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Breaking down the neurotic-psychotic artifice: The subversive function of myth in Goethe, Nietzsche, Rilke and Walter Benjamin

Lundgren, Neale Powell, Ph.D.

Emory University, 1988

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BREAKING DOWN THE NEUROTIC-PSYCHOTIC ARTIFICE:
THE SUBVERSIVE FUNCTION OF MYTH IN GOETHE, NIETZSCHE,
RILKE AND WALTER BENJAMIN

By

Neale Powell Lundgren
B.A., Loyola University, 1976
M. A., St. John's University, 1982

Adviser: Dr. Robert Detweiler

A Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School
of Emory University in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

The Graduate Institute of the Liberal Arts

1988

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Breaking Down The Neurotic-Psychotic Artifice:
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Rilke and Walter Benjamin

This dissertation re-examines the principal philosophical thrusts of the German Enlightenment period, from the perspective of their totalizing-mythological function, and investigates how this function is criticized by the *non-totalizing function of myth* found within the primary mythical images in the work of Goethe, Nietzsche, Rilke, and Walter Benjamin.

Utilizing the revolutionary book by Hans Blumenberg (*Work On Myth* 1979) on the function of myth in German Idealism and Romanticism, I instigate a discourse between Blumenberg's totalizing work on myth and the negative-dialectical work on myth as proposed by Theodor Adorno. I locate the German origins of this negative-dialectical myth-making in the work of Goethe, specifically his non-totalizing image, *Wilhelm Meister*. I locate the development of this use of myth in Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*, and, finally, trace a similar function at work in Rilke's *Malte* and Walter Benjamin's *historical materialist* .

Contrary to Habermas, who argues that Nietzsche opened up two roads to postmodernity, one leading to the "ontologization of aesthetics" (Heidegger) and the other to the "totalizing critique" of reason (Adorno/ Horkheimer), I put forth the argument that the Nietzschean "two roads" metaphor is useful but needs to be re-shaped, configuring one road toward the mythological history and historical mythology of Rilke and Walter Benjamin, and another road to Theodor Adorno's *"thorough critique"* of reason.

The need to revise Habermas's "two roads to post-modernity" theory mythographically, rests on the primary investigation of this dissertation: *to trace by de-scription the practical incarnation of the word on German soil (from the time of the classical-biblical syncretism of mythological in-scription around the fourth century to our present one).* I define this process of"practical incarnation" as *that word which subversively desires to de-scribe and trans-figure the neurotic (oedipal)-psychotic (narcissan) structure* that has defined the parameters of Western discourse, at least since neo-Platonic Christianity influenced cultural codifications of the West. Finally, I maintain that the *primary image of criticism* which emerges from the dialectical work of the writers herein, is the image of *man-child, a classless, non-totalizing image* implicit in Goethe's Wilhelm Meister, and developed in the *Kind-Mensch* constellation in the work of Nietzsche, Rilke, and Walter Benjamin.

For my mother, Antoinette
tanti bacci

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Breaking Down the Neurotic-Psychotic Artifice:
The Subversive Function of Myth in Goethe, Nietzsche, Rilke and Walter Benjamin

Chapter One. The Breakdown of Language:
De-scribing the Oedipal-Narcissan Code

When the Word Was Made Flesh or When Man Said,
"Let There Be Enlig*ht*enment"

It is impossible to pinpoint when and where the written word of German culture showed its first pathological symptoms, when it began the process of becoming flesh, and therefore, like the human body, subject to the vicissitudes of historical time. Perhaps no one ever guessed it was necessary for the word to incarnate *practically* until some time after the Middle Ages, some time after the biblical word, impelled by the scientific advance of the printing press, was made to do what it pretended to do for aeons; that is, it was made "flesh," brought into history by the *human* mind so that it might eventually become *de-scriptive* and *trans-figurative* of the individual's condition in the everyday world.[1]

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[1] Searching for an appropriate image by which to convey the dichotomy between the neo-Platonic Christian doctrine of the Logos and the actual instances of the "word" in the mode of written language desiring to change historical conditions, I came up with what I call "practical incarnation." By this term I mean all those moments in history when thought becomes embodied in outward action, when language (in the mode of the "thought of" and "written down" word) becomes an accurate *de-scription* of what is the "matter" with the everyday world, and better, becomes a catylist for the the world's concrete *trans-figuration* in the here and now, rather than the "Word" merely in-scribing the disembodied "spiritual" beliefs, aspirations and dreams of Christianity, isolated in the realm of sacred symbol, connoting a divine person. If the incarnation of the word remains an ossified, theological doctrine, paradoxically, (as doctrine or crystallized idea) it can never enter the historical world

The history of Germany's incarnation of the word began in the fourth century, with Bishop Vefila's translation of the Bible from Latin and Greek to Gothic tongue.[2] This same process was continued from an altogether different angle in the fifth century by Theodoric and Boethius, both of whom supported the humanistic revival of classic literature as a "Christian" project.[3]

Although the thorough Christianization of the Franks and Germans was insured under the rule of Charlemagne in the eighth and early ninth centuries, the mythical tale of *Heliand* in the early part of the ninth century (wherein the life of Christ is made to correspond to the customs of the Saxon people) attests to the fact that Christianity's survival by adaptation to the humanistic literature of its day, contributed as well to the word's process of *practical incarnation.* [4]

The Cluniac reform movement in the eleventh century (although meant to strengthen ecclesial power) led to the liberal education of members of the nobility who were not destined for the

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of becoming. Hence, by using the term "practical incarnation" I do not intend to give this dissertation a theological cast, thereby limiting the breadth of audience. Rather, I intend (through negative dialectic) to render accessible one of the most provocative and yet impenetrable metaphors in western theology, which has served only to separate biblical discourse from everyday discourse, rendering the doctrine of the "Word made flesh" an un-empowered, sectarian and antiquated concept. Nonetheless, the Christian doctrine of the incarnation, however interpreted, witnesses to one of the oldest and perhaps deepest (albeit ambivalent) beliefs of the human race: that what is sacred desires to become profane; not in any diabolical sense, but in a historical-redemptive sense.

[2] Kurt Reinhardt, *Germany 2000 Years. Volume 1. The Rise and Fall of the "Holy Empire"* (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1966) 22.

[3] Ibid., 26

[4] Ibid., 57.

monastic life or for the priesthood.[5] And in the fourteenth century, Marsilius of Padua (advisor to Louis the Bavarian) not only weakened the authority of the Papacy by demanding that all questions of doctrine be left up to a "general council," but certainly signaled the upcoming problem of proprietorship as to the institutional ownership of the biblical word.[6] Certainly John Huss, in the latter part of the fourteenth century, did not help matters for the institutionalized biblical word, when he advocated the "use of the vernacular in the liturgy" and "launched a campaign against the wealth of the clergy."[7]

Later, as a result of the Hussite movement in general, the Bible was translated into the Czech language. From one perspective, this would be to the advantage of the Church's long-standing desire for world-wide missionization. But from another perspective this could be seen as further fuel for the Church's secularization machine, an automotion which the hierarchical body of the Church accepted, but with a certain amount of reluctance.

The fifteenth century marked the emergence of "professional scribes" whose sole occupation consisted in the copying of religious books for mass consumption, a kind of work previously practiced (and owned) only by monks and clerics.[8] But it was John Gensfleisch

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[5] Ibid., 78.
[6] Ibid., 173.
[7] Ibid., 176-177.
[8] Ibid., 189.

Gutenberg's invention of "movable metal types" that contributed to the "public enlightenment" of Germany, and it was perhaps this single cultural advance that put the once inaccessible biblical word into the hands not only of the priviliged few, but into those of the many.[9]

In the middle of the sixteenth century, with the appearance of both Martin Luther's translation of the New Testament from Greek into the German language and his essay on the "Freedom of a Christian Man," the religious word made a further advance toward the everyday world. The phenomenon of the German Peasants' War (1517) in part, can only be explained as the result of *what happened when the religious word started to be made flesh in Germany; that is, it incarnated in a real historical situation, showing that it had the capacity to influence actual conditions in the everyday world.*

By the late sixteenth century, the *poet* who apprenticed himself under a master was given the title "scribe" (Schreiber), a century earlier given only to those who were copying specifically "religious" works.[10] The poet had to go through a long learning process until he was promoted from "scribe" to "master" (Meister). The rapid growth of the literary scribe profession (which epitomized the classical

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[9] Ibid., 190. An example of the "cross contamination" of texts, between the creative work which resulted from the synthesis between naive biblical faith and the anxiety producing advances of modern science is well illustrated by Albrecht Dürer's two woodcarvings "Melancholia" (1514) and "Knight, Death, and the Devil" (1513). Cf. Reinhardt, 197.
[10] Ibid., 202.

Graeco-Roman revival begun by Theodoric and Boethius, and continued by Ulrich von Hutten and Franz von Sickingen) along with the profession of the religious scribe (who began mass producing the Bible and other religious works), certainly served to promote more than the missionization project of the Church.

These events set the stage for a new kind of awakening in Germany, which was initiated (at least in part) by the visual *objectification* of the religious word as a result of its easier accessibility to those outside the religious institution. This phenomenon would make it possible for the human subject to begin to see close up the *difference* between the ideal messages embodied in the classical and biblical word and his own historical condition. In other words, the less the doctrine of the "Word-made-flesh" was in the sole possession of the Church and privileged aristocracy (who guarded it and kept it safe from "contamination" for centuries), the more chances the liberally-educated nobility and emerging intellectual-middle class would have to explore the possibilities of this new-found freedom. No longer would there be an unchangeable, inaccessible "holy" canon. The religious word would experience a new life, a fluid, mobile and malleable character in the minds of thinkers who would merge biblical and classical ideas into a humanistic science.

The rational-philosophical productions of the word in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries by Descartes, Spinoza, and Leibniz, spawned the so-called "Deism" or "rationalistic theology,"

championed by Melancthon and Erasmus of Rotterdam, and emerged alongside its counterpart, "Pietism."[11] This new kind of religious thinking proper to Deism suggested that God created the universe initially, but left it to humankind to shape it with the *reasonable* tool of its own moral responsibility .

It would be an oversimplification to suggest that Pietism was merely the obvious reaction on the part of the *faithful* against a theological rationalism which went against the grain of a still popular sentiment (augmented by Martin Luther) of salvation [by grace]-through-faith-alone; in other words, a mere internal issue between a Church of antiquity and a Church of the upcoming modern world.[12] It is more probable that the growing opposition between faith and reason in the religious institutions of Germany was yet another consequence of the word beginning-to-be-made flesh; that is, the word's becoming an objective reflection of a growing desire (at least on the part of Germany's intellectual elite) for self-autonomy.

In this sense, German rationalism need be seen as the vanguard of early modernism, as the consequence of the social/cultural desire to tame a universe no longer controlled by one God or a multiplicity of divine forces. For many it was thought at this time that primitive

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[11] Ibid., 356.

[12] Cf. chapter two of my dissertation wherein I discuss the tenuous political and religious situation in Germany during the eighteenth century, parallelling Germany's own golden age of rationalism, the rise of the intellectual bourgeoisie, and the focused attempt to unify the nation through an appeal to the moral order of a rationalized universe.

man had stepped out of the dark night of faith in order to bathe in the pristine dawn of theological reason, leaving his "uncivilized" and superstitious past forever behind.

It is in this sense that one need regard Lessing's alteration of the Faust legend in the eighteenth century, whereby "Faust is not damned but saved" for desiring to penetrate the mysteries of the universe.[13] This also explains Lessing's own "enlightened theology" which held that "'the letter is not the Spirit, and the Bible is not identical with religion'."[14] This realization, however, brought with it the problem of reconciling this new *freedom of thought* with the moral imperative to *act* responsibly.

No one more than Kant was familiar with this dilemma. It was just before the French Revolution that Kant wrote his essay *"What is Enlightenment?"*, a reflection influenced by a problem raised by the *Berlinische Monatschrift* (1784), which dealt with the new-felt tension among members of the German intellectual community between the promise and limitation of Enlightenment reason.

