had with Mime, with Alberich and Fafner he exorcized away further parts of his selfish will: with Alberich it was his lust for power and authority, and with Fafner it was his desire for security. The subjective sensual aspects of himself are being burned away in these two acts by these two confrontations, leaving Wotan closer to existing purely objectively as a part of the world.

iv – The Wanderer and Erda: i.e. The Wanderer and Wotan’s Hope in a Higher Power

After a lengthy respite in which Wagner wrote *Tristan und Isolde* and *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, he returned to *Siegfried* and began composing the music to Act III. By this time the deed for which Wotan had spent so much time preparing Siegmund was finally completed by Siegfried. Siegfried had gained the ring, and was being led to Brünnhilde by the only thing in the world able to teach him anything, the animals of nature, in this case the woodbird. In other words, he is being led by natural necessity to fulfill his destiny. Wotan had foretold at the end of *Die Walküre* of a confrontation between himself and the one who would pass through the flames, in which the bravery of that individual would overpower the spear, and essentially put an

end to its power. As Siegfried had killed Fafner, and Fafner could only be killed by a sword forged by one who was fearless, the ordained time had finally arrived and the spear is about to be destroyed by the fearless Siegfried as per Wotan's wish. This is a wish to which he was led by his newly acquired second nature, which will not be a subjective desire, but the natural necessity of the third stage of the Moral Progression. The preceding three dialogues were all concerned with Wotan's facing and defeating the selfish aspect of himself. Now so defeated, he is ready for the next step, to act again, not as an individual, but as the embodiment of the spirit of natural-necessity. In this role he has moved beyond non-acting Erda, and the hope that she, once upon a time, was able to instill in him. The questions he asks her and her inability to answer them prove that he has usurped her position. This scene shows that Wotan is the new nature God and, moreover, that he is able to act in the name of and for natural-necessity in a way beyond the abilities of the nature goddess. He exorcises his need for a guiding higher power, which is absolutely necessary for him to be able to act as the spirit of natural necessity.

These first two scenes of Act III are often considered puzzling, as if Wotan, after having shown himself to be objective and will-less in the previous two acts, now begins to have second thoughts about it. His questions to Erda – “how can the rolling wheel of fate be stopped” and “how may a God conquer his fear?” – seem as if they are from another time in Wotan's life and so inevitably cause us to ask why this is happening now. Is Wotan, after smiling in the face of death and being ready to assist Alberich in regaining the ring, thus dooming himself to the worst possible fate, now afraid again? Obviously the answer is no, but only because his questions literally do come from another time. They are likely the very same questions he had asked Erda when he first followed her and won wisdom and the Valkyries from her. She allayed

his fears at that time and assisted him in formulating a plan which might prevent her prophecy of a shameful end for the Gods, her own rolling wheel of fate, from coming to fruition. So now Wotan returns with these very same questions, but instead of getting answers from her, he gets advice to seek out others – a portrayal of her inability to act on her own – in answer to which he must inform her of the reasons why he cannot go to them. The Norns do not know if fate can be changed; they are mere chroniclers, and Brünnhilde was punished and banished by, as the Wanderer says, “the lord of the storm” and “the father of battles.” This in particular leaves Erda confused as to how Wotan, the father of independent thinking, could punish independent thinking in Brünnhilde, unaware of the bonds that forced him into that position. She is unable to answer him, and he must instead enlighten her, which only makes her want to return to sleep all the more. The situation has reversed from the earlier meeting; she now doesn’t know what will happen in and to the world, and he does.

It is significant that he never refers to himself during this passage. In the earlier sketches of this scene in *Der junge Siegfried*, he asked his questions for the benefit of the other Gods who were cowering in fear, to which she offered the advice “they must will what they do not want, their end.” But here he refers to himself by other names, or in referring to the former self who learned fear from her he speaks in the third person of Wotan, not of himself. One musical hint at this earlier encounter occurs early on in the scene, just after Erda awakes:

Der Weckrufer bin ich,  
und Weisen üb' ich,  
daß weithin wache  
was fester Schlaf umschließt.  
Die Welt durchzog ich,  
wanderte viel,  
Kunde zu werben,

I am the awakener,  
and I used my knowledge  
to wake, far off,  
That which deep slumber encased.  
I have travelled through the world,  
wandered a great deal,  
searching for knowledge

urweisen Rat zu gewinnen.	to gain ancient wisdom.
Kundiger gibt es	There is no one known
keine als dich:	such as yourself:
bekannt ist dir	you know
was die Tiefe birgt,	what lies in the deep,
was Berg und Tal,	and what is woven into the mountain
	and valley,
Luft und Wasser durchwebt. <sup>217</sup>	air and water.

The Wanderer continues, stressing her wisdom and reiterating what she once told him in *Das Rheingold*: “All things I know.” However, there is irony embedded musically in these lines. The musical accompaniment to the opening segment up to “I travelled the world,” uses Erda’s nature motive along with its retrograde, the “twilight of the Gods” motive, which she pronounced when she said “all things end” in *Das Rheingold*. But this passage, despite the tone of rest of these lines, does not praise her; it speaks of her and of the wisdom of the Wanderer who was able to call her out of the deep slumber, thus reminding us of the last time we saw her and the last thing she said, as well as teaching us that the roles are now reversed. The Wanderer now commands her, and has thus nominally taken her place as the wisest creature, ending her reign and fulfilling the prophecy from *Das Rheingold* that all things end, including her.

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<sup>217</sup> GS VI. 152-153.

The image shows a page of a musical score for Act III, measures 143-150. The score is written for a full orchestra and a vocal soloist. The instruments listed include Flute (Fl.), Horn (Hob.), Clarinet (Cl.), Horn (Hör.), Bass Clarinet (BbCl.), Trumpet (Bc. Tromp. (in D)), Alto Saxophone (aPos.), Bass Saxophone (Cb. Pos.), Piccolo (Pk. (in C)), Triangle (tr), Horn II (H. (in A)), Horn I (I. (in H.)), Violin (Viol.), Viola (Vcl.), Cello (Cb.), and Double Bass (B.). The vocal line is in German and includes the lyrics: "Der Weck . ru . fer bin ich, und Wei . sen üb . ich, dass weit . hin wa - che, was fester Schlaf . ver .". The score includes various musical notations such as dynamics (p, pp, pizz, cres, dim), articulation (tr, pizz), and performance instructions like "(zu 2)", "(ohne Dämpfer)", and "Erstes Zeitmaass.". The tempo is marked "pizz. p" and "cres. -".

(Act III measures 143-150)

When discussing his wandering – one of the few times he mentions what he personally is doing rather than referring to his past self in the third person by a variety of names – unsurprisingly we hear the motive of the Wanderer. Then on the next line, speaking of the ancient wisdom he would hope to win by his wandering, we hear the nature motive in the major, as opposed to the same (Erda’s) motive in the minor, and without the “twilight of the Gods” motive. The Wanderer has bypassed Erda herself and in following the natural necessity which has taken a hold of him since the final

scene of *Die Walküre*, now has a direct link to nature. Erda herself has become obsolete to him.<sup>218</sup>

Capping off this irony is the motive sounded when the Wanderer finally begins to speak glowingly of Erda's wisdom: the Valhalla motive. Why would this motive be used here unless it was meant to refer to a past perspective which the Wanderer once held as Wotan, lord of Valhalla? To Wotan, not the Wanderer, was Erda the fount of all knowledge.

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<sup>218</sup> We see the idea of a figure embodying natural necessity being able to make the necessary changes needed by the world more effectively than nature itself in *Artwork of the Future*: See PW I. 78-79. The connection between this statement and Wotan's role in this scene as he surpasses nature is striking.



The reason why she is obsolete to him, and he is now closer to natural necessity, is that Erda, unlike Wotan, is incapable of embodying the spirit of natural necessity, and thus *acting* in its interest: or as Wagner said to Röckel, “to will what is necessary and bring it about ourselves.” Erda merely speaks to him of her daughters, the Norns, who are incapable of action and willing, as Wotan points out:

<p>Im Zwange der Welt weben die Nornen: sie können nichts wenden noch wandeln.<sup>219</sup></p>	<p>The Norns weave as servants to the world: They are neither able to stop or alter anything.</p>
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Finally, when the Wanderer realizes that Erda is no longer as wise as he, and is incapable of doing more than contemplating natural necessity, he exorcises his hope in her from himself, takes control and tells her – in a passage glorifying the spirit of natural necessity which Wagner praised to Röckel – what he has willed: his own end and an end to authority in favor of the rule by compassionate love of Siegfried and Brünnhilde. In the final reversal of roles, he tells Erda that because of his willing *she* need not fear any longer, and can rest eternally in “fearless sleep.” As he calls her the “mother of primal fear,” perhaps he hopes to end all fear by making her fearless.

<p>Weißt du, was Wotan – will? Dir unweisen ruf' ich's in's Ohr, daß sorglos du ewig nun     schläf'st. – Um der Götter Ende grämt mich die Angst nicht, seit mein Wunsch es – will! Was in Zwiespalt's wildem     Schmerze verzweifelnd einst ich beschloß, froh und freudig führ' ich frei es nun aus: weih't' ich in wütendem Ekel des Niblungen Neid schon</p>	<p>Do you know what Wotan wills? This call is for your ears, unwise one so that you may now rest in fearless     eternal sleep! Fear of the Gods' downfall does not grieve me, as it is my wish – my will! What I once in the wild pain of my     contradictions, set myself upon in despair now I freely perform happy and joyful. Though in fury and loathing I flung the world to the [product of the]</p>
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<sup>219</sup> GS VI. 153.

die Welt,  
dem wonnigsten Wälsung  
weis' ich mein Erbe nun an.  
Der von mir erkoren,  
doch nie mich gekannt,  
ein kühnster Knabe,  
meines Rates bar,  
errang des Niblungen Ring:  
ledig des Neides,  
liebesfroh,  
erlahmt an dem Edlen  
Alberich's Fluch;  
denn fremd bleibt ihm die Furcht.  
Die du mir gebar'st,  
Brünnhilde,  
sie weckt hold sich der Held:  
wachend wirkt  
dein wissendes Kind  
erlösende Weltentat. –

D'rum schlafe nun du,  
schließe dein Auge;  
träumend erschau' mein Ende!  
Was jene auch wirken –  
dem ewig Jungen  
weicht in Wonne der Gott. –  
Hinab denn, Erda!  
Urmütter-Furcht!  
Ur-Sorge!  
Zu ewigem Schlaf  
Hinab! Hinab!<sup>220</sup>

Nibelung's envy  
now to the mighty Wälsung  
I leave my heritage.  
He whom I chose,  
though he does not know me,  
the bravest of the youths,  
whom I have never advised,  
has gained the Nibelung's ring.  
In the happiness of love  
separated from envy  
his nobility will quell  
Alberich's curse;  
because fear remains foreign to him.  
She whom you bore,  
Brünnhilde,  
will awaken to the hero:  
on waking,  
the child of your wisdom  
will perform the deed that will  
redeem the world.–  
So now sleep on,  
close your eyes;  
In your dreaming, behold my end!  
Whatever will happen now, –  
To the eternally young  
the god gladly surrenders.–  
Descend then, Erda!  
Mother of primal fear!  
Care's originator!  
Descend! Descend!  
Into eternal sleep!

The Wanderer, by his willing statement before Erda moves past Schiller's state of grace, limited to inactively following the spirit of natural necessity as Erda had done, and moves on to duty, so actively, consciously willing his end "and bringing it about himself." On the line "This call is for your ears, unwise one, so that you may now rest in fearless eternal sleep!" we hear the complete Erda motive and twilight of the Gods motive in the upper woodwinds, and so this declaration undoes the fear that this same line had created in him when it was delivered by Erda in *Das Rheingold*.

<sup>220</sup> GS VI. 156-157. Freely adapted from the anonymous translation "courtesy of Deutsche Grammophon" in Solti's *Siegfried* Decca: 1997. This passage, in a sense, takes away some of the heroism of Brünnhilde's final redemptive act, as Wotan has "willed" it in this scene.

Dir Un - wei - sen ruf' ich's in's Ohr, dass sorg - los e - wig du nun schläfst

Mässig.

p. + p. +

(Act III measures 352-356)

Then on the line “now I freely perform happy and joyful” he introduces a new motive which is a near-exact inversion, down to the opening leap, of the spear motive, i.e., authority, law, and custom. It is often referred to as the “world-inheritance” motive, though what it represents is more specifically “the new order of love”:

ff p cresc. ff

p. +

(Act III measures 374-376)

This motive is sounded along with Siegfried’s motive when he speaks of the new order of love and fearlessness that Siegfried and Brünnhilde will bring, and again when he says that Brünnhilde will perform the world-redeeming deed after she awakens. The new world order will exist in the free compassionate love that lives within the pair. Just as the ring does not affect Siegfried<sup>221</sup> the ring under their compassionate love will become the natural Rhinegold again, the world-redeeming

<sup>221</sup> When he takes the ring in Act II we hear the gold motive of the Rhinemaidens, not the ring motive, portraying how Siegfried, innocently views the gold.

act, and the pendulum swing of authority will stop as it gets removed from under the dragon's wing and becomes equally available to all through love.

v – The Wanderer and Siegfried, Wotan's Willful Act of Succumbing

Finally Erda sinks back into the earth, and there is nothing left for the Wanderer to do but stand and wait for his grandson to defeat him. In order for this new order to occur, the current rule of law must be destroyed just as Wotan willed it to be destroyed by Siegfried at the end of *Die Walküre*. So the ultimate result of this meeting must be, according to the law that Wotan pronounced onto the spear, Siegfried's destruction of the spear. If Siegfried does not destroy the spear, and does not fight with Wotan, then he is tacitly complying with the laws of custom that the spear represents. In this case the new world order cannot come about, Brünnhilde will not be awakened, and so she will not be able to perform the world-redemptive deed. The continuation along the path of natural-necessity will stop, and the world will stagnate. Equally, if the Wanderer just allows him to break the spear, then the new world order will have come about from the old, thus continuing the swing of the pendulum of authority. The Wanderer, now fully embodying the spirit of natural necessity, feels this and so consciously, for the greater good, takes an objective moral step backwards into subjectivity and selfishness – forcing himself to get riled up at Siegfried's lack of respect – but this step backwards is required of him by natural necessity.<sup>222</sup>

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<sup>222</sup> See: Wagner's letter to Röckel January 25/26 1854, "Faced with the prospect of his own annihilation, he finally becomes so instinctively human that – in spite of his supreme resolve – his ancient pride is once more stirred, provoked moreover (mark this well!) by – his jealousy of Brünnhilde for she it is who has become his most vulnerable spot. He refuses, so to speak, to be thrust aside, but prefers to fall – to be conquered: but even this is so little premeditated on his part that, in a sudden burst of passion, he even aspires to victory, a victory which – as he says – could only make him more

This backwards step is portrayed through his reaction to Siegfried as a graphic representation of Hume's maxim, consistent throughout the Moral Progression:

Nothing is more evident than that any person acquires our kindness or is exposed to our ill-will in proportion to the pleasure or uneasiness we receive from him and that the passions keep pace exactly with the sensations. Whoever can find the means either by his services, his beauty, or his flattery to render himself useful or agreeable to us is sure of our affections, whoever harms or displeases us never fails to excite our hatred or anger.<sup>223</sup>

The Wanderer attempts to get Siegfried to appreciate him by dropping hints as to his lineage, remembering that it was through the common dragon in the eye that Hunding was able guess at the kinship between Siegmund and Sieglinde:

<p>Mit dem Auge, das als and'res mir fehlt, erblick'st du selber das eine, das mir zum Sehen verblieb.<sup>224</sup></p>	<p>With the eye that is missing from its mate, you yourself are looking at the one that remains to me for sight.</p>
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He also attempts to enlighten the boy as to the original derivation of the sword:

<p>Doch wer schuf die starken Stücken, daraus das Schwert du geschweißst?<sup>225</sup></p>	<p>But who made the powerful splinters from which you reforged the sword?</p>
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All the while, as a loving father, he does not attempt to force himself and his experiences upon his descendant by egoistically portraying the motives associated with himself either in his voice or in the accompaniment. Rather, he stays focused on

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wretched than ever." (*Selected Letters of Richard Wagner*, 308). He must aspire towards victory otherwise he taints the formation of the new society with his old system of custom.

<sup>223</sup> David Hume. *Treatise On Human Nature*. 348. One can view this confrontation in Hegelian terms regarding *Sachlichkeit*: "The dialectic then swings over from arbitrary subjectivity to the arbitrary objectivity of *Sachlichkeit*. A man identifies himself with a *Sache*, thing or task, which is his own, and which he pursues without regard to external success or approval. Everyone else is similarly supposed to be devoting himself to his own *Sache*. Such disinterested fulfillment of tasks rests, however, on self-deception. Its disinterestedness is always held up for the admiration of others, and is really a form of personal exhibitionism." (G. F. Hegel. *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Introduction by J.N. Findlay, XX). Without the admiration from others, in the case of Wotan from Siegfried, the disinterestedness breaks down and degenerates into interestedness. The loss by Wotan and the result of this confrontation between interestedness and disinterestedness is his surrender to the ethical community of love led by Siegfried and Brünnhilde.

<sup>224</sup> GS VI. 160.

<sup>225</sup> GS VI. 159.

Siegfried and his deeds, never straying into motives associated with Wotan or the Wanderer until Siegfried asks about his eye. The one possible exception to this is after Wotan asks who created the sword; Siegfried responds with:

<p>Was weiß ich davon!          Ich weiß allein,          daß die Stücken nichts mir nützen,          schuf ich das Schwert mir nicht          neu.<sup>226</sup></p>	<p>What do I know about that!          I only know,          that the pieces were useless to me          until I reforged them myself.</p>
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This line induces a wide smile across the face of the Wanderer, and we hear a major-leaning chromatic variant of the sorrow of the Wälsungs motive where instead of leaping up a minor sixth as in the original version:



the leap is now a major sixth and thus changes sorrow into joy<sup>227</sup>:



<sup>226</sup> GS VI. 159.

