

The Fabrication of Leisure: Political Alienation and Cultural Sublimation in the German States After 1848

Arthur Schopenhauer died on September 21 1860, having experienced just a few years of the adoring fame that blossomed in the mid-1850s and kept its hold over German culture for the remainder of the century. Take Carl Ferdinand Wiesike, briefly described in David E.

Cartwright's biography of the philosopher as a "Schopenhauer fanatic" who not only bought the only portrait Schopenhauer sat for, but constructed an entire house expressly to display it.

Cartwright notes that "The wealthy landowner also built an altar. Before the portrait, he placed a table holding all of Schopenhauer's books, as if they were holy scripture" (Cartwright 540). He continues:

Wiesike's fanaticism was contagious. Admirers searched for the first edition of *The World as Will and Representation* as if it were the holy grail. Others traveled to Rudolstadt in search of the graffiti he left behind in the room in which he wrote his dissertation, treating this scribbling as if it were a "holy relic"...Lithographs were made of paintings, copies of daguerrotypes, photographs, and sketches of Schopenhauer circulated among the faithful, and it was as if his image became a fetish. The mania that surrounded the philosopher fed into his half-playful and half-serious appropriation of religious terms to refer to his philosophy and its reception. Disciples, apostles, evangelists, and arch-evangelists served the metaphysical comfort offered by a secular prophet (ibid 541).

Indeed, Schopenhauer was amused at becoming "the philosopher of the nineteenth century" so long after publishing the core of his thought, and sensed the root cause lay in something larger: he described himself as a mere "stage hand...who is busily lighting the stage's candles and is seen scurrying off stage as the curtain rises" (ibid).¹

What is going on here? Why would the first prominent Western philosopher to openly declare himself an atheist become the object of seemingly religious worship by swaths of the German public? And why did this happen over three decades after his masterpiece, *The World as*

1 Quoted after Schopenhauer, *Gespräche*, p. 306.

Will and Representation, first appeared? In brief, what was this larger “stage” that Schopenhauer had the honor of crystallizing?

In what follows I draw on the sociological theories of Karl Mannheim, Max Weber, and Emile Durkheim to portray Schopenhauer’s thought as both reflecting and aiding in the sublimation of social, political, and cultural aspirations following the mass failure of revolutionary movements in the aftermath of 1848/9. Specifically, Weber’s emphasis on “elective affinities” will help us see a deep congruity between the philosophy of *The World as Will and Representation* and the lasting dissatisfaction of prominent German intellectuals for years after 1848. Meanwhile, Mannheim’s theory of generations will help us locate this affinity as most appealing to a specific subset of revolutionary participants and observers.² I will illustrate these dynamics through two specific cases: Theodor Fontane, possibly the most important Prussian novelist of the late nineteenth century; and Richard Wagner, perhaps Germany’s most famous operatic composer and one of the fathers of modern musical composition. While Fontane’s life and writings reflect a Schopenhaurian pessimism and discontent rooted in his experiences in 1848 Berlin, Durkheim’s analysis of religion in *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* will help us see Wagner as taking a further step: reinventing opera (after obsessively rereading Schopenhauer’s works) into a spiritual-social forum for confronting and overcoming the world’s inability to ever fully satiate the desires of its inhabitants, complete with his post-1848 operatic output acquiring the status of religious rituals.

In Wagner’s case, I briefly examine the pre-revolutionary context in which Schopenhauer integrated Eastern spiritualism into his philosophical system, arguing that this integration helped

2 One could instead portray Schopenhauer as eventually occupying, in the aesthetic-intellectual space of the nineteenth century German context, the transition point between high Romanticism and literary Realism. While this would help explain why one can “hear” so much of Schopenhauer in Fontane, my ambition in this paper is to ground their affinity in a specifically sociological dynamic, with 1848 at its core.

Schopenhauer withdraw from *Vormärz* political reality through an individualist form of spiritual askesis. Wagner's trajectory from frustrated artist to political revolutionary to *artistic* revolutionary was made possible, in part, by his sublimation of stunted political will into the higher aesthetic plane of *Gesamtkunstwerk*, i.e. his mature creative philosophy—a sublimation Wagner justified through repeated appeal to the example of Schopenhauer. In closing, I suggest a contextualist approach to understanding the relation between religion and political thought, rooted in the historical dynamics of cultural sublimation from which political and cultural actors are operating.

Weber believed that ideas and cultural forms were directly responsible for transformations in society, and were not simply superstructural (4), and showed how the “*religious* features” of Protestant denominations overlap with the mindset of capitalism (Weber 8-11), rather than portraying Protestantism's dominance as blind historical chance. This “illustrat[es] the manner in which ‘ideas’ become effective in history” (35) by establishing “whether and in what points particular *elective affinities* between *certain* forms of religious belief and the ethic of the calling can be identified” (36).

We can identify such an intellectual affinity existing between Fontane's literary and personal reflections and Schopenhauer's philosophy such as cannot be explained by any facile alignment in their economic base. In fact, the two men would have disagreed enormously on the roles of the state, women, and the academy in modern society.³ What links them together is a piercing consciousness of the unbridgeable gulf between desire and satisfaction, between the world as it is and as we would like it to be. In Schopenhauer's case this had hardened into an

3 For example, H.H. Reuter has speculated that Fontane's novel *Cécile* was a reaction against Schopenhauer's views on women and marriage (Robinson 98). Moreover, Schopenhauer was a creature of the German philosophical academy system, before renouncing institutional philosophy for the remainder of his life; Fontane remained insecure about his lack of formal education well into old age.

ontology of mankind across space and time; in Fontane's, it was reflected through lifelong personal torment eventually indexed within a poetic exploration of the social tensions of Bismarck's Germany.

Consider Fontane's Dubslave von Stechlin, from his late-period novel *Der Stechlin*, who at the end of his life concludes "The self is nothing—one has to let this idea sink in completely. An eternal law is being fulfilled, nothing more. And this fulfillment, even if it's called death, shouldn't alarm us. Accepting this law calmly, that's what makes a human being moral and ennoble him."⁴ The resemblance of this statement with the final section of Schopenhauer's *The World as Will and Representation* is uncanny:

Only nothing remains before us. But our nature, which resists this melting away into nothing, is really only the will to life which we ourselves are...But if we turn our eyes away from our own petty concerns and limitations and look instead at those who have overcome the world...then...we are shown the peace that is higher than all reason, we are shown that completely calm sea of the mind, that profound tranquility, imperturbable confidence and cheerfulness...leaving only empty nothing before us. (Schopenhauer 438-9)

However late Fontane's mature fictional works appeared in the course of his life, there is no doubt the revolutionary uprisings of 1848/9 crystallized the theme of world renunciation seen above. Fontane himself participated in the March revolution of 1848 in Berlin, and here I will concentrate on "The Eighteenth of March," an autobiographical reflection on the events in Berlin as Fontane experienced them. Marked by a savage irony and willful self-distancing from the events at hand, literary scholars agree that Fontane deliberately obfuscated his actual role in the events to protect his reputation and cover his true sympathies. What is remarkable is that the resulting tone of voice is eerily evocative of Schopenhauer's distinctly un-ironic and unabashedly pessimistic worldview.