The two principal messages of Kant's important essay were 1) an overt appeal to Frederick the Great to tolerate free public debate, and 2) a subversive message: i.e., a subtle identification between the right of the state to regulate discourse and the need for an intellectual community's discourse to be regulated, but solely by the principle of

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[13] William Rose, *Men, Myths, and Movements in German Literature. A Volume of Historical and Critical Papers* (New York: Kennikat Press, 1964) 78.
[14] Reinhardt, 374.

reason.[15] For Kant, obedience to the state (and not subservience to the church) was postulated as a society-control measure, leaving freedom of public debate as a way for enlightened reason to direct the future course of society.

Kant's explicit stand on religion, found in his "Post-French Revolution" essay *Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der blossen Vernunft* (1793), expressed the solid rationalistic tenor of theology prevalent at this stage of the German Enlightenment. For Kant, it was the "idea of the good principle" which "reason" presents to one, that gives one "power."[16] In Book Three of the *Religion* essay Kant wrote that "only pure religious faith, which bases itself entirely on reason," is the faith of the "true church."[17] Later in the same essay, Kant made an appeal for the universalization of religion through reason, based on what he called "pure moral faith" or "rational faith."[18]

One would do well to keep in mind that Kant's *Religion* essay was composed during the crucial time of Germany's growing disillusionment with the French Revolution. The storming of the Bastille on July 14, 1789, gave way to a dictatorial reign of terror in

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[15] Immanuel Kant, *Was ist Aufklärung ?* in *Werke* 4. (Berlin: Bruno-Cassirer Verlag, 1922) 170, 176.

[16] Immanuel Kant, *Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der blossen Vernunft* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner-Verlag, 1956) 63; Christian von Wolff (1679-1754), one of the first popularizers of Leibniz's views, believed that there were "no mysteries in heaven and on earth: everything became perfectly clear... once it was exposed to the tranquil searchlight of reason...", and is considered the "Father of German Enlightenment"; Cf. Reinhardt, *Germany 2000 Years. Volume 2* , 360.

[17] Kant, *Die Religion* , 126.

[18] Ibid., 129,131.

1793 by the radical Jacobin minority.[19] After the military intervention of the old European powers, the gloomy situation in Paris changed the minds of German intellectuals who had been following the political developments in France with earnest.[20]

Kant's rational theology represents a watershed point in the process of Germany's word-made-flesh, in that it shifted the focus of German Enlightenment thought from the concern with "rational faith" in the biblical word as such to *faith in reason* itself. In this way the biblical word was (for the time being) mobilized and set free from the immovable reaches of the scriptural canon.

Now it seemed that the hellenized biblical word (i.e., the Logos), for centuries utilized by the Christian theologians of Graeco-Roman antiquity, would now become the vehicle for exploration--not into the nature of a divine man--but rather, a guide for a new journey into the interior mechanism of human consciousness. What began as a theological-rationalist project, would become for German Enlightenment thought a philosophical-idealist project.[21],[22]

[19] Han's Joachim Schrimpf, *Zeittafel* in *Der Schriftsteller als öffentliche Person* (Berlin: 1977) 294.

[20] Cf. especially in this regard Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Beitrag zur Berichtigung der Urteile des Publikums über die französische Revolution* (1793) in *Schriften von 1797-1801. 3* (Leipzig: Felix Meiner-Verlag, 1922).

[21] Cf. the logos doctrines of the second century theologians Justin Martyr and Irenaeus in Richard Norris Jr.'s *The Christological Controversy* (Philadelphia, 1980) 6,53, wherein the logos is identified with "divine reason." As early as the second century the concept of Logos was dislodged from its earlier, semitic soil (i.e. from its association with the Jewish "Name"[dabar] of G-d, with the self-revealing character of divine reality in the world) and took on neo-Platonic and Stoic connotations.

[22] The practice of dividing and departmentalizing the intellectual disciplines was favored by Aristotle, and continued by the medieval monks and scholastic theologians in the Middle Ages. An interesting phenomenon occurred in the

As early as 1795, it was Schelling, at that time a member of the radical idealist circle with Hegel and Hölderlin at Württenberg, who began to express more concern about first principles of philosophy, rather than rational-theological speculations on how freedom of thought might give rise to moral action.

Yet it was Fichte, whose philosophy Schelling and Hölderlin eventually assimilated into their own, who originally emphasized the importance of the *activity of consciousness* and its primary role in establishing self-autonomy. Like Kant, Fichte was steeped in the rationalism of Descartes and Spinoza, and he, like his forebears, believed that the self was the source of freedom. Fichte was convinced he had found the "all in one" (which Spinoza was looking for) in his notion of the absolute Ich.[23]

In Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre* (1797) he stressed the importance of the "pure activity" of thought, and that "pure thought" is a "self-producing activity."[24] For Fichte, on account of the absolute Ich being *activity as such* , it is "for itself;" therefore, the absolute Ich is *free*, based on this capability.[25] For Fichte, God is identified with the "Word" (in the classical sense of the Logos) as the principle of moral

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eighteenth century German Enlightenment period, where the strict divisions between "moral theology" and "ethics" no longer applied with absoluteness. The fusion between rational thought and biblical faith is, of course, most apparent in Schelling's *Vom Ich* essay wherein he identifies the absolute "Ich" not only with the self, but with God. Cf. my dissertation, page 10.

[23] Cf. Spinoza, *Ethica Ordine Geometrico Demonstrata* , Definitions 3, 4, 5, 45.

[24] Cf. Fichte, *Zweite Einleitung in die Wissenschaftslehre* (1797) in the *Schriften 3*, 457.

[25] Ibid., 462.

order in the world. Fichte believed that when the human absolute Ich acts, it does so always in harmony with the divine Word.[26]

Like Fichte, who claimed to have found the "all in one" of philosophy in the absolute Ich, Schelling, in *Vom Ich als Prinzip der Philosophie* (1795), refers to the Ich as the "original source," "cause," and "essence" of being.[27] Going one step further than Fichte, Schelling subjugates moral law to what he calls the "highest law" which states, "Be absolutely identical with yourself."[28] For Schelling, the goal of our moral striving (which is the realization of our self-identity) is achieved not through moral or social action, but through the exercise of our "intellectual intuition," the *activity of consciousness*, which has one goal: oneness with .he pure and absolute Ich, the self, God.[29]

Schelling merges Kantian, Spinozian, and Fichtean thought, but goes more in the direction of Fichte in establishing the unconditional principle as residing in an intellectually intuited, pure, absolute Ich. Freedom for Schelling, as with Fichte, is equated with pure, *self-producing activity*. Schelling came to believe that he solved Spinoza's problem of how finite modes are generated from the infinite modes, by positing that the pure self-producing activity differentiates itself

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[26] Cf. William L. Reese, *Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion. Eastern and Western Thought* (Sussex: Harvester Press, 1980) 173.

[27] Friedrich Wilhelm Schelling, *Werke 2* (Stüttgart: Fromann Holboog-Verlag, 1980) 121.

[28] Ibid., 126.

[29] Ibid., 128.

into finite modes; in other words, that the activity of the absolute "I" generates the not-"I". What Schelling seems to end up with, however, is no more than a philosophy of identity, a pantheism of interiority, an *ahistoric totality*, whereby everything in the external world is mentally identified with the pure, absolute Ich--an idealistic inversion of Spinoza's "substance" pantheism.

Fichte's and Schelling's absolute "I" epitomizes the project of German Idealism and the whole of German Enlightenment thought: to make the rationalized word flesh; to get somehow from free thought to free action after the Fall of the biblical word. But did the German Idealists accomplish this, or did they do no more than claim for themselves the *possibility* of self-autonomy? The question then remains as to whether or not the free-willed *thought* of German Idealism *necessarily* results in a free *action* . Perhaps it only remains an interior, mental activity, producing little, if nothing, in the *exterior* world.

If this be the case, then *German Idealism may have hindered the project begun by the German Enlightenment, by its having taken the "word" that was beginning to be made "flesh," and merely transplanting it from a rational-theological to a rational-philosophical realm;* in other words, from one mental realm to another. If so, then the project of German Idealism (namely, the one put into force by Fichte and Schelling) did not result in the word-made-flesh, but rather in the *word-made-human mind.* The kind of autonomy that

Fichte and Schelling succeeded in attaining was freedom as an eternal idea, a timeless, ahistorical notion of *possible* autonomy.

But *when words are made flesh, thoughts become actions, philosophy (as well as theology) becomes worldly, ideas as well as doctrines do not crystallize (remaining impenetrable to the day to day concerns of the world), but prudently serve as temporary de-scriptions and guidelines, giving future direction based on concrete situations and the best possible "next step" for a particular human community at a particular place and time.*

The German Idealist claim of the self-autonomous "I" was no more than a harmless psychotic victory; that is, a mere tour de force of the *inscribed* word *against* the historical moment on the battle-front of the interior. Perhaps it was hoped that the freedom an activity of God or an activity of state could not produce, could be accomplished through an *activity of mind* ; in other words, a mental act of negating the reality of the historical situation within an enclosed idea of freedom.

The German Idealism project may, nonetheless, be seen as contributing to the process of practical incarnation, in that the movement officially *inscribed* for posterity, the word's certain fall from being exclusively "divine" mind (and thus, imprisoned in classical-biblical antiquity) to the word's becoming "human" mind, thereby contributing to the overall the process of the word's entry into the concrete world. After German Idealism got done with the

word, it was no longer the sole property of theology, although still within the interior realm of philosophy, by the degree of mind's preoccupation with *mental activity.*

But more importantly perhaps,*the* question that seemed to lurk behind German Enlightenment thought with growing force was how one was to live in a universe no longer ruled entirely by divine forces, or their human intermediaries. The answer was believed to reside, for the time being, in the rarified realm of philosophy.

The next section of this introductory chapter on the breakdown of language will focus on the close connection between a certain kind of myth-making and the key concepts forwarded by German Idealism, which may very well have impeded the practical incarnation of the word in eighteenth-century Germany.

I will proceed by way of two opposing assessments of German Idealism, one by the modern theorist Hans Blumenberg, and the other by the Frankfurt School advocates of critical theory, Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer.

Idealism and the Totalizing Function of Myth

I will argue that Blumenberg's *Work on Myth* (1979) should specifically be read as a negative response to Adorno and Horkheimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1972), and, in general, as a negative response to the whole of Adorno's critical theory. In brief, Blumenberg's book is an appeal to return to the project of German Idealism, which (to the author's mind) properly sets *reason against faith* as the only viable way for the individual to claim full autonomy. On the other hand, for Adorno/Horkheimer, the overriding question is whether or not (since the German Enlightenment) reason has forwarded or markedly inhibited the humanization process.[30]

Adorno/Horkheimer's work is an appeal to set *reason against reason*, as a way of checking and re-checking the theoretical method that more often than not coincides with rather than criticizes the prevalent crystallization of thought and custom (namely, ideology) of whatever group happens to be in power at a given historical period. When this happens, idea can easily become ideology, in the same way that a theological interpretation tends to

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[30] I take the "humanization process" (according to Adorno) as the individual's ongoing socialization through non-privatized thinking. In order to become a functional vehicle toward this process, reason need always be cautious of its tendency to isolate the thinking process from the historical process (that is, thought separating itself from the world of external action by means of abstraction).

develop into an ossified doctrine given the right historical
circumstances.[31]

For Blumenberg, the "work on myth" (i.e., the ongoing re-working of
inherited mythical materials by "distortion" and "inversion") was
successfully handled by the German Idealists' (e.g., Fichte and
Schelling) by their absolutizing of the "I."[32] This absolutizing of the
"I" is more than just the "work*of* myth" (which Blumenberg calls
the "the absolutism of reality"; i.e., the original function of myth).[33]
What Blumenberg has in mind is German Idealism's "work *on* " the
biblical creation myth, claiming that Fichte and Schelling's "I"
succeeded as a "work on myth" because their "I" was the absolute

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[31] I am thinking here of Emperor Constantine's calling of the Council of Nicea and
establishment of the Edict of Milan in the fourth century, the one attempting to
solve overtly a theological dispute over the problem of the divine and human
personality of Jesus, and the other, instigated covertly as a political unification
measure.

[32] Hans Blumenberg, *Work on Myth* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1985), translated by
Robert M. Wallace and first published in 1979, 266,268.