<sup>227</sup> This is not the first time Wagner has modally shifted a motive from the minor to the major in order to portray the same thing, but now joyfully. The clearest example of this may be in scene 3 of *Das Rheingold*, when the servitude motive accompanying Mime changed modes when Mime described the former state of joy that Nibelungs had in making trinkets for their wives, before Alberich brought down the ring and made them slaves, though there are numerous other examples of this throughout the cycle. But more to the point, Siegfried seems to have this effect on motives. His own motive chromatically alters what would have been (in the example below) a G minor arpeggio (as seen in the bottom bracket) to an Eb major arpeggio by the final note of the figure below being raised a half-step, just as the minor sixth was raised up a half step (in the example above) to a major sixth to again emphasize a major rather than minor sonority. This major sonority, in the example of Siegfried's motive, dominates this theme, as outlined by the top bracket. There is something in these two instances of Siegfried breaking the mold – the mold of the Wälsungs by means of the major-minor sixth change, and the mold of nature in his own motive – by means in both cases of the motives reaching beyond their previous limits by a half step. This is the musical way in which Wagner explains that Siegfried is a man of history and cannot be restrained by either nature or his familial origins.



(Act III measures 553-555)

It is clear that that motive is meant to portray pride in the strong will of his grandson, while simultaneously it gives himself pride for fathering the race from which Siegfried sprung, and thus Wotan abandons his objectivity. But it is in this innocent desire for recognition that the fight becomes possible. Siegfried is not capable of giving him what he wants.

When Siegfried refuses to give him the respect the Wanderer feels he deserves, Hume's maxim comes into effect. He says:

Geduld, du Knabe!	Patience boy!
Dünk' ich dich alt,	If I seem old to you,
so sollst du mir Achtung bieten. <sup>228</sup>	then you should pay me respect.

The love which the Wanderer had previously shown Siegfried turns slowly to resentment. But more importantly, as part of the Wanderer's moral step backwards – a step he must take in order for the conflict between them to lead to an order that is not even indirectly sanctioned by Wotan – his previous selflessness that was reflected in the music by the complete lack of motives in the accompaniment associated with either Wotan or the Wanderer dissipates into pride and selfishness which is reflected musically by the return of his motives to the accompaniment. First the Wanderer motive in an altered form in triple meter enters after Siegfried questions the Wanderer about his hat, but this is quickly followed by the Valhalla motive, which begins to accompany Wotan when he attempts to convince Siegfried to treat him with respect. He becomes Wotan again here as his desires begin to re-emerge, as they must in order for the necessary conflict and downfall to take place.

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<sup>228</sup> GS VI. 159.

Das ist so Wandrer's Wei - se, wenn dem Wind ent - ge - gen er  
geht.

*ten.* *f* *ten.* *ten.*

*p dolce tr* *stacc.*

(Act III measures 590-95)

The reply that Siegfried gives to Wotan's discussion of eyes, accompanied by the Valhalla motive, is not what Wotan hoped it would be. Siegfried does not repay the kindness he was shown but rather treats him as a fool:

Zum Lachen bist du mir lustig! –	You make me laugh!
Doch hör', nun schwatz' ich	But listen, I will not chatter any
nicht länger;	longer now:
geschwind zeig' mir den Weg,	quickly, show me the way,
deines Weges ziehe dann du!	and then you go your way;
Zu nichts and'rem	for nothing else
acht' ich dich nütz':	do I need you:
d'rum sprich, sonst spreng' ich	so speak up or I'll chase you away!
dich fort! <sup>229</sup>	

This is too much to bear, and as he concludes we again hear the motive of contrasting desires – beginning in the viola and bass clarinet, but then repeating and growing until the full strings and winds are playing the theme in unison.

<sup>229</sup> GS VI. 160.

(Act III measures 629-634)

As we hear this motive repeating Wotan says the following:

<p>Kenntest du mich, kühner Sproß, den Schimpf – spartest du mir! Dir so vertraut, trifft mich schmerzlich dein Dräu'n.</p>	<p>If you knew me, insolent youth, you would spare me your insults! As I am so close to you, your threats are painful to me.</p>
<p>Liebt' ich von je deine lichte Art, – Grauen auch zeugt ihr mein zürnender Grimm. Dem ich so hold bin, allzu hehrer, heut' nicht wecke mir Neid, – er vernichtete dich und mich!<sup>230</sup></p>	<p>I have always loved your radiant race, – but my raging fury also gave you cause for fear. You that I love so, glorious hero, do not rouse my wrath today: it would destroy both you and me!</p>

We notice that on the line “I have always loved your radiant race,” the contrasting desires motive gives in to the Wälsung motive; but contrasting desires returns just afterwards. The contrasting desires are clear: Wotan is torn between his love for Siegfried and the pain that Siegfried is making him experience. He then attempts to scare Siegfried into submission, though he knows that if he were to succeed in doing so he would be eternally damned. Wotan bars Siegfried’s way with “The path that was shown to you, you shall not take,” sounded again to the contrasting desires motive, which is now fragmented and repeated in the low strings:

<sup>230</sup> GS VI. 161.

(Siegfried tritt mit Verwunderung in trotziger Stellung zurück.)

**SIEGF.**  
Hoho! Du Ver-bie-fer! Wer bist du denn, dass du mir

**WANDR.**  
Den Weg, den es zeig-te, sollst du nicht ziehn!

**SIEGF.**  
weh - ren willst?

**WANDR.**  
Fürchte des Fel - sen's Hü - ter! Ver - schlossen hält meine Macht die schla - fende

(Act III measures 675-684)

He tries twice more. "Fear the guardian of the rock!" he says against the new ostinato pattern derived from the contrasting desires motive. The battle lines are drawn.

When Siegfried shows no sign of fear; Wotan finally says,

Fürchtest das Feuer du nicht,	The fire doesn't scare you,
so sperre mein Speer dir den Weg!	so my spear will block your way!
Noch hält meine	My hand still holds
der Herrschaft Haft;	the staff of lordship:
das Schwert, das du schwingst,	the sword which you swing,
zerschlug einst dieser Schaft:	was once shattered by this staff:
noch einmal denn	once again
zerspring' es am ew'gen Speer!	let it break on the eternal spear!

That is all Siegfried needs to hear:

Meines Vaters Feind!	My father's foe!
Find' ich dich hier?	Do I find you here?
Herrlich zur Rache	How glorious

gerieth mir das!  
Schwing' deinen Speer:  
in Stücken spalt' ihn mein  
Schwert!<sup>231</sup>

that revenge is in my grasp!  
Swing your spear:  
My sword will smash it to  
pieces!

It is done. In giving in to necessity and allowing himself to regress temporarily and to place himself squarely against the new world order that he, in his role as spirit of natural necessity, so wanted in place, Wotan has played a vital role in the birth of this new order and the redemption for the world it entails. Now he is free to return to his role as the objective, selfless Wanderer. As he bids farewell to Siegfried; “Move on! I cannot stop you” is heard against Erda’s motive and the twilight of the Gods motive.

The image shows a musical score for Act III measures 746-749. The score is written for Violin (Viol.), Brass (Br.), and Trombone (Tromb.). The tempo is marked 'Mässig.' (Moderato) and the performance style is 'trem.' (tremolo). The dynamics are marked 'pp' (pianissimo) for the Violin and 'pp' (pianissimo) for the Trombone. The Brass part is marked '(trem.) (geth.)' (tremolo, getting). The score is in G major and 2/4 time. The Violin part starts with a tremolo figure. The Brass part starts with a tremolo figure. The Trombone part starts with a tremolo figure.

(Act III measures 746-749)

This is immediately followed by the woman’s worth motive sounded in the low brass and strings:

<sup>231</sup> GS VI. 163.

The image shows a musical score for Act III, measures 750-751. The score is arranged in a system of seven staves. From top to bottom, the staves are labeled: Bestmp., Pos. 1., Pos. 2., Pos. 3., CB. Pos., Viol., and Br. Each staff contains musical notation for two measures. The dynamic marking 'piu p' is present on each staff. The Bestmp. part is in the treble clef, while the other parts are in the bass clef. The Viol. part is in the treble clef. The Br. part is in the bass clef.

(Act III measures 750-751)

Wotan has completed the first half of his “willing his own destruction and bringing it about himself,” and it is for the upcoming order of compassionate love and redemption that he has done it. There is nothing higher than love, and by willing the destruction of his primary tool for achieving his desires, he has shown that he is more interested in the benefit of the world as a whole through this new order than his own selfish desire for continued existence. He has begun the transition to the fourth stage of the Moral Progression.

### Chapter 3. *Götterdämmerung* and General Conclusion

At the beginning of this study it was promised that if we did not know exactly what the meaning of the *Ring* cycle was by the end, at least we would have a better understanding of the question: why is it so unclear what philosophy Wagner was following in the *Ring*, and why can't we tell if – put simply – it is the pessimistic message of Schopenhauer or the optimistic message of Hegel-Feuerbach? The general answer is clear: the stages of development in every moral philosophical system put forth by the philosophers discussed in Part I are so similar that the only way to tell which philosophy is being used is to examine the end of the progression. Does the hero sacrifice him/her-self to be unified with a corporeal community as we see in Feuerbach, a spiritual community, as we see in Hegel and Schelling, non-existence, as we see in Schopenhauer, or simply the general betterment of humanity-others, as we observe in Schelling's predecessors?

The various endings offer little help in answering this question, because each represents a different view of Wotan's deed of self-destruction, and all were ultimately rejected in favor of, as Wagner called them, less "sententious" words, thus relying on the music to make clear what the text left ambiguous. Warren Darcy offered an excellent rotational-musical analysis of the immolation scene,<sup>232</sup> not so excellently dubbed "Schopenhauerian," in which he claims that the music depicts the intention of the rejected Schopenhauerian ending. The way it does this is by musically depicting Brünnhilde "reject[ing] this world by renouncing both the ring of

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<sup>232</sup> See: Warren Darcy "The Metaphysics of Annihilation: Wagner, Schopenhauer, and the Ending of the "Ring" *Music Theory Spectrum* XVI, no. 1 (1994): 1-40.

power and life itself. As the phenomenal world dissolves, she achieves self-extinction through an eternal union with Siegfried.”<sup>233</sup> He describes this process further:

Having gained wisdom through transcending the suffering caused by love, Brünnhilde denies both the Will to Power and the Will to Live; this enables her to transcend both the phenomenal and the noumenal worlds, lose her individuality, and enter into an eternal metaphysical union with Siegfried. In the words of the Schopenhauerian ending, she has reached ‘the blessed end of all things eternal’ – Wagner’s equivalent of Schopenhauer’s oblivion and the Buddhistic nirvana.<sup>234</sup>

The problems with this analysis are obvious. Darcy’s Schopenhauerian language aside, what he is explaining here is actually closer to Fichte, Schelling, Faust, Hegel, and Feuerbach, and Wagner’s “correction” of Schopenhauer’s system,<sup>235</sup> than it is to Schopenhauer. The strongest case he makes for a specifically Schopenhauerian model is when he says that “the final Db-major triad fades out into silence – a silence representing oblivion, the longed-for state of non-being. The annihilation of self and world is complete.” But eventually, as the opera had to end, there was going to be silence. Does that mean that every piece of music is Schopenhauerian because they all fade away into silence? Obviously not. If anything is to be taken as the final message, it should be the final sound we hear, the “glorification of Brünnhilde” motive in its final form, which in Darcy’s description is “tonally static, its previous striving sequences have yielded to harmonic security, suggesting that the wheel of eternal becoming is stilled at last.”<sup>236</sup> But as the first use of the “glorification of Brünnhilde” motive was in her sacrifice for the benefit of Sieglinde and Siegfried, i.e., love, it likely means the same in this context, thus making it again closer to Kant’s “duty” and its successors in Fichte, Schiller, Schelling, Hegel, and Feuerbach.

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<sup>233</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid.*, 25-26.

<sup>235</sup> See letter to Mathilde Wesendonck (among other letters) from April 7, 1858, where he describes love as the “well-spring of redemption.” (*Selected Letters of Richard Wagner*, 381).

<sup>236</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

The prime argument still used today, particularly by Darcy, in describing the *Ring* as Schopenhauerian, is based on Wagner's numerous descriptions of the story of the *Ring* as representing the beginning and end of the world.<sup>237</sup> But again, what does the "end of the world" [*Weltuntergang*] mean? Is it total destruction into nothingness as Darcy claims, and is that even what happens at the end of the *Ring*? No, on both counts. First, Wagner's writings imply *Untergang*, by which is meant a transition through destruction to a better, purer, freer state: much like Hegel's metaphor of the Phoenix, which in essence wills its own destruction in order to instill new life into the state, itself, and the world. For Wagner this change is depicted in the drama of the future to which the audience reacts by, ideally, being inspired to make the same change occur in the real world as well. In *Opera and Drama* Wagner said:

But what sort of shaping of the Drama, in the sense aforesaid, would be called forth by the destruction [*Untergang*] of the State, by the rise of an organically healthy Society? Looked at reasonably, the destruction of the State can mean nothing else but *the self-realisation of Society's religious consciousness (Bewusstsein) of its purely-human essence*. By its very nature, this conviction can be no Dogma stamped upon us from without, i.e., it cannot rest on historical traditions, nor be drilled into us by the State. So long as any one of life's actions is demanded of us as an outward Duty, so long is the object of that action no object of Religious Consciousness; for when we act from the dictates of religious conscience we act from out ourselves, we *so* act as we cannot act otherwise. But Religious Consciousness means a *universal consciousness (allgemeinsames Bewusstsein)*; and consciousness cannot be universal, until it knows the Unconscious, the Instinctive, the Purely-human, as the only true and necessary thing, and vindicates it by that knowledge.<sup>238</sup>

The end of the state here comes about because humanity reaches a common universal, purely-human, instinctive consciousness, which leads it by natural necessity to

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<sup>237</sup> Darcy brings this up in nearly every one of his articles on the *Ring* in an exasperating attempt to prove that the world ends at the end of the *Ring*. Here, for convenience, is one of his many footnotes on the subject highlighting a few of these descriptions: "It is clear that Wagner considered the *Ring* to end with the destruction of the world. In February 1853 he sent several copies of the *Ring* poem to Liszt, along with a cover letter in which he exhorted his future father-in-law to "[m]ark well my new poem – it contains the beginning and the end of the world!" ... Almost twenty years later on, 20 July 1872, Cosima Wagner wrote in her diary: "R. says he must now compose his verses for the end of the world" ... On 10 September 1873 she reported: "In the afternoon music – from *Götterdämmerung* 'Hagen's Watch,' 'Hagen's Call,' 'The End of the World'." (*Ibid.*, 5f.)

<sup>238</sup> PW II. 201.

destroy the state to form something better. This attitude towards *Untergang* as a new beginning is again seen in the poem to King Ludwig in honor of his twenty-fifth birthday on August 25, 1870, and of the victory of the new Reich over France:

<p>Gesprochen in das Königswort, dem Deutschland new erstanden, der Völker edler Ruhmeshort, befreit aus schmähl'chen Banden; was nie gelang der Klugen Rat, das schuf ein Königswort zur Tat:</p> <p>in allen deutschen Landen das Wort nun tönet fort und fort.</p> <p>Und ich verstand den tiefen Sinn wie keiner ihn ermessen; Schuf es dem Volke Siegsgeuinn, mir gab das Wort Vergessen; vergraben durft' ich manchen Schmerz, der lange mir genagt das Herz, das Leid, das mich besessen, blickt' ich auf Deutschland's Schmach dahin.</p> <p>Der Sinn, der in dem Worte lag, war Dir auch unverborgen: der treu des edlen Hortes pflag, er theilte meine Sorgen. <i>Von Wotan bangend ausgesandt, sein Rabe gute Kund' ihm fand:</i> <i>es strahlt der Menschheit Morgen;</i> <i>nun dämm're auf, du Göttertag.</i><sup>239</sup></p>	<p>Spoken has been the Kingly word wherefrom Germany anew is risen. the nations' noble bastion of glory, released from ignominious bands; what wise counsel never could effect a Kingly word has transformed into deed:</p> <p>in all the German lands that word now sounds forth and resounds.</p> <p>And its deep sense I did understand as no other person understood it; if for the people it meant victory, for me that word brought a forgetting; and I could inter many a grief that had long been gnawing at my heart, and the suffering that had possessed me as often as I gazed on Germany's shame.</p> <p>And the meaning that lay in that word also did not stay concealed from you: he who staunchly kept the noble hoard, was participator in my sorrows. <i>By Wotan, in anxiety, sent forth, tidings his raven found him that were good:</i> <i>the dawn of humanity sends out its beams;</i> <i>shine now brightly forth, you Godly Day.</i></p>
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It is not an end, but a new beginning. What is being described is the end of the flawed current age in favor of a more instinctive, natural one.

But the idea inherent in his poem to Ludwig is something that incorporated itself or reaffirmed itself into Wagner's philosophy over his years in exile: renewal is possible when the natural change comes from the top, which disavows his (or

<sup>239</sup> *The Brown Book*, 178-9. (Italics mine) See: Part II: Note 257.

Röckel's) essays written during 1848-9 for the *Volksblätter*, describing societal change coming from the bottom. Wagner mentions this change in heart to Röckel in a letter from March 6, 1862:

In my opinion, it would be wisest if you were to seek office in some Liberal service, for I am almost convinced that nothing can be achieved in politics save in a practical way, and armed with power.<sup>240</sup>

This important moral plays a significant part in two operas to come: *Die Meistersinger* and *Parsifal*. Both follow a similar plot line: there is a young man, unknowledgeable of tradition, who, led by the conscious resignation and obeisance to the laws of change and renewal takes over his society and rejuvenates it by doing so. These operas are in essence the response to the question which the *Ring* asks: “how to achieve Utopia?”

