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A PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACH TO THE CHARACTER OF WOTAN  
IN RICHARD WAGNER'S DER RING DES NIBELUNGEN

THESIS

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## CHAPTER I

### WOTAN IN CLASSICAL NORSE MYTHOLOGY

#### Wotan's Origins

The ancient Germanic god that Richard Wagner resurrected in his operatic cycle Der Ring des Nibelungen was worshipped and feared from Greenland to Asia Minor for 1,000 years after the birth of Christ. Among his subjects were Lombards from Scania, Burgundians from Bornholm, Rugians from Rogalnd, Goths from Oestergoetland and Vaestergoetland in Sweden, Vandals, Gepids, Erules, Sciri, and Bastarnae.<sup>1</sup> Great migrations of these peoples began around 1,000 B.C. from their "old home" in Denmark and Southern Scandinavia west and southwest into the Celtic territories of Middle Europe. Another migration, eastward, began about 500 B.C. across the Baltic to the foothills of the Carpathian Mountains. These migrations established trade routes and made possible cultural assimilation between the Greeks and other Mediterranean cultures and the Northern Teutons.<sup>2</sup> In this way the gods of the

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<sup>1</sup>Brian Branston, The Gods of the North (London, 1955), p. 14.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

North acquired new and exotic traits through comparison with the gods of Egypt and Greece.

The name Wotan (O.E. Woden, O.H.G. Wuotanaz, O.L.G. Wodan) is related to the O.E. adjective "wood," as used in Chaucer's time to mean "furious," "wild," "mad."<sup>3</sup> Wotan's name in Scandinavia, Odin (Othin, Odhinn), is likewise related to the O.N. "odhr," meaning "intoxicated," "raging."<sup>4</sup> Wotan has a more ancient connection with the Aryan god of the wind, Vata (Vayu), which is related to the Sanskrit verb "va," meaning "to blow."<sup>5</sup> An early conception of him in Germany is Wode, the German storm giant, leading his "wild army" (O.H.G. Wuotis-her), the procession of the homeless dead, through the sky.<sup>6</sup>

The extent of Wotan's kingdom at the beginning of the Christian Era was roughly the fifty-second parallel from the mouth of the Rhine to the middle Elbe.<sup>7</sup> His influence was greatest during the Migration Age (300-500 A.D.) when his warlike attributes were most emphasized. About this time the Angles and Saxons took

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 108.

<sup>4</sup>Ellis Davidson, The Gods and Myths of Northern Europe (London, 1964), p. 147.

<sup>5</sup>Donald MacKenzie, Indian Myth and Legend (London, n.d.), pp. 24-25.

<sup>6</sup>Branston, op. cit., p. 108.      <sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 111.

possession of England, bringing their heathen beliefs and practices with them.<sup>8</sup> During this period Western Europe was in constant turmoil; Rome fell and the Teutonic tribes overran the West.

The original All-Father of the ancient Teutons was one corresponding to the Indo-European Sky-Father Djevs (Dyaus), related to the Greek Zeus.<sup>9</sup> His name was Tiwaz, later Tyr or Tiu. That his worship was widespread is testified to by the many place-names assigned to him and also by the name of the third day of the week, Tuesday, which is common to all Teutonic peoples.<sup>10</sup> About the year 98 A.D., the Roman historian Tacitus (Germania, Chap. 9) reported that the Germans sacrificed to both Mercury and Mars, that is, to Wotan and Tyr. We may conclude from this that Wotan was already challenging Tyr for precedence at that time.<sup>11</sup> By the year 874 A.D., when Iceland was settled by Norwegians, Wotan was supreme.<sup>12</sup> This rise of Wotan to pre-eminence over Tyr reflects a decline in the morality of the war-like ruling classes. This coincided with the Viking Age, when the fierce

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<sup>8</sup> Davidson, op. cit., p. 11.

<sup>9</sup> Champedie de la Saussaye, The Religion of the Teutons (Boston, 1902), p. 243.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 244.      <sup>11</sup> Branston, op. cit., p. 111.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 136.

Northmen again presented a threat to Western civilization. Whereas Tyr was associated with law and justice, Wotan was often represented as deceitful and treacherous, moody and unjust.<sup>13</sup> Although Wotan was renowned for his wisdom, he was not concerned in any way with justice among men, but rather with strife and war, which he was believed to stir up on earth in order to select for himself the most valiant fighters.<sup>14</sup> In the myths that have survived, Tyr takes no important part. In the Poetic Edda he is present at the assembly of gods in "Lokasenna" where reference is made<sup>15</sup> to the legend in which he loses his right hand to the Fenris Wolf.<sup>16</sup> He is also presented in dialogue with Thor in "The Lay of Hymir"<sup>17</sup> and his worship is recommended to the hero Sigurth (Wagner's "Siegfried") by Sigdrifa (Wagner's "Bruennhilde") in "The Lay of Sigdrifa."<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>Peter Munch, Norse Mythology (New York, 1942), p. 290.

<sup>14</sup>Davidson, op. cit., p. 60.

<sup>15</sup>Lee Hollander, ed., The Poetic Edda (Austin, 1962), "Lokasenna," stanzas 38, 39, p. 98.

<sup>16</sup>See Prose Edda, "Gylfaginning," Chapter 33.

<sup>17</sup>Hollander, op. cit., "The Lay of Hymir," pp. 83-89.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., "The Lay of Sigdrifa," Stanza 7, p. 235.

His name came to mean simply "god" in such compounds as "sigtyr," meaning "god of victory."<sup>19</sup>

The main literary sources of information about the gods of the North are two: the Poetic Edda, and the Prose Edda of Snorri Sturluson. Because of its greater antiquity, ante-dating the Christian conversion of Iceland (1050 A.D.) where it was written, the Poetic Edda is regarded as primary.<sup>20</sup> A third important source is Saxo Grammaticus' Danish History, of which the first nine chapters deal with the pagan beliefs of ancient Denmark. The most valuable commentator from early times is Tacitus, writing at the end of the first century A.D. He was deeply interested in the German way of life and believed that the Romans should learn from it.<sup>21</sup> He wrote as traveler, historian, moralist, but especially as an embittered foe of the Imperial tyranny. He praised the Germans as being individualistic, virtuous, freedom-loving, and jealous of their racial purity.<sup>22</sup> He also records the bravery of their women in battle, aiding the men and unflinchingly dressing their wounds and sending

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<sup>19</sup>De la Saussaye, op. cit., p. 244.

<sup>20</sup>Branston, op. cit., p. 35.      <sup>21</sup>Davidson, op. cit., p. 15.

<sup>22</sup>Jacques Barzun, Race: A Study in Superstition (New York, 1937, reprinted 1965), pp. 17-18.



them back to fight. In the North, writing of the customs of worship prevailing in Scandinavia about the year 1050 A.D. is the monk' Adam of Bremen. He has left us a particularly grim picture of the sacrifices to Wotan at Uppsala in Sweden, in which the limbs of a gigantic tree are strewn with the bodies of men and animals, hung by the neck and pierced with spears. "Wodan," he remarks, "id est furor."<sup>23</sup>

#### Wotan's Attributes

Wotan was at first regarded as the god of nocturnal storms, as a horseman ranging the sky with his band in search of fantastic game.<sup>24</sup> He later rose in stature and became the god who granted victory in battle and decided the fate of men.<sup>25</sup> He was the god of war and of intelligence, of poetry and of eloquence. He was armed with a shining breastplate and a golden helmet. From his throne Hlidskjif he sent his ravens Hugin and Munin (Thought and Memory) over the world so that when they returned they might whisper in his ear all they had seen. His eight-hooved horse Sleipnir, his spear Gungnir which could not be deflected, and

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<sup>23</sup>Davidson, op. cit., p. 51.  
Branston, op. cit., p. 108.

<sup>24</sup>Larousse Encyclopedia of Mythology (New York, 1959), p. 258.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid.

his ring Draupnir, from which every ninth night dropped eight similar rings, all these bespeak his immense authority over the gods and men.<sup>26</sup>

Wotan was never accepted as chief god at any one time by all Northmen. He was usually found as part of a trinity. Tacitus writes that the Western Teutonic tribes worshipped "Mercury, Mars, and Hercules," that is, Wotan, Tyr, and Fyoergyn (Thor).<sup>27</sup> The reasons for the Roman identification of Wotan with Mercury are many. Mercury was originally unknown to the Romans, as was Wotan to the Teutons. He received his first sacrifice in 399 B.C. by order of the Sibylline Books, the oracle of Rome, where his first temple had been constructed one hundred years before.<sup>28</sup> Mercury was the god of wisdom, intelligence, and eloquence as was Wotan. He had taught men writing even as Wotan had given them the art of the runes. Mercury was cunning and treacherous like Wotan. Both gods are pictured with hat and staff; Mercury's winged sandals allowed him to fly around the world as did Wotan as ruler of the wind.<sup>29</sup> The scholars of the Middle Ages,

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<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 259.      <sup>27</sup>Branston, op. cit., p. 112.

<sup>28</sup>Viktor Rydberg, Teutonic Mythology (London, 1906), I, p. 79.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 73.

following the Euhemeristic argument that the gods were merely elevated men, believed that the historical leader whom the Romans had called Mercury and the Teutons Wotan were identical.<sup>29</sup> The Greeks also identified him with the Egyptian god called Hermes-Trismegistus, whose original status as Thoth, the originator of magic and alchemy, coincided well with Wotan's reputation as a worker of magic.<sup>30</sup>

The most important connection between Wotan and Mercury is that both were psychopomps, or leaders of the dead.<sup>31</sup> It was the custom before and after a battle to sacrifice men to Wotan by hanging and stabbing. He is referred to in this connection as the "God of Hanged Men" and the "Lord of the Gallows."<sup>32</sup> In Valhalla, Wotan presided over a host of warriors chosen by himself from the bravest of men so that they might fight with him in the final battle with the Vanir, a rival clan of gods. This was the legend of the Ragnarok, the "Doom of the Gods" and the "World's

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<sup>29</sup>Rydberg, op. cit., p. 73.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 94.

<sup>31</sup>Davidson, op. cit., p. 141.

<sup>32</sup>Munch, op. cit., p. 8.