4 Quoted after Görner (12).

Fontane opens the passage by noting the irony that from his position as pharmacist he “had far greater difficulties” with coworkers unable to empathize with his liberal journalism than with the socially varied “clientele...of modest tradesfolk, simple artisans, and proletarians” (305).

Yet when

it became clear...that in Berlin too something was brewing, even my employer began to treat me with a certain distinction...This awe serves as the best possible brake on those who wish one ill. I pity anyone who believes he can make his way in the world solely on the strength of ‘love,’ especially in these parts. (306)

Beneath the humor in this passage lies an extremely dark view of human nature, particularly the irreconcilability of compassion with worldly behavior. Schopenhauer memorably expressed the same sentiment in universal terms in his greatest work, writing that “justice comes from an ability to see through the *principium individuationis*...that manifests itself as pure, i.e. unselfish love of others” (401). Such “unselfish love” is truly *otherworldly*, since “cognition of other people’s suffering” entails overcoming the Kantian, ego-ridden, representational faculties of cognition with which we understand the world: “we found suffering to be essential and inseparable from life as a whole, and that every wish stems from a need, a lack, a suffering” (402). This is why those who practice universal love (e.g. Christ) are inevitably martyred: their beliefs do not suit the world.

Fontane also reflects on the inadequacies of Friedrich Wilhelm IV as a ruler, chastising him as “a professor...who concluded that the old conclusion was ethically superior,” when in fact “A government’s task is not to determine what is better or best for the country, but only to do what the better or best elements of the people wish...even if they should prove misguided” (308). What distinguishes this passage from mere Romanticized politics is Fontane’s skepticism that such aspirations can actually improve the conditions of the country. He makes this latent cynicism explicit shortly after:

The sentiment that suddenly made an appearance within the bourgeois sphere—“Oh, bother! We want *our* freedom, too!”—was certainly not enough to ignite a revolution, but it strongly, even decisively supported the revolution when it finally arrived...[T]here was no striking difference between those who ended up fighting for the cause and those who remained more or less amused spectators. (309)

What kind of observation is this from someone who believes the government should always reflect the will of the people? If, however, we interpret Fontane’s notion of “will” as an expression of short-sighted or even blind desire absent of moral righteousness, often marked by greed or a sheer want to avoid the tedium of life—that is, through a specifically Schopenhaurian lens—we can make sense both of Fontane’s sentimentalism and cynicism, and cleanly dissect them from a Romantic form of politics:

[L]et us look at the violent, inexorable impulse of masses of water rushing down to the depths, the perseverance of the magnet that always returns to the North Pole, the longing with which iron flies to the magnet, the vehemence of two poles in an electric current striving to reunite (as with human desires, the striving is only intensified by obstacles)...Once we have seen all this it will not take any great stretch of the imagination to recognize...the very same thing that in us pursues its goal illuminated by cognition while here, in the weakest of its appearances, it is blind, dull, one-sided and unalterable in its striving...it must be called *will* here as well as there, a name signifying the being in itself of every thing in the world and the sole kernel of every appearance. (Schopenhauer 143)

Correspondingly, Fontane’s ideal ruler follows the will of the people not out of compassion but from obeying the brute laws of an indifferent universe.

Fontane’s own sympathies in 1848 Berlin seemed to lie with everyone and no one: he notes the “insignificant” street skirmishes were “strenuous for the troops, who had to remain in a constant state of alert,” while the rabble before the royal palace “began to make the King uneasy,” leading him to order the troops to clear the square; the troops, placed in a “moment of peril,” “gave off a few shots” as “equal numbers of harmless and not so harmless persons...dispersed into the various residential quarters” (309-10). Fontane even chastises his employer for the hypocrisy of being a “good marksman” and owning “a small hunting preserve

in the environs of Berlin” while detesting the idea of being “shot at himself.” Fontane himself describes a lonely attempt to break into a church to ring the bells and alert the city of the day’s events, but the doors are locked (“Protestant churches are always locked”), and in an especially amusing scene, he subsequently falls in with workers who loot the Königstadt Theater for old props that could double as live firearms (“now they [the guns] were appearing again, not in the glow of the stage lamps but in the full light of day, to be pressed into service against a command that had become wholly unfashionable and, like a ‘timeworn plot,’ a thorough bore”). In the midst of awkwardly loading the ancient prop with gunpowder, Fontane becomes totally disaffected with the revolutionary cause:

Up to then I had been in a state of feverish excitement which had swept me far from all reality, from any sober, rational considerations; but suddenly—and all the more so because as a former member of the Franz Grenadiers I possessed at least an inkling of the soldier’s life, of shooting and weaponry—all my activity up to now appeared to me as pitiful childishness...This carbine was rusty; whether the flintlock still functioned was dubious, and if it functioned the barrel might split, even if I had a proper shell. And instead there I was, shaking powder into it as if an entire cliff were to be blown up. Ludicrous! And equipped with such a toy, merely endangering myself and those around me, I had thought to advance against a Guards batallion! It saddened me to have to admit this, but at the same time it came as a great relief that I had finally realized the full extent of my foolishness. (313)

From that moment forward Fontane was overcome with the “wretchedness” of both himself and the erstwhile revolutionary cause. The next day, when it was announced Prussian troops were leaving the city, he reflected that

I could not rid myself of the suspicion that everything being hailed as a victory was but a something that had come about with the gracious acquiescence of the supreme authority and had simply been interpreted as a triumph of the people...The will of the people was nothing, the power of the monarch everything. (323)

Meanwhile, for Schopenhauer an absolutist state and powerful military were simply logical: it was not the job of the state to improve society, but rather to protect individuals from harming each other through unpredictable, blind clashes of will.⁵