[33] Blumenberg's work is crucial for the study of myth because he focuses on the
original reception of myth rather than on the origin of myth as such (Cassirer).
Blumenberg takes Cassirer's notion of myth as a "symbolic" form and makes the
revision that myth is, rather, a "form as such, by which to define the undefined;"
168. One need view Cassirer's overall theory of symbolic forms and their
relationship to mythical thought in the context of a neo-Kantianism, whereby the
subject's experience of objective reality (i.e. phenomena) is mediated by symbolic
forms. It is through the image, which early mythical consciousnness forms, that
power is gained over the thing "named." Cassirer remains a strict neo-Kantian in
that his symbolic form theory presupposes the absolute separation between thought
and being. It was Cassirer's intent to take the world of myth seriously, yet at the same
time he wanted to overcome the problem of German Idealism, which presupposed
the supremacy and originality of thought. Even though Cassirer's original myth-
making consciousness remains confined within Kant's category of phenomena (and,
in this case, subject to critique) his work remains important because his theory of
symbolic forms opened another discussion as to the *function of myth* and the
original relationship between myth and language, a subject which Blumenberg picks
up; Cf. Ernst Cassirer, *Language and Myth* (New York: Dover Publication Inc., 1953),
36, translated by Susan Langer.

distortion and inversion of the monotheistic, Judaeo-Christian God.[34]

Blumenberg believes that myth works on the side of humanity only when reason claims back for itself the power it originally gave to mythical figures; that "myth allows man to live, by depleting superior power."[35] To take a specific example, Blumenberg reads Schelling's inversion of the biblical creation myth--i.e., that after creation, the Hebrew God became blind and needed man to see-- as the "adjustment accomplished in remythicization which allows man to live to the extent that god loses."[36]

Blumenberg believes that the primary motivation behind the German Idealism project was to find ways to "de-divinize" the gods, which to his mind were originally a human invention stimulated by the "terrors of the unknown."[37] Consequently, for Blumenberg, it is the ultimate task of the modern thinker to carry through this initial "work on myth" begun by the German Idealists, by becoming ourselves Prometheans, stealers of the divine fire, courageous assertors of self-autonomy.

Adorno and Horkheimer's assessment of German Idealism, as already mentioned, proceeds from an altogether different premise.[38]

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[34] Ibid., 274.

[35] Ibid., 31.

[36] Ibid., 213.

[37] Ibid., 388.

[38] Cf. my chapter three on Nietzsche for a thorough discussion of Habermas's critique of Adorno/Horkheimer via Nietzsche's mythological figure, Dionysus.

Both thinkers, having backgrounds in humanist studies, and rooting their theory in the neo-Marxism of Georg Lukács, base their dialogue with German Idealism on a critical view of reason itself, specifically, as regards' the eighteenth-century German intellectual movement's glorification of the power of reason; their faith in reason's ability to produce human freedom on the historical level.

This does not mean that Adorno/Horkheimer take a conservative, or irrationalist stance of any kind on the issue Löwith), nor do they bracket out "theoretical" reason, opting for a "practical" moralist ethic (Kant). What both theorists intend to promote is a rigorous process of reason set against itself (Nietzsche) . This is an *aufhebung* process whereby 1) a concept generates its own contradiction, 2) the contradiction (or negation) is used as a tool to observe man's second nature or culture, 3) a useful remnant is searched for from within the contradiction, a pregnant possibility, a non-totalizing image which might prove to be helpful in a *temporary* way for humanity at a *particular* moment in history. As Adorno and Horkheimer write in their Introduction to the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* , "the task to be accomplished is not the conservation of the past, but the *redemption of the hopes of the past.*"[39]

Blumenberg and Adorno/Horkheimer do agree on the close

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critique of Adorno/Horkheimer via Nietzsche's mythological figure, Dionysus.
[39] Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1972) , translated by John Cumming, xv; Italics mine.

connection between mythology and the concepts forwarded by the German Enlightenment. However, according to Adorno/Horkheimer, the "universality of ideas" held by the German Enlightenment is based on a "domination of abstraction" in the conceptual sphere, and nurtured through history by a praxis of "actual domination."[40] They cite Odysseus and the "proprietor relationship" he maintained toward his belongings, as an early example of this domination process. Continuing with this line of thought, Adorno/Horkheimer claim that philosophy (i.e., idealism) and mythology share a "longing...[for] a lost remote antiquity."[41] To their view, this longing which drives Idealism is a longing for totality. Adorno/Horkheimer do not have a problem with the "longing" as such, but with the *concepts of totality* which that longing generates through rationalization.[42] The "homeland" for which the idealist really longs, is not anything which can be rationalized into existence; rather, it is "nature itself as wrested from myth."[43]

According to Adorno/Horkheimer, the tendency to *totalize the world through rationalized thought* (which to their view is the epitomy of enlightenment thinking) has infiltrated all of western

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[40] Ibid., 14.

[41] Ibid., 78.

[42] "Reason contributes only the idea of systematic unity, the formal elements of fixed conceptual coherence"; Cf. Adorno and Horkheimer, Ibid., 82. This is a prime example of not only mistaking the map for the territory itself, but confusing the ideas which reason generates with the actual state of affairs in the world. Cf. also Martin Jay's concept of totality on page twenty-three of this dissertation.

[43] Ibid., 78.

society's modern modes of production, thereby increasing our separation from our "first" nature, and decreasing our control over our "second" nature, culture. As a result, culture has become, for the modern era, the "cultural industry", nurtured on our fetishistic need for "distraction," and "subsumed under one false formula: the totality of the culture industry."[44]

Furthermore, rather than fostering reflection (in the mode of negative dialectics), the culture industry, having now become the "etertainment business," can only offer the consumer "freedom from thought and from negation." Finally, Adorno/Horkheimer tell the historian of ideas that if he would make a "philosophical interpretation of world history," he would need to write a history of how the "rational domination of nature comes increasingly to win the day."[45]

Hans Blumenberg, an historian of ideas, does not take seriously Adorno/Horkheimer's critical neo-Marxist approach to the project of German Idealism. He opts rather to write a history of how the individual has attempted a rational domination over the gods, for the sake of human advancement. For Blumenberg, the freedom which the self is obliged to seek--if he truly desires autonomy--is a freedom from dominion by all supernatural powers. These

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[44] Ibid., 136.
[45] Ibid., 223.

supernatural powers need to be seen for what they are: illusions, which, from the beginning, primitive man "named" as a way to alleviate his anxiety over the "terrors of the unknown."[46]

The critical theory of Adorno/Horkheimer (albeit Adorno's critical effort, in particular, remaining central to this study) maintains that human history is equal to the history of domination, and began when the individual initially began to reason nature into a distant abstraction. In their view, authentic freedom is unthinkable without unilateral "social emancipation."[47] Moreover, ideology (which is none other than a philosophy of totality given momentum by a nationalist sentiment toward unity) always reflects what in the outside world is "economic coercion," when that ideology proclaims individual freedom from within the prison walls of mentality.[48]

As I mentioned at the beginning of this section on Idealism and totalizing myth, Blumenberg's *Work on Myth* is not only a response to Adorno and Horkheimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, but an answer to Adorno's own criticism of German Idealism, and to the more recent schools of phenomenology which emerged in the early part of this century, of which Heidegger's thought (according to Adorno) is the culmination.

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[46] Ibid., 388.
[47] Ibid., xiii.
[48] Ibid., 167.

Blumenberg criticizes Heidegger's philosophy of being to the extent that it does not follow his own dictum of distortion and inversion of the god-myths with enough rigor. Consequently, Blumenberg compares what he calls Heidegger's "story of Being" to the German Romantic school's search for origins, in that both attempted a return to a "true past" in order to realize a "true future."[49] Blumenberg maintains that Heidegger's method is correct, but it lacks the strength proper to a Promethean kind of thinking, which would regard the transformation of an earlier mighty god into a lifeless concept of being, as too weak an endeavor. What is necessary is a full rebellion "against all heavenly and earthly gods."[50]

As can be anticipated, Adorno criticizes Heidegger for different reasons, the first being that, to his way of thinking, an "ontologization of history" justifies a "submission--not to the gods--but to "historical situations."[51] In a later essay, Adorno argues that modern ontological thought (before Heidegger) forwarded the same antithesis between nature and history as German Idealism before it held.[52] Adorno believes that idealism and phenomenology are similar in that, for both schools of thought, nature equals myth (i.e. as that pre-determined being underlying history), and history equals that which

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[49] Blumenberg, 52.

[50] Ibid., 584.

[51] Theodor Adorno, *Negative Dialectics* (New York: Seabury Press, 1973), translated by E.B. Ashton, 130.

[52] Theodor Adorno,"The Idea of Natural-History" in *Telos 60* , 1984: 111, translated by Bob Hullot-Kentor.

appears as new (i.e., real novelty). For Adorno, this separation between nature and history proposes another problem: if nature and history are antithetical, then there can be no justifiable mediation from thought to being. As a result, early ontological phenomenology ends in the same kind of subjectivism with which German Idealism began: when meaning is posited as the *possiblity of being*, being-as-such remains ahistorical.

As a corrective, Adorno forwards the "idea of natural-history" as a way of overcoming the antithesis of history and nature. His central problem with Heidegger's neo-ontology is that (in Adorno's view) Heidegger collapses nature and history through the concept of *Dasein*, a "there-being," an essential human existence thrust in a world of becoming.[53]

I believe that Adorno's overall intent in the above article is to shift philosophical thinking from a subjectivist idealism to a socialist actualism, to what Adorno calls the " *concrete* unity of nature and history."[54] This means that attention is turned away from possibilities or essences (Adorno's "first" nature) and turned toward actualities or concrete historical situations (Adorno's "second" nature or "culture"); in this case, the "immediate and alienated world of commodities." [55]

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[53] Ibid., 112.
[54] Ibid., 117.
[55] Ibid.

Finally, Adorno's *myth of Kronos* may be read as a counter-myth to Blumenberg's "Prometheus."[56] Adorno writes that the "static character of mythical elements" (Blumenberg's "iconic constancy") is what the philosopher who looks at mythical elements need disregard.[57],[58] Rather, within a myth, there is an "element of the historically dynamic, whose form is dialectical."[59]

For Adorno, the Kronos myth is a dialectical myth, in the sense that Kronos is a god who "creates" and then "annihilates his own creations."[60] Adorno calls this fluid stratum of myth the "archaic-mythical" and writes that anyone who sees merely the "static character of mythical elements" has reverted back to Plato's world of absolute forms, thereby giving in to the "temptation of idealism."[61] Opposite Blumenberg's Prometheus, who desires to usurp the power of his divine creators by setting himself up as the guardian of his human creations, Adorno wants humanity to establish an ongoing critique of its creations, negating them when they no longer prove useful to the project of building an historically-concrete and

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[56] According to Hesiod in the *Theogony*, Kronos was one of the Titans , and he committed the "primal crime of castrating his father, and thus supplanting him." Prometheus stole from Zeus the privilege of fire, believed to be the source of original sin according to the Greeks, "regarded as giving rise to [culture] the arts and sciences"; Cf. Michael Senior, *The Illustrated Who's Who in Mythology* (London: Orbis Books, 1985), edited by Geoffrey Parrinder, 55. 173.

[57] Blumenberg, 149.

[58] Adorno, "Natural History", 123.

[59] Ibid.

[60] Ibid.

[61] Ibid.

naturally-unalienated world.[62]

In my view, the principal weakness in Blumenberg's myth-making (and that same kind of myth-making proper to German Idealism) is that it falls prey to what Martin Jay has called the category of *"expressive totality, "* a concept which "rests on the assumption that a totalizer, a genetic subject, creates the totality through self-objectification."[63] In contrast to Blumenberg, Adorno allows the utilization of mythical images, but only as a "temporary totality," which he also calls "changing constellations" or "trial combinations" of images, which in turn are meant to give only temporary and historically relevant solutions to problems.[64]

Although the importance of Adorno's *negative-dialectical myth* should not be underestimated, the weakness in Adorno's thought is that his methodological borrowings from Georg Lukács and Walter Benjamin (not having been influenced enough by Benjamin's literary-critical efforts on Baudelaire) limit his criticism to specifically philosophical discourse. In addition, Adorno's conclusions are grounded exclusively in neo-Marxist concerns, and he leaves behind the rich mine of German literary production, an archive not only deserving of his attention, but, moreover, one which would serve to

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[62] Blumenberg, 595.