Destruction by Fire," in which Wotan is swallowed by the Fenris Wolf.<sup>33</sup>

Wotan's ability to change his shape at will and his proficiency in magic arts bear great resemblance to certain shamanic practices of northern Europe and Asia.<sup>34</sup> The shaman was a seer, an intermediary between the world of gods and men. By placing himself in a trance, he frees his soul from his body so that it may descend into the realms of the dead.<sup>35</sup> Upon his return to consciousness he is able to predict the future or retrieve a soul that has departed too soon. Wotan, on his eight-legged steed Sleipnir, knew the secrets of travel between the two worlds and of consultation with the dead. Just as every shaman must undergo a ritual death, so did Wotan hang himself on the World Tree Yggdrasil (the "Steed of Ygg," the "Terrible One," another name for Wotan), pierced with his own spear and dedicated to himself as related in the Poetic Edda.<sup>36</sup> Nine days he hung there, without succor, until he looked below him and, perceiving the runes, caught them up and fell to the ground. This legend seems to have two meanings: Wotan

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<sup>33</sup>Branston, op. cit., p. 303.

<sup>34</sup>Davidson, op. cit., p. 118. <sup>35</sup>Ibid.

<sup>36</sup>Hollander, ed., op. cit., "Havamal," stanzas 138-139, p. 36.

sacrifices himself to himself, thereby gaining the runes, that is, wisdom or self-knowledge, and by doing so, he is undergoing a shamanic ritual of initiation into magic arts.<sup>37</sup> Though this legend is undoubtedly shamanic in origin, it is impossible to pursue its meaning further due to lack of evidence at the sources.<sup>38</sup>

In considering the religious beliefs of the ancient Teutons one must take into account the immense differences in social and political conditions among the many tribes of people spread across many lands over a long period of time, which render it virtually impossible to discover a uniform development in their mythology.<sup>39</sup> Few among the innumerable gods and goddesses, giants and dwarfs, heroes and war-maidens bear an individualized character.<sup>40</sup> Of all the Norse Pantheon, Wotan has the longest list of by-names, principally because of his adoption by the upper classes and his consequent glorification in verse by the poets of the courts, the skalds.<sup>41</sup>

What we have in Wotan is a powerful deity, a sky god and a war god, possessing supernatural powers of transformation, all-knowing and all-seeing, everpresent in the world of men, a god not

<sup>37</sup>Davidson, *op. cit.*, p. 145.      <sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 149.

<sup>39</sup>de la Saussaye, *op. cit.*, p. 398.      <sup>40</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 403.

<sup>41</sup>Branston, *op. cit.*, p. 112.

loved or even respected but feared and accepted on his own grim terms. After the conversion to Christianity of the Northern lands, which process lasted from the sixth to the eleventh century A.D., Wotan survived as the Devil and was pictured as a crafty, malicious old one-eyed man always busy with some mischief or other.<sup>42</sup> He appeared later in folk stories, notably in the "Story of Olaf Tryggvason"<sup>43</sup> in which he visited the king at Easter and kept him up all night talking, leaving in the morning, "but not before telling the cook that the meat he was preparing was bad and leaving him two sides of an ox in its stead."<sup>44</sup>

### The Rise of Mythology as a Science

In the sweeping tide of Christianity, Northern Europe was the last to be converted. Everywhere this conversion took place there were pagan gods to be disposed of and numerous means were used for apologizing for their former existence, means which had been suggested by the ancients themselves.<sup>45</sup> One theory, put forth by Euhemeros about 320 B.C., was that the gods were merely

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<sup>42</sup>Munch, op. cit., p. 299.      <sup>43</sup>Saga Libing, iii, 314.

<sup>44</sup>John McCulloch, The Mythology of All Races, II, "The Eddic," (Boston, 1930), p. 66.

<sup>45</sup>Jean Seznec, The Survival of the Pagan Gods (Stanford, 1963), p. 4.

elevated men, once great chieftains and heroes, later venerated in divine form. Eventually the human origin of the gods ceased to be a source of rejection and contempt; it granted them protection, a right to survive as symbols of spiritual significance, as embodiments of ancient wisdom.<sup>46</sup> The science of mythology about the eleventh century had become a philosophia moralis, eventually reconciled with theology.<sup>47</sup> The Renaissance returned to the gods of the Greeks and Romans their original pagan form in art<sup>48</sup> and the external form became of primary importance.<sup>49</sup> Thus the science of mythology became a concern within the domain of art. An elaborate system existed whereby the gods were depicted as symbols of moral teachings and philosophical truths.<sup>50</sup> By the eighteenth century, mythology was studied not so much for its moral teachings as for its insights into the nature of religion itself.<sup>51</sup> A vast literature of pseudo-scholarship made speculation on these matters a commonplace in intellectual circles.<sup>52</sup> Although a good part of

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<sup>46</sup>Ibid., p. 13.      <sup>47</sup>Ibid., p. 90.      <sup>48</sup>Ibid., p. 211

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., p. 262.      <sup>50</sup>Ibid., p. 278.

<sup>51</sup> Frank Manuel, The Eighteenth Century Confronts the Gods (Harvard, 1959), p. 6.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., p. 8.

this learning was devoid of broad concepts and was too casual and shallow to be of lasting value, there was also a rich philosophical literature on the gods which was of central significance in Enlightenment thought.<sup>53</sup> France and England were the centers of this learning, which spread eastward and influenced the Germans, who remained without recognition until the next century.<sup>54</sup>

In the last decades before the French Revolution an indigenous German countermovement was launched in philosophy. Its prophet was Johann Georg Hamann (1730-1788), the "Magus of the North," but its principal spokesman was Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744-1803), who in turn was a great influence on the young Goethe.<sup>55</sup> By far the most influential eighteenth century work promulgating the anti-rationalist philosophy of history was Herder's Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit (1784-1791), which contained his concept of the Volk as a primeval historical, not biological, entity.<sup>56</sup> In Herder's thought, it was the Volk that expressed itself, influenced by climate and environment, in its mythology, which represented the purest expression of its soul.<sup>57</sup> Where the Enlightenment had stood for clarity

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<sup>53</sup>Ibid., p. 9.    <sup>54</sup>Ibid., p. 10.    <sup>55</sup>Ibid., p. 284.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., p. 291.    <sup>57</sup>Ibid., p. 296.



through analysis, Herder and his school praised the organic, poetic, and the complex.<sup>58</sup> With great foresight he envisioned the unification of the arts in "one connected lyrical structure,"<sup>59</sup> a passage possibly known to Wagner and perhaps even to Beethoven, before the composition of the Ninth Symphony.<sup>60</sup>

This revival of interest in folk-mythologies incited the Germans to look back into their own mythology. The rising Romantic movement sought to resurrect this Germanic past, discovering therein an incentive toward national pride.<sup>61</sup> The brothers Grimm, scrupulous scholars in contrast to most of the Romantists, edited the Eddas and sought to piece together the remnants of a great national epic from old German folk tales.<sup>62</sup> Fundamental to the Grimms' approach was a recognition of the connection between myth and language.<sup>63</sup> This movement, which developed into the science of philology, began when an Englishman, Sir William Jones, became in 1790 the first European to learn Sanskrit,

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p. 308.      <sup>59</sup> Adrastea, XXIII, 336.

<sup>60</sup> Robert Clark, Herder: His Life and Thought (Los Angeles, 1955), p. 430.

<sup>61</sup> de la Saussaye, op. cit., p. 17.      <sup>62</sup> Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., p. 18.

in the process noticing the many similarities between the language, supposedly the most ancient in existence, and modern European languages such as Greek and German. The notion of an Aryan language and race developed throughout the next century alongside the many theories of comparative mythology.

With a surfeit of knowledge regarding the numerous mythologies of all parts of the world, the matter of common motifs began to concern researchers in comparative religion. Were such mythological themes as "Death and Resurrection," "Virgin Birth," and "Creation from Nothing" to be rationally dismissed as mere vestiges of primitive ignorance or were they to be interpreted as transcendent symbols? Also, were these motifs the result of spontaneous operations of the psyche or were they the invention of particular times and persons which were spread by early migrations and commerce?<sup>64</sup> Few in the nineteenth century were competent to face either of these questions, as the psychology of the time had not yet discovered the means for probing the psyche in depth.<sup>65</sup> Wilhelm Wundt (1832-1920) wrote copiously on the subject of ethnological psychology (Voelkerpsychologie) while recognizing the limitations of his times.

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<sup>64</sup>Joseph Campbell, The Masks of God: Primitive Mythology (New York, 1959), p. 15.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid., p. 16.

In Paris, Jean Martin Charcot (1825-1893) had initiated a scientific probing of the psyche through the techniques of pathological anatomy in his studies of hysteria, paralysis, and brain disease. Among his pupils were two destined to carry this research forward to great achievement: Sigmund Freud and Carl Gustav Jung.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>66</sup>Ibid.

## CHAPTER II

### JUNGLIAN DEPTH PSYCHOLOGY

Psychology is the study of the psyche, which includes the entire being of man, conscious and unconscious. Depth psychology aims specifically at providing a description of the unconscious contents of the psyche.<sup>1</sup> This is a central concern of our age. For the first time in history man has succeeded in removing from nature all primitive mystery.<sup>2</sup> The result of this preoccupation with the conscious side of life has been to render modern man unstable, imbalanced psychically. Natural functions have been repressed with a resulting impoverishment of man's spiritual life. The sexual origin of neuroses, according to Freud, is a major example of this repression.

Historically speaking, the problems of the unconscious--developed in preliminary fashion by Eduard von Hartmann (1842-1906) and William James (1842-1910)--had previously been

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<sup>1</sup>Wilfried Daim, Depth Psychology and Salvation (New York, 1963), p. 28.

<sup>2</sup>Carl Jung, Civilization in Transition, Vol. X of the Collected Works (New York, 1964), p. 211.

entirely foreign to the traditional European psychology, which was based essentially on the psychological ingredients of Platonic and Aristotelian philosophy.<sup>3</sup> Prior to what has been called the "Freudian Revolution," European psychology had followed the general trends of anthropology in its methods.<sup>4</sup> From its very beginnings the "Freudian Revolution" showed two aspects: one sociological, one strongly individualistic.<sup>5</sup> The latter path was taken by Alfred Adler in his "Individual Psychology" and the former by Carl G. Jung.