There are two main changes which must take place. First, the instinctive natural young man must be capable of adjustment and must not be entirely led by nature against the tradition which natural necessity leads to rejuvenate. We observe this in *Die Meistersinger* in Act III when Sachs trains Walther in form, leaving him free to observe whatever harmony he wishes. Walther at first rejects the rules but then is open to them on a limited basis after he sings his first stanza to Sachs, “Shining in the rosy light of morning”:

Sachs:	
Das war ein Stollen: nun achtet wohl, daß ganz ein gleicher ihm folgen soll.	That was a stanza: now make sure that one exactly like it follows.
Walther:	
Warum ganz gleich?	Why exactly like it?

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<sup>240</sup> *Letters to Röckel*, 164.

Sachs:	Damit man seh', ihr wählet euch gleich ein Weib zur Eh'.	So that one can see, that you are choosing an equal for its wife.
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(Walther sings a second stanza)

Sachs:	Ihr schlosset nicht im gleichen Ton: das macht den Meistern Pein; doch nimmt Hans Sachs die Lehr' davon, im Lenz wohl müß' es so sein. – <sup>241</sup>	You didn't cadence in the same key:  that offends the masters; but Hans Sachs will learn something from it, in the prime of youth it must be so. –
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Walther takes this lesson and wins the hearts and minds of the other masters. So a willingness to learn from culture is necessary in order to take it over and rejuvenate it; but as this exchange makes clear, it is also necessary to have a leader who recognizes the necessity behind change and renewal, and is willing to step aside for the betterment of his society.

Sachs, after rejecting Eva's plea to compete in the competition to save her from Beckmesser, chooses to assist the young Walther and direct his energies for Walther's benefit rather than his own. In this way he embodies natural necessity in that by giving Walther the means to win the competition he is, to an extent, dethroning himself as the acknowledged greatest singer of the town, and on a more personal level, giving up the girl to the younger man even though he is widowed and lonely. Sachs even admits, as in the above exchange, that just as he is teaching Walther, Walther is teaching him through his natural inner *Mut*-driven song: a type of song that the masters, with their strict rules, have forgotten how to sing and will need to relearn if their music is going to improve and progress.<sup>242</sup>

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<sup>241</sup> GS VII. 239-240.

<sup>242</sup> James Treadwell offers a contrary view of Sachs which views him more as a schemer of the second-stage of the Moral Progression than the resigned, third-stage figure he is. He says of Sachs that "his "resignation" does not prevent him from orchestrating the whole town of Nürnberg in accordance with

The same two elements are in place in *Parsifal*. When Parsifal speaks to Gurnemanz of killing the swan, Gurnemanz informs him that this natural act was morally wrong and against the laws of nature and love that the knights hold sacred. Rather than spurning this society's law, the young man breaks his bow and swears never to use it again.<sup>243</sup> In Act II he curses himself and his selfishness for following his *Mut* and abandoning his mother rather than caring for her and returning to her, asking god for "redemption" from this sin of his youth. Finally, in Act III again Gurnemanz commands him to obey the laws of the land by disarming himself as he enters these sacred lands, and Parsifal obeys. Then, in a reversal of roles, Gurnemanz recognizes the spear and declares Parsifal to be the new leader who will re-purify the grail-knights after Amfortas's misdeed. In the Good Friday sequence, Amfortas steps aside, recognizing that his role must be one of giving way to the new leader.

The answer provided by these two operas is that society itself and its leaders must be prepared to follow the law of natural necessity and step aside in favor of the new leader who will be able to rejuvenate the whole through his own adherence to natural-instinct.<sup>244</sup> In this light the meaning of the *Ring* becomes clear through the

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his wishes, nor is it much in evidence when the town reciprocally hails him as its father-figure in the final tableau... Sachs's calm and disinterested demeanour actually allows him to manipulate everything around him extremely efficiently. If Sachs is a man of resignation, then resignation is not in fact the surrender of desires (and the threshold of Nirvana), but rather a more subtle means of achieving success." (James Treadwell. *Interpreting Wagner*, 176-177). This problem here is the same as that which plagues Wanderer criticism. The fact is, if Sachs and Wotan are working towards the benefit of others against their own possible gain, then they are not acting from desire, but from natural necessity.

<sup>243</sup> This point is mentioned in contrast to the rejection of authority by Siegfried in Paul Schofield *The Redeemer Reborn*. "He [Parsifal] has all of Siegfried's attributes: youth, strength, courage, fearlessness, brashness, arrogance, inherent goodness, naiveté, skill with weapons, and a total lack of understanding that actions have consequences. But his readiness to change is very close to the surface, and when Gurnemanz points out to him the great error of his killing the swan and the suffering it has caused, Parsifal is truly contrite. He breaks his bow into pieces and throws away his arrows. This is a very significant act, for it is the exact opposite of Siegfried's great act, the reforging of Notung." (69).

<sup>244</sup> Recently, Nicholas Vazsonyi, in his *Richard Wagner: Self-Promotion and the Making of a Brand* has reaffirmed that the moral of *Tristan* too is the rejection of the current flawed society in favor of one based on an adherence to natural unconscious instinct. Isolde embodies this change in the final scene: "Enveloped by sound (*um mich klinget*) which no one else senses, Isolde moves permanently into her alternate consciousness. She finally stops asking questions and submits to total sensory satiation in a life-breathing universe: *Welt-Atems wehendem All...* Body is replaced by spirit. Isolde delivers herself whole, awash in waves of sound, unconscious, ecstatic." (149) This transformation is not a means for

very fact that this did not happen with Siegfried. The society and laws of custom of the Gods, employed deftly by Hagen for his own gain in *Götterdämmerung*, did not step aside in favor of Siegfried; rather, Siegfried fell under their sway; and because of that, true reform and an end to authority was postponed. But Wotan did step aside, and Wotan with his will, Brünnhilde, did relinquish their selfishness for the greater good. Their example, however, was not universally followed, and so Siegfried died. But his death served a vital purpose, as a life-lesson, told by Brünnhilde, to the kingless Gibichungs at the end of the opera, who Darcy quite rightly says are us.

Now the biggest question: who learns this lesson? When the Norns are weaving the rope of fate at the beginning of *Götterdämmerung*, they speak of Wotan's actions and his preparations for Brünnhilde's redemptive deed. They say that all of the heroes, Valkyries, and Gods are huddled around Wotan in fear, though Wotan sits still as he emotionlessly and desirelessly waits for Brünnhilde's deed at which point he will will his own end. Ultimately, he will thrust the spear fragments into Loge and Valhalla will burn to the ground with Gods and heroes inside. Thus will Wotan free the world of this last symbol of authority; the other darker symbol of authority, the ring, having been cleansed by Brünnhilde's deed and returned to the Rhinemaidens. The world will be free to start anew; free of the swinging pendulum of authority. The Norns describe this sequence coldly, as a fated event, and continue to toss the rope after they finish discussing this event. The rope of fate, the rope on which the knowable history of the world is written, does not break at the mention of this conflagration, so this fire cannot be the end of the world. What causes it to break is the discussion of the "deeds of men" and the motives of the ring and the curse. In

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achieving utopia, as *Meistersinger* and *Parsifal* offer, but rather is a personal transformation lighting the way towards the natural instinct that the *Publikum* must follow in order to become *Volk*. In this sense, the philosophical ideal of *Tristan* in its portrayal of the necessary change from selfishness to selflessness, is consistent with the philosophical ideal found throughout Wagner's corpus.

other words, the history of humanity is written up until the end of the present age of authority, after which humanity must choose its own direction – whether to follow the failed older system of authority founded in the curse and the ring, or to follow the example of Wotan and Brünnhilde. The rope breaks because it must, for the sake of the general progression of humanity. It must be by conscious choice that humanity progresses, not through some higher power. As Wagner said in *Artwork of the Future*, nature only brings us so far, after which point a choice to act in favor of natural necessity is required so that further progress can be made. This is why Wotan had to usurp Erda's role in *Siegfried* Act III: as only Wotan was capable of making the individual choice to act as the embodiment of natural necessity, a step Erda, as nature alone, could not make. At the end, the leaderless Gibichungs on the stage and the members of the audience must choose their own fate; it is not written for them.

Wagner's ideal vision for the audience is then in two parts. First, is the manner in which the audience is to receive the *Ring*. They should take in the complete content of the operas with an open mind, without hindering this reception with unnatural reflection. If this first part is done, then it follows that at the completion of the poem, the audience would desire to form the universal will of which he spoke in *Opera and Drama* and which he described in his letters to Franzisca.<sup>245</sup> We see this desire embodied in the answered version of the *Ring*'s question – “Can we build it?” – found in *Meistersinger* and *Parsifal*: “Yes we can!”; or in Wagner's words to the audience following the conclusion of *Götterdämmerung* at Bayreuth in 1876:

We owe this to your favor, and the tireless energy of my artists. What I have to say to you can be expressed in an axiom! You have now seen what we can

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<sup>245</sup> See: pgs 362-3.

do; it remains with you to make it possible. And if it is your work, then we shall have an art.<sup>246</sup>

So then what is the philosophy of the *Ring*? The *Nibelung Sketch* tells the story of the history of the world; and the history of the rulers of this world follows the Moral Progression, particularly in its Hegelian aspect. The rulership of the Giants represents the natural rule by strength alone of the first stage. The scheming Gods, after taking advantage of the Giants' fear, rule by the imperfect law of the second stage. Then the Gods feel guilt and wish morality to rule the world. This is best shown through Siegfried: the "man of history" who knows of his impending death. Despite this knowledge of his impending death, he equally knows that if he gives in to fear while alive – which surrendering the ring because his life was threatened would be doing – he would not go to Valhalla after he died. If this were to happen, his help would be unavailable to the Gods and so their rule, which at that point will have been transfigured into a rule by morality, will end.<sup>247</sup> He must be free of fear in order to save the Gods and the world in the crisis to come, and so surrenders his life by retaining the ring. This is a third-stage ideal world brought about by the fourth-stage sacrifice of the "man of history" Siegfried and the Gods who willfully surrender their authority of the world to morality. No individual character goes through every stage of the Moral Progression: it is a story of authority, and in order to create the ideal world both master (the Gods, i.e. aristocracy) and servant (men) must be willing to bring this world about by mutual self-sacrifice. The goal is a monarchy, as the Gods rule at the end of the sketch, but it is the ideal, morally-based monarchy of Wagner's *Vaterlandsverein* speech.

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<sup>246</sup> SS XVI. 161. Also in Paul Lindau's *Nüchterne Briefe aus Bayreuth* as well as Berthold Kellermann's *Erinnerungen*. Here quoted from: *The Story of Bayreuth As Told in the Bayreuth Letters of Richard Wagner*. trans. and ed. Caroline Kerr. (Boston: Small, Maynard and Company: 1912), 250.

<sup>247</sup> See Part II, Note 78.

In *Siegfrieds Tod*, Wagner felt it was unnecessary to tell the whole story of the world and the progression of authority. The message is condensed into a single idea: overthrow plutocracy. Some time in between the original completion of *Siegfrieds Tod* and the beginning of *Der junge Siegfried*, Wagner had changed the ending of *Siegfrieds Tod* so that the Gods no longer rule in the new world: the ideal monarchy from the *Vaterlandsverein* speech has been rejected in favor of the people themselves bringing about and ruling the new moral world. But this alteration of the ending does nothing to change the focus of *Siegfrieds Tod* from the overthrow of plutocracy. The fact is, both endings work with this focus, so it doesn't matter who is in control of the world as long as plutocracy ends. But the key is that ending plutocracy can only be achieved by a Hegelian "man of history" capable of acting for the benefit of the whole. This figure could then be represented by the people acting together in the spirit of revolution or by a moral change in the character of the ruler. Both fit in this newly specific message of the opera.

In the bipartite Siegfried dramas written between 1848 and 1851 the message is clear: end plutocracy, but do so solely by revolution and the overthrow of the old. Wotan in these two became the spirit of change from *Die Wibelungen*. Wotan is a plot device that offers assistance to all in the form of back-stories that would have been necessary without *Die Walküre* and *Das Rheingold*, and he freely disappears when Siegfried, a spirit like him who embodies change,<sup>248</sup> comes forward to wake Brünnhilde. Wotan performs no specific deed to bring about any event, but merely assists others in their endeavors. We are not meant to sympathize with him, as the focus of these dramas is Siegfried, the bringer of change, the man of history. Wotan and Mime-Alberich, as light and dark images – thesis and antithesis – of the world of

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<sup>248</sup> See the last line of the *Die Walküre* prose draft: Strobel, 251; and above Note 53.

authority are here swept aside in favor of the synthesis, Siegfried. We sympathize with this synthesis, Siegfried, and we look to him as a model so that we too may change the world, displacing our own older generations by a deed of revolution only possible for the Hegelian “man of history,” that we, as the revolutionary *Volk*, have become.

It is only with the inclusion of Wotan as a sympathetic character with a complete story that Wagner changed this message, in part because his view of the audience changed. Now we as an audience are no longer meant to look to Siegfried for guidance but to Wotan. The audience are no longer revolutionary *Volk*, but are followers of Alberich’s and Wotan’s flawed system of authority. Wotan shows us a path out of selfishness that will make us want to change our ways and morally progress as Wotan did. Wotan is no longer the plot device meant to be pushed aside by Siegfried, the bringer of change. Rather, Siegfried has become the plot device to which Wotan must succumb in order to forcibly remove his own subjective self from himself. The complete Moral Progression is again brought to the drama, but now in the guise of a single character whose progress along this path we as an audience are meant to follow and imitate. Siegfried, in the final version of *Siegfrieds Tod* (now *Götterdämmerung*), no longer expresses the awareness of the necessity of his death that he expressed in the *Nibelung Sketch*. With this gone, so went his ability to be the knowingly self-sacrificial “man of history.” Now Siegfried is morally stagnant, incapable himself of moral progress because of his inability to learn fear, and so is displaced as the ideal sympathetic character by Wotan, who could now portray all of the stages of moral development over the course of the four-part drama.

But an answer to the question, “what is the philosophy of the *Ring*?” is lacking. There is a resolute answer to the question of the philosophy of the *Siegfried* drama(s)

(end of plutocracy), and another clear answer for the philosophies of *Parsifal* and *Die Meistersinger* (the ruling societies must actively succumb to the new young ruler and the new young ruler must adapt to be the best leader for the new society). Perhaps the reason each has a clear solution to the question of a philosophy is that in the *Siegfried* drama(s), *Parsifal* and *Die Meistersinger* the young heroes are all capable of moral progress. This is not the case in the *Ring*, and possibly because of that, no such solution presents itself in the *Ring*. Instead of a solution, we see a question. The path of moral development itself is clear. We know what must be done, and we know what we would like to have happen after it is done, but we don't know what will happen. Wagner strictly adheres to the Moral Progression in his depiction of Wotan: from instinctual selfish being to self-less obeyer of the highest natural necessity, which leads one to will the end of subjectivity and to exist as objective love alone. It was Schopenhauer who made him realize the importance of this conscious self-sacrifice even if Wagner had been saying it in one form or another since his earliest writings. But the more he identified his philosophy with Schopenhauer's, the more his own previous views – that progress is possible and love is the key to redemption – got in the way. In short, as John Oxenford was able to understand German philosophy because of Schopenhauer's clear language, Wagner was able to understand Schopenhauer and so to go back and more clearly comprehend the systems of moral development of his age, and to channel them into his great work. Wagner's understanding of this age was more comprehensive than we have imagined it to be, and those who would mock his allegedly deficient knowledge of it, such as Newman and Shaw, are mistaken, as his mind was able to get to the core ideas of moral development and project them in his work of art in a way that, arguably, no one either before or since has been able to match. The failure of the *Ring* to bring about the new

moral world hoped for by Wagner and prophesied by the *Frühromantiks* in their ideal artwork need not diminish the fact that the *Ring of the Nibelung* stands side by side with *The Critique of Pure Reason*, *The Science of Knowledge*, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, *Thoughts on Death and Immortality*, and *The World as Will and Representation*. All convey the same message: selfless love and compassion are what is needed. The rest is up to us.

## APPENDICES – WAGNER AND FRENCH SOCIALISM

These appendices are a supplement to the analyses of the Moral Progression in Part I. I do not wish to belabor the discussion of the Moral Progression any longer than is necessary, as it and its inherent consistency have been clearly laid out, leaving further documentation superfluous. That being said, the intellectual background to Wagner would not be complete without some consideration of Saint-Simon, or more specifically the Saint-Simonians and their intellectual step-son Proudhon. In my outlining of the above Moral Progression I drew upon those who I felt to be the major philosophical writers who contributed to the formation of a “Horizon of Expectations” which was present in Germany in the 1840’s and 50’s regarding a philosophical moral progression. I began with some of Kant’s foreign influences: only the biggest names were mentioned, and the description was never intended to present a complete outline of the philosophy of the time, as the student of philosophy and history will know, but a simplification only. Despite the language barrier, German philosophy did not exist in a vacuum, and writings like those of Feuerbach, Schiller and Hegel would not have been possible without the influence of French writers building on the same Rousseauian and Kantian foundations, and vice versa.<sup>1</sup> It was in the working out of ideas, their digestion, to paraphrase Berlioz’s summary of Wagner’s philosophical thinking, whether in French, English, or German, that philosophical progress was made. So it is quite possible that for many German

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<sup>1</sup> *The Doctrine of Saint-Simon: An Exposition. First Year 1828-1829.* trans. Georg G Iggers. (New York: Schocken Books, 1958), 26f., 59f., 72. There are also certain elements which one might associate with Hegel, such as the dichotomy of humanity into Master and Slave which the author attributes to Aristotle and Saint-Simon (pg 73) along with the view of the world in terms of dichotomies also popularized by Kant and Fichte.

poets and artists the first exposure to Hegel and Kant could have occurred second hand through the incorporation of their ideas by the French socialists such as the Saint-Simonians.