[63] Martin Jay, "The Concept of Totality" in *Telos 32* , 1977: 130.

[64] Theodor Adorno, "The Actuality of Philosophy" in *Telos 31* , 1977: 127-128, translated by Bob Hullot-Kentor.

support the negative-dialectical work on myth which Adorno only briefly mentioned during the span of his critical career.

However, in my estimation, the dialogue which I have instigated between Blumenberg and Adorno/Horkheimer on the relationship between the German Enlightenment project and totalizing myth-making (not to speak of the problems of mediation that arose from this dialogue; e.g., thought-action; reason-faith; nature-history; possibility-actuality) holds the key to why the process of *practical incarnation of the word* in Germany was inhibited rather than advanced by the eighteenth-century German Idealism project, as exemplified by Fichte's and Schelling's concept of the absolute "I."

If the language that we inscribe is in reality to be *made* flesh, it has to do more than remain an ideal projection within the human mind. Inscribed language needs to issue forth (initially) *not ideas* based on presupposed metaphysical principles; but rather, worthy *images* , accurately *de-scriptive* of given historical situations.

The close historical proximity between the parallel development of German Idealism's absolute "I" and the advent of rational deism, which provided a temporary cure for Germany's disillusionment over the questionable success of the French Revolution, is but one example which supports the need for continued critique of the late German Enlightenment. The deeper one looks at this particular

period in Germany, the more one discovers a progressive intellectualization of a universe, one which was beginning to be perceived as unmanageable.

As we will see in chapter two, the late German Enlightenment may very well exemplify a psychotic-philosophical [i.e., totalizing] response on the part of an anxious-ridden and divided Germany on the verge of modernization. Eighteenth and early nineteenth-century *German Idealism and Romanticism, desired to provide a sense of unified leadership, but in actuality promoted the antithesis between nature and history by identifying historical action with mental activity,* thereby de-railing the word's de-psychoticization and de-neuroticization process; that is, language's ongoing route towards the external world, a journey with a two-fold purpose in mind: to describe and trans-figure the historical world.

This journey, beginning with Kant, perhaps emerged in German consciousness before the "philosophical" Enlightenment, when the biblical word was no longer exclusively owned and protected by the Church of the pre-modern world, but was for the first time put into the minds and hands of the "common" person, serving as a catalyst for the growing awareness of the discrepancy between the ideal-mental world and the concrete-real world.

The third section of this introductory chapter on the breakdown

of language will investigate more closely the notion of totalizing myth, regarding the connection between totalizing myth and what I will term the "ideological function of neurosis-psychosis"; more specifically, how *neurosis and psychosis constellate and reinforce the prevailing institutional codes rather than serve as instruments for the critical observation of those codes.* The following discussion will act as a bridge to chapter two, wherein an assessment of Goethe's late eighteenth-century novel *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* will be made in light of this particular study.

The Ideological Function of Neurosis-Psychosis

In *The Political Unconscious. Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (1981) Fredric Jameson writes that "there is nothing that is not social and historical— indeed, that everything is 'in the last analysis' political."[65] It is with this in mind that I read the "hidden narrative" of German Idealism; namely, that the growing *preoccupation with mental activity* and the totalizing myth-making that this way of

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[65] Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious. Narrative as Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University, 1981) 20.

thinking generated in eighteenth and nineteenth-century Germany, did not simply occur as part of a linear and progressive development of western cultural *thought detached from history*, as if this could somehow legitimate the separation between a *history of ideas* and a history of actual human inter-relationships. *German Idealism's development of the absolute "I"-- as well as German Romanticism's ahistoricization of myth (two philosophical directions which will be investigated in the next chapter)--were, to a certain degree, psychotic responses to the organic anxiety within society as a whole, paralleling Germany's growing awareness of historical pluralization.*

In Jameson's own analysis of the problem of totalizing thinking, he writes positively of "Althusserian literary criticism" which maintains that "the appropriate object of study emerges only when the appearance of formal unification is unmasked as a failure or an ideological mirage."[66] Certainly, we have seen this very dynamic at work in the case of Adorno's critique of German Idealism's settlement for just such a "formal unification," due to the fact that actual unification was an impossibility.

Also important for the present study is Jameson's notion of the *ideology of form,* that it is at this level that mere "form" has, in actuality, become "content"; albeit an unconscious, "sedimented content" which insidiously shapes modes of behavior as well as

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[66] Ibid., 56.

modes of production but also disguises unfulfilled desires.[67]

Jameson's view is similar to Emile Beneveniste's, that "discourse unfolds simultaneously along more than one axis, and that it has its origins in a split subject . . . that it issues from an unconscious as well as a conscious speaking subject."[68] In other words, both for Jameson and Beneveniste, an object of study always contains both a "text" and a "subtext."[69] In a discussion concerning Emile Beneveniste's psycho-linguistic method, Kaja Silverman writes that "essays, poems, novels, and plays, which depend upon the linguistic order for their articulation, dramatize the way in which *desire constantly disrupts that order* ."[70]

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[67] Ibid., 98-99.

[68] Kaja Silverman, *The Subject of Semiotics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983) 50; Cf. also Emile Beneveniste's "Language and Freudian Theory", 67-68.

[69] Certainly the whole discussion about "text" and "subtext" could not be a possibility without the insights from Freud's dreamwork concerning the distinction he made between the "manifest content" and the hidden repressions revealing frustrated wish-fulfillments. In Freud's *Über den Traum* (1901) he wrote the following about this "hidden" or repressed content of dreams: "Die Analyse zeigt aber, dass sehr viele andere Träume, die in ihrem manifesten Inhalt nichts Erotischer erkennen lassen, durch die Deutungs arbeit als sexuelle Wunscherfüllingen entlarvt werden..."; Cf. Sigmund Freud, *Gesammelte Werke 3* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer-Verlag, 1942) 696.

[70] Kaja Silverman, 85. I do think that the significance of the relationship between desire and the (unconscious) subtext has, for the most part, been mined only in the so-called "literary text." The "literary text" (e.g., the poem or novel) by definition manifests the proximity of the psyche, and lends easily to symbolic interpretations. The "literary text" as a "form" already tells the reader that "revealing" and "veiling" will be expected. However, one of the purposes of this dissertation is to ask the question whether or not other "texts" (e.g., the "philosophical" text) also manifests (like the novel or poem) a hidden content; namely a subtext of repressed desire. In the following pages, what will be searched for are clues as to possible subtexts beneath the "philosophical" text. Although by definition the "philosophical" text (on the surface) is grounded in a more apparent conceptual or logical framework, the implicit question posed in this dissertation is precisely how *this* text aligns with the poem and the novel at the level of repressed desire, at the level of sub-text? The pecularity of many late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century German thinkers rests on the fact that their "philosophical" texts were beginning to break out of clear,

If this indeed be the case, a series of questions follow: **How does the "philosophical text" conceal its own "subtext" of repressed desire?** Also, specific to German Idealism, what kind of repressive mechanism was at work in Fichte's and Schelling's formation of the absolute "I"? Furthermore, how may the idealist notion of an absolute "I" have reinforced the prevailing codes, not to speak of the hermeneutic code sedimented deeply within the German eighteenth and early nineteenth-century "philosophical" text?[71] What can an investigation into terms which define mental illness, such as "neurosis-psychosis," tell us how a psychoanalytic structure such as this only fosters the dominating codes, hermeneutic and otherwise? And finally, what does all this have to do with the breakdown of language, with the process of the practical incarnation of the word in Germany, the nagging question behind the whole of this introductory chapter?

The starting point of the proceeding discussion on the

conceptual frameworks, and were incorporating "poetic" images, many of which were borrowed from the literary-theological sphere. So too, many of the "literary" texts were beginning to draw inspiration from the conceptual realm (as we will later see in the philosophical-literary work of Hölderlin). So, as "literary" text is to hidden desire, that rich, tangled web of subtext, so too, the "philosophical" text (at least, that text proper to late eighteenth and early nineteenth century Germany) is to the tangled web of repressed wishes, of longings for totality, universality, and wholeness.

[71] Explaining Roland Barthes "codes", Kaja Silverman in *The Subject of Semiotics* writes,"...what the *hermeneutic code* moves toward (i.e. a 'profound or final space') is nothing other than a signified which refuses to connote. The hermeneutic code inscribes the desire for closure and 'truth'", 257; Barthes connects the *"symbolic code"* with the "articulation of binary oppositions...any attempt to reconcile them is seen as 'transgressive'",270; Finally, for Barthes, *"cultural coding* functions to impede the play of signification, to make every detail yield the same meaning...it is the quintessence of what cannot be written", 278. Italics mine.

ideological function of neurosis-psychosis will take seriously the "task of psychoanalysis" as set forth by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari in *Anti-Oedipus. Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1977); in short, that "psychoanalysis must undo the codes so as to attain the quantitative and qualitative flows of libido that traverse dreams, fantasies, and *pathological formations* as well as myth, tragedy, and the social formations."[72]

Deleuze and Guattari describe the neurotic as "the one on whom the Oedipal imprints take, whereas the psychotic is the one who is incapable of being oedipalized, even and especially by psychoanalysis."[73] The plan that Deleuze and Guattari propose is one they call the "schizoanalytic approach," which attempts to do with psychoanalysis what Nietzsche attempted to do with religion and other codified institutions; that is, to form a **new subject** which goes against, not what is most evident within a prevailing system of power, but what is most hidden; namely, the philosophies of totality which unconsciously support that system's repression of desire.[74]

Deleuze and Guattari believe that a Marxist corrective to Nietzsche's "new subject" (Anti-Oedipus rather than Anti-Christ) will get rid of depression and loneliness as a result of the "action and

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[72] Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus. Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (New York: Viking Press, 1977), translated from the French by Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane, 301. Italics mine.
[73] Ibid., xvi.
[74] Ibid., xxiii.

passion of a collective nature."[75] This is all well and good, but in their attempt to undermine the ideological functions of psychoanalysis by measuring the unconscious "against the units of production" rather than against "myths" (Freud and Jung), they end up by forming a binary opposition between a capitalist and communist *theory of desire* .

In my view, (although Deleuze and Guattari are considered avant-garde Marxists) their book still smacks of that naive-Marxist reductionism (albeit, with a touch of Nietzsche), consequently maintaining the very prisonhouse of alienation Deleuze and Guattari desire to usurp, whereby a psychology of totality is traded in for an early Lukácsian Marxism of totality,--while the actual day to day affairs of humans continue their course unaltered, unaffected by the psycho-political systemization of thought, Marxist or otherwise.

The problem which Deleuze and Guattari have not yet solved (despite their rigorous decoding project, which is to be applauded) is just how to decode without the subsequent *isolation of the new subject,* without the decoder's separation from the day-to-day society of which he desires to deconstruct, but not foreclose; in other words, how can marginality be *positively subversive* without at the same time becoming asocial?

The task of psychoanalysis is certainly to instigate an ongoing criticism of codes (starting with its own), but it will fail if it chooses to

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[75] Ibid.

keep erecting its tent forever in one philosophical camp, especially one that is known for its own particular struggles with totalizing thinking and the limitations it has experienced in the practical sphere.[76] The problem with *Anti-Oedipus* is that it would have done better to have gone more to the side of the positive subversivity of Nietzsche and less to the side of naive-Marxism as a corrective to Nietzsche's pathological deterritorialization. I will discuss this at more length in chapter three.

This is the strength of the neo-Marxist project of Adorno, as I see it: to be honest about the fact that an *intellectual revolutionary* will never unchain an abstract proletariat. **The intellectual revolutionary needs to take up a more modest (and perhaps more tedious) task: the painstaking process of unchaining the shackles of reified thought which his predecessors and contemporaries have inherited, link by link, mastering first the critical-historical method of *reason set against itself*** (i.e., making operative the negative-dialectical principle embedded within reason), a rule that Nietzsche untiringly followed.