#### Jung and Freud

Jung first heard of Freud in 1900 when he read Freud's new book "The Interpretation of Dreams." Jung was at that time twenty-five years old. They met in Vienna in February, 1907, and were immediately attracted to one another.<sup>6</sup> Jung found in Freud a man of real importance and a great teacher, but as they became acquainted with one another's ideas Jung found much that he could not accept. At this time Freud was over fifty years old and a very

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<sup>3</sup>Daim, op. cit., p. 14.      <sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Carl Jung, Memories, Dreams, Reflections (New York, 1961), p. 149.

controversial figure; association with him was considered dangerous in academic circles.<sup>7</sup> Jung was disturbed by Freud's insistence on the sexual basis of all neuroses, but lacked the authority of experience to fully support his objections. Before he met Freud he had come to consider the unconscious and its products, dreams, as natural processes to which no arbitrariness could be assigned.<sup>8</sup> Their relationship reached a climax in 1909 during a trip to lecture at Clark University in Worcester, Massachusetts. For seven weeks the two men were together every day and analyzed each other's dreams.<sup>9</sup> By his reticence in divulging certain personal details necessary in order to clarify a dream of his, Freud revealed himself to Jung as placing personal authority above truth: "The end of our relationship was already foreshadowed."<sup>10</sup> With the publication of Jung's next book, Wandlungen und Symbole der Libido in 1912 (English: Symbols of Transformation, 1916), his break with Freud was public and definite.

Freud's original importance was in formulating a system of understanding and dealing with the unconscious mind. According to him the unconscious is unformed at birth. As the child grows and

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 148.    <sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 162.    <sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 158.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

consciousness is forced upon him, certain feelings become repressed through conflict with the outside world. These repressed contents of the mind, finding no expression in consciousness, form the unconscious and continue to live and influence consciousness in ways of which we are not aware. Neurotic persons suffer from these repressed contents as they cannot reconcile the inner tension between the two halves of their mind. Because of the nature of our times, especially the oppressive nature of the Christian church morality, the major repressions are sexual. This led Freud to postulate sexuality as the prime motivating factor in human behavior. What he called "libido" was understood to be pure sexual energy, the basic source of the will to live.

Jung's psychology differs from Freud's particularly on this point of the nature of psychic energy (libido). This was the subject of Jung's major statement of his final break with Freud, Symbols of Transformation, in which Jung goes to great length and extensive documentation to demonstrate the undifferentiated nature of psychic energy per se. "Libido," in Jung's psychology, refers specifically to bodily needs like hunger, thirst, sleep, and sex.

"Libido is appetite in its natural state . . . unchecked by any kind of authority, moral or otherwise."<sup>11</sup>

### The Collective Unconscious and the Archetypes

By thus broadening the scope of psychic energy, Jung showed the unconscious to be deeper and more ramified than was thought. While retaining Freud's theory of repressed contents, Jung postulated a second layer of the unconscious whose elements were never repressed from consciousness in the individual at all but were inherited, that is, present at birth. In contradistinction to the repressed contents of the unconscious, this second layer was impersonal, universal in nature. Jung called this the "Collective Unconscious," distinguished from the "Personal Unconscious" by its suprapersonal nature, which is present, fully formed, in everyone.<sup>12</sup>

The Collective Unconscious consists of what we know as "instincts" when they appear in consciousness, that is, a certain

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<sup>11</sup> Carl Jung, Symbols of Transformation, Vol. V of the Collected Works (New York, 1956), p. 135. This concept was anticipated by Arthur Schopenhauer in his notion of the Will, of which sexuality was the basic expression. See below Chapters III and IV.

<sup>12</sup> Carl Jung, Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious, Vol. IX of the Collected Works (New York, 1959), p. 43.



predisposition to behave in a manner unaccountable for by reason or consciousness. They are present in animal and insect life in great variety. They are no less potent in man, although we have lost sight of this fact and prefer to think that we can cope with everything consciously. These "patterns of instinctual behavior" Jung has called by a special term, the "Archetypes," and to their description and delineation, so far as is possible, he has devoted a major portion of his work.<sup>13</sup>

Freud recognized the existence of these "archaic remnants" but refused to concede them any significance in the total functioning of the psyche. To pursue their nature further, Freud contended, was to go beyond the limits of psychology as a science into the "black mud" of occultism and magic,<sup>14</sup> but this is precisely what Jung has done and moreover without losing a strict scientific perspective.<sup>15</sup> It should be said here that Jung's basic standpoint is that of an empirical, practicing physician. He is concerned primarily with the individual and all his researches derive from this motive. He is the complement of such historians as Jakob Burckhardt (a great influence on Jung), who sought to discover the basic materials for the study of historical periods in the psychological

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid.      <sup>14</sup>Jung, Memories, pp. 150, 151.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 155.

qualities of individuals. Jung has sought the cultural context, which, when understood in a large sense of time, provides the fundamental perspective for an insight into the breadth and meaningfulness of personality.<sup>16</sup>

At first the notion of the archetype was applied by Jung primarily to psychic "motifs" that could be expressed in images, In time it was extended to all sorts of patterns, configurations, happenings, hence to dynamic processes as well as to static representations. Ultimately it came to cover all psychic manifestations of a biological, psycho-biological, or ideational character, provided they were more or less universal and typical in nature.<sup>17</sup> The archetype is essentially an unconscious content that is altered by becoming conscious and by being perceived, taking its color from the individual consciousness in which it happens to appear.<sup>18</sup> Archetypes are fundamental elements of the conscious mind. They are systems of readiness, for action, and at the same time they are images and emotions. They are inherited with the brain structure,

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<sup>16</sup> Ira Progoff, Jung's Psychology and Its Social Meaning (New York, 1953), p. 35.

<sup>17</sup> Jolande Jacobi, Complex, Archetype, Symbol (New York, 1959), p. 34.

<sup>18</sup> Jung, Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious, p. 5.

being its psychic aspect.<sup>19</sup> In itself, the archetype is empty, purely formal, nothing but a facultas praeformandi, a possibility of representation which is given a priori.<sup>20</sup> Calling them "patterns for behavior" is perhaps misleading, for it suggests a sterile mold which is arbitrarily used, then cast aside. Jung stresses the very opposite: they are basic to the operation of the psyche, "an immediate datum of psychic experience,"<sup>21</sup> "a psychic organ present in all of us."<sup>22</sup>

Archetypes originate in the dawn of human consciousness,<sup>23</sup> an indeterminable point in time at least 50,000 years ago. And even then, let it be noted, the primal mold existed from the aeons upon aeons of lower life forms in ceaseless repetition of basic life patterns. Thought was not distinguished from external phenomena. Thoughts were more akin to objects. Ego, that is, separateness, did not exist except latently.<sup>24</sup> To trace the successive stages of the formation of ego, the conception of man and man's mind as

<sup>19</sup>Jacobi, op. cit., p. 37.

<sup>20</sup>Jung, Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious, p. 79.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 5.      <sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 160.

<sup>23</sup>The situation at the beginning of Das Rheingold.

<sup>24</sup>Cf. "a block of wood, untooled," Tao Te Ching, 32. This is approximately what is meant in Taoism as the "original mind," empty of willfulness, the primal state of the universe.

separate entities and all this has engendered is beyond the scope of this paper. Two diverse approaches to this are The Phenomenon of Man, by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, and The Origins of Consciousness, by Erich Neumann. One result of such study is to show that man has always been under the influence of "dominating ideas,"<sup>25</sup> expressed in countless mythologies and religions. It is perhaps too general to say that religion is due to the archetypes, but rather, at rock-bottom, the two are inseparable. Archetypes do not explain religion, archetypes are not religion, but archetypes and religion spring from the same ground (the psyche) and we find the most variegated expressions of the archetypes in man's religions. It is by no means accepted by all researchers in the field of comparative religions that Jung's concept of the archetypes is sufficient for all applications; however, none will deny the existence of similar motifs present in the most diverse areas, which may or may not seem significant in the sense Jung gives them. For the purposes of this study, however, Jung's work holds special relevance.

Jung lived in a period of an intense reawakening of certain archetypal images among a particularly susceptible people, the Germans.<sup>26</sup> He has called Germany "a land of spiritual

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<sup>25</sup>Jung, Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious, p. 62.

<sup>26</sup>Cf. below, Chapter IV.

catastrophes."<sup>27</sup> Their ancient mythology is ample expression of this. In no other mythology is the theme of the "Doom of the Gods" and the "World Destruction" so insistently and persistently developed. It shows neurotic tendencies in that it permits the individual no exit into the open; all the heroes perish and none of the gods survives them.<sup>28</sup> In more recent times, the coincidence of the "Freudian Revolution" with the most destructive wars in history is a phenomenon for which we lack the perspective to evaluate clearly. That it is undoubtedly coupled with the reactivation of certain motifs, or archetypes, of the long quiescent Germanic pagan religion is a thesis of Jung's. The place of Richard Wagner in this pattern, and more specifically, the character of Wotan in his work, is the object of this study.

### The Primary Archetypes

Concerning the archetypes, we find that their images have been among the highest values of the human psyche; they have peopled the heavens of all races from time immemorial.<sup>29</sup> Not one single important idea exists that is not ultimately founded on

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<sup>27</sup>Jung, Civilization in Transition, p. 187.

<sup>28</sup>Daim, op. cit., p. 176.

<sup>29</sup>Jung, Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious, p. 84.

primordial archetypal forms dating from a time when consciousness did not think but only perceived.<sup>30</sup> After many years of combined research into antiquity and personal observation of mental patients, Jung came to formulate several archetypes as basic, that is, those having the most frequent and disturbing influence on the ego,<sup>31</sup> although the actual number of archetypes is theoretically unlimited.<sup>32</sup> Of these, the one most easily experienced is called the "Shadow."

To become conscious of the Shadow is to recognize the dark aspects of the personality as real and present. This means challenging the whole ego-personality, for no one can become conscious of the Shadow without considerable moral effort.<sup>33</sup> The Shadow is first to be found in projections, outside the personality, projected onto an external object. This object is, of course, another person, of the same sex as the subject, who seems to be everything the subject is not, from which all the (emotional) bad effects of this encounter seem to arise. Projection is never conscious. It is always

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<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 33.

<sup>31</sup>Jung, Aion, Vol. IX of the Collected Works (New York, 1958), p. 8.

<sup>32</sup>Jung, Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious, p. 48.