**Appendix A – The Doctrine of Saint-Simon:  
An Exposition (First Year 1828-1829)**

The writings of Saint-Simon were arguably not as influential as the lectures on Saint-Simon given by August Comte and his other followers, who are responsible for the *Exposition*, a series of lectures begun in 1828, and similar lectures on Saint-Simonism after his death. It was these lectures which were attended by some of the greatest cultural figures of the decade to come, such as Heinrich Heine and Franz Liszt,<sup>2</sup> as well as Heinrich Laube, whose “Young German” movement, in which Wagner participated, was characterized by Laube as Saint-Simonian.<sup>3</sup> The primary goal of Saint-Simonism is “universal association” which is, according to the writer of the “Fourth session” of the *Exposition*, “the association of all men on the entire surface of the globe in all spheres of their relationships.” To this end, the writers of the lectures explain that the history of mankind can be viewed as a developmental moral progression to this goal. History is viewed in terms of this development reminiscent of that of Hegel, and as a dichotomy between the contrasting forces of antagonism and universalism.

The first stage of history is built on antagonism and exploitation, a model the author attributes to Kant: the powerful control the weak and make them slaves, and men exploit nature for their own gain.

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<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, xxiv.

<sup>3</sup> See also: Jane Fulcher, “Wagner, Comte, and Proudhon: the Aesthetics of Positivism in France”, *Symposium* XXXIII 2 (1979), 144. “If one compares Wagner’s ideas on art with the earlier Saint-Simonian aesthetic, there are undeniable points of coincidence which probably were not mere fortuitous ones. During Wagner’s youth, his close circle of friends included the Saint-Simonian sympathizer Heinrich Laube, with whom the composer was known to have had long discussions on the subject of art.”

The exploitation of man by man describes the state of human relations in the past... doubtless the exploitation of external nature goes back to remotest antiquity; industry is not a discovery reserved for the future.<sup>4</sup>

Then in a turn of logic, the author builds on this with a notion which one could also observe in Hegel: he divides society into two classes, the exploiters or masters, and the exploited or slaves. He then explains that it is the masters who are occupied with war and property, and the slaves who are occupied with peace and equality, and therefore with education and improvement. Based on this analysis, it is through the incorporation of the slave mentality that universalism rather than antagonism is achieved in the society as a whole. Much as in Hegel's dialectic, the master is responsible for the beginning of a society and its departure from nature, while the slave is responsible for bringing equality and consciousness of others to that society: in short, moral education.

History tells us how this most numerous class constantly improved its relative position on society through the peaceful work to which it was dedicated. It also tells us how this improvement, subject to the general principles of social relations of the past, took place only through the successive admission of the most advanced men of the exploited class to the ranks of the privileged, which formed the class of the masters. Finally mankind will break all the chains with which antagonism has burdened it. One day man, liberated and completely separated from the animals, will organize for peace, after having undergone and consequently rejected the education of war... Society is awaiting the peaceful organization which it has been promised... He [Saint-Simon] has shown us the definitive goal towards which all human capacities must converge: the complete abolition of antagonism and the attainment of universal association by and for the constantly progressive amelioration of the moral, physical, and intellectual condition of the human race.<sup>5</sup>

The way Saint Simon's goal will be achieved is through a moral education. Part of this moral education involves a return to Christianity. This return is a combination of several ideas. In part it is a return to the equality of the early church's conception of a God who loves everyone equally without considering individual status:

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<sup>4</sup> *The Doctrine of Saint-Simon: An Exposition*, 72.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 73, 79.

But let us return to that great separation, established by Christianity under the name of Catholicism, between spiritual and temporal power. We shall not deal at length here with the betterment which resulted from it for the human species. We shall merely stress the general character of this separation. The doctrines of the Church, completely foreign to military power, had been elaborated, as we have said, without the rights of Caesar being taken into account. Persecuted, but nevertheless peaceful, the Church respected the hierarchies of antagonism, but within its midst based dignity upon personal merit, not upon birth. She did not intervene between master and slave to recognize the realm of conquest by sanctifying it as the religions of the past had done. On the contrary, she taught the masters that God is no respecter of persons, that in his eyes the temporal hierarch is nothing, since he prefers the poor to the rich and the weak to the mighty of the earth. Thus the essentially peaceful Church, or Christian association founded its power on the brotherhood of mankind.<sup>6</sup>

The features of the church mentioned here also belong to those mentioned by David Strauss in his *Life of Jesus*, or Wagner in *Jesus von Nazareth*, which ultimately stem from the kind loving Christian god of a reformed Christianity discussed by Fichte and his successors.<sup>7</sup>

But this is not the end of the Saint-Simonians' conception of Christianity.

Although at times a separation is made between early Christianity and later Catholicism<sup>8</sup>, unlike Fichte and most of his successors Saint-Simon prizes certain elements of later Catholicism, particularly its hierarchical structure based on obedience.<sup>9</sup> Using Catholicism as a model, rather than Protestantism and early Christianity, which were viewed by the Saint-Simonians as revolutionary and as such based on individuality and egoism, the Saint-Simonians were able to associate obedience (the slave-peaceful mentality) with selflessness, which would then lead to the goal: universal association. In other words, equality will not be achieved through force but through peaceful obedient selflessness. In the sixteenth lecture of the

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<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

<sup>7</sup> See Part I: Notes 204-5.

<sup>8</sup> One example of this can be found in: *The Doctrine of Saint-Simon*, 248: where overall love is associated with early Christians.

<sup>9</sup> *The Doctrine of Saint-Simon*. 253f.

*Exposition* the writer has harsh words for those Christians who would use revolution as a tool for equality.

Hear those rebellious citizens and ardent revolutionaries! The Christians also want 'peace for the cottages,' but they built the palace of the Lord to obtain it. They also preach struggle and war. But which enemy do they teach man to suspect and fight? Man himself and his egoism... Obedience is sweet and faith easy when the master who commands orders us to believe in the noble destiny of the human species, when he forces us to guide all our thoughts and acts towards a goal which delights our hearts so greatly. Apostles of Liberty, will you yet long repeat that revolt is the holiest duty? Are you not afraid that this terrible weapon – which you have used blindly because you wanted only to destroy – will one day turn against you? Do you not tremble when you worry that soon perhaps mankind, taught by you, will rise in revolt against the heavy yoke which your doctrines have imposed on man for two centuries. You who constantly speak of the early Christian's fury against the enemies of the Church and of their cruel acts of vengeance, while forgetting that it was in the schools where your principles were professed that they had learned to seek vengeance; you who know that they acted not as Christians but as barbarians, since Christ had commanded them to pardon offenses; do you believe that human societies will never be led by men whose powers they will cherish and whose authority they will defend? What! Hated leaders, masters who plot our ruin, who idly fatten themselves on our work and our sweat, monsters who live from our suffering and our tears! Is Hell then your future? And you want your path to be followed! No, no, the sound of the alarm bell, the sinister cry 'To Arms!' must no longer be heard. Blood must no longer moisten our furrows. Arson and war have long enough devoured the world. Stop intoxicating us with distrust and hate. The time has come for mankind to exclaim like Solomon: 'Withdraw furious north wind; come gentle southern winds!'<sup>10</sup>

Although this path focuses on love (a concept especially highlighted in the Moral Progression variants of Fichte and Feuerbach) it also focuses on submission through obedience and hope. One does not achieve the sought-after government and then submit to its will, but one is obedient to the ruling will and hopes that the right government or universal association will come through this submission. This is what makes this last paraphrase from Solomon, in retrospect, quite ironic. Solomon was not the first in line for his father David's throne and was trying to forcibly calm those who took him for a usurper into accepting him as ruler. The violent usurper is asking

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<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 258, 259, 261-2.

for peace, and so this becomes the message of the Saint-Simonians: submit to the ruler whoever it is and eventually a ruler will come who is worthy of the name. This is not consistent with the Moral Progression. A universal will, nature, or spirit to which the individual can submit is always hypothesized. This aspect is what the Saint-Simonians took from the Catholics, and which the above philosophers rejected: being obedient to the higher authority no matter what it is, and hoping that it will be a righteous authority.

The other side of this hope is the idea, partially borrowed from Schiller and his successors, of a moral education. If the public, both the obedient masses and those representing authority, can be morally educated, then the authority to which all shall submit will lead to universal association and freedom. The most fascinating aspect of this education for a Wagnerian is that the faculty to which the Saint-Simonians address this education is Feeling. The author of the tenth session explains that philosophy gives precedence to reason over feeling, but it is through feeling that deeds are accomplished, and through reason that the feeling is justified. Action requires feeling, not reason. So it is the faculty of feeling which is to be addressed in a moral education and those with the greatest capacity for feeling are to be the teachers.<sup>11</sup>

But the author also explains that it is through the faculty of feeling alone not only that goals can be achieved, but that sympathy can be felt, and that egoism can be dissipated in favor of selflessness, which is the true moral education.

Man lives and is sociable through feeling. Feeling binds us to the world and to man, and to all which surrounds us. When this bond is broken, when the world and man seem to reject us, when the affection attracting us toward them is weakened and annihilated, life ceases for us. Without those sympathies that unite man with his fellow men and that make him suffer their sorrows, enjoy their joys, and live their lives, it would be impossible to see in societies

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<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 158.

anything but aggregations of individuals without bonds, having no motive for their actions but the impulses of egoism. Feeling makes man inquire about his destiny, and feeling first reveals the answer to him. Then doubtless science has an important role to fulfill. It is called upon to verify these inspirations, revelations, and divinations of feeling, and to furnish man with the insights to make him move rapidly and securely toward the goal discovered for him. But it is again feeling which, by making him desire and love this goal, can alone give him the will and the necessary strength to attain it.<sup>12</sup>

It is the faculty of feeling that brings a community together through a common goal, away from individual egoism. As in Schiller's moral education, it is the observation of and sympathy with those suffering that educates, and this can only be experienced through feeling, not through reason. Upon gaining the ability to be selfless and suppress the individual will, the community as a whole works toward a common goal: its own progression, prescribed by and foreseen by the "men with the greatest capacity for feeling" called "artists."<sup>13</sup>

Finally, the author offers two ways or scenarios in which this education was to be achieved or these feelings addressed and instilled: through "cult" in periods of what the author refers to as "organic" epochs, which can be likened to Schiller's conception of the life of grace in which what the individual wants and the duties of the individual are the same; and through art during periods such as the "present," called "critical" epochs, in which egoism predominates.

These expressions of feeling, called "cult" in organic epochs or "fine arts" in critical epochs, always result in arousing the desire for conformity with the goal that society sets itself in proving the actions necessary for progress. In this respect no difference is found between one state of society and another, organic or critical, except in the nature of the feelings that the cult or the fine arts are called upon to develop and the duties which they demand.<sup>14</sup>

In both epochs this moral education has the same end: to focus the attention of individuals on duty and the community rather than on egoism.

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 154.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 173.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 157.

The overall goal of the Saint-Simonians is the same as the goal discussed by the philosophers in Part I: to achieve universal association through individual renunciation [Dévoûment]<sup>15</sup> primarily through, at least in our “critical” epoch, a moral education brought on by artists in an artwork which portrays sympathetic selflessness to its public through the faculty of feeling. The connection with Schiller’s and Schelling’s conception of the morally educating artwork and the artist is clear, as is the importance of the faculty of feeling in receiving this moral education. Wagner would write about this sentiment throughout his life as the means for and purpose behind expressing art to the public.<sup>16</sup> In a broader context the *Exposition* outlines the same progression as we have observed in the Moral Progression from selfishness to selfless renunciation, quieting the will in favor of a community of equals. The society begins as a community of individuals living instinctually. Then the community gets taken over by the figure of the powerful man, at which point the community becomes divided into masters, the selfish, and slaves, the selfless. Through an incorporation of the slave mentality, i.e., selflessness, brought on either by the slave condition itself or by a moral education through an artwork or through religion (depending on whether

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<sup>15</sup> For a discussion of the translation of this word as renunciation rather than devotion in the context of the author’s religion of the future see: *Ibid.*, 178f.

<sup>16</sup> Fulcher includes at least some of the Saint-Simonian characteristics that Wagner employed similar to those discussed above in her article: “Wagner, Comte, and Proudhon: the aesthetics of positivism in France,” in *Symposium*, XXXIII, no. 2 (1979) “The ideas of this group [Saint-Simonians], as they were interpreted in Germany, thus stimulated Wagner in an indirect way, by helping him focus specifically on the issue of the communal, social function of art. The Saint-Simonians, originally, had expanded romantic ideas concerning redemption through art to include social regeneration as well as individual renewal as the ultimate goal. In addition, they provided the framework and precedent for Wagner’s own theoretical link between the issues of artistic reform and a necessary return to true social health. Wagner, like the Saint-Simonians, saw the modern world as materialistic. This was a condition to be ministered to through the spiritually healing powers of art. In *Die Kunst und Die Revolution* he laments the effects of this malady on the fine arts, and in *Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft* considers the relationship between religion and art, as raised previously by the Saint-Simonians. Like theirs, his emphasis is on communal worship, or internalization of collective ideals, the inculcation of associations in spirit to make society once again whole. Like the Saint-Simonians, too, Wagner envisaged the theater as a locus of edification, a place to instill the ideals of the community in self-seeking, individual man. The theater was to be a synthetic medium; it was to incorporate, integrally, the different fine arts in one totality that was to overwhelm the senses, in order to foster communal consciousness.” (144)

one is living during a critical or organic epoch); society moves towards this goal of universal selflessness-association, and equality.<sup>17</sup> Finally, we observe a world-historical view of history in which constant progress is made, as well as a dialectical view of the world (antagonism versus universalism) both of which were made famous by Hegel, but stem from an earlier tradition.

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<sup>17</sup> The definition of the universe offered in the seventeenth session corroborates this view of the individual becoming part of a universal all or will. In addition, this session includes a notion borrowed from Spinoza and his 'God as nature' successors in the *Frühromantik* when the author explains that the world itself has a connection to humanity and that together they form the All or the universe: "Even those facts with which the present day sciences deal can be understood only incompletely because of the scientists' ignorance of the other important portion of science which deals with men's moral relations among themselves and the sympathetic bonds uniting mankind with the world. And, indeed, man cannot successfully explain and define the universe, whose infinite unity he feels, except by placing himself alternately and by abstraction now at the center, now at the circumference of this one, multiple phenomenon; now relating the All to his own existence, and then considering himself essentially dependent on the All, in relation to which his individuality is only a point." (267) From this description we can observe the Saint-Simonian view of an end, not exactly death, but an end-goal in eradicating the individual consciousness in the All or Universal will achieved through moral education, love, and obedience: most of the characteristics of the last stage of the above described Moral Progression.

## Appendix B – P. J. Proudhon’s “What is Property?” and its Similarities to Wagner’s Prose Writings

Proudhon, much like the authors of the *Exposition*, straddles both the French and the German philosophical traditions. Proudhon, however, particularly in his famous essay of 1840 “What is Property?” is more overt about his connection to the German philosophical tradition and is critical of the Saint-Simonians. Underneath the “property is theft,” anarchist *visage* lies the *Grund* of the German philosophical tradition. Although Proudhon is tentative toward the Kantian categories and the logic behind them, particularly the conception of time and space as the necessary building blocks for knowledge, he uses Kant and this very conception of time and space (among other Kantianisms) as the basis for his argument in “What is Property?”

Hence, say they, if the mind had no innate *ideas*, it has at least innate *forms*. Thus, for example, every phenomenon is of necessity conceived by us as happening in *time* and *space*, - that compels us to infer a *cause* of its occurrence; every thing which exists implies the ideas of *substance*, *mode*, *relation*, *numbers*, &c.; in a word, we form no idea which is not related to some one of the general principles of reason, independent of which nothing exists. ... as I do not wish to enter here into a discussion of the mind, a task which would demand much labor and be of no interest to the public, I shall admit the hypothesis that out most general and most necessary ideas – such as time, space, substance, and cause – exist originally in the mind; or, at least are derived immediately from its constitution.<sup>18</sup>

In his introduction, Proudhon tells us that the three major influences on his thought are the Bible, Adam Smith, and Hegel, which we observe in his methodological outline for the essay; thesis-antithesis-synthesis.<sup>19</sup> So clearly there is more to

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<sup>18</sup> P.J. Proudhon. *The Works of P.J. Proudhon*. Volume 1 “What is Property?” [1840] trans. Benjamin R. Tucker. (Cambridge: Press of John Wilson and Son, 1876), 16-17.

<sup>19</sup> In a letter from Proudhon from August 1848 he answered the question of whether the writings of Charles Fourier had any impact on his thinking and responding thusly: "I have certainly read Fourier, and have spoken of him more than once in my works; but upon the whole, I do not think that I owe anything to him. My real masters, those who have caused fertile ideas to spring up in my mind, are

Proudhon's thinking than discussions of anarchy and the evils of property. That being said, the form and language of the essay is closer to Rousseau's essays against monarchy, in which he is less interested in individual progressions and more interested in the progression of society as a whole. The goal of this essay is to discover a means to better the condition of the lower classes and so bring equality to society.