Deleuze and Guattari move in the right direction in their search for a *new image* by which to de-scribe accurately this "new subject," but to call this subject an "orphan" who is as well an "anarchist" and "atheist" is far away from the intention of Nietzsche's mythological

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[76] I am thinking here of Georg Lukács' direct confrontations with the problem of totality and mediation on the part of the intellectual revolutionary or theoretical arm of the proletariat, and the laborer's capacity for proletarian consciousness in *History and Class Consciousness. Studies in Marxist Dialectics* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1968), translated by Rodney Livingstone, 2-3, 9-19, 24, 28, 39, 47, 52-53, 58, 64, 70, 76-78, 88, 91, 98-99, 103-104, 140-152, 168-178.

das Kind, a mythological image I will deal with at length in chapter three.[77] For an anarchist goes against the law without putting anything (even temporarily) in its place, and an atheist (as such) remains bound by the god he so vehemently despises. History has shown (contrary to what the Bible has told us) that Goliath has always won against this kind of David.

What Deleuze and Guattari attempt to do through the image of the *orphan* is to transcend the oedipal triangle wherein the family code is stuck. Yet, *the orphan can exist only because it feeds--through its own lack--the infant who is baptized time and time again into the oedipalized family.*

Jacques Derrida's two-edged word *differance* (meaning both to "differ" and "defer") is helpful here, because it attempts to establish a bridge between the binary opposites such as mind/matter, speech/writing, master/slave, and so on.[78] In short, *differance* denies the absoluteness between these opposites. It shows that they are not independent entities, but co-dependent, in the sense that the domination of one over the other always hides the non-spoken valuation of one and the devaluation of the other.

Héléne Cixous has brought this discussion further out into the open with her notion of "patriarchal binary thought", whereby all the "feminine" opposites (e.g., "passivity," "nature," "mother,"

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[77] Deleuze and Guattari, 311.

[78] G. Douglas Atkins, *Reading Deconstruction. Deconstructive Reading* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1983) 20.

"emotion," etc.) exist in a master-slave relationship to their empowered counterparts (e.g., "activity," "culture," "father," "reason").[79]

Yet, it is Julia Kristeva's *revolutionary subject* and that subject's "disruptive" purpose which needs to be the central issue of such a discussion (and not gender). This image, in my view, more successfully transcends the binary opposition problem and approaches a new classless, genderless image.[80] Hence, the problem with Deleuze's "orphan" is that it remains dispossessed of the oedipal family, all the while desiring to be part of it. It gives Oedipus power because it can only be defined in terms of its opposite. It is because the "orphan" has foreclosed the oedipal code that it remains caught in Oedipus's clutches, disavowed, yet named forever the "un-baptized."

With this being said, it is too early at this point to look for a fitting image for this "new subject." Instead, I will make a preliminary search for this "new subject," beginning first by testing the hypothesis that *the structural term "neurosis-psychosis" in western culture is defined in terms of an oedipal-narcissan code,* itself a "pathological formation," a sediment of the western hermeneutic code; a code that can be traced at least as far back as the eighteenth and early nineteenth-century German Enlightenment; moreover, that *a setting forth of a new subject cannot effectively be put into force, until the*

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[79] Toril Moi, *Sexual/Textual Politics. Feminist Literary Theory* (London & New York: Methuen, 1985) 104.
[80] Ibid., 166.

oedipal-narcissan code--revealed as a major neurotic-psychotic constellation--is de-scribed and trans-figured ; that is, until the process of the word-made-flesh is once again re-mobilized.[81]

In *The Language of Psychosis* (1986) Bent Rosenbaum and Harly Sonne use Lacan's structural-linguistic approach in their study of neurosis-psychosis. According to the Lacanian view, the "acquisition of language" is always "phallic" because it "takes place under conditions of conflict" during childhood, when the "imaginary order" of the mother is transferred to the "symbolic order" of the father.[82]

According to this view, the desire to fit into the symbolic order (delineated by father consciousness; such as law, violent aggression,

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[81] I am aware that in the Third Edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistic Manual* (DSM III) the journal does not even list "neurosis" as a mental illness. It is "not considered an illness," but only because the disorder does not imply an "organic pathology." Simms adds that "theories about neurosis reflect the philosophical set of the generation which propounds them" ; Cf. Andrew Simms, *Neurosis in Society* (London: The Macmillan Press, 1983) 22,25 ; In the same year James Angst wrote that the neurotic-psychotic distinction is often defined nowadays in terms of an "endogenous-reactive dichotemy." For example, in this view, neurotic depression is said to be "socially or psychosocially caused", whereas psychotic depression is thought to be caused by "genetic factors or disturbances in the brain"; however Angst notes that using the endogenous-reactive dichotemy interchangeably with the psychotic-neurotic distinction is not valid since psychotic states can follow "reactions to life stress"; Cf. James Angst, *The Origins of Depression. Current Concepts and Approaches* (Berlin: Springer-Verlag, 1983) 19-20. As early as 1974, Dr. Malcolm Bowers noted that "current terminology is in great need of revision", and that "current labels in psychosis have neither test-retest reliability nor predictive value"; Cf. Malcolm Bowers, *Retreat From Sanity. The Structure of Emerging Psychosis* (New York: Human Sciences Press, 1974) 193; The placing of "psychosis" exclusively in a biological, genetically-inherited sphere does no more than claim the paradigmatic character of the symbolic order; in other words, the "symptoms" of psychosis are collapsed into the category of "causes," the result being that discourse between the neurotic-psychotic construct and the prevailing codes is denied . Consequently, *the psychotic condition gets interpreted solely in terms of its myopic relationship to a kind of analysis which, itself, is defined in terms of the level of its adaptability to the accepted code.*

[82] Bent Rosenbaum and Harly Sonne, *The Language of Psychosis* (New York & London: New York University Press, 1986) 101.

and the desire to compete) wins over the desire to live by the imaginary order of mother consciousness (such as the desire to counsel, bond with, and care for). *Neurosis* then, is characterized by the acquisition of language which conforms to the symbolic "Name-of-the-father."[83] *Psychosis*, on the other hand, is understood as the rejection of the Name-of-the-father speech.

In Anika Lemaire's *Jacques Lacan* (1970) the author elucidates Lacan's thoughts on the neurotic-psychotic structure. Lemaire informs us that according to Lacan, it is the failure of the oedipal situation which characterizes psychosis and "distinguishes it from neurosis."[84]

If this indeed be the case, then it would seem that *the success of the narcissan situation would characterize psychosis.* Furthermore, the pay-off which results from adapting to the world of Oedipus is one where the subject is held in a neurotic-psychotic bind. The subject must always decline the option for full gratification by the repression of its desire through the symbolic order of language. *What the oedipalized subject may not live out, it will be permitted to speak and write.*

Therefore, the beginning of adult human existence as defined by

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[83] Ibid.

[84] Anika Lemaire, *Jacques Lacan* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970), translated by David Macy, 8; Cf. also Julia Kristeva's view influenced by Lacan, which holds that one cannot make a "straightforward rejection of of the symbolic order, since such a total failure to enter into human relations would, in Lacanian terms, make us psychotic"; Toril Moi, 170.

Oedipus coincides with the beginning of the child's full initiation into phallocentric culture, a culture which is based on the neurotic impulse from which language gets its specific character. The oedipalized child must take ownership of its Name, the Name-of-the-father, and in so doing, begin the long, ambivalent process of adulthood, whereby all affective and imaginary experience is circumcised, cut short, displaced by language. The contents of the unconscious remain none other than the sum of its repressions, which themselves constitute the real absence which language has castrated from experience. Every human utterance then, configurates another reality which, due to the censorship of Oedipus, is pushed back into the metaphoric recesses of language.[85]

Conversely, when Narcissus censors Oedipus, the affective and imaginative subject tyrannizes the "I." This is why (as Lemaire notes) "in psychotics one does observe a frequent use of he/it for self designation."[86] Lemaire points out that Lacan's contribution to the neurosis-psychosis discussion is his reinforcement of the notion that the neurotic always has the possibility in more "favorable circumstances" to tend to what is being repressed and reintegrate it

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[85] On the subject of metaphor in a Lacanian framework, Juliet Flower MacCannell writes, "what Lacan's contribution consists in showing . . . is how the negative side of metaphor—its ability to distinguish and discard, cut off, select . . .becomes a *determinant* of the social ties (discursive forms) between human beings. It dominates the linguistic modes, and it does so in the service of culture. In short, it becomes ideology"; Cf. Juliet Flower MacCannell, *Figuring Lacan. Criticism and the Cultural Unconscious* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986) 90.
[86] Ibid., 54.

into the "dialectical current of experience."[87]

Unfortunately, for the psychotic, the journey back to the oedipal world is a more difficult one, since only by heeding the call of phallocentric speech can the Narcissus-dominated subject be led away from the captivity of the unworldly mirror, and successfully begin his re-oedipalization.

On the basis of the above discussion, *the neurotic-psychotic construct can now be de-scribed as a mytho-historical and historico-mythical apparatus, an artifice defining the parameters of phallocentric culture.*[88] In other words, neurosis and psychosis are realities only in so far as they are deviations from the accepted code, the one deviation being a less harmful one (even allowing for the "harmless psychosis"), whose prodigality depends upon the necessary oedipal compromise; the other deviation being more destructive and alienating for the narcissan subject, compounding the practical difficulty it has with getting on with life in the everyday world.

It is in the mode of absence that the neurotic-psychotic construct is an ideological form (i.e., a crystallization of the binary structure of culture as defined by the psychoanalytic institution), laying out before the oedipal initiate what kind of *totalizing activity (i.e., psychosis)* is

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[87] Ibid., 231.

[88] In the Afterward to Foucault's *Madness and Civilization* , Colin Gordon writes that "its working hypothesis could be taken...to be that madness does not signify a real historical-anthropological entity at all, but is rather the name for a fiction or a historical construct"; Cf. Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge. Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980) 235.

acceptable and what kind is not. According to the western cultural code (namely, the philosophy and ethics which we have inherited from our classical Greek-philosophical and neo-Platonic-theological traditions), it remains acceptable to push for *meaning* and *closure* intellectually, and in fact, it is reinforced.[89] But one cannot interrupt the real world with those abstract visions of totality to the extent that the competitive and privatized oedipal world of commerce will fall into a deficit.

Oedipus does not wish that our actual social interr*actions* and trans*actions* with one another be substantially altered by our philosophical, theological, literary, or artistic interests and amusements. Oedipus allows each person (according to his own level of intelligence) to escape into the above narcissan confines as a way to relieve the anxiety temporarily, which comes with our continual (albeit unconscious) resistance to oedipalization. It is in this way that Oedipus censors and renders impossible the politicization (or historicization) of aesthetics, a subject with which Walter Benjamin (as we will see in chapter four) was not unfamiliar.

Philosophy, in the totalizing form of idealism, like the Freudian dream, is a harmless psychosis because its power remains in the circular world of ideas, imaginations, and fantasies, which it

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[89] As the result of numerous case studies, Malcolm Bowers has noted four major characteristics of the psychotic experience: 1) the "press for meaning," 2) a serious distortion of the external world through "projection," 3) the cross-contamination of "ideation and perception," and 4) the "formation of delusions based on the "push for closure or meaning"; Cf. Bowers, 73.

continually creates and recreates. Yet, ironically, this cyclical current of power remains externally isolated by the fact of its internal systematization. Philosophy which begins in reaction to history will forever be ahistorical, a negation of history, a museum of the interior, an *amuseum*; that is, "amusing" only to the intellectual who seeks temporary comfort from the stressful oedipal world of meaningless trans*actions*.

It is in this sense that a philosophy of the above sort merely fuels the neurotic, oedipal machinery by remaining non-productive, save in the ahistorical and rationalized realm of thoughtful activity . It remains to be seen whether or not the harmless psychosis of oedipalized-philosophical thought does more harm to the socialization process than the thoughts of the mentally broken-down dreamer, because this kind of "philosophical psychosis" remains well hidden, and thus, potentially, more destructive.