Thus, as reflected in literary and autobiographical examples at different stages of his life, Fontane was deeply ambivalent towards the idea of changing the world's social ordering as a means of improving the lives of its inhabitants.⁶ This uncertainty obtained not just a psychic/intellectual but also institutional expression: he first translated leftist British writers in 1842, but volunteered to join the Prussian army a few years later after experiencing a life crisis;⁷ he tried to become a professional writer almost immediately after the events in Berlin, failed, and retreated to journalism instead (Demetz xi); he later landed a government job through the aid of his conservative contacts, ironically using his literary and journalistic skills to support through the press the reactionary government he had earlier fought on the streets of Berlin,⁸ even if the money allowed him to finally marry his longtime fiancée; later appointed the English affairs correspondent on the arch-conservative *Kreuzzeitung*, he switched to the more liberal *Vossische Zeitung* as a theater critic, worked as a war correspondent glorifying the German armed forces in their struggles against France and the Danes in Schleswig-Holstein, before finally establishing

5 Incidentally, there was no doubt as to Schopenhauer's sympathies: the old philosopher had amended his will on June 26 1852 to leave most of his estate to "the fund established in Berlin for the support of the Prussian soldiers who fought for the maintenance and restoration of legal order in Germany and who became invalids in the battles of riot and rebellion in the years 1848 and 1849 as well as for the survivors of those killed in battle." Quoted after Cartwright, p. 517 (itself quoted after Hugo Busch, *Das Testament Arthur Schopenhauer* (Wiesbaden: Brockhaus, 1950), p. 8, quoted in Hübscher, *Sämtliche Werke*, Vol. 1, p. 118).

6 This claim would greatly benefit from including more examples from Fontane's fiction as well as his journalist publications surrounding and immediately following the events of 1848, but regrettably such an investigation is beyond the scope of this paper.

7 As Demetz summarizes, "Even before the days of the revolution, Fontane preferred to read, to his conservative friends, newly written ballads about romantic pirates on the Seven Seas rather than to bore them with his translations of English radical verse" (xiii).

8 Demetz also notes "the final irony...that he felt compelled to tender his resignation when a more liberal government succeeded the conservatives in Berlin, because he did not want to sell himself to the new bureau chiefs in Berlin and London by telling them that he had been on their side anyway" (xiv).

himself as a novelist in the late 1870s, at which point he was in his late fifties. The mature literary style for which he became known—intensely socially conscious, tragicomic, pervasive irony and skepticism—can be seen as a function of this incredibly long path to negotiating his own position in German culture.

We can employ Karl Mannheim's theory of generations to both generalize this affinity to others beyond Fontane, while still observing its strength as greatest for a subset of those who were affected by the events of 1848/9. Mannheim wrote that the theory was most appropriate for "understanding of the structure of social and intellectual movements" in relation to "the accelerated pace of social change characteristic of our time" (Mannheim 163), and the events of those years certainly led to a "certain characteristic mode of thought and experience" specific to Fontane's generation (173).

Fontane's life is the story of a man endlessly dissatisfied with his social position, superficially illustrious in his professional appointments and writing output but in fact deeply haunted by the ideological and spiritual ambiguities at the heart of the German state's long nineteenth-century gestation. In old age, Fontane made reference to "die Gedoppeltheit meiner Natur," an expression whose dimensions were simultaneously familial, sexual, and political. Here I briefly explore Fontane's correspondence with the prominent German writer and translator Wilhelm Wolfsohn as exemplifying this "Gedoppeltheit" at the heart of Fontane's literary persona. Wolfsohn, like Fontane, was a leftist Romantic as a young man, and they became friends while members of a radical literary group. Their 1848/49 correspondence demonstrates Fontane's ambivalence towards becoming a member of "good" German society: at the end of a letter dated January 10 1848, in which Fontane expressed excitement at Wolfsohn's upcoming visit, Fontane writes that he wants to explicitly state

one thing that...is likely overflowing in these lines: when I invited you...I was undoubtedly a freer man within his own four walls, [but] now I am following Börne [a prominent German-Jewish satirist who converted to Lutheranism] as a true German, a servant and claim no inch of the earth as *mine*.⁹

Indeed, ensuing letters are marked by the same undercurrent of anxiety over Fontane selling himself out for the purpose of his career and wife: he thanks Wolfsohn profusely for his “effort to smuggle [him] in to the German public” through literary contacts,¹⁰ and in a letter dated November 24 1849 playfully discusses a love letter (evidently meant for his wife) that he had sent to Wolfsohn for feedback: “I recall that the earlier closing line ‘The pain of this existence’ displeased you or appeared to have two meanings. What do you think of the improvement ‘The pain of *all* existence.’ Is this an improvement?!”¹¹

Such examples of Schopenhaurian angst help us see that 1848/9 was, for Fontane, about more than political dissatisfaction: he was under intense financial, professional, intellectual, and matrimonial pressure to conform to the norms of a society itself undergoing rapid change, such that private cynicism and withering self-deprecation were the only means of maintaining one’s sanity. This specific confluence of psychic-emotional forces, and the aesthetic program that both men produced in response, would not have hit the idealistic university students on the barricades in Dresden and Berlin, nor those old enough to have avoided being shaped by the writings of the Young Germans and thereby rendered immune to intense disappointment in the aftermath of 1848/9. It moreover comprises a specific “generational unit,” to use Mannheim’s term, within those of the same age group as Fontane such as Marx (a year older) or Engels (a year younger)

9 “Eh ich schließe, nur noch das eine, was übrigens wohl nach Ton und Haltung dieser Zeilen überflüssig ist: als ich Dich einlud, mich zu bekneipen, war ich unzweifelhaft ein freier Mensch in seinen eignen vier Pfählen, jetzt bin ich nach Börne ein echter Deutscher, ein - Bedienter und nenne keinen Zollbreit Erde *mein*.”Fontane an Wolfsohn, 10. 1. 1848, in Schultze, p. 78.

10 “Habe Dank wegen Deiner Bemühung, mich ins deutsche Publikum einzuschmuggeln.” Ibid., p. 79.

11 “Ich entsinne mich, daß Dir früher die Schlußzeile ‘Der Schmerz um dieses Leben’ mißfiel oder doch zweideutig erschien. Was meinst Du zu der Verbesserung ‘Der Schmerz um alles Leben’. Ist es eine Verbesserung?”Brief von 24. Nov. 49, *ibid.*, pp. 88-9.

who did not resort to cynicism or empty idealism after those years' events. We might then see Schopenhauer as a generational "forerunner" who first articulated a "nucleus of attitudes particular to a new generation" (Mannheim 188) that reached its intellectual maturity thirty years after the core of his thought was published.