When I solicited your votes I boldly avowed my intention to bend my efforts to the discovery of some means of *ameliorating the physical, moral, and intellectual condition of the more numerous and poorer classes.*<sup>20</sup>

Proudhon rejects the incarnation of the Catholic Church of his time. This sentiment is a direct reaction against the Saint-Simonians. He believes that hope alone cannot achieve equality; Catholic submission and obedience will not make the desired ruler appear, but revolution must be used to force society into equality. This revolution will be immanent:

I anticipate history by a few days; I disclose a truth whose development we may try in vain to arrest; I write the preamble of our future constitution. This proposition which seems to you blasphemous – *property is robbery* – would, if our prejudices allowed us to consider it, be recognized as the lightning-rod to shield us from the coming thunderbolt; but too many interests stand in the way!... Alas! philosophy will not change the course of events: destiny will fulfill itself regardless of prophecy[.]<sup>21</sup>

His thesis is that this immanent revolution will be influenced by his discovery and the communication of this discovery to the people of the possibility of an ideal

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three in number: first, the Bible; next, Adam Smith; and last, Hegel." "What is Property?" *Introduction, Life and Works* by JA Langois, xxi.

<sup>20</sup> Proudhon "What is Property?" 1. Compare this to the destiny of Man described in "Man and Existing Society" (PW VIII. 228. "*Man's destiny is: through the ever higher perfecting of his mental, moral, and corporeal faculties, to attain an ever higher, purer happiness. Man's right is: through the ever higher perfecting of his mental, moral and corporeal faculties, to arrive at the enjoyment of a constantly increasing, purer happiness.*"

<sup>21</sup> Proudhon "What is Property?" 12.

government built from the Hegelian synthesis of the economic systems of the past and present, communism and capitalism, fusing them into the ideal, anarchy.<sup>22</sup>

But before he begins his discussion of this synthesis, Proudhon shares some familiar notions on the human inability to see objects per se, but rather to view them in terms of experience. We have such little conception of what we want as opposed to what we ought to have, and how to achieve either, that soon we end up in logical fallacies that ultimately bring us nothing.

[It] is a psychological fact none the less true, and one to which philosophers have paid too little attention, that habit, like a second nature, had the power of fixing in the mind new categorical forms derived from the appearances which impress us, and by them usually stripped of objective reality, but whose influence over our judgments is no less predetermining that that of the original categories. Hence we reason by the *eternal* and *absolute* laws of our mind, and at the same time by the secondary rules, ordinarily faulty, which are suggested to us by imperfect observation. This is the most fecund source of false prejudices, and the permanent and often invincible cause of a multitude of errors. The bias resulting from these prejudices is so strong that often, even when we are fighting against a principle which our mind thinks false, which is repugnant to our reason, and which our conscience disapproves, we defend it without knowing it, we reason in accordance with it, and we obey it while attacking it. Enclosed within a circle, our mind revolves about itself, until a new observation, creating within us new ideas, brings to view an external principle which delivers us from the phantom by which our imagination is possessed.<sup>23</sup>

The error in judgment brought on by a contradiction between objective reality and perceived subjective reality is a fundamental characteristic of the second stage of the above discussed Moral Progression. The way out of this second stage, for Proudhon as well, is to abandon the subjective individual viewpoint brought about by custom, in favor of an objective one. Proudhon likens this to the abandoning of false scientific

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<sup>22</sup> Proudhon "What is Property?" 4. also 258-9. "To express this idea by an Hegelian formula, I will say: Communism – the first expression of the social nature – is the first term of social development, - the *thesis*; property, the reverse of communism, is the second term, - the *antithesis*. When we have discovered the third term, the *synthesis*, we shall have the required solution. Now this synthesis necessarily results from the correction of the thesis by the antithesis. Therefore it is necessary, by a final examination of their characteristics, to eliminate those features which are hostile to sociability. The union of the two remainders will give us the true form of human association."

<sup>23</sup> Proudhon "What is Property?" 17.

notions that were believed by convenience and custom rather than for their inherent accuracy.

[I]t being necessary to account for everything, we are obliged to seek for principles more and more comprehensive: that is why we have had to abandon successively, first the opinion that the world was flat, then the theory which regards it as the stationary centre of the universe, &c.<sup>24</sup>

By the same principle, false notions of morality brought on by the same convenience and custom ought to be abandoned, otherwise we will not be able to achieve any morally good ends, and will be caught up in the confusion of what actually is good, what actually is evil, and how best to achieve a good end through action.

If we pass now from physical nature to the moral world, we still find ourselves subject to the same deceptions of appearance, to the same influences of spontaneity and habit. But the distinguishing feature of this second division of our knowledge is, on the one hand, the good or the evil which we derive from our opinions; and, on the other, the obstinacy with which we defend the prejudice which is tormenting and killing us. Whatever theory we embrace in regard to the shape of the earth and the cause of its weight, the physics of the globe does not suffer; and, as for us, our social economy can derive therefrom neither profit nor damage. But it is in us and through us that the laws of our moral nature work; now, these laws cannot be executed without our deliberate aid, and, consequently, unless we know them. If, then, our science of moral laws is false, it is evident that, while desiring our own good, we are accomplishing our own evil; if it is only incomplete, it may suffice for a time for our social progress, but in the long run it will lead us into a wrong road, and will finally precipitate us into an abyss of calamities.<sup>25</sup>

The way to bring about these changes is to rid society as a whole of the evils which instill selfishness and inequality, and create differing subjective outlooks by which error and evil come about. The first time this was done was through the doctrine of Christ, who, according to Proudhon:

[Christ] went about proclaiming everywhere that the end of the existing society was at hand, that the world was about to experience a new birth; that the priests were vipers, the lawyers ignoramuses, and the philosophers hypocrites and liars; that master and slave were equals, that usury and every

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<sup>24</sup> Proudhon "What is Property?" 20.

<sup>25</sup> Proudhon "What is Property?" 20-1.

thing akin to it was robbery, that proprietors and idlers would one day burn while the poor and pure of heart would find a haven of peace.<sup>26</sup>

Christ was protesting against the inequality in society and its stem from ownership.

Though the concept of ownership was not entirely destroyed, according to Proudhon, the Roman world negated its foundation of luxury and slavery; in essence, undoing its own traditions.

After his death, his original disciples travelled about in all directions preaching what they called the *good news*, creating in their turn millions of missionaries; and, when their task seemed to be accomplished, dying by the sword of Roman justice. This persistent agitation, the war of the executioners and martyrs, lasted nearly three centuries, ending in the conversion of the world. Idolatry was destroyed, slavery abolished, dissolution made room for a more austere morality, and the contempt for wealth was sometimes pushed almost to privation. Society was saved by the negation of its own principles, by a revolution in its religion, and by violation of its most sacred rights. In this revolution, the idea of justice spread to an extent that had not before been dreamed of, never to return to its original limits. Heretofore justice had existed only for the masters; it then commenced to exist for the slaves.<sup>27</sup>

It is clear that Proudhon takes the opposing view regarding the early Christians and revolution to that of the authors of the obedience-stressing, revolution-denying Saint-Simonian *Exposition*.

But property was not abolished, despite the appearance of Christ's message, and Proudhon uses this fact to support the notion that the Christian Church does not fully express the doctrine of Christ. Proudhon then turns his attack against the results of the 1789 revolution. He describes the spirit of the revolution as that of negation,<sup>28</sup> but the results of the revolution led not to the undoing of the system which kept the

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<sup>26</sup> Proudhon "What is Property?" 28.

<sup>27</sup> Proudhon "What is Property?" 29.

<sup>28</sup> Proudhon "What is Property?" 32. "The spirit which gave rise to the movement of '89 was a spirit of negation; that, of itself, proves that the order of things which was substituted for the old system was not methodical or well-considered; that, born of anger and hatred, it could not have the effect of a science based on observation and study; that its foundations, in a word were not derived from a profound knowledge of the laws of Nature and society. Thus the people found that the republic, among the so-called new institutions, was acting on the very principles against which they had fought, and was swayed by all the prejudices which they had intended to destroy. We congratulate ourselves, with inconsiderate enthusiasm, on the glorious French Revolution, the regeneration of 1789, the great changes that have been effected, and the reversion of institutions: a delusion, a delusion!"

citizens of France unfree and unequal, but a furtherance of it. The idea that monarchy is the problem that prevents equality, as we see in Rousseau and Spinoza among others, is a fallacy according to Proudhon.<sup>29</sup> It is not monarchy alone which produces inequality, but the rule of men over other men, which by definition does not abandon subjective custom and opinion in favor of objectivity and reason, the system which Proudhon is seeking as the ideal. Speaking of France before the revolution he says:

The nation, so long a victim of monarchical selfishness, thought to deliver itself for ever by declaring that it alone was sovereign. But what was monarchy? The sovereignty of one man. What is democracy? The sovereignty of the nation, or, rather, of the national majority. But it is, in both cases, the sovereignty of man instead of the sovereignty of the law, the sovereignty of the will instead of the sovereignty of reason; in one word, the passions instead of justice. Undoubtedly, when a nation passes from the monarchical to the democratic state, there is progress, because in multiplying the sovereigns we increase the opportunities of reason to substitute itself for the will; but in reality there is no revolution in the government, since the principle remains the same. Now, we have the proof to-day that, with the most perfect democracy, we cannot be free.<sup>30</sup>

So some progress was made between the pre-revolution Monarchy and the “democracy” that existed in the first republic before Napoleon declared himself emperor. Much progress in the dissolution of the rule of property was made before and after the revolution when the government took away the rights of the church and nobility to keep their property, putting them on a more equal footing with the common people.<sup>31</sup> But this was just progress, not a revolution of the kind envisioned by Christ according to Proudhon. Such a revolution could only occur by destroying

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<sup>29</sup> Proudhon adds to this notion that; “If the chief of the executive power is responsible, so must the deputies be also. It is astonishing that this idea has never occurred to any one; it might be made the subject of an interesting essay.” (Proudhon “What is Property?” 32.) The idea of the counsellors to the King, or the aristocracy itself being not as noble as the King and as such ought either to be replaced by those willing to hold themselves to the same standard as the King, or ought to step aside while the King governs alone is an idea which Wagner seems to have employed in practically every discussion of politics in his prose writings from the *Vaterlandsverein* speech to *State and Religion* and *German Art and German Policy*. It is difficult to avoid noticing Proudhon’s influence on Wagner in this regard.

<sup>30</sup> Proudhon “What is Property?” 33. This proof relates to the still young American Democracy as discussed by De Tocqueville, which also did not eradicate the root evil, ownership, from its system.

<sup>31</sup> Proudhon “What is Property?” 37.

the long-standing system of property-based law. Proudhon continues this argument by analyzing the nature of property and property law from the Roman times to the time of Louis Phillipe.

Wagner follows every one of Proudhon's points, particularly in *Art and Revolution* and *Artwork of the Future*: the immanence of the revolution in which the customs and habits of the pre-revolutionary society will be done away with in order to give birth to the new society, and the idea that the lack of a complete doing away with these customs and habits is the reason that all revolutions up to this point have not been true revolutions. First, he felt that revolution would be immanent, as we can observe in *Artwork of the Future* among other essays, and the numerous letters from the period before 1852 where he questions whether or not cities and opera houses will still be standing and thus be able to perform his works when he completes them;<sup>32</sup> and second, that their revolution would be brought on by the people in the spirit of the revolutionary Christian teachings. Wagner describes this revolution using essentially the same terminology in the *Vaterlandsverein* speech:

This will be the great War of Liberation for deep-dishonoured, suffering mankind: not one drop of blood, not a single tear, nay, not one deprivation will it cost: merely one conviction shall we have to gain, and that will thrust itself upon us past withstanding: the conviction *that it must bring about the highest happiness, the perfect wellbeing of all, if as many vigorous human beings as ever the soil of Earth can nourish, combine in well-ordered unions, through exchange of the products of their various and manifold abilities, to mutual enrich and benefit each other...* We shall perceive that Human Society is maintained by the *activity of its members*, and not through any fancy agency of *money*: in clear conviction shall we found the *principle* – God will give us light to find the rightful law to put it into practice; and like a hideous nightmare will this demoniac idea of Money vanish from us, with all its loathsome retinue of open and secret usury, paper-juggling, percentage and bankers' speculations. That will be the *full emancipation of the human race*; that will be the *fulfilment of Christ's pure teaching*; which enviously they hide from us behind parading dogmas, invented erst to bind the simple world of

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<sup>32</sup> One prime example of this can be seen in Wagner's letter to Uhlig of November 12, 1851.

raw barbarians, to prepare them for a development towards whose higher consummation we now must march in lucid consciousness.<sup>33</sup>

It is through the employment of Christian teachings and the abolition of money, i.e., property, that a society of equals will be reached. The influence of Proudhon is clear.

In *Art and Revolution* Wagner discusses why revolutions have failed to create true equality, and so were not true revolutions but only restorations, i.e., a furtherance of the same principles found before the revolution, by employing the 1830 and 1848 revolutions in France as examples. Using the support the theatre attained from the newly post-revolutionary French government as both a point sufficient unto itself and as a metaphor for the failure of revolutions to address what is important in society, he says:

The Revolution of February deprived the Paris theatres of public support; many of them were on the brink of bankruptcy. After the events of June, Cavaignac, busied with the maintenance of the existing order of society, came to their aid and demanded a subvention for their continuance. Why? – Because the Breadless Classes, the *Prolétariat*, would be augmented by the closing of the theatres. – So; this interest alone had the State in the Stage! It sees in it an industrial workshop, and, to boot, an influence that may calm the passions, absorb the excitement, and divert the threatening agitation of the heated public mind; which broods in deepest discontent, seeking for the way by which dishonoured human nature may return to its true self, even though it be at cost of the continuance of our – so appropriate theatrical institutions!”<sup>34</sup>

The government in place after the revolution seeks to calm the people into accepting the status quo in the same way as the pre-revolutionary government did.

Speaking generally of the failure of revolution to achieve the desired ends, he says that there hasn't yet been a real revolution:

Unhappily, things have not as yet advanced beyond the mere demonstration. In fact, the Revolution of the human race, that has lasted now two thousand years, has been almost exclusively in the spirit of Reaction. It has dragged

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<sup>33</sup> PW IV. 138.

<sup>34</sup> PW I. 46.

down the fair, free man to itself, to slavery; the slave has not become a freeman, but the freeman a slave.<sup>35</sup>

What is noteworthy about this idea is that, as with Proudhon, the revolution of the masses was started by Christ, as Wagner's "two thousand year revolution" comment shows, and was incomplete because the goals of each revolution were looked at not in terms of something new to be achieved or to be built up, but solely something to be torn down: in other words a negation, as per Proudhon; or reaction, as per Wagner. Because of this, every revolution has ultimately failed; they have been acts of restoration, not revolution.<sup>36</sup> Negation is a necessary part of the revolution; however it must be accompanied by a real object. Proudhon's ideal government is called anarchy, and Wagner's is a government in which all follow the laws of nature, but both result in a society in which universal love reigns and property and money are but a memory.

Lastly, culture itself, particularly the culture of selfishness, for Wagner as for Proudhon, ought to be rejected in favor of universalism. In *Artwork of the Future* he uses the terms *Mode* (Fashion or Style) to refer to a learned cultural influence which is unnatural; not stemming from need; and *Gewohnheit* (translated by Ellis as 'Habit') to refer to the same unnatural needless selfishness, but with no forethought involved; i.e. the "custom" of Proudhon. This unnatural need has its basis in selfish egoism.<sup>37</sup>

The only way it can be overpowered is by the revolution which will destroy all aspects of culture and custom which do not follow the nature – stem from luxury and fashion and not need – and which prize the benefit of the individual over that of the community. So society as it is, its habits and customs and particularly its fashions, ought to be rejected in favor of the new society, much as Christ destroyed the temple

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<sup>35</sup> PW I. 50.

<sup>36</sup> Paraphrase of PW I. 53.

<sup>37</sup> See: PW I. 84.

in his effort to show the true path to God. One of the starker examples is the rejection of traditional marriage. Proudhon offer some insights on the subject, which begin from Destutt de Tracy's, an avid Saint-Simonian, insight that love and marriage ought to be at the discretion of the couple and not as to custom or the rules of society, quoting: "I confess that I no more share the desire of the moralist to diminish and restrain our pleasures, than that of the politicians to increase our procreative powers, and accelerate reproduction." From this Proudhon goes one surprising step further, saying: "Widespread misery results from love and marriage, but this our philosopher does not heed."<sup>38</sup> This enigmatic comment is left unexplained until a footnote forty pages later:

Between woman and man there may exist love, passion, ties of custom, and the like; but there is no real society. Man and woman are not companions. The difference of the sexes places a barrier between them, like that placed between animals by a difference of race. Consequently, far from advocating what is now called the emancipation of woman, I should incline, rather, if there were no other alternative, to exclude her from society. The rights of woman and her relations with man are yet to be determined. Matrimonial legislation, like civil legislation, is a matter for the future to settle.<sup>39</sup>

Obviously this position is indefensible, and Wagner himself did not believe in such inequality, but there is reasoning behind Proudhon's wishing to deal with the idea of marriage after the inevitable political revolution. His ideal anarchy stems from voluntarily entering into a relationship with society by which you relegate your will to a secondary position to that of the community. The important word here is "voluntarily." As soon as it becomes a requirement, whether it is marriage or any contract from the state, even if it is based on the most natural law, it is still something imposed upon the individual by custom, and therefore becomes odious.<sup>40</sup> As marriage is itself a contract and so takes away the couple's voluntarily choosing to love, honor,

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<sup>38</sup> Proudhon "What is Property?" 203.

<sup>39</sup> Proudhon "What is Property?" 245.

<sup>40</sup> Proudhon "What is Property?" 260.

and obey each other upon entry, it too is odious and ought to be rejected. That is why Proudhon relegates the subject to a time after the anarchist revolution has been achieved. That being said, Proudhon's warning on love itself could also be a warning about the baser love associated with desire, discussed with similar warnings by the philosophers included in the overall Moral Progression.