<sup>33</sup>Jung, Aion, p. 8.

recognized afterwards.<sup>34</sup> This recognition is the first step towards knowing oneself. It is exceedingly difficult because it not only challenges the whole man, but it also reminds him at the same time of his helplessness and ineffectuality.<sup>35</sup> If we are able to see our own Shadow and can bear knowing about it, then a small part of the problem has already been solved; we have at least brought up the personal unconscious, the sum of our repressions.<sup>36</sup>

If the encounter with the Shadow is the "apprentice-piece" in the individual's development, then that with the "Anima" is the "master-piece."<sup>37</sup> The term, "Anima," adapted by Jung from the Latin, is not here "soul" in the traditional dogmatic sense, not an anima rationalis, which is a philosophical conception, but a natural archetype that sums up all the statements of the unconscious, of the primitive mind, of the history of language and religion.<sup>38</sup> Strictly speaking, the Anima belongs to the masculine mind and has a counterpart in the feminine which Jung has called the "Animus." Very simply, the Anima is the image of femininity which a man carries inside himself and the Animus is the image of masculinity which a woman carries inside herself. Unlike the Shadow, which is always

<sup>34</sup>Jung, Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious, p. 61.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 20.      <sup>36</sup>Ibid.      <sup>37</sup>Ibid., p. 29.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., p. 27.

projected onto a figure of the same sex as the subject, the Anima and the Animus are projected onto members of the opposite sex. The Anima has none of the straight-forward evil and repulsive aspects of the Shadow since it does not spring simply from the personal unconscious but has its roots in the collective unconscious and is therefore ambivalent, elusive.<sup>39</sup> A full view of man takes in both masculine and feminine components, both good and evil. This uniting of opposites is the "Syzygy" motif, a term which applies not only to the union of male and female elements of the psyche but to the integration of all opposites, the sexual being the most common and most important.<sup>40</sup>

The Anima is the projection-making factor of the psyche, which becomes the unconscious as represented by the Anima.<sup>41</sup> She is found projected in whatever is fleeting, ungraspable, mysterious, in nixies, water-sprites, spectres, usually in historic dress with a predilection for Greece and Egypt.<sup>42</sup> Her existence is beyond all categories. Although she may be the chaotic urge to life, something strangely meaningful clings to her, a secret knowledge or hidden wisdom which contrasts most curiously with her irrational

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<sup>39</sup>Ibid., p. 27.      <sup>40</sup>Ibid., p. 69.

<sup>41</sup>Jung, Aion, p. 12.

<sup>42</sup>Jung, Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious, p. 28.



nature.<sup>43</sup> Once a person comes to grips with his Anima her chaotic capriciousness will cause him to suspect a secret order, a meaning, a purpose over and beyond her nature. The subject is in the grip of a turbulent life-situation which refuses to fit any traditional meaning. Only at the final depth, in a kind of voluntary death,<sup>44</sup> may he experience the "Archetype of Meaning," just as the Anima is the "Archetype of Life Itself."<sup>45</sup>

Here we are dealing with psychic facts of which man has never been conscious: the realm of the gods.<sup>46</sup> As long as the archetype is not projected, neither loved nor hated in an object, it is still wholly identical with the individual, who is thus compelled to act it out himself. We have a word for this: "animosity," which is best interpreted as "anima possession," a condition of uncontrolled emotion.<sup>47</sup> Men of this type--Richard Wagner is a

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 30.

<sup>44</sup>Cf. Tristan und Isolde, Act II.

<sup>45</sup>Jung, Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious, p. 32.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., pp. 29, 28.

<sup>47</sup>Jung, Civilization in Transition, p. 40.

good example--show an almost feminine disposition in their relations with the outside world, reacting intuitively, irrationally rather than with masculine logic and cool-headedness. They are apt to devote most of their lives to the pursuit of their dreams, living in a constant state of fantasy, showing little regard for the simple (Christian) virtues of home and hearth.

The archetypes so far discussed are capable of being experienced in personified form, appearing in dreams and fantasies as active personalities.<sup>48</sup> In this process, another class of archetypes becomes involved, that of the "Archetypes of Transformation." They are not personalities, but rather typical situations, places, ways and means that symbolize the kind of transformation in question.<sup>49</sup> The integration of the Shadow, or the realization of the personal unconscious marks the first stage in this analytical process. Without it recognition of the Anima and Animus is impossible.<sup>50</sup> Of the next stage Jung has written:

The recognition of the Anima or Animus gives rise, in a man, to a triad, one third of which is transcendent: the masculine subject, the opposing feminine subject, and the transcendent Anima. The missing fourth element that would make the triad a quaternity is, in a man, the archetype of the "Wise Old Man"

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<sup>48</sup>Jung, Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious, p. 37.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid.      <sup>50</sup>Jung, Aion, p. 21.

and in a woman, the chthonic "Mother." These four constitute the marriage quaternio, which provides the pattern for the self and also for the structure of primitive society.<sup>51</sup>

These last archetypes, the Wise Old Man and the Mother, are not directly experienceable. They are too deeply rooted in the psyche ever to become completely conscious. The Mother is particularly diverse in its manifestations. Obvious qualities associated with it are maternal solicitude and sympathy, the magic authority of the female; also, the wisdom and spiritual exaltation that transcends reason, all that is benign, all that cherishes and sustains, that fosters growth and fertility.<sup>52</sup> Places of magic transformation and rebirth, the underworld, caves, wells, trees, are presided over by the Mother.<sup>53</sup> All these symbols can have a positive or negative meaning. Evil aspects of the Mother are the witch, the dragon<sup>54</sup> (any devouring and entwining animal), the grave, deep water, and death.

Along with the Shadow and the Anima, the archetype of the Wise Old Man is capable of being experienced in personified form, but only in a mature personality.<sup>55</sup> In experiencing this

<sup>51</sup>Ibid.      <sup>52</sup>Ibid., p. 82.      <sup>53</sup>Ibid.

<sup>54</sup>See below, Chapter III.

<sup>55</sup>Jung, Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious, p. 37.

archetype man comes to know that most ancient form of thinking as an autonomous activity whose object he is.<sup>56</sup> The Wise Old Man is the representative of timeless wisdom, the sage who has transcended the world, who has comprehended all and absorbed within himself all opposites. A person who has attained to this state of mind has truly become an "in-dividual." Jung calls the process by which man comes to know the ultimate archetype of the Self the process of "Individuation."<sup>57</sup> This is not a pathological phenomenon but a supremely natural development of the personality in the second half of life, after the fulfillment of social obligations.<sup>58</sup> The process is as old as man himself and represents a "natural religious function" of man impelling him to wholeness. It is a state which cannot be reached without much suffering, without accepting freely many things which are shunned by the ordinary man. Analysis is not the only way of reaching this goal, but it is one which fits the modern situation particularly well.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>56</sup>Ibid.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., p. 275.

<sup>58</sup>Frieda Fordham, An Introduction to Jung's Psychology, (Middlesex, 1953), p. 77

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., p. 76.

### The Death of the Gods

The archetypes, of which we have examined only the most representative, place us in immediate contact with the mysteries of antiquity. Nothing that was ever vital to man has ever been lost or has ever died completely, but has simply retreated to a deeper layer of consciousness. The scholars of the Middle Ages who treated the pagan gods as former leaders, elevated men, paid homage to man's own assimilating capabilities. Thus the worshippers of Wotan accepted the Christian God without compunction as a better and more powerful deity. The myth of the crucified god was familiar to them as the myth of Wotan hanging himself from the World Tree, dedicated to himself. The slain Christ who shall be resurrected with a new heaven and a new earth became the story of Balder the Beautiful, whose name means "Lord," the son of Wotan and Frigg, who was killed through the craftiness of Loke and who sleeps until the destruction of the old gods when he will rule in place of Wotan.

That the gods die from time to time is due to man's discovery that they do not mean anything. In reality, he has discovered that up until then he has never thought about his images at all.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Jung, Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious, p. 13.

"The gods of Greece and Rome perished from the same disease as did our Christian symbols; people discovered then, as today, that they had no thoughts whatever on the subject."<sup>61</sup> The process of the devaluation of the Christian symbols and the rediscovery of the pagan symbols stretched from the Enlightenment well into the twentieth century. Perhaps the single most influential work in this regard in modern times was that of Richard Wagner.

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<sup>61</sup>Ibid., p. 14.

CHAPTER III  
THE CHARACTER OF WOTAN IN  
WAGNER'S RING

The History of the Composition

With the revival of interest in pagan mythology in the first decades of the nineteenth century, the subject of the Nibelungenlied became a popular one for representation on the stage in Germany.<sup>1</sup> Its appropriateness as a subject for a true German national opera was pointed out by Theodor Vischer in an essay in the second volume of his Kritische Gaenge (1844).<sup>2</sup> Ernest Newman, in his biography of Wagner, speculates that Vischer's article was known to Wagner and stimulated his interest in the subject during 1845, while he was working on Lohengrin. Wagner's first attempt to exploit the material was a sketch for a "grand heroic opera in three acts," Siegfrieds Tod, containing approximately the same events as Goetterdaemmerung.<sup>3</sup> As is well known, Wagner came gradually

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<sup>1</sup>Ernest Newman, The Life of Richard Wagner, II (New York, 1933-46), p. 27, n.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 29-30.

to the conclusion that an expansion of the material was needed and subsequently the poem of Der junge Siegfried was written in the late spring of 1851.<sup>4</sup> Later that year Wagner decided to preface this with two further operas, Das Rheingold and Die Walkuere.<sup>5</sup> The first prose sketches for these operas were made at the same time, the poems being finished in July and November of the following year.<sup>6</sup>

Wagner's original sketch for a drama on the Nibelungen subject (1848) amounts to little more than a mythological morality play in which the devitalizing effects of lust for power are shown and a means of salvation is suggested.<sup>7</sup> The idea of Alberich's renunciation of love is conspicuously absent. Wotan is not yet individualized. He acts in the company of the other gods in stealing the hoard in order to pay the giants (Freia is not involved) and in raising a race of heroes to win back the gold.<sup>8</sup> The account of the incest of Siegmund and Sieglinde follows the version of the Volsunga Saga in which they are not direct descendants of Wotan but rather the offspring of a hitherto barren marriage fertilized by

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 237.    <sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 245.    <sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 288.

<sup>7</sup>Robert Jacobs, "A Freudian View of the Ring," Music Review, XXVI (August, 1965), p. 211.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 208.



Wotan with one of Freia's golden apples. The Walkuere is not Wotan's daughter, and after banishing her to her rock he plays no further part in the drama. In Der junge Siegfried the present relationship of the pair is established and in the first prose sketch of Die Walkuere Wotan becomes an active participant in the events of the first act, appearing on stage to place the sword in the tree and remaining to witness the incest.<sup>9</sup>

In Volume II of his Life of Wagner Newman discusses the thesis, propounded by Kurt Hildebrandt,<sup>10</sup> that Wagner's change to a pessimistic philosophical position from his optimistic world-view of the first sketches was related to certain contemporary political events, especially Napoleon's coup d'état of December, 1851, and the general failure of the revolution to effect any lasting changes in society.<sup>11</sup> This thesis depends on the question of Erda's warning to Wotan in Rheingold, Sc. iv. The original wording of this scene implied a redemption for the gods if the Ring was returned to the Rhine; the final wording is a prophecy of an inevitable doom for the gods. Newman, contrary to Hildebrandt, holds that Wagner was

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 210.