Schopenhauer's Appropriation of Buddhism

Schopenhauer's masterwork, *The World as Will and Representation* (hereafter *WWR*), was in fact not the product of influence from Buddhism, as he made explicit:

For up to 1818, when my work appeared, there were to be found in Europe only a very few accounts of Buddhism, and those extremely incomplete and inadequate, confined almost entirely to a few essays in the earlier volumes of the *Asiatic Researches*, and principally concerned with the Buddhism of the Burmese [e.g., Buchanon 1801]. (Schopenhauer [1844/1859] 1958: 169)

Indeed, Ozeray's *Recherches Sur Buddou Ou Bouddou*, one of the earliest Orientalist sources of Buddhism scholarship, was published in 1817, just one year prior. Schopenhauer did, in fact, possess a superficial acquaintance with and knowledge of Buddhism while producing *WWR*,¹² but this acquaintance expanded over time, as is clear from the substantially magnified references to it in later editions of *WWR*. Consider his description of the *principium individuationis*, i.e. the Kantian, ego-ridden self defined by its representational faculties of cognition with which one understands the world. Schopenhauer writes that "justice comes from an ability to see through the *principium individuationis*...that manifests itself as pure, i.e. unselfish love of others" (401), entailing a transcendence of individual cognition through "cognition of other people's suffering." In the later 1859 edition, Schopenhauer explicitly equates this principle with the veil of *maya*, crediting the insight to the ancient Brahmins and Buddhists rather than to his own reinvention of

¹² Schopenhauer cites his sources in the first edition of his work: Duperron's *Oupnek'hat*, Polier's *Mythologie des Indous*, Klaproth's translation of the *Bhadavad-gita*, "On the Fo-Religion," from the first volume of the *Asiatic Magazine*, and Sir William Jones' "Moha-Mudgava," and "Institutes of Hindu Law, or the Ordinances of Manu," from the second volume of the *Asiatic Magazine*. Last, he mentions *Asiatick Researches*.

Kantian epistemology (e.g., [1818/1859] 1969: 8, 253, 352). He draws additional parallels between the concept of *nirvana* and his own denial of the will-to-live (e.g., [1818/1859] 1969: 356, 411); the Brahmins' and his own sense of worldly "pessimism," matched by a drive for compassion and universal love ([1818/1859] 1969: 408). He additionally credited Anquetil-Duperron's Latin translation of the Persian version of the *Upanishads* (*Oupenek'hat*) as influencing his own system of thought, calling the translation the "greatest gift to the 19th century" ([1818/1859] 1969:355).

The question of Buddhism's influence on Schopenhauer—precisely what form it took, from which sources, on which components of his thought, at which stages of his career—is ongoing in the secondary literature.¹³ Here I simply claim that Schopenhauer's own asserted affinity with Buddhism should be understood as a part of the evolving intellectual context of German and French Orientalism, particularly the qualifications and distancing on display in Idealist philosophies of history such as Hegel's, where Buddhism is treated as a worldview of destruction (*Vernichtung*):

[One] must continually take great care to want nothing, to desire nothing, to do nothing; he must be without passion, without inclination, without activity...Saintliness consists in man uniting himself with God, with nothingness, with the absolute in this destruction, in this silence. The supreme end, happiness, consists in the cessation of all movement of the body and soul...Man must make himself nothing. In his being, he must act in a negative way, defend himself not against the outside but against himself.¹⁴

Schopenhauer, in fact, agreed with this broad characterization of "Indian" philosophy, viewing it primarily as a religion of "nothingness" that matched his own epistemology and ethics as originally expressed in 1818 and elaborated in his later writings. Where he disagreed was in embracing this interpretation of Buddhism as a form of spiritual *askesis*, befitting his adoption of

¹³ From a very extensive literature, I cite App 1998; Cross 2008; Berger 2004; Singh 2010.

¹⁴ Quoted after Droit 2003, p. 61.

Orientalism as a form of private religion that reflected his personal alienation from the political (and worldly) investments of his academic and philosophical rivals. As noted by Cartwright, Schopenhauer only began to openly identify as a Buddhist late in his life, alongside a network of allies and associates including Frédéric Morin, Adam von Doß, Carl Georg Bähr, and Eduard Crüger;¹⁵ his personal acquisition in 1856 of a gilded statue of the Buddha and succession of poodles with the moniker *Atman* are further evidence of the primarily *domestic* and individualist nature of his fascination with the religion, and his free use of it to create rituals and practices that meshed with his alienation from the “religion of reason” that was German Idealism.

In brief, Schopenhauer refused to cultivate any philosophical or political reconciliation between the self and external reality, as the latter is a mere reification of subjective will: blind, primitive, irrational, and libidinal. The only solution is to withdraw from the world through a process of severe self-discipline and mastery of personal appetites, whatever their form. Buddhism therefore served as a “training in detachment” (in Roger-Pal Droit’s phrase), an attempt to rein in one’s aspirations and drives to prevent them from dominating oneself. To the extent that Schopenhauer had a politics, as on display in his 1851 collection of essays *Parerga und Paralipomena*, it was exclusively individualist: it was not the job of the state to improve society or provide any avenue for political change, but rather to protect individuals from harming each other through unpredictable clashes of will.¹⁶ The personal solace Schopenhauer found in music, discussed briefly in *WWR*, was not a concession to subjective will but another means of preventing its reifications, as music was a pure expression of will devoid of form. Hence

¹⁵ See Cartwright, *Schopenhauer: A Biography*, pp. 273-4, describing Schopenhauer’s use of the phrase “We Buddhists” to describe his relations to peers.

¹⁶ Incidentally, there was no doubt as to Schopenhauer’s reactionary sympathies: the old philosopher had amended his will on June 26 1852 to leave most of his estate to “the fund established in Berlin for the support of the Prussian soldiers who fought for the maintenance and restoration of legal order in Germany and who became invalids in the battles of riot and rebellion in the years 1848 and 1849 as well as for the survivors of those killed in battle.” See Hübscher, *Sämtliche Werke*, Vol. I, p. 118.

Schopenhauer's own deployment of Buddhist concepts, in particular his fascination with *maya*, was of a piece with his own novel appropriation of Kantian epistemology and cultural taste as a (peripheral) member of 19th century German society.