According to the Lacanian view the *psychotic breakdown* is characterized by the total displacement of language and the "I". The result is that "language has achieved independence," a freedom-from-body, whereby *word is not made flesh, but made word* ...until finally, in total asociality, language severs itself from the body, and in so doing, disintegrates the personality. *Therefore it would make common sense that for language to become body, our words--not the personality-- need to "break down," in the positive sense; that is, our words need to be made flesh, humbly de-scriptive and trans-figurative of what is*

really the "matter" with the world we have shaped in our own image.

This then, is the ultimate meaning of the practical incarnation of

words which are still trapped in the realm of totalized ideas, still held

captive in the mode of subtext or repressed desire.

But for now, the word that issues from the world of Narcissus (for most of us) remains a mirror that has its dark, glazed backside turned toward us. Although we are allowed to comfort ourselves from time to time in the glass mirror the oedipal factory continues to reproduce for us, we are cautioned not to linger there too long. However, it is the true psychotic who not only peers into that *different* and dangerous mirror, but cannot look away from it. This is why he is likened to Narcissus.[90]

The next chapter will investigate more closely (specifically through the work of Hölderlin and Goethe) possible messages which the narcissan world has for the world ruled by Oedipus. These messages (if decoded) perhaps will give clues (helpful even for the present historical epoch) as to how both Oedipus and Narcissus might be freed from their mutual captivity, which is none other than their

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[90] Using Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (A.C.E. 2-8) as a source and not the "late renderings" of the Narcissus myth, Julia Kristeva writes the following: " . . . Narcissus, at the moment when his tears disturb the pool . . . realizes not only that the loved image is his own, but furthermore that it can disappear-- as if he had thought that, for want of touching, he could never be satisfied with contemplation alone [. . .] it is perhaps more interesting today to stress the originality of the narcissistic figure and the very particular place it occupies in the the history of Western subjectivity on the one hand, and on the other, taking its morbidity into account, in the scrutiny of the critical symptoms of that subjectivity." Cf. Julia Kristeva, *Tales of Love* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987) 104-105. Translated by Leon S. Roudiez. Originally published in the French under the title *Histoires d'amour* , 1983, Editions Denoël.

pathological relationship with one another based on Narcissus's *foreclosure* of Oedipus and Oedipus's *devaluation* of Narcissus.

Chapter Two. Breaking Open the Closed Circle of

Enlightenment:

The *De-scriptive* and *Trans-figurative* Function of Myth in

Goethe's *Lehrjahre*

The Psychotic Function of Myth in Hölderlin

The previous chapter showed how German Idealism's absolute "I" was a *totalizing* response to the anxiety experienced by the emerging "free-thinking" subject (namely, the subject whose freedom was still limited in the face of the precariousness of historical conditions).[1]

The present chapter will set out to show the extent to which Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* successfully *de-scribed* and *trans-figured* the German Enlightenment era; that is, both deconstructed it's totalizing thrust (exemplified in the psychotic work of Hölderlin) and offered a workable alternative, and in so doing, mobilized the poetic and philosophical crystallizations of the word toward the external world once again, that the word might continue its process of

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[1] As already mentioned in the previous chapter, the historical situation during Germany's golden age of enlightenment was characaterized by a lack of political and religious unity, as instanced by the failure of the French Revolution to provide a paradigm for Germany's leadership, as well as the growing antagonism between the enthusiastic pietists and intellectual deists.

practical incarnation, or (one could say) *the word's actual materi-alization* .

It was not only the idealism of Fichte and Schelling that served to immobilize the word through totalizing thinking. The "New German" Idealism (of which the poet Hölderlin was among its chief proponents), although vigorously interested in the "moral action" project as proposed by Kant, met with its own problems of mediation between theory and practice.

As mentioned in chapter one, German Idealism's pre-occupation with "mental activity" was responsible for the de-railment of the word, it's route toward the external world, a direction which Kant attempted to energize through his "maxim of action" via "rational faith."[2],[3] What Fichte accomplished through his reinterpretation of Spinozian substance was to move Kant's *Freiheit zu handeln* from the moral-rational sphere to the pure-philo-sophical realm, from a concern with external "activity" to a preoccupation with the "internal" activity of consciousness.

During the same year of his *Vom Ich* essay, Schelling, having by this time moved solidly in the direction of the Fichtean absolute "I," received a letter from Hegel wherein Schelling was questioned as to the degree of impact a purely philosophical word would have on the present day situation.[4]

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[2] Fichte, *Wissenschaftslehre* , 457; Cf. also Schelling, *Vom Ich* , 125,
[3] Kant, *Religion* , 129-130.
[4] Cf. Hegel's letter to Schelling, April 16, 1795.

Hölderlin, at this time, was distressed with the fact that Schelling's thought was moving closer to Fichte's.[5] Hölderlin was an active member of the "New German" Idealism group founded by Hegel and Schelling.The origin of the intellectual group was was not only instigated by the failure of the French Revolution, which to their minds failed on account of an inadequate philosophical system.[6] The New German Idealism was also part of an intellectual revolution in Germany whose main impetus derived from Kant's critical philosophy.[7]

It has been noted that in contrast to Kant and Fichte, the notion that "ideas must serve politics and not the reverse" was the basis of friendship between the Swabian circle composed of Hölderlin, Schelling, and Hegel.[8] According to Dilthey, the friendship between the three thinkers was consolidated at the theologically conservative University at Tübingen (1788-1791).[9] However, after the publication of *die Brief Jacobis über Spinoza* (1789), and the controversy over the Jacobi-Mendelssohn debate, they took the side of Spinoza and sought after a monistic-pantheistic approach that would incorporate Greek philosophy, basing their first principle on the Greek formula, "all in

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[5] Cf. Hölderlin's letter to Niethammer, November 22, 1795.
[6] Clarissa Fineman, *Hölderlin's Philosophy with Particular Reference to Plato* (Detroit: Harlo Press, 1981) 16.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Franz Gabriel Nauen, *Revolution, Idealism and Human Freedom: Schelling, Hölderlin, and Hegel and the Crisis of Early German Idealism* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1971) ix.
[9] Wilhelm Dilthey, *Das Erlebnis und Die Dichtung. Lessing, Goethe, Novalis, Hölderlin* (Leipzig und Berlin: B.G. Teubner-Verlag, 1922) 359.

one."[10]

Having already adopted the monistic position of Spinoza as opposed to the dualism of Kant, Fichte had already paved the totalizing route for the New German Idealism school. Hölderlin affirmed Fichte's correction of Spinoza, grounding his first principle in an "activity" rather than in a "thing" (i.e., in a "substance"), but concluded that Fichte's "I" was too one-sided and divisive to be an all-embracing first principle. Also, since Schelling was still in support of the Fichtean "I" approach, Hölderlin believed that Schelling was turning away from the circle's original "search for political and cultural means to unite men divided in modern society."[11]

In Hölderlin's letter to Niethammer in 1795, the poet expressed what he believed to be the inadequacy of Schelling's grounding of "intellectual intuition" in "pure reason," and believed that "aesthetics" would be a more effective vehicle for proselytizing the idealism project.[12] It was during this period that Hölderlin began his long dedication to the unification of Germany, believing this could be accomplished by the provision of an *aesthetic philosophy of totality*.

In the *Preface to the Third Version of Hyperion* (1794-1795) Hölderlin confronts the limitation of the individual in the everyday world as he struggles to achieve "blissful oneness."[13] He writes that

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[10] Ibid., 359-362.

[11] Nauen, 43.

[12] Cf. Hölderlin's letter to Niethammer, November 22, 1795.

[13] Friedrich Hölderlin, *Werke. Briefe. Documente. Entwürfe und Bruchstücke Zum Hyperion. Vorstufen Der Endgültigen Fassung* (München: Winkler-Verlag, 1963)

"blissful oneness"(with nature) is "lost to us," and we are born to "strive" toward our re-unification with nature.[14] For Hölderlin, neither "knowledge" nor "activity" in any one period of existence will bring about this "state where all opposition ceases."[15] Furthermore, one could not have an inkling of this "unending peace . . . . . [one] could *not think nor act if not by this infinite unity , this being.*"[16] Continuing, Hölderlin writes that it is through "reason" that our divided nature is united, and that the "all in one" can be glimpsed in the world, but only through the highest phenomenal category of knowledge, the intuitable "all in one" which he calls *Beauty* .[17]

In the *Preface*, Hölderlin expresses a nostalgic longing for the Greek ideal of totality, which he calls "the grave of youthful humanity".[18],[19] R.B. Harrison has observed that by the time Hölderlin developed the mythological character of Hyperion, he had already accrued a thorough education in Greek philosophical-

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717.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Ibid., Italics and parenthesis mine.

[16] Ibid., Italics mine.

[17] Ibid.

[18] In the *Preface* Hölderlin writes: "To end every opposition between oneself and the world, to restore the peace of all peace, which is higher than all reason, to unite us with nature, to the *one unending totality* , that is the goal of all our striving..."; Ibid., 717.

[19] Ibid., 716. Franz Gabriel Nauen has observed that Schiller(who was born and educated a Swabian) and Fichte shared with Hölderlin, Schelling, and Hegel the "belief that spiritual rebirth was a prime precondition for social and political freedom," but that "it was Schiller who developed the thought...that the Greek experience, while irrevocably lost, was nonetheless the only valid norm for politics and society..."; Cf. Nauen, 4.

mythological thought patterns: those he learned early in his education, and the renaissance Platonism which was popular in his day (i.e., neo-Platonist thought patterns which were intensfied through his renewed interest in classical Greek studies from 1793 until his collapse in 1806.).[20],[21]

Generally, one could say that the two principle Platonic notions that run through Hölderlin's philosophy are: 1) the totalizing-cosmological model of nature and history, whereby the one original, creative principle of all being and becoming, is responsible for generating multiplicity, a principle which gathers the dividedness in creation (at the end of its course) back to "nature, to the *one unending totality*," and 2) the primacy of *Beauty* as the phenomenal expression of this totality (envisionable through the mode of intuition). [22],[23]

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[20] Fineman, 47.

[21] According to ancient Greek mythology, Hyperion was the father of Helios-Sol(or Phoebus); Cf. Robert E. Wolverton, *An Outline of Classical Mythology* (Totowa, New Jersey: Littlefield, Adams & Company, 1966), 28. In his critical reading of Hölderlin's Hyperion , Walter Silz compares Hölderlin's character to Goethe's Werther, for like Werther, "Hyperion is the very type of the manic-depressive. It is his nature to fly from one extreme to the other..."; Cf. Walter Silz, *Hölderlin's Hyperion. A Critical Reading* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1969) 42.

[22] Hölderlin, Ibid., 717.

[23] Cf. Hölderlin, Ibid.; Also Plato writes:"...this power or demiurge[Beauty] , which is in itself different from the world-soul, having imparted to the world its present form and nature, abides forever more in eternal peace"; Cf. Plato's *Timaeus* , Dialogue 3, in Fineman, 89; Plato also writes in his*Phaedrus* that "everyone...chooses his love from the ranks of Beauty according to his character, and this he makes his god"; also in Fineman, Ibid.; In Plato's *Symposium* , Diotima's initiation of Socrates into the "love mysteries" culminates in a vision of "absolute Beauty" which will "bring forth goodness"; Cf. Walter Hamilton, translator and editor, *Plato. The Symposium* (New York: Penguin, 1951) 94-95; Diotima, as the personification of the "Beauty" Ideal, figures strongly in Hölderlin's Hyperion novel. Walter Silz writes that "Diotima embodies the ideal toward which the whole

In the *Preface* to the Hyperion novel, Hölderlin was attempting to address the problem of identity, which was, to his mind, a problem Fichte's and Schelling's "activity of consciousness" failed to solve. Yet, the only kind of "activity"*(Handeln)* that one finds in Hölderlin's *Preface* is this: the grasping of the *idea of totality* through the aes-thetic principle he calls *Beauty*.[24] Moreover, Hölderlin is quick to emphasize that this "activity" is an individual quest for one's "origin," and can only be found in the *realm of the interior*, "Mir ist Originalität Innigkeit."[25]

Consequently, Hölderlin's corrective remains (like Fichte's and Schelling's) an activity of consciousness, whereby the human connection to nature (i.e., the external world) is sought by way of essences. If it was Schelling who rationalized the identity of nature and the "thinking subject" (through the idea of the recreative power of the absolute "I"), it was Hölderlin who rationalized the identity of nature and the "intuiting subject" (through the receptive, poetic image of "Beauty"). Both of these idealistic notions--the "absolute I" and "Beauty"--fail to establish any concrete mediation between subject and object.