<sup>10</sup>Kurt Hildebrandt, Wagner und Nietzsche, Ihr Kampf gegen das Neunzehnte Jahrhundert (Breslau, 1924).

<sup>11</sup>Newman, op. cit., pp. 351ff.

led by instinct to consider more and more the nothingness of the world through the character of Wotan.<sup>12</sup> This is supported by a letter from Wagner to August Roeckel<sup>13</sup> in which Wagner feels that the necessity of Wotan's downfall will be justified in the minds of the spectators through emotion, not through intellect.<sup>14</sup> Wotan's tragedy becomes that he will his own destruction as necessary for the redemption of the world. This is the point at which Wagner's world-view meets Schopenhauer's. The culmination of the latter's philosophy is the negation of the Will, which he imagined to be the unconscious life-force of the universe. Wagner's discovery of Schopenhauer's Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung one year after the complete poems of the Ring had been privately printed served to confirm his unconscious feeling that the pessimistic turn his thought had taken was justified.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 352.

<sup>13</sup>Wilhelm Altmann, Letters of Richard Wagner (New York, 1963), pp. 259-263.

<sup>14</sup>Newman, op. cit., p. 359.

<sup>15</sup>Cf. Jung's conception of "libido," see above Chapter II, note 11.

<sup>16</sup>Leon Stein, The Racial Thinking of Richard Wagner (New York, 1950), p. 33.

The Evolution of Wotan's Character as  
a Psychological Process

We have seen that in Wagner's original conception of the Ring Wotan plays no central part. Wagner took him over from mythology almost unchanged, even retaining the spelling "Wodan" as in the Grimms' edition of the Eddas. In Wagner's scheme to portray the morality of contemporary society Wotan symbolized the oppressive principle of Ownership, which Wagner contended was originally spiritual, as in the time of Charlemagne, but since the time of Frederick I had become materialized and had usurped the true wealth of the people, forcing them to slave in misery for the profit of a few.<sup>17</sup> From the time of Wagner's return from Paris in 1842 to assume the position of second Kapellmeister in Dresden he had been increasingly occupied with the social and political situation in Germany and especially with its effect on the theater, which he conceived as a powerful institution, capable of much social good. The frivolity and vulgarity of the public theater had depressed him in Paris. When he saw the same situation prevailing in his beloved homeland, it became a matter of great urgency for him to expunge this hateful influence of French civilization.<sup>18</sup> Seeking his own artistic identity and through this the salvation of German art, he

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<sup>17</sup> Maurice Boucher, The Political Concepts of Richard Wagner (New York, 1950), p. 32.

<sup>18</sup>  
Ibid., p. 75.

delved into pagan mythology. It became necessary for him to feel a great empathy with the Volk in order to create his music-dramas.<sup>19</sup> As his own personal situation became more and more separated from reality due to his increasing debts and his inability to sacrifice his ideals, he came to identify his sufferings with those of the Volk, which he defined as "those who feel a common need,"<sup>20</sup> The tyranny of the "pale metal" (gold) was equally oppressive to him and his artistic ideals as it was to the common people whose lives from birth on were sacrificed to it.<sup>21</sup> Parallel to this sentiment was a conviction that there was an innate goodness and purity in the German people which had been stifled by modern society. The Germans were not at present their true selves and the fault did not lie with them but with "foreign elements," by which Wagner meant the Jews.<sup>22</sup> In all this Wagner was giving vent to his own frustrations. He looked to heaven for a miracle, as did Elsa in Lohengrin, and when nothing availed he turned revolutionary against a loveless society that had denied him the right to be free.<sup>23</sup> He

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 46.

<sup>20</sup>Richard Wagner, Gesammelte Schriften und Dichtungen (Leipzig, 1907), III., p. 48.

<sup>21</sup>Boucher, op. cit., p. 26.      <sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 53.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 34.

wrote Siegfrieds Tod to depict his ideal man, the long-awaited, loving man of the future. In opposition to Wotan as the principle of Ownership, Siegfried would possess only himself. Perfect in his innocence, he would be free from the bondage of gold and his perfection would redeem the gods of their sin. He would be the vassal who takes his lord's guilt upon himself and sacrifices himself to atone for it.<sup>24</sup>

In all Wagner's revolutionary tracts such a salvation is implicit; he was ever more reformist than revolutionist.<sup>25</sup> In his "Vaterlandsverein" Speech of 1849 he envisioned a conciliation of monarchy and republic. The king would rule by the will of the people and German spirit would rejuvenate the world under such beneficent leadership.<sup>26</sup> Later, he ascribed the failure of the revolution to the incapacity of men's minds to change. He saw that change must come from within and could not be imposed from without by force. As he brooded on this, the character of Wotan began to acquire deeper shades of meaning. Material ownership implied a failure to love. This was society's great fault. The primacy of the spiritual over the material could find no support in the

<sup>24</sup>Newman, op. cit., p. 350.

<sup>25</sup>Boucher, op. cit., p. 25.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 27.

present state.<sup>27</sup> Thus it became clear that the gods were not to be saved merely by Siegfried's sacrifice.

As a symbol of willfulness and authority, Wotan is analogous to the ego in Jung's psychology. Wagner's conviction that egoism must be destroyed before the new man could appear<sup>28</sup> is similar to Jung's theory that the ego must surrender its central place of authority in the psyche if the personality is to progress to the realization of the self, its goal in life.<sup>29</sup> This progression towards the self Jung called the process of "Individuation." In this process the ego is submitted to a barrage of assaults on its authority through the revelation of the unconscious drives; the archetypes with their mystery and meaningfulness as compared to the one-sided outlook of the ego. Wotan's subjection to the treaties engraved on his spear is symbolic of the ego-centered personality in the first half of life. In this period it is natural for the personality to center itself in the ego.<sup>30</sup> The process of Individuation can be generated only in a personality possessing a strong ego-center. The crime against oneself is to carry this ego-centeredness beyond its beneficent

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., pp. 34-35.      <sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 48.

<sup>29</sup>Jung, Two Essays on Analytical Psychology (New York, 1953), p. 252.

<sup>30</sup>Fordham, op. cit., pp. 78ff.

stage to the point that it hardens and becomes tyrannical, producing an imbalanced personality. This happens when the ego fails to integrate with the unconscious, when a person fails to see beyond himself and fails to recognize that he is not the center of the universe as his former willfulness had led him to believe. Wotan's lust for power causes him to commit this sin against himself, and by implication, against the world, for he stands for the collective consciousness of the world. It is for this that the world must perish in order to be reborn.

Wotan's shadow is Alberich, who is also called Schwarz-Alberich even as Wotan is sometimes called Licht-Alberich. Wagner was at pains in his description of Alberich to give him a certain nobleness for all his evil and hideous aspects. In Rheingold, sc. iv, our sympathy is certainly for him when he is brutally robbed by Wotan. Alberich had paid a terrible price for the Ring. Symbolically, he had brought up the hidden wealth of the world from the depths of the world's (Wotan's) unconscious only to have it misappropriated by a ruthless display of ego-power. Wotan was doubly wrong in that his theft represents a dishonest attempt of the ego to make contact with the unconscious without having earned the right through sacrifice. He is forced by his own unconscious drives to betray himself in order to preserve his fortress; the ego attempts

to cheat the unconscious into preserving its (ego's) own misconceptions. This confrontation of the ego and its Shadow produces an extremely tense situation. The collapse of the psyche is imminent. At this point Wotan has an archetypal vision of the Anima. Erda appears and prophesies the end of the gods, that is, the end of the ego's authority. Suddenly face to face with a force beyond his comprehension Wotan yields the Ring and Life (Freia) returns to the gods.

Wotan vows to know more of this mysterious being and so begins the process of his redemption, the process of his individuation, during the course of which he will rise to the "tragic height of willing his own destruction."<sup>31</sup> The process will be completed in the third act of Siegfried when Wotan voluntarily calls forth Erda, having gained the necessary strength to face her as an equal. Wotan's individuation is strikingly brought out in the music of the Ring. From Rheingold, sc. iv, to Siegfried, III, sc. i, Wotan's music forms a great arch, or Bogen, as the term is used in Alfred Lorenz' study of the form of the Ring.<sup>32</sup> This is illustrated in the following diagram:

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<sup>31</sup>Altmann, op. cit., pp. 259-263.

<sup>32</sup>Alfred Lorenz, Das Geheimnis der Form bei Richard Wagner, Vol. I, Der Ring des Nibelungen (Berlin, 1924).



1st Erda Scene (Rheingold, sc. iv)

Fricka Scene (Walkuere, II, sc. ii)

Monologue (Walkuere, II, sc. iii)

Farewell Scene (Walkuere, III, sc. iii)

Mime Scene (Siegfried, I, sc. ii)

Alberich Scene (Siegfried, I, sc. ii)

2nd Erda Scene (Siegfried, III, sc. i)

Fig. 1 -- Wotan's Individuation Curve

The material preceding the first Erda Scene, Rheingold, scenes ii and iii, may be considered expository. Wotan is shown in the fullness of his power, the unchallenged ego-authority with no knowledge of the unconscious. The material following the second Erda Scene, Siegfried, III, sc. ii, is in effect a coda. Wotan has here reached the end of his development and awaits the inevitable end. As we have seen, the first Erda scene is the beginning of Wotan's development. It is, as Lorenz points out,<sup>33</sup> in the parallel minor key of D flat major, the key associated with Wotan throughout the Ring. The apex of the whole curve is Wotan's Farewell, which symbolizes the ultimate sacrifice of the Will, symbolized by

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<sup>33</sup>Ibid., pp. 25-26.

Bruennhilde, which Wotan must make before he can meet his own unconscious. It is in the key of E major,<sup>34</sup> the relative major of the tonality of the first Erda Scene. The second Erda Scene, the climax of Wotan's development, is in G minor, which, symbolic of the distance Wotan has travelled mentally, bears the distant relationship of a tritone to Wotan's original key. The scene of Wotan's encounter with Siegfried forms a coda to his curve. It is in the key of E flat major, the key of Nature in her innocence, symbolizing Wotan's final peace of mind. This progression of tonalities from D flat to E flat is exactly the reverse of the entire Ring itself, which goes from E flat at the beginning of Rheingold to D flat at the end of Goetterdaemmerung.