Wagner follows suit with this idea as well. In *Jesus of Nazareth* he quotes the above idea nearly word for word:

[John:] 'Ye shall never swear'; in Oaths lay the binding law of a World that knew not Love as yet. Let every man be free to act at every moment according to Love and his ability: bound by an Oath, I am unfree: if in its fulfillment I do good, that good is robbed of merit (as every bounden virtue) and loses the worth of conviction; but if the Oath leads me to evil, then I sin against conviction. The Oath engenders every vice: if it binds me against my profit, I shall seek to circumvent it (as every law is circumvented) and what I should quite rightly do in pursuance of my welfare, through the oath becomes a crime; but if I find my profit in it (without doing harm to another), then I rob myself of the moral satisfaction of doing right at every instant through my own free judgment [.]<sup>41</sup>

And again more specifically on the subject of marriage a few pages later:

As a first law, *Marriage* was entrenched by transferring the law of Love to it: but the law; i.e. essence of Love, is everlasting: a pair that mutually inclines without compulsion, can do this solely from pure love; and this love, so long as nothing crosses it, can naturally admit no surcease, for it is the full and mutual completion and contentment of the man and woman, which wins in fruitfulness, and in the love devolving on the children its perpetual motion and renewal. To this complete relationship became attached the concept of Possession: the man belonged to the woman, the woman to the man, the children to the parents the parents to the children, – love gave duration to this state of Belonging, and continuous Belonging stiffened to the concept of Possession... The Individual's natural rights were consequently extended over those close-knit to him by love: thus ripened the idea of Marriage, its sacredness, its right; and this latter became embodied in the Law. But that Right was bound to turn into a wrong, when it no longer found its basis through and in love itself; it could but turn into an utter sin, so soon as its sacredness was made to prevail *against* love, and that in two directions: 1. when the marriage was contracted without love, 2. when the parents' rights became a scourge upon the children. If a woman was wed by a man for whom she had no love, and he fulfilled the letter of the marriage law to her, through

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<sup>41</sup> PW VIII. 299.

that law she became his property: the woman's struggle for freedom through love thereby became a sin, actual contentment of her love she could only attain through adultery.<sup>42</sup>

Wagner wrote in *Mein Leben* that the first time he came across this specific idea against the marriage oath was in his talks with Röckel in the period leading up to the Dresden uprising in 1849. Wagner explains:

On the basis of the socialist theories of Proudhon and others pertaining to the annihilation of the power of capital by direct productive labor, he [Röckel] constructed a whole new moral order of things to which by some of his more attractive assertions, he little by little converted me, to the point where I began to rebuild upon it my hopes for the realization of my artistic ideals. Two of the points he made particularly struck me: for one thing, he wanted to do away completely with the institution of marriage as we knew it. But wouldn't we then, I asked, find ourselves in promiscuous relations with girls of necessarily dubious reputation? With kindly exasperation he gave me to understand that we could have no idea of the purity of morals in general, and of the relationship between the sexes in particular, until we were able to free people completely from the yoke of trades, guilds, and other coercive institutions of that kind. I should consider, he said, what the only motive would be that would induce a woman to surrender to a man, after considerations of money, fortune, position and family prejudice, and all the pressures they exerted, had entirely disappeared.<sup>43</sup>

This position, to which Wagner found himself convinced by Proudhon via his mouthpiece Röckel, Wagner believed in for the rest of his life. We see this idea

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<sup>42</sup> PW VIII. 301-302. We also see here the basis for Siegmund's going against the law and having an adulterous affair with his sister, for she did not marry with love and so according to the higher law of nature, that marriage was invalid. As Wagner wrote later in *Jesus of Nazareth* "The commandment saith: Thou shalt not commit adultery! But I say unto you: Ye shall not marry without love. A marriage without love is broken as soon as entered into, and whoso hath wooed without love, already hath broken the wedding... Where ye marry without love, ye bind yourself at variance with God's law, and in your wedding ye sin against God; and this sin avengeth itself by your striving next against the law of man, in that ye break the marriage vow. It is a good law: Thou shalt not commit adultery...but I preserve you from this sin inasmuch as I give you the law of God which saith: Thou shalt not marry without love." (303) and even more directly relating to Siegmund and his capacity of direct descent from God "sin abideth in the world so long as the Law abideth, and the law so long as injustice (Wrong): he who liveth in God's love, is upright, and the law is dead unto him" Ye descend from God, but from God descends no unclean thing... all offence and sin come through the Law, which is against man; wherefore am I come to redeem you from the Law, without which there is no Sin, - and this I do by teaching you that ye all descend from God and are in him through Love, which is the only Law." (304-305)

<sup>43</sup> *My Life*, 373.

repeated in the incomplete fragment “On the Feminine in the Human Race” of 1883 which was meant to be a conclusion to *Religion and Art*.<sup>44</sup>

The last aspect of custom rejected by Proudhon is art. He believes that no art written during the present time can be of lasting worth; only art written after the revolution will have worth:

The nineteenth century is, in my eyes, a genestic era, in which new principles are elaborated, but in which nothing that is written shall endure. That is the reason, in my opinion, why, among so many men of talent, France to-day counts not one great writer. In a society like ours, to seek for literary glory seems to me an anachronism. Of what use is it to invoke an ancient sibyl when a muse is on the eve of birth? Pitiably actors in a tragedy nearing its end, that which it behooves us to do is to precipitate the catastrophe. The most deserving among us is he who plays this best part. Well, I no longer aspire to this sad success!

Wagner seems to have directly employed this idea both practically, as can be seen by his compositional silence between the completion of *Lohengrin* and the beginning of *Das Rheingold*, and theoretically, as he outlined to Uhlig in his letters of December 27<sup>th</sup> 1849 concerning his trip to Paris and *Siegfrieds Tod*:

If we are entirely honest with ourselves, then we really must admit that this is now the only thing which has any sense or any real purpose: works of art cannot be created at present, they can only be prepared for by means of revolutionary activity, by destroying and crushing everything that is worth destroying and crushing. That is our task, and only people totally different from us will be the true creative artists. It is only in that sense that I can envisage my forthcoming activities in Paris: even the work that I am writing and producing for there can only be a single moment in the revolution, a token of affirmation in the process of destruction. Destruction alone is what is needed, - to build anything at present can only be arbitrary[.]<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> PW VI. 335. “Whereas the fall of human races lies before us plain as day, we see the other animal species preserved in greatest purity, except where man has meddled in their crossing: manifestly, because they know no ‘marriage of convenience’ with a view to goods and property. In fact they know no marriage at all; and if it is marriage that raises man so far above the animal world, to highest evolution of his moral faculties, it is the abuse of marriage, for quite other ends, that is the ground of our decline below the beasts.” He continues this fragment with a discussion of the pros and cons of polygamy vs. monogamy with an eye towards what is natural, and what is capable of ennobling; this is of course after the marriage of convenience or for the sake of custom has been dismissed.

<sup>45</sup> *Selected Letters of Richard Wagner*. 184.

And on November 12, 1851, he declared that no music should be written until after the revolution, but then music could be performed whose purpose would be to explain the meaning of the revolution to those who brought it about. Only then would music again serve a purpose, but until then the deed of revolution had first to take place.

A performance is something I can conceive of only after the Revolution; only the Revolution can offer me the artists and listeners I need. The coming revolution must necessarily put an end to this whole theatrical business of ours: they must all perish, and will certainly do so, it is inevitable. Out of the ruins I shall then summon together what I need: I shall then find what I require. I shall then run up a theater on the Rhine and send out invitations to a great dramatic festival: after a year's preparations I shall then perform my entire work within the space of four days: with it I shall then make clear to the men of the Revolution the meaning of that Revolution, in its noblest sense. This audience will understand me: present day audiences cannot.<sup>46</sup>

Returning now to Proudhon and property: by citing the definitions of property throughout time beginning with the Roman law and ending with the Napoleonic code, Proudhon sees that property is really an extension of the will's authority over the

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<sup>46</sup> *Selected Letters of Richard Wagner*. 234. See also *Communication to My Friends* "Therefore was my interest in the world of politics always in so far of an artistic nature, as I looked beneath its formal expression into its purely human contents. Only when I could strip off from the phenomena their formal shell, fashioned from the traditions of Juristic Rights, and light upon their inward kernel of purely human essence, could they arouse my sympathy; for here I then saw the same impelling motive which drove myself, as artist-man, to wrest from the evil physical form of the Present a new physical mould which should correspond to the true essence of humanity—a mould which is only to be gained through destruction of the physical form of the Present, and therefore through Revolution." (PW I. 355.) These examples considered, he obviously changed his mind, both in between the two letters to Uhlig in 1849 and 1851, and afterwards; that art could help achieve revolutionary change and so thus not be possible only after the revolution. See: *Letters to My Dresden Friends* letter of September 20, 1850 to Uhlig, speaking of a performance of Siegfried. "When everything was in order I should arrange, under these circumstances, for three performances of *Siegfried* in one week. After the third, the theatre would be pulled down and the score burnt. To those persons who had been pleased with the thing I should then say, 'Now do likewise.'" (67)

There are also some important similarities found in the view of art's place in society between Proudhon and Wagner, primarily, in that art is a sacrifice of resources that the community gives up for its own ultimate benefit; in this sense the community itself is the artist. "The artist, the *savant*, and the poet find their just recompense in the permission that society gives them to devote themselves exclusively to science and to art: so that in reality they do not labor for themselves, but for society, which creates them, and requires of them no other duty." ("What is Property" 144) and "Rarity of genius was not, in the Creator's design, a motive to compel society to go down on its knees before the man of superior talents, but a providential means for the performance of all functions to the greatest advantage of all." ("What is Property?" 198)

world and others.<sup>47</sup> It represents the will's desire to conquer and as such has its basis in fear of loss. Without property to lose, this selfish will would lose its object and quiet itself, but this cannot occur until society stops recognizing individual property rights, and the means to bring this about is the purpose of his study.

The first step of his Hegelian historical survey is to examine the ancient state of communism and the modern state of capitalism in order to find the noblest elements of the two which will form his ideal synthesis. Proudhon maintains that the first human society was a primitive state of communism in which "all things were common and undivided; they were the property of all."<sup>48</sup> Proudhon quotes from Destutt de Tracy on this idea:

'Prior to all covenants, men are, not exactly, as Hobbes says, in a state of *hostility*, but of *estrangement*. In this state, justice and injustice are unknown; the rights of one bear no relation to the rights of another. All have as many rights as needs, and all feel it their duty to satisfy those needs by any means at their command.' Grant it; whether true or false, it matters not. Destutt de Tracy cannot escape equality. On this theory, men, while in a state of estrangement, are under no obligation to each other; they all have the right to satisfy their needs without regard to the needs of others<sup>49</sup>

In other words, in this first stage humans are independent beings satisfying their own wants and desires. The only organization such a society has is in that people are living together and through their labor share each other's spoils. They share not out of a law or any form of noble judgment but because there is not yet the concept of property and ownership to determine what members of society can and cannot do. They take what they feel compelled to take no matter whose labor brought it into

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<sup>47</sup> Proudhon "What is Property?" 42-3. "The Roman law defined property as the right to use and abuse one's own within the limits of the law... Code Napoléon, article 544: "Property is the right to enjoy and dispose of things in the most absolute manner, provided we do not overstep the limits prescribed by the laws and regulations." ... [this proviso in the Napoleonic code does not change the nature of the Roman law to any meaningful extent] its object is not to limit power, but to prevent the domain of one proprietor from interfering with that of another. That is a confirmation of the principle, not a limitation of it.

<sup>48</sup> Proudhon "What is Property?" 55.

<sup>49</sup> Proudhon "What is Property?" 59-60.

being. Not only is this a paraphrase of the world without feeling, i.e. aesthetic education, which the author to the *Exposition* describes, but it is also an explanation of the first stage of the Moral Progression.

Proudhon posits that everyone is born with a talent, and feels compelled to do that for which they have a talent, like the instinct of bees to collect pollen and return to the hive. In such a society there is a king, but the king is not in control of his society, as all follow their own instincts to do what they are driven to do; the king then functions as a “rallying point” for the community, not an authority over it.

If, like the bees, every man were born possessed of talent, perfect knowledge of certain kinds, and, in a word, an innate acquaintance with the functions he has to perform, but destitute of reflective and reasoning faculties, society would organize itself. We should see one man plowing a field, another building houses; this one forging metals, that one cutting clothes; and still others storing the products, and superintending their distribution. Each one, without inquiring as to the object of his labor, and without troubling himself about the extent of his task, would obey orders, bring his product, receive his salary, and would then rest for a time; keeping meanwhile no accounts, envious of nobody, and satisfied with the distributor, who never would be unjust to anyone. Kings would govern, but would not reign; for to reign is to be a *proprietor à l'engrais*, as Bonaparte said: and having no commands to give, since all would be at their posts, they would serve rather as rallying centres than as authorities or counsellors. It would be a state of ordered communism, but not a society entered into deliberately or freely.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Proudhon “What is Property?” 252. As Proudhon explains, kingship, in some form, is present from the earliest times and in the original state of negative communism. The original king though is only a leader in that he leads through experience and the custom of the society itself. “Man (naturally a sociable being) naturally follows a chief. Originally, the chief is the father, the patriarch, the elder; in other words, the good and wise man, whose functions, consequently, are exclusively of a reflective and intellectual nature. The human race – like all other races of sociable animals – has its instincts, its innate faculties, its general ideas, and its categories of sentiment and reason. Its chiefs, legislators, or kings have devised nothing, supposed nothing, imagined nothing. They have only guided society by their accumulated experience, always however in conformity with opinions and beliefs.” (273) The tyrant king ruling through strength comes from the stage after negative communism in which strength and will of the leader displaces expedience, experience of the elder of the community and the customs of that community. “Royalty, and absolute royalty, is – as truly and more truly than democracy – a primitive form of government. Perceiving that, in the remotest ages, crowns and kingships were worn by heroes, brigands, and knight-errants, they confound the two things, - royalty and despotism. But royalty dates from the creation of man; it existed in the age of negative communism. Ancient heroism (and the despotism which it engendered) commenced only with the first manifestation of the idea of justice; that is, with the reign of force. As soon as the strongest, in the comparison of merits, was decided to be the best, the oldest had to abandon his position, and royalty became despotic.” (273-4)

This might sound ideal and has been, according to Proudhon, misconstrued as ideal by philosophers of the past, but this condition of sharing spoils of work is not the result of conscious free choice, which is not yet present at this stage of society, but rather is the “first species of slavery.”<sup>51</sup> Communism cannot be the ideal state in the same way that democracy cannot be the ideal state: as long as man is over man in any way, even if it is many men as opposed to one monarch over a community, reason does not rule. As long as men are ordering other men to work, the community is one of slaves, not equals.

The members of a community, it is true, have no private property; but the community is proprietor, and proprietor not only of the goods, but of the persons and will. In consequence of this principle of absolute property, labor, which should be only a condition imposed upon man by Nature, becomes in all communities a human commandment, and therefore odious.<sup>52</sup>

This is a society which does not accept, but rather denies independent thought and reflecting will. The weak take advantage of the strong and force them to do their share of the work for the greater benefit of the community as a whole. Such a state then for Proudhon is intolerably unequal. The individual is not given a chance to choose to give up his will in favor of the community; this choice is made in advance. The individual cannot grow and in fact never really is able to become an ‘individual’, but remains a tool of the state.

Passive obedience, irreconcilable with a reflecting will, is strictly enforced. Fidelity to regulations, which are always defective, however wise they may be thought, allows of no complaint. Life, talent, and all the human faculties are

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<sup>51</sup> Proudhon “What is Property?” 258. See also 259, “I ought to conceal the fact that property and communism have been considered always the only possible forms of society. This deplorable error has been the life of property. The disadvantages of communism are so obvious that critics never have need to employ much eloquence to thoroughly disgust men with it. The irreparability of the injustice which it causes, the violence which it does to attractions and repulsions, the yoke of iron which it fastens upon the will, the moral torture to which it subjects the conscience, the debilitating effect which it had upon society; and, to sum it all up, the pious and stupid uniformity which it enforces upon the free, active, reasoning, unsubmitive personality of man, have shocked common sense, and condemned communism by an irrevocable decree.”

<sup>52</sup> Proudhon “What is Property?” 260.

the property of the State, which had the right to use them as it pleases for the common good. Private associations are sternly prohibited, in spite of the likes and dislikes of different natures, because to tolerate them would be to introduce small communities within the large one, and consequently private property; the strong work for the weak, although this ought to be left to benevolence, and not enforced, advised, or enjoined; the industrious work for the lazy, although this is unjust; the clever work for the foolish, although this is absurd; and, finally, man – casting aside his personality, his spontaneity, his genius, and his affections – humbly annihilates himself at the feet of the majestic and inflexible Commune!

It is upon this revelation that Proudhon rejects the idealized nature state in favor of one requiring freedom of choice. Communism takes this choice away.<sup>53</sup>

We see clearly from this last quote, especially from Proudhon's description of "passive obedience" for those participating in the commune, that this is another criticism of the Saint-Simonian conception of obedience bringing about a better world. In addition, we can see where Wagner's critique of communism from the *Vaterlandsverein* speech came from. Just after the part of the speech quoted above in which Wagner describes the specifics of the revolution, i.e., its Christian character and abolition of money, he mocks both those who think it sounds like communism, and the system of communism itself:

That will be the *full emancipation of the human race*; that will be the *fulfilment of Christ's pure teaching*; which enviously they hide from us behind parading dogmas, invented erst to bind the simple world of raw barbarians, to prepare them for a development towards whose higher consummation we now must march in lucid consciousness. Or does this smack to you of *Communism*?