This way of thinking presupposes from the very beginning the

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book tends. She is the very spirit of selflessness. She has from the beginning that 'seelige Selbstvergessenheit'(I,10,13f.)"; Silz correctly adds, however, that Hyperion has failed at the "career of social usefulness [Diotima] had envisioned for him..."; Cf. Silz, 47,49. Parenthesis mine.
[24] Hölderlin, *Werke* , 716.
[25] Ibid.

antithesis between the order of thought and being, and between nature and history, a problem I addressed earlier in the second part of chapter one, in Adorno's critique of idealism and twentieth century phenomenology.[26] The consequence is always a fractional one, in that **the human subject who universalizes denies the efficacy of the concrete world of particular action, of which the subject is necessarily a part, be it through affirmation or negation.**

By refusing to see nature in any but essentialist terms, the subject as a being-in-the-world, remains in fact a being-out-of-the-world; that is, a human existence which is rationalized out of concrete history. Hölderlin's treatise on the the Greek ideal of totality within the *Preface* to the Hyperion novel, becomes the means by which the poet attempts to justify Hyperion's flight from the world into the intuited stronghold of Beauty, a neurotic-psychotic bind which concludes Hyperion's universalized "eccentric course."[27]

In *Die älteste Systemprogramm des deutsche Idealismus* (1795-1796), Hölderlin[28] delineated further the project of New German

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[26] Cf. pp. 20-22 on idealism's and phenomenology's split or lack of mediation between nature and history according to Adorno.

[27] "We all run thorugh an eccentric course, and there is no other possible way from childhood to maturity"; Hölderlin, *Werke* , 717.

[28] Although the essay was found among Hegel's papers (and in his own handwriting), Ernst Cassirer believes it was originally Hölderlin's: "Man sieht: alles was Hölderlin in der Zeit seines Zusammentreffens von der Philosophie verlangte und ersehnte, das ist in diesem Blatte verheissen"; Cf. Ernst Cassirer, *Idee und Gestalt: Goethe, Schiller, Hölderlin, Kleist* (Berlin: Bruno Cassirer-Verlag, 1921) 130. Although the question still remains whether or not Hegel in fact copied the work from a Hölderlin original, the centrality of the *Schonheit* motif within the work would suggest that Hölderlin—if not *the* author—would have definitely complied with—if not had a hand in—the aesthetic material which is contained in the essay.

Idealism. Recapitulating the Platonic notion found in the *Preface* to the Hyperion novel, the poet writes that the "idea of Beauty" is the "idea which unifies everything."[29] Hölderlin calls "the highest act of reason" an "aesthetic act," and berates those "philosophers of letters" because they are, in his opinion, "persons without aesthetic sense."[30]

It is here in the *Systemprogramm* essay that Hölderlin expresses the general sentiment of New German Idealism: that neither Kant's moral law as proof of the existence of ultimate reality, nor Fichte's collapse of ultimate reality within a notion of the absolute "I," is sufficiently mediatory between the phenomenal and noumenal worlds. However, for Hölderlin, mediation will prove successful not by establishing a way of thinking that is essentially different from Kant and Fichte, but rather in philosophy's choice for a more appropriate literary genre in which to express the totalizing view of the German Idealist school; namely, " Poetry."[31]

Similar to Schiller and Herder, in their aesthetic call for the unification of reason and the heart, Hölderlin names his aesthetic philosophy "a monotheism of reason and the heart."[32] The poet ends his essay with similar sermonistic images, used to define his theosophy of aesthetics; such as, "a polytheism of imagination and

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[29] Hölderlin,*Werke* , 557.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Ibid., 558. Schiller wanted to unify thought and feeling, but had no first principle; Cf. Schiller's *Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen in einer Reihe von Briefen* (1795).

art" and "a new religion."[33] When Hölderlin refers to his particular brand of idealism as a *"mythology of reason"* the totalizing (and consequently, psychotic) complexion of the essay becomes apparent to the reader.[34]

For Hölderlin's mythology of reason is one whereby the life of the human subject is not seen in terms of its concrete and social character, but in terms of one who shares universally with all organic life, the cyclical process of life, death, and return to oneness, homological with the thermodynamic course of nature; in other words, a *philosophical history of totality* that concerns itself not with human subjects at particular moments in history, but with the never ending rise and fall, the upward and "downward curve," experienced by all organisms, the universal idea that every living thing returns to its origin, and ends with its beginning.[35]

Both Hölderlin's *Systemprogram* essay and *Preface* to the Hyperion novel achieve the status of Blumenberg's "work *of* myth" because human history is "absolutized" (namely, taken out of history) through an essentialist view of nature.[36] The two works achieve as well Blumenberg's "work *on* myth" in that Hölderlin's aesthetic

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[33] Ibid.

[34] Ibid. In *Das Erlebnis und die Dichtung* (1922) Dilthey wrote that Hölderlin was attracted to the Greek ideal, whereby art glorified the "oneness of life" and was grounded in "the beauty of the world"; Cf. Dilthey, 361.

[35] Hölderlin, *Werke* , 557. In "Lebenslauf" Hölderlin wrote the following: "Grössers wolltest auch du, aber die Liebe zwingt/All uns nieder, das Laid beuget gewaltigen,/Doch es kehrt umsonst nicht/Unser bogen, woher er kommt!"

[36] Blumenberg, 266.

project (to abolish the fragmented "I" through the intuition of "Beauty," whereby the human individual and nature are re-unified) succeeds as a "distortion" and "inversion" of the biblical tale; for Hölderlin's myth-making marks out a direct opposite road back to paradise after the Fall. The road to re-unification according to Genesis is begun as the result of a particular act of disobedience of a man and a woman to a monotheistic God.[37] Furthermore, the original family of the post-paradise legend is doomed to struggle with a nature that is set against it (as punishment for the family's disobedience), beginning the family's life of exile, subduing the earth and all of its non-human inhabitants, and insuring its survival by extracting nourishment from the earth.[38]

However, as one sees both in Hölderlin's *Systemprogramm* and the *Preface* to Hyperion, there is no *moral* reason why human nature is initially divided, and no moral imperative to make right an original wrong. There is only the unending, cyclical process of dividedness and oneness, which the human individual and nature "out there" share in common. It is the task of the individual to align himself with the universal flow of nature, not control or set himself against it, as in the Bible story. Not even a hint of Kant's moral imperative (a remnant of biblical responsibility) is traceable in Hölderlin's "mythology of reason;" no "maxim of action" save the

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[37] Genesis, 3:17.
[38] Genesis, 3:17-19.

"aesthetic (intuitive) act" which *unifies through reason* (in the sublime mode of intuition) what has been divided through reason (in the intellectual mode of "understanding") . [39]

Hölderlin's philosophy of totality is most apparent in *Urteil und Sein* (1795), where the poet argues against Schelling's philosophy of identity. Hölderlin understands *Urteil* or "judgment" in the literal sense (namely, "Ur-teilen", that is, the "original-dividing or parceling out"). For Hölderlin the "original division" manifests itself in the bifurcation of consciousness whereby reality can only be comprehended through the division of subject and object. It is through the work of "intellectual intuition" that one begins to envision the divisions in their original unity or oneness through the notion of "being."[40]

In *Urteil und Sein* Hölderlin goes to great lengths not to equate "absolute being" with "identity."[41] Surely Hölderlin here is reacting to Schelling's *Vom Ich* essay, wherein Schelling proposes an identification of the objective world (nature "out there") with the absolute "I"; in short, the identification of the "I" with the "not-I."[42] For Schelling believed that the fundamental law of being, expressed in its phenomenal form, says "become identical."[43]

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[39] Hölderlin, *Werke* , 557.

[40] Ibid., 491. One can see here the very basis of Heideggerian phenomenology. It is, of course, no secret that Heidegger's philosophy of being is indebted to the(totalizing) aesthetic work of Hölderlin.

[41] Ibid.

[42] Schelling, *Werke 2* , 127.

[43] Ibid.

Hölderlin's corrective to Schelling's interiorization of the exterior world via pure reason is made by the establishment of a hierarchy of knowledge, whereby the status of the categories of knowledge (from lowest to highest on the scale) depends upon the *unifying capacity* of that particular kind of knowing, "intellectual intuition"rating highest on the scale over "pure reason."[44] Hölderlin believes that "intellectual intuition" is to be valued over "reason" and the "understanding" because an act of intellectual intuition (namely, an "aesthetic act") is the way one grasps--through the mediation of Beauty-- *the totality of the creative process* .[45]

Hence, Hölderlin's philosophy of totality, as it is put forth in his *Urteil und Sein* essay, is as well a work *on* the biblical myth, in the sense that the biblical notion of an actual division between human nature and the natural world caused by an original, immoral (that is,unlawful) act is converted from a sin against a god into the classical Greek notion of "ignorance against the law of nature," which (for Hölderlin) only an *act* of intellectual intuition can correct .[46]

Hölderlin's *Fragment von Hyperion*(1793) contains two notions which are central to the poet's totalistic campaign: the

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[44] Hölderlin, *Werke* , 491. Hölderlin establishes his hierarchy of knowledge from the lowest degree, *Verstand* , (understanding or ratiocination) to the higher degree,*Vernunft* (pure reason), and finally, to the highest degree, *intellectualen Anschauung* (intellecutal intuition). According to Dilthey, Hölderlin originally borrowed the notion of "intellectual intuition" from Fichte; Dilthey, 411.

[45] As already mentioned, in Hölderlin's *Systemprogramm* essay he calls the highest act of reason "an aesthetic act"; Cf. Hölderlin, *Werke* , 557.

[46] According to the classical Greek view, sin is equated with ignorance or the privation of knowledge, as the alpha privative before "gnosis" shows (i.e."a-gnosis", literally "not knowing" or "not having knowledge").

establishment of 1) a state of "highest notion," and 2) a state of "highest education."[47] The second ideal (the first has already been discussed at some length) is forwarded in Hyperion's letter to Bellarmin, where Hyperion rhetorically asks, "Where do we find the oneness that gives us peace, peace?."[48] Hyperion responds to his own question by affirming that one must seek the answer "in fellowship with men."[49]

In a letter to his half-brother, written during the same year of the *Fragment*, Hölderlin proclaims that the "object" of his love is the "human race," defining what he calls the "germs of enlightenment" as those "silent wishes and efforts of individuals for the education of the human race . . . ."[50]

How then, is one to understand Hölderlin's final work, *Hyperion* (1793-1799), begun that very same year, a novel which tells the tale of a man who initially enters the stream of society, but at the novel's end turns away from the everyday world? For in the final letter of the novel, Hyperion will cease his "fellowship with men" (the second ideal of the Hyperion *Fragment*) turning instead toward a final, solitary fellowship with "nature," to partake of what Hyperion calls "the tree of life."[51]

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[47] Hölderlin,*Werke* , 359.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Cf. J.B. Leishmann's introduction to *Friedrich Hölderlin. Selected Poems* (London: the Hogarth Press, 1963), 14.
[51] Hölderlin, Ibid.

It is here, in Hölderlin's unique use of the biblical image, the "tree of life," that the poet accomplishes German Idealism's final inversion of the paradise myth (begun by Fichte and Schelling).[52] For unlike Adam and Eve, whose alienation from nature and the original unity experienced in paradise results from eating from "the tree of life," the very same act for Hyperion results in his salvation-- namely, his re-unification with nature. Hyperion enters a peopleless paradise as a new Adam who is neither dependent upon a monotheistic god nor a wife called Eve. No, Hyperion is dependent only upon the intuited principle of *aesthetic totality*, the goddess Beauty. She will lead him not into temptation, this Diotima, but will guide Hyperion back, back "into the arms of nature, which are unchangeable, quiet and beautiful."[53]

Hölderlin's poem *Mnemosyne* (in Greek, "Remembrance"), written sometime after the poet was pronounced legally insane in 1806 and sometime before the poem's publication in 1826, remains a tragic witness to the fact that Hölderlin never waivered from Hyperion's longing for totality, for a realm of completeness that Hölderlin believed had already been manifest in classical Greek culture.