The affinity with Schopenhauer is seen even more strongly in the writings and compositions of Wagner; it is impossible to imagine Wagner's post-1848 output without the philosopher's influence. As Bryan Magee puts it,

What Schopenhauer did for Wagner was to give to someone who was already depressed and disoriented by the loss of an almost religious faith in political solutions...a view that saw all public affairs, including politics, as trivial, and positively advocated...a turning way from the world and its values; a view that held up sexual love and the arts, above all the art of music, as the most valuable of human activities—and did all this in a philosophical masterpiece possessed of aesthetic, intellectual and personal characteristics that were strikingly similar to Wagner's (Magee 128).¹⁷

The root affinity was a product of Wagner's failed revolutionary actions in 1849. While in Dresden Wagner became a political and personal ally of Mikhail Bakunin, infamous around Europe for his trouble-making actions and anarchistic writings, while aesthetics were closely modeled after the Young Germans and Left Hegelians, specifically Feuerbach. When the insurrection failed, Wagner fled to Zurich to escape arrest, the start of over a decade of political exile. He escaped with the financial aid of the pianist Franz Liszt, a non-exiled political sympathizer who remained in good standing with German court societies—a set of connections that Wagner was always eager to exploit for financial and social gain. Indeed, Liszt would remain an important correspondent and confidant for Wagner during his extended period abroad. The correspondence with Liszt soon after Wagner's exile—angry at the world, disillusioned, full

¹⁷ See also Thomas Mann's summation: "His acquaintance with the philosophy of Arthur Schopenhauer was the great event in Wagner's life. No earlier intellectual contact, such as that with Feuerbach, approaches it in personal and historical significance."

of aimless, destructive anarchism—are a kind of visual evocation of Schopenhauer’s metaphysics:

1850: “I no longer believe in any other revolution than that which begins with the burning down of Paris.”

Late 1854, immediately after first reading Schopenhauer: “Let us treat the world only with contempt; for it deserves no better; but let no hope be placed in it, that our hearts be not deluded! It is evil, evil, *fundamentally evil*...it belongs to *Alberich*: no one else!! Away with it!” (Magee 40)

It is no coincidence that *Der Ring* ends with a conflagration engulfing the entire world.

Wagner recorded in his autobiography that it was while finishing the composition of *Das Rheingold* and beginning work on *Die Walküre*, in late September 1854, that he first read *WWR*. He notes here that Georg Herwegh, like Wagner a revolutionary artist and refugee, introduced him to Schopenhauer, confirming that philosopher’s role in facilitating a sublimation of stunted political activism to the realm of aesthetics. He also writes inclusively, including “everyone roused to great passion” and “everyone in [this] frame of mind” as sharing this fascination with Schopenhauer, indicating a Mannheimian sublimation of will *across generations* rather than piecemeal enjoyment by a select few.

Wagner described his initial reactions to Schopenhauer in the following passage from a letter to Liszt:

Apart from slowly progressing with my music, I have of late occupied myself exclusively with a man who has come like a gift from heaven, although only a literary one, into my solitude. This is Arthur Schopenhauer, the greatest philosopher since Kant, whose thoughts, as he himself expresses it, he has thought out to the end. The German professors ignored him very prudently for forty years...All the Hegels, etc., are charlatans by the side of him. His chief idea, the final negation of the desire of life, is terribly serious, but it shows the only salvation possible. To me of course that thought was not new, and it can indeed be conceived by no one in whom it did not pre-exist, but this philosopher was the first to place it clearly before me. If I think of the storm of my heart, the terrible tenacity with which, against my desire, it used to cling to the hope of life, and if even now I feel this hurricane within me, I have at least found a quietus which in wakeful

nights help me to sleep. This is the genuine, ardent longing for death, for absolute unconsciousness, total non-existence; freedom from all dreams is our only final salvation. In this I have discovered a curious coincidence with your thoughts; and although you express them differently, being religious, I know that you mean exactly the same thing. How profound you are! In your article about the *Dutchman* you have struck me with the force of lightning. While I read Schopenhauer I was with you, only you did not know it. (September 29 1854)¹⁸

Liszt, for his part, shared in the infatuation with Schopenhauer, finding him useful for expressing his frustrations with life at court:

Your letter, received today, has increased my grief at not being able to be with you...Alas! we are miserable creatures, and the few who have penetrated the deepest secrets of life are the most miserable of all. That snarling old cur, Schopenhauer, is quite right in saying that we are ridiculous in addressing each other as *Monsieur* or citizen. *Compagnon de misère et de souffrance*, or fellow-sufferers, and worse we are, *tutti quanti*, and nothing we can do can make any essential change in this. (August 22 1859)¹⁹

Schopenhauer therefore served as a shared intellectual touchstone and source of solidarity for Wagner and Liszt across the political and geographic divide between Zürich and Weimar. For two men who went years without seeing each other, yet maintained a potent series of compositional collaborations and needed to stay in touch to ensure Liszt's continual supply of funds to Wagner (who was perpetually low on cash), Schopenhauer's writings were one of the few forms of experience both could readily share.

More critically, Schopenhauer's *WWR* played a direct part in Wagner's shifting philosophy of aesthetics, giving a deeper and more systematic intellectual form to the reinvention already underway since his transplant to Zürich. Indeed, Wagner credits Schopenhauer directly with "giving [him] the idea" for *Tristan and Isolde*, likely also his most singular creation. The opera is known for its utter lack of tonal harmony, and the infamous "Tristan chord" that opens the overture is often marked as the birth of modern music; it is Wagner's ultimate expression of how all human desires—political, sexual, familial—can never be fully met by the world, yet

¹⁸ *Correspondence Vol. II*, p. 53-4.

¹⁹ *Correspondence Vol. II*, p. 305.

obtain their fullest expression in music—an idea itself borrowed from *The World as Will and Representation*. Consider the opera’s famous division of action between day and night; the former separates Tristan and Isolde from each other, the latter unites them. This division does not just metaphorically express Schopenhauer’s distinction between the phenomenal and noumenal realms, but is itself qua metaphor borrowed from the philosopher.²⁰ In addition, the so-called “Schopenhauer draft” of *Der Ring des Nibelungen* features an entirely different ending to the opera and altered libretto reflecting Schopenhauer’s views on sexual relations and worldly pessimism, philologically dated to have been written soon after Wagner’s intensive period of philosophical study.