In the second act of Walkuere, Wotan appears as the ego suffering from its attempt to integrate with the unconscious. This attempt has produced Bruennhilde, a symbol of Wotan's will.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>In Lorenz' analysis of the form of Tristan in the second volume of Das Geheimnis, the key of E major signified "Love." This connotation was undoubtedly carried over from the final scene of Walkuere, composed only three years before Tristan. Cf. Elliott Zuckerman, The First Hundred Years of Wagner's Tristan (New York, 1964), p. 168.

<sup>35</sup>Bruennhilde: "Zu Wotan's Willen sprichst du/ . . . wer bin ich, / waer' ich dein Wille nicht? ("To Wotan's will thou speakest/ . . . who am I, / if I am not thy will?" Walkuere, II, scene ii.)

Bruennhilde's development, from Walkuere, II, to the final scene of Goetterdaemmerung, also forms a Bogen, of even greater span than that of Wotan's. The apex of her development is the last scene of Siegfried, a parallel to the last scene of Walkuere. The height of Wotan's development is the putting to sleep of his beloved daughter, a ritual act symbolizing the suppression of his own will. The height of her own development is her awakening by Siegfried as a free will, possible only through Wotan's sacrifice. In Wotan's development, the apex leads to his own catastrophe, which, however, is not experienced by the spectator as a catastrophe at all, but rather as a redemption. In rejecting his will, Wotan has cleared the way for his own development; he has accepted his fate. Afterwards, in Siegfried, he appears in a changed form, the Wanderer, no longer a worker, an agent of the will, but as a witness.

The four Wanderer scenes in Siegfried form a progression descending into the unconscious towards final self-knowledge. The Wanderer's first encounter is with Mime, Alberich's brother, and, like him, a symbol of the personal unconscious. Mime, being less cunning and less evil than his brother, represents the sum of representations and secret fears, as shown by his paroxysm of fear at the beginning of the next scene. His preoccupation with fear and his inability to accomplish anything of merit, such as forging the sword, show him to be an accessory figure to the real Shadow. The fact that he

had forged the Ring and the Tarnhelm, however, suggests that such dreams of power and dominion originate in the suppressed emotions of fear and guilt. Later, when Siegfried tastes the dragon's blood, symbolic of his victory over the devouring Mother, he is able to see through Mime's false front and destroy him, thus ridding himself of neurotic dependence on the fantasies of the personal unconscious. But Mime is easy game for the Wanderer. This scene is really a parody of the situation in the first act of Walkuere. The evil host has become a pathetic misshapen dwarf and the wandering stranger has become a noble god. Siegmund, too, had much of the Wanderer in him, and perhaps some of Siegmund's courage and heroism in the face of destiny shows in the Wanderer. In the course of Mime's questioning, he refers to himself for the first time as Licht-Alberich, showing that he has recognized the dark side of himself. The Wanderer leaves Mime, a victim of his (Mime's) own suppressed fear that Siegfried will be the one to forge the sword and kill him with it.

Having surmounted the first stage of his journey into the unconscious, Wotan encounters Alberich, his true Shadow, who thoroughly reviles him for his dishonest ways. Wotan is seeing the dark side of his personality, the side he had refused to accept before; however, this time he is ready for it. His guilt is real.

enough, but he has faced it and is prepared to suffer its consequences. The setting for this scene, Siegfried, II, sc. i, is described in the score as "Night, in a deep forest . . . at the entrance to a cave." It is a place of magic transformation presided over by the Mother in one of her devouring aspects, the dragon Fafner.<sup>36</sup> It is clear from Alberich's speech that he has not progressed beyond his mental state at the end of Rheingold; he still dreams of world-conquest. The progression possible to Wotan as a creature of the upper world (consciousness) is not possible to a creature of the unconscious. The unconscious cannot initiate any effort to comprehend the psyche as a whole. This can come only from above, as in inspiration like that of Wotan's at the end of Rheingold, symbolized by the Sword motive:



Fig. 2 -- Sword Motive (Inspiration), Rheingold, Scene iv, measures 925-926.

<sup>36</sup>Jung, Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious, p. 158.

Alberich cannot comprehend Wotan's renunciation of the hoard.

He still thinks that Wotan covets the same goal as himself. Wotan replies to this: "Des Ringes waltet, / wer ihn gewinnt." "Whoever wins it, / let him be lord."<sup>37</sup> Alberich takes this to mean himself. Wotan goads him into trying to talk Fafner out of the Ring, thus revealing Alberich's impotence. To the accompaniment of the Nature motive in its original key of E flat, Wotan tells him what he has learned:

WANDERER: Al- - les ist nach sei-ner Art:  
 An ihr wirst du nichts än-dern.

Fig. 3 -- Siegfried, Act II, Scene ii, measures 458-465.

<sup>37</sup>This and all subsequent English translations from the Ring are from Stewart Robb's translation of the Ring (New York, 1960), pp. 200, 202.

"All things go their wonted way: / think not fate can be altered."

This shows that Wotan has come to an atonement with nature, with his true self. Having met the Shadow on its own terms, the ego progresses to the Anima, this time in full possession of its powers.

Erda bears a dual role in the Ring. She is called "Mutter," "Urwissende," and "Urmutter," but her relationship to Wotan is not that of mother, though she shares some attributes with this most mysterious archetype. Wotan represents the "Self" of the world. There are several versions of his birth in mythology,<sup>38</sup> which seems to suggest that he does not spring from any one source, just as the ego is present at birth, though undeveloped. Wotan's consciousness reflects the collective level of consciousness of the world, which can have no fixed beginning.<sup>39</sup> Wotan is first aware of Erda in Rheingold, sc. iv, when he had jeopardized his own existence by refusing to yield the Ring. His vision of Erda is comparable to a sudden realization of the gravity of the situation and of the meaninglessness of pursuing material wealth. He has glimpsed what Jung calls the "Archetype of Life itself."<sup>40</sup> This vision

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<sup>38</sup>See Prose Edda, "Gylfaginning," Chapter 5, and Poetic Edda, "Voluspa," stanzas 3 and 4. Hollander, ed., p. 2.

<sup>39</sup>See above, Chapter II.

<sup>40</sup>See above, Chapter II, note 45.

changes Wotan and he thinks no more of gold, but of founding a race of heroes, the Volsungs, by which the ego intends to recreate itself. In Walkuere, II, sc. ii, Wotan is forced to acknowledge, under the scorn of Fricka, that he cannot accomplish this through an agent. The task is his alone and its completion is possible only through great sacrifice. Now, in the third act of Siegfried, Wotan calls up Erda voluntarily, having gained the necessary strength of character. Erda is evasive. She tries to divert him by suggesting that he take his affairs to the Norns (Fate) or to Bruennhilde (Will), but Wotan replies that he has already progressed beyond these. His question is for her alone: How can he accept his own destruction? This is the central point of the entire Ring. As Wagner wrote to Roeckel on completion of the poems:

We must learn to die, and to die in the fullest sense of the word; dread of the end is the source of all lovelessness and it is engendered only where love is already fading. . . . This is the whole lesson we have to learn from human history: to will the thing that must be and ourselves to fulfill it.<sup>41</sup>

A comparison of the music of this passage from Siegfried with a corresponding passage from Walkuere, in which Wotan, in a fit of despair, reveals to Bruennhilde his innermost desire for self-annihilation, is very instructive.

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<sup>41</sup>Altmann, op. cit.



WOTAN:

nur Ei - - - nes will ich noch:

das En - - - de das En - - - de!

Weisst du, was Wo - lan will? (Langes Schweigen)

Fig. 4 -- A Comparison of two passages from the Ring:  
Walkure, Act II, Scene iii, measures 350-357, and  
Siegfried, Act III, Scene i, measures 348-350.

These two examples contain exactly the same melodic and harmonic materials. There is no specific motive in them that is used anywhere else in the Ring, although the descending diminished seventh chord is related to the Ring motive.



Fig. 5 -- Ring Motive, Rheingold, Scene i, measure 582.

These two passages illustrate what Wagner meant when he claimed that the spectator would be able to justify the action "emotionally."<sup>42</sup> Unless he had studied the scores very carefully, the spectator would not consciously perceive that these two passages are identical, but the "feeling-tone" of the music would be unconsciously felt, and during the "long silence" following Wotan's outburst in the Siegfried passage the spectator would unconsciously make the connection and Wotan's subsequent actions would be perfectly understandable.

It is significant that Erda does not reply to Wotan's question. The implication of the music is clear: Wotan has realized it himself inwardly. The conclusion of the scene is a monologue addressed to Erda ("Dir, Urweisen . . .") during which the motive of "Love" appears for the first time:

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<sup>42</sup>See above, Chapter II, note 14.



(ORCHESTRA)

wa - - chend wirkt dein wis - sendes Kind er - lö - -

- - sen-de Wel - - - - - ten - that.

Fig. 6 -- Siegfried, Act III, Scene i, measures 407-414.

(" . . . your wisdom's child / shall perform a deed / to redeem the world.")

Thus Wotan prophesies a new birth of consciousness through love. Appropriately, he does not move from this position during the following scene with Siegfried. The wandering god has truly ceased his wanderings.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE SPIRIT OF WOTAN IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

We have seen that the progression that Wotan undergoes in the Ring is strikingly symbolic of the psychological progression towards psychic wholeness described by Jung. We have also seen that in the premise and completion of the Ring such an interpretation was farthest from Wagner's intentions. In order to reconcile these two statements we must recollect that Wagner's intentions were often at odds with his final achievements, as a single example should make clear.

As he originally conceived the opera Tristan und Isolde, it was to be a "monument to that most beautiful of dreams, in which that love shall for once be thoroughly satiated."<sup>1</sup> But it is precisely the point that such satiation never occurs at all. This is particularly clear in the music, with its unending deceptive resolutions and its famous "yearning" chromaticism. The two lovers achieve their consummation separately and this becomes the antithesis of love. Tristan attains a final terrifying vision of his

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<sup>1</sup>Briefwechsel zwischen Wagner und Liszt, Second Part, Erich Kloss, ed. (Leipzig, 1910), p. 43.

own death-wish while Isolde dissolves into a Nirvana of transfigured longing. The difference is that of the masculine and feminine principles, the one tending towards all-inclusive self-awareness, the other towards all-inclusive synthesis. This theme is not foreign to the Ring and springs directly from the third act of Siegfried, which Wagner was able to complete only after composing Tristan.<sup>2</sup> The problem of Wotan, that is, the attainment of wholeness through negation of the will, was much too big even for the four operas of the Ring. Tristan and Die Meistersinger are two excursions which Wagner found it necessary to make. Parsifal represents his final word, the final statement of his solution, which combines a theatricalized Christianity with a devitalized Wagnerism. Joseph Kerman, with Shaw, has held this final transformation to owe a greater share in its conception and completion to Wagner's concern with Wagnerism rather than to the genuine inspiration that surely burned in him during the conception of the Ring.<sup>3</sup> It was Cosima, his devoted and strong-willed second wife, who took him in hand and guided his spirit to the completion of the task he had set himself. She fostered

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<sup>2</sup>Robert Raphael, "The Redemption from Love in Wagner's Tristan," Monatshefte, LV (1963), p. 115.