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<sup>53</sup> This is one of the most important features of Proudhon's thinking that aligns him with the Zeitgeist progression. Earlier on in his essay he told a story in parable form of Edward III's entry into Calais "The English conqueror [Edward III] consented to spare its [Calais's] inhabitants, provided it would surrender to him its most distinguished citizens to do with as he pleased. Eustache and several others offered themselves; it was noble of them, and our ministers should recommend their example to the bondholders. But had the city the right to surrender them? Assuredly not. The right to security is absolute; the country can require no one to sacrifice himself. The soldier standing guard within the enemy's range is no exception to this rule. Wherever a citizen stands guard, the country stands guard with him: to-day it is the turn of the one, to-morrow of the other. When danger and devotion are common, flight is parricide. No one has the right to flee from danger; no one can serve as a scapegoat. The maxim of Caiphas – *it is right that a man should die for his nation* – is that of the populace and of tyrants; the two extremes of social degradation." (49-50) Sacrifice is only noble when it is voluntary, not when it is forced, as we have observed hitherto in the Moral Progression, whether it is the *Würde* of Schiller or any other incarnation of the concept.

Are ye foolish or ill-disposed enough to declare the necessary redemption of the human race (notwendige Erlösung des Menschengeschlechts) from the clumsiest, most demoralizing servitude to vulgarest matter, synonymous with carrying out the most preposterous and senseless doctrine, that of Communism?<sup>54</sup>

It is clear that he does not think highly of the system, but it is unclear why. By using the phrase to describe the system, “the clumsiest most demoralizing servitude to vulgarest matter” (“plumpesten und entsittlichendsten Knechtschaft gemeinster Materie”) Wagner may be focusing on Proudhon’s essential problem with the system; the demoralizing servitude of the strong to the weak, and saying that that is the reason for its being a “preposterous and senseless doctrine.” However it is when he explains that the king should not lower himself to the level of the peasants<sup>55</sup> – the strong being taken advantage of by the weak and thus Proudhon’s evil communism – but should use his position to best support the people, that we know that Wagner is using Proudhon’s conception of the system of communism, and criticizing it for the same reasons as Proudhon.<sup>56</sup>

Keeping this state of “ideal” communism in mind, the moment reflection becomes a faculty of humanity, this state is lost. Reflection is of course, according to Proudhon, directly related to the ability of the mind to reason through “observation and experiment”; so once again, it is experience by which anything can be knowable

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<sup>54</sup> PW IV. 138.

<sup>55</sup> See: PW IV. 141. and pg 631 below.

<sup>56</sup> This is a likely implication of the phrase given the context and Wagner’s intellectual background concerning Proudhon, but Wagner’s terminology, *Materie* (translated by Ellis as “material”) in particular, makes it difficult to say with certainty that that is what he meant. In addition, he is not consistent in his descriptions of communism. This is the only context which addresses what appears to be an established system of communism, and which he refers to as *Kommunismus*. In other contexts and other essays he uses the terms *Kommunismus* and *Gemeinsamkeit* interchangeably to mean merely the opposite of egoism (*Egoismus*), which is then more of an ideal to which society based on morality should move rather than an established system as we see in the above context. (For *Kommunismus* in this context see for example, the third chapter of *Artwork of the Future*, and for *Gemeinsamkeit* see the fragmentary essay “The Artithood of the Future” as well as subsequent fragments which worked out ideas found particularly in the Zürich period writings.)

and the faculty of reason can be employed.<sup>57</sup> In this initial state of reason breaking away from instinct the primitive communist state is disrupted.

Man, in order to procure as speedily as possible the most thorough satisfaction of his wants, seeks *rule*. In the beginning, this rule is to him living, visible, and tangible. It is his father, his master, his king. The more ignorant man is, the more obedient he is, and the more absolute is his confidence in his guide. But, it being a law of man's nature to conform to rule, - that is, to discover it by his powers of reflection and reason, - man reasons upon the commands of his chiefs. Now, such reasoning as that is a protest against authority, - a beginning of disobedience. At that moment that man inquires into the motives which govern the will of his sovereign, - at that moment man revolts.<sup>58</sup>

The first consequence is that man begins to err as his faculty of reason and judgment is new and subjectively based. "In reflecting, he becomes deluded; in reasoning, he makes mistakes, and, thinking himself right, persists in them."<sup>59</sup> This erring mixes with egotism to the point where he no longer wishes to be involved in the communal society, as he views his ideas, rather than those of the community, as best.

He is wedded to his opinions; he esteems himself, and despises others. Consequently, he isolates himself; for he could not submit to the majority without renouncing his will and his reason that is, without disowning himself, which is impossible in this isolation, this intellectual egotism, this individual opinion, lasts until the truth is demonstrated to him by observation and experience.<sup>60</sup>

This first state of reflection, then, is opposed to instinct. Where once man lived in community, now he lives on his own; where once man was forced to accept the communal will as his own, he now declares his independence from his former instinctive living and follows his own will alone. But as with other systems outlined in the above Moral Progression, the views garnered from this new state of independence are inconsistent and unreliable – in short, the first evil, which can only

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<sup>57</sup> Proudhon "What is Property?" 252. "But man acquires skill only by observation and experiment. He reflects, then, since to observe and experiment is to reflect; he reasons, since he cannot help reasoning."

<sup>58</sup> Proudhon "What is Property?" 275.

<sup>59</sup> Proudhon "What is Property?" 252.

<sup>60</sup> Proudhon "What is Property?" 252.

be corrected by further experience and an admission that instinct is not wholly wrong and individual opinion is not wholly right.

While man is governed by instinct, he is unconscious of his acts. He never would deceive himself, and never would be troubled by errors, evils, and disorder, if, like the animals, instinct were his only guide. But the Creator had endowed us with reflection, to the end that our instinct might become intelligence; and since this reflection and resulting knowledge pass through various stages, it happens that in the beginning our instinct is opposed, rather than guided, by reflection; consequently, that our power of thought leads us to act in opposition to our nature and our end; that, deceiving ourselves, we do and suffer evil, until instinct which points us towards good, and reflection which makes us stumble into evil, are replaced by the science of good and evil, which invariably causes us to seek the one and avoid the other. Thus, evil – or error and its consequences – is the firstborn son of the union of two opposing faculties, instinct and reflection; good, or truth, must inevitably be the second child. Or, to again employ the figure, evil is the product of incest between adverse powers; good will sooner or later be the legitimate child of their holy and mysterious union.<sup>61</sup>

But before this “mysterious union” occurs, man lives in selfish evil egotism as in the first stage of the Moral Progression.

It will be no surprise to see the root cause of this evil is *fear*, as it is in the Moral Progression. Proudhon explains the difference between the sense of duty that animals feel toward their young and others in their immediate community compared to reasoning, reflective man. The one attribute that prevents man from following the instinctive duty to society that the animals feel is fear of the future, the very attribute that enables human to plan. This fear, as Proudhon explains, does not just lead man, but compels him to conquer his fellow man out of fear for his own security. It is from this root fear that the role of property in society begins. “That which in this instance obscures our duty is our power of foresight, which, causing us to fear an eventual danger, impels us to usurpation, and makes us robbers and murderers.”<sup>62</sup> Once fear

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<sup>61</sup> Proudhon “What is Property?” 257-8.

<sup>62</sup> Proudhon “What is Property?” 231.

takes over, a new world order begins based on strength: in part it relates to Rousseau's powerful man.

Justice, after passing through the state of negative communism, called by the ancient poets the *age of gold*, commences as the right of the strongest. In a society which is trying to organize itself, inequality of faculties calls up the idea of merit; *équité* suggests the plan of proportioning not only esteem, but also material comforts, to personal merit; and since the highest and almost the only merit then recognized is physical strength, the strongest, and consequently the best, is entitled to the largest share; and if it is refused him, he may naturally take it by force. From this to the assumption of the right of property in all things, it is but one step.<sup>63</sup>

This step, invention of property rights, comes about as a reaction to the realization that a world ruled by strength alone is chaotic. As Proudhon explains, it is not merely the powerful man who rules at this stage but egoism itself. When the individual initially rebels against the rule of the community in negative communism, or the “king” of that state,<sup>64</sup> he becomes so engulfed in selfishness that in his withdrawal from society he holds no laws sacred except his own, he is his own king, and a society full of kings ruling over their kingdom of one, living by their own laws, is chaos.

If he obeys no longer because the king commands, but because the king demonstrates the wisdom of his commands, [as it is in the state of original negative communism] it may be said that henceforth he will recognize no authority, and that he had become his own king. Unhappy he who shall dare to command him, and shall offer, as his authority, only the vote of the majority; for, sooner or later, the minority will become the majority, and this imprudent despot will be overthrown, and all his laws annihilated.

It is a situation wherein every individual is trying to overpower every other individual – the negative stereotype of anarchy. Thus the only way to get out of this state was to create agreements and laws:

[E]ach individual had the right to *satisfy his needs without reference to the needs of others*. In other words, that all have the right to injure each other;

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<sup>63</sup> Proudhon “What is Property?” 262.

<sup>64</sup> See: Note 48 above. “What is Property?” 273-4.

that there was no right save force and cunning. They injured each other, not only by war and pillage, but also by usurpation and appropriation. Now, in order to abolish this equal right to use force and stratagem, - this equal right to do evil, the sole source of the inequality of benefits and injuries, - they commenced to make *covenants either implied or expressed*, and established a balance.<sup>65</sup>

In other words, man was granted the right of possession which could not be taken away by force or strategy; something given to man by right, law, and/or contract.

This new right Proudhon viewed as a concoction that merely allowed egoism to remain in control but in a lesser form than in the chaotic state which existed initially after reflection took hold. It was lesser in that at least what one created with one's own hands was one's own to be bartered as one saw fit, in contrast to the previous condition under which this could be taken away, and so was considered to be in a sense equality through law. As long as the law is in place this is the case, and as soon as someone through force or strategy got hold of the products of another's work, law itself was dissolved.

The genesis and growth of possession gradually forcing people to labor for their support, they agreed either formally or tacitly – it makes no difference which – that the laborer should be sole proprietor of the fruit of his labor; that is, they simply declared the fact that thereafter none could live without working. It necessarily followed that to obtain equality of products, there must be equality; and that, to obtain equality of labor, there must be equality of facilities for labor. Whoever without labor got possession, by force or by strategy, of another's means of subsistence, destroyed equality, and placed himself above or outside of the law. Whoever monopolized the means of production on the ground of greater industry, also destroyed equality. Equality being then the expression of right, whoever violated it was *unjust*. ... Thus the law, in establishing property, had not been the expression of a psychological fact, the development of a natural law, the application of a moral principle. It has literally *created* a right outside of its own province. It has realized an abstraction, a metaphor, a fiction; and that without deigning to look at the consequences, without considering the disadvantages, without inquiring whether it was right or wrong. It has sanctioned selfishness; it had indorsed monstrous pretensions; it had received with favor impious vows, as if it were able to fill up a bottomless pit, and to satiate hell! Blind law; the law of the ignorant man; a law which is not a law; the voice of discord, deceit, and

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<sup>65</sup> Proudhon "What is Property?" 60.

blood! This it is which, continually revived, reinstated, rejuvenated, restored, re-enforced – as the palladium of society – has troubled the consciences of the people, has obscured the minds of the masters, and had induced all the catastrophes which have befallen nations.<sup>66</sup>

We can observe in this description a possible influence for the counterpart to the “first sin that caused a whole world of suffering” in the *Ring*; the use of strategy meant to cheat the giants out of payment for Valhalla, their work.

Against this desire and egoism there is also the contrary feeling which incites men to associate with each other as equals, not to conquer one another. This Proudhon calls sociability. Proudhon offers this comparison between the selfish characteristics of man versus the sociable characteristics, and concludes that the good and the moral behavior stems from man’s sociability, while the evil behavior stems from the selfish.

[1] The mother, who protects her son at the peril of her life, and sacrifices every thing to his support, is in society with him – she is a good mother. She, on the contrary, who abandons her child, is unfaithful to the social instinct, - maternal love being one of its many features; she is an unnatural mother. [2] If I plunge into the water to rescue a drowning man, I am his brother, his associate; if, instead of aiding him, I sink him, I am his enemy, his murderer. [3] Whoever bestows alms treats the poor man as his associate; not thoroughly, it is true, but only in respect to the amount which he shares with him. Whoever takes by force or stratagem that which is not the product of his labor, destroys his social character – he is a brigand. [4] The Samaritan who relieves the traveller lying by the wayside, dresses his wounds, comforts him, and supplies him with money, thereby declared himself his associate – his neighbor; the priest, who passes by on the other side, remains unassociated, and is his enemy. In all these cases, man is moved by an internal attraction toward his fellow, by a secret sympathy which causes him to love, congratulate, and condole; so that, to resist this attraction, his will must struggle against his nature.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Proudhon “What is Property?” 71, 75-6.

<sup>67</sup> Proudhon “What is Property?” 227. On the third point it is difficult not to see the connection with Loge’s attempts to steal the Ring through trickery as well as get out of Wotan’s deal with the Giants for Valhalla.

So then, it is the extension of this sociability which ultimately leads to voluntary selflessness for others, i.e. the third and fourth stages of the above discussed Moral Progression.

Consistent with the concept of *Notwendigkeit*, Proudhon says that this sociability stems from need [*besoin*], and it is from this need and this sociability or social nature that true justice and equality come into being. This need itself is divided into two species: “for the self,” and the sociable “for others.” It is in the need “for others” that innate sociability transforms into duty [*devoir*], meant essentially in the Kantian sense, while need “for the self” is the basis for true individual rights.

Man’s social nature becoming *justice* through reflection, *équité* through the classification of capacities, and having *liberty* for its formula, is the true basis of morality, - the principle and regulator of all our actions. This is the universal motor, which philosophy is searching for, which religion strengthens, which egotism supplants, and whose place pure reason never can fill. *Duty* and *right* are born of *need*, which, when considered in connection with others, is a *right*, and when considered in connection with ourselves, a *duty*. We need to eat and sleep. It is our right to procure those things which are necessary to rest and nourishment. It is our duty to use them when Nature requires it. We need to labor in order to live. To do so is both our right and our duty. We need to love our wives and children. It is our duty to protect and support them. It is our right to be loved in preference to all others. Conjugal fidelity is justice. Adultery is high treason against society. We need to exchange our products for other products. It is our right that this exchange should be one of equivalents; and since we consume before we produce, it would be our duty, if we could control the matter, to see to it that our last product shall follow our last consumption. Suicide is fraudulent bankruptcy. We need to live our lives according to the dictates of our reason. It is our right to maintain our freedom. It is our duty to respect that of others. We need to be appreciated by our fellows. It is our duty to deserve their praise. It is our right to be judged by our works.<sup>68</sup>

So it is from this necessity for sociability that egoism is ultimately supplanted by selflessness.

This change does not occur immediately. Proudhon explains that these two sides of the individual, sociability and egoism, are often in contradiction with one

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<sup>68</sup> Proudhon “What is Property?” 282-283.

another. This is quite a different contradiction from the second stage contradiction.

This contradiction is between his desire to commune with others and to conquer them, and in it the positive sociable instinct can be used to assist egoism rather than suppress it.

Man is born a social being, - that is, he seeks equality and justice in all his relations, but he loves independence and praise. The difficulty of satisfying these various desires at the same time is the primary cause of the despotism of the will, and the appropriation which results from it. On the other hand, man always needs a market for his products; unable to compare values of different kinds, he is satisfied to judge approximately, according to his passion and caprice; and he engages in dishonest commerce, which always results in wealth and poverty. Thus, the greatest evils which man suffers arise from the misuse of his social nature, of this same justice of which he is so proud, and which he applies with such deplorable ignorance. The practice of justice is a science which, when once discovered and diffused, will sooner or later put an end to social disorder, by teaching us our rights and duties.<sup>69</sup>

Despite this misuse of the social instinct, ultimately, it will be used to supplant egoism.

The social instinct progresses in two distinct stages; the latter is the recognition of other people as individuals in and of themselves independent of the self's desires, i.e., the third stage of the Moral Progression, while the former has not yet come to this realization and views all through "sympathetic attraction," something akin to Hume's loving others who resemble ourselves or help us directly. Proudhon describes the first stage, the sympathetic attraction in this way:

The sympathetic attraction, which causes us to associate, is, by reason of its blind, unruly nature, always governed by temporary impulses, without regard to higher rights, and without distinction of merit or priority. The bastard dog follows indifferently all who call it; the suckling child regards every man as its father and every woman as its nurse; every living creature, when deprived of the society of animals of its species, seeks companionship in its solitude.<sup>70</sup>

It seems to be consistent with the first stage of the Moral Progression in that it speaks of fleeting temporary impulses. The final idea that the animal seeks companionship in

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<sup>69</sup> Proudhon "What is Property?" 254.

<sup>70</sup> Proudhon "What is Property?" 230.

solitude if no other animals of the same species are present explains that what it is really searching for is some variation of itself in companionship, and if it cannot have a variation of itself, it will settle for its actual self. Moved on by social necessity these fleeting temporary urges for companionship with others like oneself gives way to true sociability: Proudhon's second stage of sociability.

The second degree of sociability is justice, which may be defined as the *recognition of the equality between another's personality and our own*. The sentiment of justice we share with the animals; we alone can form an exact idea of it; but our idea, as has been said already, does not change its nature.<sup>71</sup>

This recognition of the equality of others with oneself without bias is the third stage of the Moral Progression.

Up until the point at which the social instinct begins to dominate the individual, a king rules by the law, i.e., property, and to a lesser extent force, if the two can be distinguished. The law of property put in place at once subdues the revolt of the people by offering them a taste of equality without really giving them true equality. But, when sociability begins to take over, something occurs in the individuals of the society. Proudhon calls this the move from the selfish individual to *scientific man* – scientific in the sense that law is based on objective truth, and not the individual fancy of any one or many persons.