Schopenhauer, to be sure, was not solely responsible for Wagner’s self-reinvention. Wagner’s reading of *The World as Will and Representation* was so impactful in large part because it interrupted and exacerbated an intellectual transformation that was already underway, as Wagner attempted to reconcile the aesthetic and political drives that had forced him into exile in the first place. But if the initial steps towards Wagner’s aesthetic sublimation of dissatisfaction with the world were facilitated by correspondence with other disenchanted leftists within his generational unit, and intellectually through his merger of Schopenhaurian and Left Hegelian aesthetics, what of the “Wagner cult” that emerged with the construction of the Bayreuth Festspielhaus and his massive popularity by the end of the nineteenth century? I argue that Wagner’s sublimation of political drives into the sphere of art took on the form of religious

20 “The form of the present is essential to the objectivation of the will; as an unextended point, the present cuts time (which extends infinitely in both directions) and is fixed immovably in place, like an everlasting noon without the cool of evening, just as the real sun burns incessantly while only seeming to sink into the bosom of the night. That is why fearing death as an annihilation is like thinking that the evening sun could complain: ‘Woe is me! I am sinking into eternal night.’...The earth turns from day into night; the individual dies: but the sun itself burns its eternal noontime without pause. For the will to life, life is a certainty: the form of life is the endless present; it does not matter how individuals, appearances of the Idea, come into existence in time and pass away like fleeting dreams” (Schopenhauer 307).

rituals through the theoretical categories introduced by Durkheim in *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, especially his distinction between the sacred and the profane, whose mere difference “suffices to characterize this classification of things and to distinguish it from any other”; indeed, these “two worlds are not only conceived as separate, but as hostile and jealous rivals” (Durkheim 39). As we shall see, Wagner drew on his reading of Schopenhauer to view the *entire phenomenal world* as profane, but merged this with his Feuerbachian aesthetics to transform opera into a higher, “sacred” space for his audience’s benefit. Moreover, a Durkheimian “collective effervescence” that “generates a kind of electricity that quickly transports [participants] to an extraordinary degree of exaltation” (162-3) was clearly experienced by attendees at Wagner’s operas, binding them together in the experience of his post-1848 output. I concentrate on two essays by Wagner, “Art and Revolution”, written in the immediate aftermath of his move to Zurich, and the later “The Opera House at Bayreuth”, as my main sources of data.

“I believed in the Revolution,” writes Wagner in “Art and Revolution,”

and in its unrestrainable necessity...only, I also felt that I was called to point out to it the way of rescue. Far though it was from my intent to define the New, which should grow from the ruins of a sham-filled world, as a fresh *political* ordering: I felt the rather animated to draw the outlines of the *Art-work* which should rise from the ruins of a sham-bred *Art* (1-2).

Wagner goes on to portray the Greeks as exemplifying the aesthetic ideal through artistic synthesis (32-3), and additionally ties this development to the social order in which it was produced, a vision of artistic synthesis notably distinct from Schopenhauer, for whom “Art repeats the eternal Ideas grasped through pure contemplation” and “takes the form of either the visual arts, poetry or music; art originates in the cognition of the Ideas alone” (Schopenhauer 207-8). The eventual merger of Wagner’s bitterly unfulfilled Feuerbachian vision for a perfect synthesis of all forms reflecting the collective species being of the society in question, with

Schopenhauer's view that art, whatever its form, is defined by a loosening of the individual, logical consciousness with which we perceive reality, will comprise the mature social function of Wagnerian opera: the *replacement* of the world, and all its imperfections, with a perfectly synthetic *social space* by momentarily bypassing rational cognition.

The seeds of this reinvention, whereby Schopenhauer's epistemology would later furnish Wagner with the conceptual tools for reinventing what opera could be, are present in his correspondence with Liszt from earlier in 1854, where Wagner describes his composition of *Der Ring* as an attempt to redeem the world on a higher aesthetic plane:

Dearest Franz, none of my latter years has passed without bringing me at least once to the verge of the resolution to put an end to my life. Everything seems so waste, so lost! Dearest friend, art with me, after all, is a pure *stop-gap*, nothing else, a stop-gap in the literal sense of the word. I have to stop the gap by its means in order to live at all. It is therefore with genuine despair that I always resume art; if I am to do this, if I am to dive into the waves of artistic fancy in order to find contentment in a world of imagination, my fancy should at least be buoyed up, my imagination supported. I cannot live like a dog; I cannot sleep on straw and drink bad whisky. I must be coaxed in one way or another if my mind is to accomplish the terribly difficult task of creating a non-existing world. (January 15th 1854)²¹

This view of art as a "stop-gap" from reality bears a complex relationship with Schopenhauer's philosophy of aesthetics, as we have seen.

Meanwhile, in "Art and Revolution" Wagner portrays the pleasurable sublimity of Art as suppressed and prevented in its development by the rise of monotheistic religion (37), a sentiment shared by Schopenhauer, who wrote that "religious doctrine transcends the consideration of things according to the principle of sufficient reason, and recognizes the Idea of the human being" through its attempt to control the desires of believers, especially through sexual abstinence (355-7) and "becoming a *tranquilizer* of all willing" (259). But where Schopenhauer sees religion and art as serving different functions (art makes one individually

²¹ *Correspondence, Vol. II, p. 4.*

reflect on the will underlying all phenomena, religion socially regulates will to provide succor to adherents), Wagner saw them as *competitors* and historical substitutes for each other.

In short, Wagner's post-1848 aesthetics retained the radicalism of his socialist period, but by reinventing that radicalism as a search for *absolute truth* rather than sociocultural development. Art does not "progress" over time: it is always more or less true in accordance with how completely it sublimates the ontology of its audience to an incorruptible, aesthetic realm, a perspective analogous to Schopenhauer's view of the sublime.²² The potential of Wagnerian aesthetics to become a sacred and otherworldly form of politics is hinted at by Wagner's outlining of his notion of *Gesamtkunstwerk*, in which "all scattering of the [social] forces concentrated on *one* point," serving as "the abstract and epitome of all that was expressible in the Grecian nature" (52); furthermore, "Only the great *Revolution of Mankind*, whose beginnings erstwhile shattered Grecian Tragedy, can win for us this Art-work" (53). Such a revolutionary aesthetics bears a highly provocative relationship with Schopenhauer's characterization of music:

[I]f someone surrenders himself completely to the impression made by a symphony, it is as if he sees all the possible events of life and the world passing before him: yet if he pauses and reflects on this, he cannot specify any point of similarity between the play of notes and the things he has in mind. For music is, as we have said, different from all other arts in that it is not a copy of appearance...but is instead a direct copy of the will itself, and thus presents what is metaphysical in all that is physical in the world, the thing in itself for all appearance. We could therefore just as well call the world embodied music as embodied will... (290)

For Wagner, the ultimate forum for *Gesamtkunstwerk*—the form most approaching the ideal of art and hence meant to complete the dignifying revolution of mankind—is the theater, as it "is the widest-reaching of Art's institutes, and the richest in its influence" (62). He subsequently

22 "Then the untroubled spectator will experience the twofold character of his consciousness most clearly: he feels himself to be both an individual, a frail appearance of the will that can be crushed by the slightest blow of those forces, helpless against the might of nature, dependent, abandoned to chance, a vanishing nothing in the face of enormous powers; and yet at the same time the eternal, tranquil subject of cognition that, as the condition of all objects, carries and supports just this entire world, with the terrible struggles of nature merely as its representation, while the subject itself calmly apprehends the Ideas, free from and foreign to all need and all willing. This is the full impression of the sublime" (Schopenhauer 229).

closes with a clearly religious appeal for theater as “the altar of the future” reflecting the spirits of Jesus and Apollo (64-5).