<sup>3</sup>Joseph Kerman, "Debts Paid, Debts Neglected," in Henry Plaine, ed., Darwin, Marx, Wagner: A Symposium (University of Ohio Press, 1962), p. 147.

the cult of Wagnerism and Wagner's personal tragedy was that he came to care about this more than he did about his artistic integrity.<sup>4</sup> This cult that sprang up at Bayreuth made possible the absorption into the mystic Volk that Wagner had intuited long before but could not accomplish alone.

In the working out of the Ring, Wagner came only gradually to realize his real intentions.<sup>5</sup> What had begun to promise only sufficient material for a grand heroic opera became a life's task, a struggle with inner destiny. When one considers the enormous sacrifices Wagner went to in order to bring the Ring to its first representation (a span of over thirty years from its inception) the conclusion must be that he was driven by a compulsion far greater than a mere desire to have his works performed. As he said to Cosima at the completion of the Festspielhaus: "Every stone in that building is red with your blood and mine."<sup>6</sup> This compulsion is the same that drove him to attempt to synthesize all the arts into a visual form. It was a vital necessity for him to be able to project himself to the

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<sup>4</sup>Peter Viereck, Metapolitics (New York, 1941), p. 130.

<sup>5</sup>Wilhelm Altmann, Ed., Letters of Richard Wagner, pp. 310-312.

<sup>6</sup>Newman, Life of Wagner, Vol. IV, p. 485.

fullest. So realistic and cool a mind as Tolstoy's perceived this at once:

Above all, from the very beginning to the very end [of Siegfried], and in each note, the author's purpose is so audible and visible that one sees and hears neither Siegfried nor the birds, but only a limited, self-opinionated German of bad taste and bad style, who has a most false conception of poetry, and who, in the rudest and most primitive manner, wishes to transmit to me these false and mistaken conceptions of his.<sup>7</sup>

At bottom Wagner's compulsion was undoubtedly a native inability to come to terms with himself, to effect a conciliation within himself of the conscious mind and the unconscious. Jung has called this type of disposition hysterical:

An hysterical disposition means that the opposites inherent in every psyche, and especially those effecting character, are further apart than in normal people. This greater distance produces a higher energetic tension, which accounts for the undeniable energy and drive of the Germans. On the other hand, the greater distance between the opposites produces inner contradictions, conflicts of conscience, disharmonies of character--in short, everything we see in Goethe's Faust.<sup>8</sup>

It was clearly not enough for him simply to write the works and leave them behind to be produced as so many other great composers had done. His will was to make the works visible; only

<sup>7</sup>Lyof N. Tolstoi, "What Is Art?" Collected Works, Vol. 20 (New York, 1904), p. 119.

<sup>8</sup>Jung, Civilization in Transition, p. 207, 423.

then could he rest. "To bring the unconscious part of human nature to consciousness within Society . . . is the . . . task imposed upon us for the Future."<sup>9</sup> In all his dealings with other men he never felt himself anything but justified, even in the most outrageous demands.<sup>10</sup> He possessed an intellect of fantastic scope. This overcapacity was balanced, however, by a deficiency of morality, which in a deeper sense involves an inability to perceive the Shadow.<sup>11</sup> This Wagner could not do; therefore he was driven to project himself onto a long list of operatic characters who all commit transgressions against the accepted moral values and emerge completely justified, even as Wagner did! Artistic creation was the only possible outlet for his temperament, and it had to be a synthesis of all the arts in order to achieve his end. The art of music was to his intellect, represented by poetry, as the unconscious is to consciousness. This need that he felt to merge all the arts was thus a projection of his own need to conciliate the two halves of his psyche. In all his voluminous writings on pseudo-technical matters there is not one page devoted

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<sup>9</sup>Richard Wagner, Richard Wagner's Prose Works, translated by Ashton Ellis, Vol. II, Opera and Drama (London, 1893), pp. 193-194.

<sup>10</sup>Newman, Wagner as Man and Artist (New York, 1924; 1960), Introduction, pp. 3-30.

<sup>11</sup>Jung, Aion, p. 7.



to an objective theory of harmony, melody, or rhythm. The faculty of musical creation must have been wholly unconscious to him, and paradoxically, that is the only facet of his immense output that has exerted a substantial influence and that will survive. The "Tristan chord" is still a lively topic one hundred years after its first hearing, but his racial theories have sunk into the oblivion of dusty library shelves.

#### Wagner and National Socialism

And it would have been well if his racial and social writings had remained in oblivion, but the cult of Wagnerism, which gained momentum only after Wagner's death, and was upheld by Cosima and championed by Houston Stewart Chamberlain, seized upon all of Wagner's works and constructed a philosophy which, coinciding with the growing tide of nationalism and anti-Semitism, led to the seduction of an entire generation by another arch-Wagnerian, Adolf Hitler. The opera Lohengrin, which had captured the heart of Ludwig II at the age of fourteen, later worked a similar magic on the twelve-year-old Hitler. Both men saw themselves as saviours of German culture, but only Ludwig had any real claim to that pretension. As Schwarz-Alberich deigned to do the sinister deed that Licht-Alberich was incapable of, so did Hitler attempt to carry out

the conquest and genocide that Wagner had only implied. With the rise of Hitler, the spirit of Wotan was released from his bonds of pagan mythology into the world of men. Jung saw this clearly in 1936:

An ancient god of storm and frenzy, the long quiescent Wotan [has awakened] like an extinct volcano, to new activity, in a civilized country. . . . We have seen him come to life in the German Youth movement, and right at the beginning, the blood of several sheep was shed in honor of his resurrection.<sup>12</sup>

Alfred Rosenberg, the "philosopher" of Hitler's Reich, wrote:

Wotan, as the eternal mirror of the primeval soul-forces of the nordic man, is living today as 5,000 years ago.<sup>13</sup>

Wagner had created his Wotan a noble but erring god, not the criminal demonic spirit that possessed Hitler and his generation. This spirit was closer to the pagan Lord of the Gallows, with overtones of blasphemous magical powers. Such a spirit is found in Wagner's more unpleasant writings, such as "Judaism in Music," in which Wagner gives vent to an irresistible unconscious revulsion for his own shadow. Jung has written in this connection

We always rediscover our unconscious psychic contents in other people. [Thus] the coincidence of

<sup>12</sup>Jung, "Wotan," in Civilization in Transition, pp. 180: 373.

<sup>13</sup>Peter Viereck, Metapolitics (New York, 1941), p. 292.

anti-Semitism with the reawakening of Wotan is a psychological subtlety worth mentioning.<sup>14</sup>

Wagner then, as did Hitler later, feeling a collective empathy with the Volk and unable to come to terms with the Shadow, projected it onto an entire race, the Jews. There is an echo of Wagner's description of Alberich in Hitler's account of his first encounter with a city Jew in the streets of Munich: "an apparition in a black caftan and black hair locks. Is this a Jew? . . . Is this a German?" A few pages later he decides "the Jew is no German. [He is] the seducer of our people."<sup>15</sup>

Looking back at the nightmare of Nazi Germany, Jung wrote in 1945:

All these pathological features--complete lack of insight into one's own character, auto-erotic self-admiration and self-extenuation, denigration and terrorization of one's fellow men, projection of the Shadow, lying, falsification of reality, determination to impress by fair means or foul, bluffing and double-crossing--all these were united in the man who was diagnosed clinically as an hysteric, and whom a strange fate chose to be the political, moral, and religious spokesman of Germany for twelve years. Is this pure chance?<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Jung, Civilization in Transition, p. 181.

<sup>15</sup>Adolf Hitler, Mein Kampf, translated by Ralph Manheim (Boston, 1943), pp. 56, 61.

<sup>16</sup>Jung, "After the Catastrophe," in Civilization in Transition, p. 203.

He could almost be speaking of Wagner, who did indeed become the "political, moral, and religious spokesman" for a large number of Germans and foreigners in the generation following his death.

#### The Case of Nietzsche

Another aspect of the spirit of Wotan received a striking portrayal at the hands of Wagner's "brother in spirit," Friedrich Nietzsche. Both men have been cited as having an immense influence on Hitler, but both stand ultimately far above such distortion. They belong to a type of thinker called by Eric Bentley "Heroic Vitalists."<sup>17</sup> Jung finds Nietzsche a "prophetic example" from which the Germans could have learned much.<sup>18</sup> It was an early experience that marked Nietzsche. At the age of fifteen, he had a dream in which,

. . . as he was wandering about in a gloomy wood at night, he was terrified by a 'blood-curdling shriek from a neighboring lunatic asylum,' and soon afterwards he came face to face with a huntsman whose 'features were wild and uncanny.' Setting his whistle to his lips 'in a valley surrounded by wild scrub,' the huntsman blew such a shrill blast' that Nietzsche lost consciousness.

Jung comments on this:

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<sup>17</sup>Eric Bentley, A Century of Hero-Worship, pp. 101-190.

<sup>18</sup>Jung, Civilization in Transition, p. 212.

It is significant that in his dream Nietzsche, who in reality intended to go to Eisleben, Luther's town, discussed with the huntsman the question of going instead to "Teutschenthal" (Valley of the Germans). No one with ears to hear can misunderstand the shrill whistling of the storm-god in the nocturnal land.<sup>19</sup>

This figure of a Hunter-god was pictured in the fourth part of Also Sprach Zarathustra, in the section titled "The Magician," which is generally held to be a portrait of Wagner.

Unnamable, shrouded--terrible one!  
 Thou hunter behind clouds!  
 Struck down by thy lightning bolt,  
 Thou mocking eye that stares at me from the dark:  
 Thus I lie  
 Writhing, twisting, tormented  
 With all eternal tortures,  
 Hit  
 By thee, cruelest hunter,  
 Thou unknown god!

Some lines later he is called "Thou hangman-god!," a clear evocation of Wotan.<sup>20</sup> This passage is the symbolic rejection of Wagner's Weltanschauung by Nietzsche's symbol of wholeness, Zarathustra, who beats the moaning magician and denounces him as a fake and a liar.<sup>21</sup> Bentley speculates on Nietzsche's rejection of Wagner: "Was it partly because Wagner actually let his feminine

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 184.