But having reached this height, he comprehends that political truth, or the science of politics, exists quite independently of the will of sovereigns, the opinion of majorities, and popular beliefs, - that kings, ministers, magistrates, and nations, as wills, have no connection with the science, and are worthy of no consideration. He comprehends, at the same time, that, if man is born a sociable being, the authority of his father over him ceases on the day when, his mind being formed and his education finished, he becomes the associate of his father; that his true chief and his king is the demonstrated truth; that politics is a science, not a stratagem; and that the function of the legislator is reduced, in the last analysis, to the methodical search for truth.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Proudhon "What is Property?" 231.

<sup>72</sup> Proudhon "What is Property?" 276. Expounding upon this point, Proudhon, after having mocked those who believe democracy is the ideal government which he denotes by the phrase "everyone is

This is the newest and last rejection of kingship, and it is a rejection of anyone's authority over anyone else, as was the case with the previous rejection of the king, but in this case instead of supplanting royal authority with the individual will it is supplanted by 'objective truth', in other words, the social sentiment that makes man freely relinquish his individual will for the betterment of the whole.

Proudhon describes three types of this social sentiment that exist depending on the role and abilities of the person to whom the sentiment is referring in the society. Together Proudhon refers to this as *équité*. Proudhon explains: "The social sentiment then takes on a new character, which varies with different persons. In the strong, it becomes the pleasure of generosity; among equals, frank and cordial friendship; in the weak, the pleasure of admiration and gratitude." The most important of the three types is the "pleasure of generosity" experienced by the man of superior strength. This is described as voluntary self-sacrifice for the community: i.e., the fourth stage of development in the Moral Progression.

The man who is superior in strength, skill, or courage knows that he owes all that he is to society, without which he could not exist. He knows that, in treating him precisely as it does the lowest of its members, society discharges its whole duty towards him. But he does not underrate his faculties; he is no less conscious of his power and greatness; and it is this voluntary reverence which he pays to humanity, this avowal that he is but an instrument of Nature, - who is alone worthy of glory and worship, - it is, I say, this simultaneous confession of the heart and the mind, this genuine adoration of the Great Being, that distinguishes and elevates man, and lifts him to a degree of social morality to which the beast is powerless to attain... The joys of self-sacrifice are ineffable... *Équité* does not change justice: but, always taking *équité* for the base, it superadds esteem, and thereby forms in man a third degree of sociability. *Équité* makes it at once our duty and our pleasure to aid the weak

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king", he explains "... I will say, in my turn, "Nobody is king; we are whether we will (wish it or not) or no, associated." Every question of domestic politics must be decided by departmental statistics; every question of foreign politics is an affair of international statistics. The science of government rightly belongs to one of the sections of the Academy of Sciences, whose permanent secretary is necessarily prime minister; and, since every citizen may address a memoir to the Academy, every citizen is a legislator. But, as the opinion of no one is of any value until its truth has been proven, no one can substitute his will for reason, - nobody is king." (278)

who have need of us, and to make them our equals; to pay to the strong a just tribute of gratitude and honor, without enslaving ourselves to them; to cherish our neighbors, friends, and equals, for that which we receive from them even by right of exchange. *Équité* is sociability raised to its ideal by reason and justice; its commonest manifestation is *urbanity* or *politeness*, which, among certain nations, sums up in a single word nearly all the social duties.<sup>73</sup>

As is the case particularly in Schiller, the specific act of self-sacrifice goes above and beyond the necessity for equality. In this sense Proudhon's ideal society can be likened to Schiller's conception of grace in that all are enjoying their mutual equality for the benefit of the whole.

Liberty applauds self-sacrifice, and honors it with its votes, but it can dispense with it. Justice alone suffices to maintain the social equilibrium. Self-sacrifice is an act of supererogation. Happy, however, the man who can say, 'I sacrifice myself.'<sup>74</sup>

As long as the act is performed through choice and not through force it is an example of dignity and the highest notion of *équité* and not something forced on the poor individual by the state, which itself is odious. "When self-sacrifice is forced, it becomes oppression, slavery, the exploitation of man by man."<sup>75</sup>

Proudhon's concluding words of the first part of "What is Property?" are in the style of a sermon to fill the lost members of society with hope and those who still hold on to the property as the end all of law with fear in the knowledge of their numbered days, and instills in them the necessity to relinquish their property in the spirit of *équité*. He explains that anarchy, essentially communism except that the members freely choose to participate without force, is the ultimate solution to all social and political problems.

Politics is the science of liberty. The government of man by man (under whatever name it be disguised) is oppression. Society finds its highest perfection in the union of order with anarchy. The old civilization had run its

<sup>73</sup> Proudhon "What is Property?" 240-1, 242.

<sup>74</sup> Proudhon "What is Property?" 283.

<sup>75</sup> Proudhon "What is Property?" 283f.

race; a new sun is rising, and will soon renew the face of the earth. Let the present generation perish, let the old prevaricators die in the desert! The holy earth shall not cover their bones. Young man, exasperated by the corruption of the age, and absorbed in your zeal for justice! – if your country is dear to you, and if you have the interests of humanity at heart, have the courage to espouse the cause of liberty! Cast off your old selfishness, and plunge into the rising flood of popular equality! There your regenerate soul will acquire new life and vigor; your enervated genius will recover unconquerable energy; and your heart, perhaps already withered, will be rejuvenated! Everything will wear a different look to your illuminated vision; new sentiments will engender new ideas within you; religion, morality, poetry, art, language will appear before you in nobler and fairer forms; and thenceforth, sure of your faith, and thoughtfully enthusiastic, you will hail the dawn of universal regeneration! And you, sad victims of an odious law! – you, whom a jesting world despoils and outrages! – you, whose labor has always been fruitless, and whose rest had been without hope, – take courage! Your tears are numbered! The fathers have sown in affliction, the children shall reap in rejoicings! ... O God of liberty! God of equality! ... Abridge, if possible, the time of our trial; stifle pride and avarice in equality; annihilate this love of glory which enslaves us; teach these poor children that in the bosom of liberty there are neither heroes nor great men! Inspire the powerful man, the rich man, him whose name my lips shall never pronounce in Thy presence, with a horror of his crimes; let him be the first to apply for admission to the redeemed society; let the promptness of his repentance be the ground of his forgiveness! Then, great and small, wise and foolish, rich and poor, will unite in an ineffable fraternity; and, singing in unison a new hymn, will rebuild Thy altar, O God of liberty and equality.<sup>76</sup>

There is much in this final sermon-credo that is immediately familiar to us in Wagner.

Among many notices of the old generation with their old ideas passing away in favor of a noble new generation we have Wagner's sentiment from *Art and Climate*:

But in the boundless intercourse of Future Men, the thousand individual qualities that shall have sprung from human Need, in answer to the diverse idiosyncrasies of Climate, – so soon as ever they have raised themselves to the height of the universal Human, and therefore universally Intelligible, – will mutually react on one another in fertilising interchange, and blossom forth to joint 'all-human' artworks, of whose amplitude and splendour our art-sense of to-day, with its eternal clinging to the fetters of the old and dead, can conceive no jot or tittle.<sup>77</sup>

And more pointedly with similar terms we have several letters from Wagner to Uhlig:

first from November 21/22 1849,

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<sup>76</sup> Proudhon "What is Property?" 286-288.

<sup>77</sup> PW I. 264.

There is only one thing that matters to me, and that is that they [Wagners works, particularly *Wibelungen*, *Art and Revolution*, *Artwork of the Future*] are read as widely as possible; I welcome anything that contributes to that end; it matters not a whit if they are torn to pieces, because that is something that is entirely to be expected. After all, I am not seeking to be reconciled with worthlessness, but what I do seek is the most ruthless war: and since the sort of worthlessness I have in mind is one of the conditions of public life and above all of the trade which is practiced by artists and literary figures, I can find friends only in those areas which are totally removed from the public sphere as it now predominates. It is not a question of convincing other people and winning them over; it is question purely and simply of extermination: we shall gain the strength to bring this about in the future if we learn to see ourselves as the disciples of a new religion, and consolidate our faith by means of our mutual love: let us stick to the side of youth, – and let the older generation rot in hell, they have nothing to offer us!”<sup>78</sup>

And in his May 6/7 letter:

I can only expect to make an impression on young people, because they in general are capable of receiving new impressions. The old man of today is quite powerless to escape from routine: he never sees what is new, for which he has deadened all his receptive organs, but only himself and what is old. These people must be abandoned to a death by putrefaction; but in no wise must one fight with them.<sup>79</sup>

Wagner’s thoughts on the evils of commerce and contracts are widely known and appear in nearly every prose work from this period. Whether it is his description of property and possession from *Die Wibelungen*, in which property comes into being at the end of the hereditary Ur-Kinship much in the same way it came into being at the end of the period of appointed kingship during the state of negative communism in Proudhon<sup>80</sup>, or as art attaching itself to this greatest of evils associated with the worst

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<sup>78</sup> *Selected Letters of Richard Wagner*, 181.

<sup>79</sup> *Selected Letters of Richard Wagner*, 226.

<sup>80</sup> “So-after the fall of the heroic-human Wibelungen-this hereditary ownership, then property *in general, de facto possession*, became the title for all rights existing or to be acquired; and Property gave Man that right which man had theretofore conveyed to property. It was this dreg of the vanished Nibelungen-Hoard, then, that the sobered German lords had kept them: though the Kaiser might soar to the highest peak of the Idea, what clung there to the ground below, the Duchies, Palatinates, Marks and Counties, all ranks and offices enfeoffed by the Kaiser, in the hands of his utterly un-idealistic vassals condensed to mere *possession, property*. Possession now was consequently *Right*, and upright was it kept by all Established and Approved being henceforth drawn from that one right on a more and more elaborate system.” (PW VII. 297.)

kind of backwards social development in *Art and Revolution*<sup>81</sup>; or even more subtly as an explanation of the revolutionary characteristics of a friend (Jessie Laussot) and her naturally rejecting “treaties and agreements” because of these characteristics<sup>82</sup>; it is clear that Wagner was just as strongly against property and treaties as the basis for law and a society as Proudhon.

The calling upon of the property-driven individuals to resign their property and join the state as citizens is mirrored in Wagner’s *Vaterlandsverein* speech. First he calls upon the noblemen to give up their titles so that the people can become one free folk and not divide themselves into several classes, which can be done by ridding society of money and property.

When all the classes hitherto at enmity, and parcelled off by envy, have been united in the one great class of the free Folk, embracing all that on the dear German soil had received its human breath from God, – think ye we then shall have reached our goal? No, then shall we first begin in earnest! For then must be taken firmly and deedfully in the eye *the question of the root of all the misery in our present social state...* This will be the great War of Liberation for deep-dishonoured, suffering mankind: not one drop of blood, not a single tear, nay, not one deprivation will it cost: merely one conviction shall we have to gain, and that will thrust itself upon us past withstanding: the conviction *that it must bring about the highest happiness, the perfect wellbeing of all, if as many vigorous human beings as ever the soil of Earth can nourish, combine in well-ordered unions, through exchange of the products of their various and manifold abilities, to mutually enrich and benefit each other.* We shall recognize it as the most sinful state for a human Society to be in, when the energy of individuals is pronouncedly hampered, when available forces can neither move in freedom nor thoroughly expend themselves; providing always – and this is the only reservation – the earthly soil is broad enough to yield them nurture. We shall perceive that Human Society is maintained by the *activity of its members*, and not through any fancy agency of *money*: in clear conviction shall we found the *principle* – God will give us light to find the rightful law to put it into practice; and like a hideous nightmare will this

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<sup>81</sup> Could Art be present there in very deed, where it blossomed not forth as the living utterance of a free, self-conscious community, but was taken into the service of the very powers which hindered the self-development of that community, and was thus capriciously transplanted from foreign climes? No, surely! Yet we shall see that Art, instead of enfranchising herself from eminently respectable masters, such as were the Holy Church and witty Princes, preferred to sell her soul and body to a far worse mistress – *Commerce*. (PW I. 41.)

<sup>82</sup> “But only as a rebel could Jessie have carried out her decision, not through treaties and agreements with those who could never, ever treat with her or enter into any agreement with her.” (*Selected Letters of Richard Wagner*. Julie Ritter letter, June 26/27 1850; 201.)

demoniac idea of Money vanish from us, with all its loathsome retinue of open and secret usury, paper-juggling, percentage and bankers' speculations. That will be the *full emancipation of the human race*; that will be the *fulfilment of Christ's pure teaching*; which enviously they hide from us behind parading dogmas, invented erst to bind the simple world of raw barbarians, to prepare them for a development towards whose higher consummation we now must march in lucid consciousness.<sup>83</sup>

If this didn't imitate Proudhon and his concept of anarchy enough – from the relinquishing of the rights of property (through relinquishing of titles) to the language of the revolutionary Christ against money, to the mutual benefiting deed of *équité* – Wagner's final discussion on the role the king should play in this new society by relinquishing his title and becoming first citizen of the republic makes it clear.

Should ye, however, be bound to recognize the possibility, as I perceive its more than possibility, then our Republic were indeed the right one, and merely we durst ask *the King to be the first and sterlingest Republican of all*. And who is more called to be the *truest, faithfulest* Republican, than just the *Prince*. Res Publica means: the affairs of the nation. What individual can be more destined than the Prince, to belong with all his feelings, all his thoughts and actions, *entirely to the Folk's affairs*? Once persuaded of his glorious calling, what could move him to belittle himself, to cast in his lot with one exclusive smaller section of his Folk? However warmly each of us may respond to feelings for the good of all, so pure a Republican as the Prince can he never be, for his cares are undivided: their eye is single to the One, the Whole; whilst each of us must needs divide and parcel out his cares, to meet the wants of everyday... [prince should be] the genuine free father of the Folk. We turn our eyes away from distance, we raise them in our home again, and there we see a prince whom his people love, not in the mere sense of old-traditional allegiance to his family, no! Of pure love for himself, for his ownest I. We love him because he is what he is, we love his pure virtue, his high sense of honour, his probity, his clemency. So from a full heart I cry aloud in joy: - That is the man of Providence... At the head of the Free State (the republic) the hereditary King will be exactly what he should be, in the noblest meaning of his title [Fürst]: the First of his Folk, the Freest of the Free! Would not this be alike the fairest commentary upon Christ's saying: "All whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all"? Inasmuch as he serves the freedom of all, in his person he raises the concept of Freedom itself to the loftiest, to a God-implanted consciousness.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> PW IV. 138.

<sup>84</sup> PW IV. 141-4.

One of the most interesting aspects of this explanation is that it does not call on the king to become one with the peasants. This would involve the great and the strong being taken advantage of by the weak, and so Wagner is simultaneously calling on the strong man, the king, to voluntarily give up his rule, while also volunteering to use his strong position to help the people to the best of his ability. His notion of republic is Proudhon's anarchism plain and simple.<sup>85</sup>

In summary, we can see clearly that Proudhon and the Saint-Simonian authors of the *Exposition* both followed the same four stage path as outlined in the *Zeitgeist*: 1. natural instinct ruled without reason; 2. reason is instilled but chaos reigns; 3. return to nature as we are able to look on others objectively through association [Proudhon] or sociability brought on by the moral education which is taken in through the faculty of feeling [Saint-Simonians]; 4. and finally, selflessness in favor of the community as a whole sometimes leading to self-sacrifice in the case of Proudhon following Schiller's concept of dignity. We can also observe the similarities between the concepts contained in these works and those in Wagner's prose writings.

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<sup>85</sup> Those familiar with the essay *Die Revolution* published in Röckel's *Volksblätter* will see the immediate similarities in calling upon the lower classes to no longer show fear as the moment of change is at hand while simultaneously warning the upper classes and those who use and abuse the system of property that their time is up between it and Proudhon's final prayer to the God of liberty/equality.

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## Curriculum Vitae – Solomon Guhl-Miller

## Education:

- PhD in Musicology from Rutgers University January 2012
- Master of Music in Double Bass Performance/Pedagogy from Peabody Conservatory May 2003
- Bachelor of Music from Peabody Conservatory May 2001

## Teaching Experience:

## Courses Taught in Music History and Theory at Rutgers University:

- Introduction to Music 101 (2003-2008)
- Introduction to Music History 102 (Spring 2004)
- Introduction to Music Theory 103 (Fall 2006)
- Wagner's *Ring* (undergraduate seminar, Fall 2007)
- Introduction to Music 101 Online (2009-present)

## Guest Lecturer at Rutgers University:

- Lectured on Marschner's *Der Vampyr* and Shakespeare's influence on Romanticism in the undergraduate seminar: Romantic Opera (two classes, Fall 2007)
- Lectured on philosophy and mythology in Wagner's *Ring* in the graduate seminar: Wagner's *Ring* (Spring 2008)
- Lectured on Conductus and Organum in Ars Antiqua Polyphony in the graduate seminar: History of Polyphonic Notation (Fall 2007, Fall 2010)

## Research:

- PhD dissertation: "The Path of Wagner's Wotan: German Idealism, Wagner's Prose Writings, and the Idea of Moral Progress"
- Masters Essay: "The Elephant in the Room: A Study of Appoggiatura Cadences in the Theory and Practice of Polyphony Before 1300"

## Research Interests:

- Wagner's music and writings, Aesthetics, German Idealism, Early polyphony up to 1300

## Papers Presented:

- "Three Hypothetical Phases of Notre Dame Organum Performance Practice in the Thirteenth Century" at *The Gothic Revolution: Music in Western Europe, 1100-1300* (Princeton University, November 4, 2011 – to be published in an upcoming issue of *Musica Disciplina*)