Schopenhauer himself passively encouraged the ritualization of his philosophy,²³ but in Wagner the drive for opera to become a replacement of religion and politics—and anything else that obfuscated man’s quest shed egoistic desire—was all-consuming, from his early motivating belief that a complete staged performance of *Der Ring* would be immediately followed by mass social revolution to *Parsifal*’s final realization of his ideal of “*ein Bühnenweihfestspiel*” (“A Festival Play for the Consecration of the Stage”). The intense religious effects of *Parsifal* are infamous, spurred by Wagner’s insistence that it be staged *only* at Bayreuth (a moratorium successfully enforced for decades after his death), a classic example of Durkheimian prohibitions defining the sacred. *Parsifal* is also associated with a tradition at Bayreuth to reserve all applause until after the final act—a spontaneous audience reaction that arose from the somber religious airs surrounding the work’s premiere. Consider also the post-mortem testimonials of audience members after its early productions at the Bayreuth Festspielhaus:

Felix Weingartner, conductor: “When the curtain had been rung down on the final scene and we were walking down the hill, I seemed to hear the words of Goethe ‘and you can say you were present.’ The ‘Parsifal’ performances of 1882 were artistic events of supreme interest and it is my pride and joy that I participated in them.” (Hartford 131)

Max Reger, composer: “When I first heard *Parsifal* at Bayreuth I was fifteen. I cried for two weeks and then became a musician.”

Eduard Hanslick, critic, commenting on the religious air surrounding the *Parsifal* premiere: “The question of whether *Parsifal* should really be withheld from all theatres and limited to...

Bayreuth was naturally on all tongues... I must state here that the church scenes in *Parsifal* did not make the offensive impression on me that others and I had been led to expect from reading the libretto. They are religious situations—but for all their earnest dignity they are not in the style of the church, but completely in the style of the opera. *Parsifal* is an opera, call it a ‘stage festival’ or ‘consecrational stage festival’ if you will.” (Hartford 127-8)

23 He writes that “it is evident that the only way to completely fathom the thought presented here is to *read the book twice*, and in fact with considerable patience the first time, the sort of patience that only comes from a voluntary conviction that the beginning presupposes the end almost as much as the end presupposes the beginning” (Schopenhauer 6).

Wagner's later "The Opera House at Bayreuth," written to justify the construction of the Bayreuth Festspielhaus where *Der Ring* would have its first complete performance, comprises a more mature synthesis of Schopenhaurian metaphysics with aesthetic materialism as an advertisement for *Gesamtkunstwerk*. The architectural construction of the Festspielhaus made clear its function as a sacred space: it was designed to conceal the orchestra from view to free "the vision from the observation of any intervening sense of reality," while a "mystic gulf" between the proscenium and the first row of seats served to "divide the real from the ideal" and "induces in him [the spectator] that spiritualized state of clairvoyance wherein the scenic representation becomes the perfect image of real life." Wagner also tied the construction of a new "German stage" to the "development of the true, essential German spirit" and "public mind" on par with their political expression "in the newly-restored German empire" (260-1), and notes that the roots of what would later become his "class" of followers was based on the original network of longtime supporters during his exile who shared his dream of art as a substitute for political action. Public officials should take art, rather than politics, as the primary shaper of national character: "it may...be positively asserted that an ennobling of that taste, and of the morals necessarily influenced by it, can be most energetically directed and supported by the stage" (263-4). This description bears an unmistakable similarity with Durkheim's view of moral communities as the modern inheritors of traditional religious practices.

Wagner discusses the new "class" of Germans to whom he could "render [his] purpose attainable" as both created through his music and recognized by him as the logical counterpart to his creations (267)—a clear invocation of Left Hegelian consciousness formation, though reinvented to lay the foundation for a nationalist-conservative group of followers. Wagner's eventual popularity was clearly a function of more than the re-channeling of stunted left-wing

radicalism, even as Wagner drew on that autobiographical background to awaken an aesthetic-revolutionary sentiment in his more authoritarian supporters. This is additionally apparent from Wagner's intense friendship and association with King Ludwig II of Bavaria (who became enamored with Wagner during his adolescence) from the 1870s onward during the composition of *Tristan and Isolde* and construction of the Bayreuth Festspielhaus, bankrolled by Ludwig II himself after Wagner's attempts to gain the support of Bismarck failed. Stefan Herheim provides a strong sociological account of the significance of Wagner's association with Ludwig II, noting the opposition between Wagner's "political idea of a 'republican king'" and Bismarckian *Realpolitik*, as well as Ludwig II's role as "supporter in his somewhat incredible plan to save people from politics through artistic renewal...[H]is life's work really reflects the 19th century as the most desperately revolutionary era in our cultural history."²⁴ Wagner additionally describes the sublimating significance of the Festspielhaus in a speech to his "honored patrons" ("To you alone, lovers of my special art...could I look for encouragement in carrying out my project; only upon you could I call for assistance in my work.") that calls to mind a prophet speaking to his disciples:

You believe in my vocation to found for Germans a theatre of their own, and you place in my hands the means of erecting this theatre in actual, material form before your eyes...[I]n the proportions and arrangements of the hall itself and the auditorium, you will find a thought expressed which will establish between yourselves and the play you came to see, a new relation very different from that which previously existed. Should this effect be simply and completely produced, then the mysterious entrance of the music will prepare you for the unveiling and plain exposition of scenic paintings, which, appearing to come out of an ideal world of dreams, will acquaint you with the full reality of the ingenious deceptions whereof the art of painting is capable. (271-2)

The inauguration of Bayreuth in 1876 was attended by a motley assortment: the half-mad "fairy-tale" King Ludwig II himself, but also Franz Liszt (the radical-leftist pianist who had