<sup>20</sup>Friedrich Nietzsche, The Portable Nietzsche, translated by Walter Kaufman (New York, 1954), pp. 364-365.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 367.

nature speak in his works, thus giving utterance to what Nietzsche most loathed not only in Wagner but in himself?"<sup>22</sup> The Dionysian spirit that Nietzsche had exalted in The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music was also an attribute of Wotan: "Was it really only the classical philologist in Nietzsche that led to the god being called Dionysus instead of Wotan--or was it perhaps due to his fateful meeting with Wagner?"<sup>23</sup> Birth of Tragedy ends with a prediction in Wagnerian terms of Germany's coming greatness:

Let no one believe that the German spirit has irrevocably lost its Dionysiac home so long as those bird voices can clearly be heard telling of that home. One day the knight will awaken, in all the morning freshness of his long sleep. He will slay dragons, destroy the cunning dwarfs, rouse Bruennhilde, and not even Wotan's spear will be able to bar his way.<sup>24</sup>

Seventy-four years later, Alfred Rosenberg wrote an epitaph for Hitler in much the same terms:

. . . like Wotan, he wanted to build a Valhalla, but when the will to power and right broke asunder, this castle fell to dust. Hitler experienced Wotan's tragedy in his own person without being warned by it; and he buried Germany under the ruins of his Valhalla.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>22</sup>Bentley, op. cit., p. 184.

<sup>23</sup>Jung, Civilization in Transition, p. 383.

<sup>24</sup>Friedrich Nietzsche, The Birth of Tragedy and the Genealogy of Morals, translated by Francis Golffing (New York, 1956), p. 144.

<sup>25</sup>Alfred Rosenberg, Memoirs (Chicago, 1949), p. 325.

Here the cycle is complete. The vision of the German spirit, triumphant over evil, is first pictured as the conquering Siegfried, but when the Ergriffenheit<sup>26</sup> has passed, that spirit becomes Wotan, the "Arch-deceiver." Wagner, personally imbalanced, was able through a powerful mass-appealing art to project his imbalance onto an entire generation, which refused to see the full implications of the Ring and reenacted the tragedy upon itself.

#### German Philosophy and National Socialism

Jung was fully aware of the impending catastrophe from the beginning and has commented upon it with a breadth of understanding possessed by few. His evolving conception of the human psyche led him, after his break with Freud, to consider ever more deeply the phenomenon of the collective psyche of his age. This is the same collective psyche which Wagner had intuited and which he had written his works to affect. This was also the same collective psyche that Hitler, led by Wagner's example, had captured, making himself the instrument of its self-destructive destiny.

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<sup>26</sup>Jung, Civilization in Transition, p. 184. "Ergriffenheit - a state of being seized or possessed . . . Wotan is an Ergrifer of men, and, unless one wishes to deify Hitler--which indeed actually happened--he is really the only explanation. It is true that ~~Wotan shares~~ this quality with his cousin Dionysus, but Dionysus seems to have exercised his influence mainly on women."

From Schopenhauer's glimpse of the Will to Nietzsche's prophecy of the Uebersch and its subsequent vulgarization at the hands of Hitler, Jung has developed a description of the psyche capable of comprehending this massive cycle of events, the importance of which we have not yet begun to realize. The pattern of influences may be shown graphically by the following diagram:

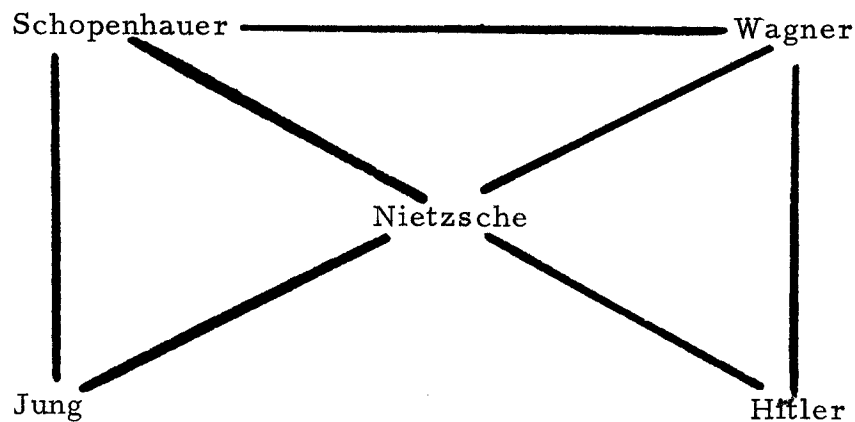


Fig. 7 -- A Diagram of the pattern of influences between Schopenhauer, Wagner, Nietzsche, Jung, and Hitler

Jung was drawn to Schopenhauer early, while still a school-boy. He relates in his autobiography that he was attracted by Schopenhauer's honesty in depicting the world as it is, in its harsh reality.<sup>27</sup> He rejected, however, Schopenhauer's pessimism and his solution to the problem of existence. Led on to the study of Kant,

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<sup>27</sup>Jung, Memories, Dreams, Reflections (New York, 1965), p. 69.



Jung discovered that Schopenhauer "had committed the deadly sin of hypostatizing a metaphysical assertion, and of endowing a mere noumenon, a Ding an sich, with special qualities."<sup>28</sup> Later he came to realize that Schopenhauer had tried to atone for the original sin of creation by negating the basic life-force.<sup>29</sup>

Nietzsche had been attracted to Schopenhauer for much the same reasons as Jung. Nietzsche, however, distorted Schopenhauer's tenets to fit his own evolving theories of salvation through art.<sup>30</sup> These ideas coincided with Wagner's and the two men were drawn to each other through a common regard for Schopenhauer and for the salvation of the German people through art.<sup>31</sup> Wagner's conception of the synthesis of the arts had undergone a change from its original form in Oper und Drama through his attempt to reconcile it with Schopenhauer's belief that such a thing was impossible.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 70.

<sup>29</sup>Jung, Symbols of Transformation (New York, 1956), p. 382.

<sup>30</sup>Frederick Love, Young Nietzsche and the Wagnerian Experience, University of North Carolina Studies in the Germanic Languages and Literatures, No. 39, 1963, p. 57.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 60.

<sup>32</sup>Jack M. Stein, Richard Wagner and the Synthesis of the Arts (Detroit, 1960), passim.

His new theory was expressed in his article "Beethoven," of the year 1870, when his relations with Nietzsche were at their best. In it, Wagner uses Schopenhauer's theory of dreams as "a kind of catalytic agent to unite Schopenhauer's metaphysics of music with [his] own conception of the Gesamtkunstwerk,"<sup>33</sup>

The figure of Nietzsche held special importance for Jung, who had grown up in Basel, where Nietzsche had lived and taught. Nietzsche's former teacher and great friend Jakob Burckhardt was still alive and a local legend in Jung's youth. Zarathustra made as great an impression on Jung as had Faust.<sup>34</sup> He perceived the split in Nietzsche's mind and likened it to his own second personality, of which he had been conscious since childhood.<sup>35</sup> Later, he saw Nietzsche's Dionysian experience as a prologue to a mass seizure of the Collective Unconscious, which he ascribed to the god Wotan as being more in keeping with the Germanic spirit.<sup>36</sup> Jung found that by declaring that God was dead, Nietzsche had sundered

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<sup>33</sup>Jack M. Stein, "The Influence of Schopenhauer on Wagner's Concept of the Gesamtkunstwerk," Germanic Review, XXII (1947), p. 100.

<sup>34</sup>Jung, Memories, Dreams, Reflections, p. 102.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 103.

<sup>36</sup>Jung, Psychology and Religion (New Haven, 1938; 15th printing 1964), p. 33.

the split in his mind. "[Nietzsche] was too positive a nature to content himself with a negative creed. For such a man it seems dangerous to make the statement that God is dead. He becomes instantly a victim of 'inflation.'"<sup>37</sup> This condition Jung also described as "God-Almightiness": "the picture of the hysterical state of mind, of Nietzsche's 'pale criminal'".<sup>38</sup><sup>39</sup> Such a state of mind on a mass scale was very receptive to the seductions of Hitler.

The history of Germany under Hitler is to Jung "the case-chart of an hysterical patient."<sup>40</sup>

The phenomenon we have witnessed in Germany was nothing less than the first outbreak of epidemic insanity, an irruption of the unconscious into what seemed to be a tolerably well ordered world. . . . Maybe the Germans were predestined to this fate, for they showed the least resistance to the mental contagion that threatened every European. . . . And what could they not have learned from the suet-and-syrup of Wagner!<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>37</sup>Ibid., p. 104.

<sup>38</sup>"An image made this pale man pale. He was equal to his deed [murder] when he did it; but he could not bear its image after it was done. Now he always saw himself as the doer of one deed. Madness I call this: the exception now becomes the essence for him. . . . the stroke that he himself struck stopped his poor reason. . . ." Zarathustra, Pt. I, Section 6, "On the Pale Criminal."

<sup>39</sup>Jung, Civilization in Transition, p. 215.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., p. 209:427.      <sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 412:432.

Wagner and Nietzsche were prophetic examples of this state of mind. This is the extent of their connection with National Socialism. Both men would never have advocated the conquest by force or the mass murders of the Nazi regime. However, Jung does not feel that such manifestations must be the final result of the reawakening of the archetype of Wotan.

Wotan must, in time, reveal not only the restless, violent, stormy side of his character, but also his ecstatic and mantic qualities--a very different aspect of his nature. If this conclusion is correct, National Socialism would not be the last word.<sup>42</sup>

Der Ring des Nibelungen is unique in the history of art.

To paraphrase a term from Hegel, it may be considered a "World-historical Art-work." It stands as the climax of the great German Romantic movement. Its historical advent coincides with the emergence of a united Germany as a great political power. As a psychological phenomenon, it is the eruption into consciousness of a long quiescent archetype, of a "Germanic datum of first importance."<sup>43</sup> The subsequent history of Germany follows as night follows day.

The spirit of Wotan was recognized over two thousand years ago. It was worshipped because it was the source of a great and mysterious power. Jung shares this reverence, though in keeping

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<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 192:399.      <sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 186.

with our manner of thinking he re-locates its proper place in the human psyche, making possible its re-integration with consciousness. The need for this is surely evident to anyone who has felt the chilling dread of imminent world-annihilation. The shrill whistle of the nocturnal storm-god may sound once again. Will there be ears to hear it?

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