24 See <http://www.wagneropera.net/Interviews/Stefan-Herheim-Parsifal-Interview.htm>

secured Wagner's escape from Dresden) as well as Friedrich Nietzsche, prior to his high-profile defection from and alienation with the future "Wagner cult". There is no doubt that before Wagner and Bayreuth became little more than cultural ornaments heralding the rise of bombastic German nationalism (and later fascism), they stood as one of the most conspicuous symbols for the profound political and spiritual ambivalence at the heart of modern Germany, as is evident from the ideologically complex (yet sociologically traceable) energies assembled that year at the Festival. As Richard Strauss wrote of *Tristan and Isolde*, "Here the yearning of the entire 19th century is gathered in one focal point."²⁵ Tellingly, the very American writer Mark Twain was immune to the intense political and spiritual sublimation offered at Bayreuth, summarizing the behavior and layout of the festival in a manner evocative of Durkheim:

These devotees would worship in an atmosphere of devotion. It is only here that they can find it without fleck or blemish or any worldly pollution. In this remote village there are no sights to see, there is no newspaper to intrude the worries of the distant world, there is nothing going on, it is always Sunday. The pilgrim wends to his temple out of town, sits out his moving service, returns to his bed with his heart and soul and his body exhausted by long hours of tremendous emotion, and he is in no fit condition to do anything but to lie torpid and slowly gather back life and strength for the next service. This opera of "Tristan and Isolde" last night broke the hearts of all witnesses who were of the faith, and I know of some who have heard of many who could not sleep after it, but cried the night away. I feel strongly out of place here. Sometimes I feel like the sane person in a community of the mad; sometimes I feel like the one blind man where all others see; the one groping savage in the college of the learned, and always, during service, I feel like a heretic in heaven.²⁶

The Bayreuth Festspielhaus, as the material realization of *Gesamtkunstwerk*, represented both the climax of Wagner's efforts to transform opera into a secular religion and a cultural touchstone for Germans whose life trajectories had been shaken by the tumult of 1848-9. As such, it comprised an institutionalized and *politicized* expression of the spontaneous popularity of

25 See <http://www.wagneroperas.com/indexwagnerbio3.html>

26 From "Mark Twain at Bayreuth," printed online: <http://www.twainquotes.com/Travel1891/Dec1891.html>. My analysis would be strengthened by additional examples from the pen of Friedrich Nietzsche, but it is regrettably beyond the scope of this paper to undertake this.

Schopenhauer's thought in the mid-1850s, with Wagner himself embodying the transition from political alienation to cultural nationalism through his appropriation of Schopenhauer as a tool for artistic self-reinvention. Wagner and Fontane stand together as generational phenomena, their lasting dissatisfaction with the world (and perennial efforts to renounce its evils through the production of art) shared by all for whom the path to modernity through ideology was especially traumatic. It is thus no surprise that the German philosopher who most completely and beautifully captured this discontent, Arthur Schopenhauer, obtained his greatest popularity soon after the rockiest years in the history of nineteenth-century Prussia.

Conclusion

In a letter to Liszt on June 19th 1849, shortly after being forced from Dresden and desperate for money, Wagner expresses his pain and embarrassment at asking for financial support from the very courts he had chastised as an erstwhile revolutionary:

My position is all the more painful because I can take no steps to free myself from the suspicion of such sentiments without incurring the worse suspicion of meanness and cowardice. You personally I may assure that the feeling manifested by my undisguised sympathy with the Dresden rising was very far from the ridiculously fanatical notion that every prince is an object of active hatred. If I concurred in this strange fanaticism, I should naturally have had scruples in approaching the Grand Duchess at Weimar with *perfect* openness. Before you, I trust, I need not defend myself; you know the bitter source of my discontent, which sprang from the condition of my beloved art, which I nourished with passion, and which **finally I transferred to every other field**, the connection of which with the ground of my deep dissatisfaction I had to acknowledge. From this feeling came the violent longing which finds its expression in the words, 'There must be a change; thus it cannot remain.' That now, taught by the experience of my participation in that rising, I could never again mix myself up with a political catastrophe, I need not say; every reasonable person must know it. What rejoices me, and what I may safely affirm, is **that in all my aims I have once more become entirely an artist.**²⁷ (emphasis added)

In response, Liszt reassured his friend with concrete advice: schedule upcoming opera performances, stay in touch with sympathizers, and try to get the press on your side: "In a word,

²⁷ *Correspondence Vol. I*, p. 30.

very dear and very great friend, make yourself possible in possible conditions, and success will assuredly not fail you.”²⁸

The peculiar intellectual history whereby Schopenhaurian asceticism helped redirect Wagner’s stunted political drives into a new form of opera—and through this, into the heart of modern Germany’s political unification—is based in the social mechanics of psychological sublimation, of “making oneself possible in possible conditions.” Wagner’s ability to command the Schopenhauer vogue and make the “Buddha of Frankfurt” into a workable aesthetic doctrine simply entailed creating practices and rituals that transformed his pessimistic epistemology into a language for communicating with others, whether in the form of written correspondence or librettos or the architecture of the Bayreuth Festspielhaus.

As such, sublimation may be a useful historiographical tool for explaining the complex and apparently orthogonal dynamics of religious discourse and political thought in other contexts. Whether the referents of one’s speech acts are other-worldly (as in religion) or this-worldly (as in politics), it is their practical deployment in a shared historical context and social space that determines their objective interrelation. Understanding how such terms can be transposed or reinvented between cultural realms—as seems to have happened in the case of Schopenhauer and Wagner—can therefore shed light on the broader historical intersections of religious mysticism and hard-nosed political reality.

Can these conclusions be generalized to explain cultural phenomena in more recent times? Schopenhauer has remained a peripheral member of the philosophical canon, most influential among artists (Thomas Mann and Jorge Luis Borges perhaps being the strongest twentieth-century examples). His greater significance lies simply in being the first-ever instance

²⁸ Ibid., p. 34.

of a cultural dynamic nowhere near complete to this day: the union of Western intellectual practices with Eastern spiritualism. The entire apparatus of his thought is defined by this synthesis; Wagner's own domestic retreat (*Wahnfried*, "escape from illusion") in Bayreuth was filled with Buddhist statues and iconography, and his operas were meant to induce a state of enlightenment amongst spectators. If one were to search for the twentieth century's closest equivalent to this synthesis, it seems the growing popularity of *New Age literature*—and specifically as it grew out of the so-called *Counterculture*—fits the bill. Was the process of aesthetic sublimation out of the revolutionary failure of 1848/9 paralleled by the transformation of yippies into yuppies following the unrest of 1968?

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