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[52] "Then the Lord God said, 'Behold, the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil; and now, lest he put forth his hand and take also of the *tree of life*, and eat, and live forever'--therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from which he was taken. He drove out the man; and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to *the tree of life* ."; Cf. Genesis, 3:22-24. Italics mine.

[53] Cf. Hyperion's first letter to Bellarmin in Volume One of the novel.

Hölderlin tells us in the first draft of the poem that Christianity as a "law" has been surmounted by a "higher law" (nature), so that now only "the flowers and water can tell us whether there is still a god."[54] And although "Achilles" (Hölderlin's personification of Greek culture in the poem) has died, a person can still hear the "Echo" of the lost culture in the movements of the wind across the rural landscape, in the wave of "the leaves and oak trees."[55] The final task of this Narcissus is to respond to the call of his "Echo" by leaving society in order to dwell in the un-peopled "city of remembrance."[56]

As early into the writing of *Hyperion* as 1794 (during the same time Hölderlin met with Goethe for the first and last time in Jena), the poet was showing signs of mental fatigue. In a letter to Neuffer in November of 1794, he wrote:

> I must find my way out of twilight and sleep ....
> if I am not at last to take shelter in a melan-
> choly resignation, where one .... lets the world
> go the way it is going .... calmly from one's own
> corner.[57]

Surely, Hölderlin's Hyperion (like his creator) is the epitome of

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[54] Cf. "Mnemosyne" (First Draft) in Hölderlin's *Gedichte* (1826).

[55] Ibid.

[56] Cf. "Mnemosyne" (Third Draft), Ibid.

[57] Cf. Hölderlin's *Werke* , 714. In H.J. Schings's *Melancholie und Aufklärung* (1977) he claims that in the eighteenth century in Germany, middle class melancholy (due to a lack of political power) resulted in the middle class person's retreat into the interior; moreover that much of the literature has the character of "Utopia". Schings writes, "Melancholie oder Utopia—das ist hier die Frage"; Cf. Hans-Jurgen Schings, *Melancholie und Aufklärung. Melancholiker und ihre Kritiker in Erfahrungs-seelenkunde und Literature des 18 Jahrhunderts* (Stuttgart: Carl Ernst Poeschel-Verlag, 1977) 4.

one who has enabled the world to "go the way it is going . . . calmly from one's own corner." It is this kind of psychotic activity which has enchanted Hyperion, holding him spellbound, turning him from the world into his narcissan mirror, yet all the while empowering the very world he has foreclosed.

In *Madness and Civilization. A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*(1961), Michel Foucault lists Hölderlin among the "melancholics" of the eighteenth century, and writes :

> .... at the end of the eighteenth century, all forms
> of madness without delirium, but characterized
> by inertia, by despair, by a sort of dull stupor,
> would be readily classified as melancholia.[58]

In *Melancholie und Gesellschaft* (1969) Wolf Lepenies has observed that the two most famous literary characters whose *Weltflucht* is connected with melancholy are Goethe's Werther and Hölderlin's Hyperion.[59] According to Lepenies, what the "flight from the world" effects is an "isolation of power."[60] The result is the thinker's preoccupation with the *"idea of freedom"* and the *" intro-*

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[58] Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization. A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), translated from the French by Richard Howard. Originally published in French as *Histoire de la Folie* in 1961, by Librairie Plon, 124,

[59] Wolf Lepenies, *Melancholie und Gesellschaft* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp-Verlag, 1969) 81.

[60] Ibid., 99; In Robert James *Dictionnaire Universel de Medecine* (Paris, 1746), he defines the "melancholic" as one who "can no longer enter into a resonance with the external world"; in Foucault, 126. Lepenies notes in his book that "in eighteenth century Germany there is a lessening in the middle class person's ability to engage in effective political activity," Lepenies, 77.

verted concept " rather than with external acts.[61]

One is reminded here of the ideological thrust behind German Idealism (after Kant's notion of "free thought") exemplified in Fichte's definition of "thought" as a "self-producing activity" or Schelling's "idea of absolute power" by which the "I" acts by means of its essence.[62,63]

These specific examples from the German Idealism project certainly lend support to Wolf Lepenies's claim: that what the retreat from the world of external activity effects is not the integration of forces in the world, but rather, the "isolation of power." *The "idea of freedom" and the "introverted concept" (the result of German Idealism's mental productive forces) can be said to be psychotic activities , by which--through the power of thought--the individual has built his own mental artifice of totality as a means of dealing with the fragmented inconsistencies of the concrete world.*

Hölderlin's mythology of reason signaled German Idealism's final, *psychotic* break with reality, by being its representative *par excellence* for the conversion of a philosophy of totality into a totalizing (i.e., psychotic) myth. Hölderlin's mythology of reason is non-dialectical and whose "iconic constancy" keeps itself alive in the guise of timelessness. Moreover, a totalizing mythical image (such as Hölderlin's Hyperion) can only continue its momentum outside of

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[61] Lepenies, 80.
[62] Fichte, *Wissenschaftslehre* , 46.
[63] Schelling, *Vom Ich* , 122.

history, fueling the endless *mental production* of the idealist machine while the world of material reproduction continues its own rationalized course.

Perhaps the most damaging effect of the psychotic activity proper to a philosophy of totality is that this way of thinking remains uncritical of itself and critical of the outside world, yet only by way of simultaneous self-affirmation and other-denial . It is in this sense that Hyperion is similar to the passive-aggressive psychotic whose rage against the oedipal code has been introverted and inverted into another code, the code of Narcissus.[64] Narcissus, then, in spite of himself, remains bound by the oedipal code; furthermore, **the existence of both the oedipal and narcissan code depends on how each maintains its own isolation of power through foreclosure and mutual devaluation through non-disclosure.**

So this is the peculiar schizophrenic condition of Hölderlin's mythical Hyperion: that even though Hyperion claims he has submitted to a "first" nature (that is, an idealized nature un-contaminated by concrete history), he remains forever marked by the sign of his "second" nature (namely, the culture within which Hyperion and his creator exists, although in the mode of absence).

It is the task of the redemptive critic to open the discourse

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[64] Cf. Hyman Spotnitz M.D. , "Narcissus as Myth, Narcissus as Patient", wherein the author writes of the psychotic reaction of the present- day narcissistic patient who can only deal with his rage against the outside world through "passive-aggressive" behaviour; in Marie Coleman Nelson, Editor, *The Narcissistic Condition. A Fact of Our Lives and Times* , (New York: Human Sciences Press, 1977) 90.

which Hyperion (himself being aligned with Narcissus) has closed off. Contrary to what Hyperion has proclaimed to be the case, his redemption does not lie in the arms of his idealized (first) nature, but within the very vortex of the second nature he has disclaimed. And the reverse is also true. The arrogance of Oedipus's domination over Hyperion-Narcissus, is itself a kind of rage, and hides a fear that all is not well with the king. This is why Oedipus has often sought the consolation of Narcissus's flower and song, though most often in the dark and by the moon. Nevertheless, Oedipus is as much bound by Hyperion-Narcissus as Hyperion-Narcissus is bound by Oedipus.

Therefore, for Hyperion-Narcissus to be healed, so too must Oedipus. They exist both in an overtly diametric and covertly "siametric" relationship.

The next section will discuss the extent to which Goethe exposed this hidden, siametric relationship between Hyperion-Narcissus and Werner-Oedipus through Goethe's dialectical-mythical character, Wilhelm Meister. The overall project will be to measure the extent to which the narcissan world of Hölderlin's Hyperion and the oedipal world which Hyperion chose to foreclose, can be *described* and *trans-figured* by Goethe's Wilhelm.

Wilhelm Meister *De-scribes* and *Trans-figures* the Oedipal-
Narcissan Code

One can better appreciate the novelty of Goethe's unique "novel of education" if it is put into context with the reactions that Goethe's *Lehrjahre* incited, responses which came mainly from the Romantic-Idealist school, and against which the novel was measured. In *Hölderlin and Goethe* (1975) Eudo Mason writes:

> *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* has the distinction
> of being the only work of Goethe's on which Höl-
> derlin expresses an opinion in all the documents
> that have come down to us.[65]

In January of 1795, Hölderlin wrote a letter to Neuffer, discussing his brief meeting with Goethe, and how delighted he was with the *Lehrjahre*, especially Wilhelm's conversation with Werner about the importance of the poets.[66] However, at the time the letter was written, Hölderlin could have read only the first books of the *Lehrjahre* (the rest of the books were not finished until the summer of 1796), which contained neither Goethe's criticism of the theater as an efficient means of education, nor Goethe's *thought-(external)*

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[65] Eudo Mason, *Hölderlin and Goethe* (Berlin and Frankfurt: Herbert Lang and Cie Ag-Verlag, 1975) 86.
[66] Ibid.

action corrective.[67]

As already mentioned, although the more obvious connections have been made between Goethe's Werther and Hölderlin's Hyperion (that both mythical characters were melancholics), I have not found any mention of the *contrast* between Hölderlin's Hyperion and Goethe's Wilhelm Meister. For example, Hyperion only begins his education within society, but ends his education process by turning away from the world, moving toward an idealized form of "nature." In contrast to Hyperion's pathologically, regressive behavior, Wilhelm Meister's whole apprenticeship hinges on his continual choices not to escape but to actively engage in society.[68] Needless to say, Hölderlin would not have praised Goethe's novel in his letter to Neuffer if he had read Goethe's completed work.

One of the first critical opinions of Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* novel came from Friedrich Schlegel. He first said of the novel that Goethe had restored "as a genuine poet, novelistic poetry in prose,"defining the book as "modern and poetic, yet not romantic."[69]

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[67] Ibid.

[68] It need be noted that Georg Lukács does mention, in reference to Goethe's *Lehrjahre* , that "the Romantic element is absent from it, and so is the poetry of nature—the miraculous. It deals only with ordinary, human things; nature and mysticism are quite forgotten"; Cf. Georg Lukács, *The Theory of the Novel. A Historico-Philosophical Essay on the Forms of Great Epic Literature* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1971) 139, translated from the German by Anna Bostock and first published by Paul Cassirer, Berlin, 1920. Lukács is right about the absence of nature in Goethe's novel but quite wrong about the absence of mysticism. In fact, the whole of Book Six, which is also positioned at the very center of the novel, contains the confessions of the mystic, Sperata, who is *eine schöne Seele* . It need be said, however, that Goethe is *critical* of mysticism in the *Lehrjahre* , a matter I will deal with later in the section on Goethe's (implicit) scale of health within the novel.
[69] William Rillyman, *Goethe's Narrative Fiction. The Irvine Goethe Symposium*

However, Friedrich Schlegel gave a more critical response to the novel in his 1797 notebooks, where he further characterized the *Lehrjahre* as "a 'poetic' novel in distinction to Tieck's *Franz Sternbald* 'romantic' novel," praising Goethe's "poetic unity" but criticizing "Wilhelm's goal."[70]

Despite Schlegel's criticism, he understood Goethe's departure from the romantic-idealist project better than anyone during his time. Schlegel even attempted to placate the growing resentment of the romantic school toward the *Lehrjahre* by making the distinction between the romantic school's "universal education" and Goethe's own "humanistic education."[71]

However, Tieck responded by saying that Goethe's novel did not adequately serve the Idealist cause because it did not support the Romantic notion of "universal education."[72] Tieck's own idealistic effort was best portrayed in his novel *Franz Sternbalds Wanderungen* (1798), which was his own attempt to craft through the novelistic literary form a synthesis of "ideality and reality, time and eternity."[73]

Initially, Novalis praised Goethe's novel, but in 1800 he called the *Lehrjahre* a "satire against poetry and religion."[74] In his contribution to the *Irvine Goethe Symposium* (1983), Ernst Behler

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(Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1983) 117.

[70] Ibid., 120.

[71] Ibid., 122.

[72] Ibid., 119.

[73] Ibid., 125; In October of the same year Schiller wrote that Goethe's novel was "not poetic" in "form" but conceded that the book contained a "poetic spirit," Ibid., 114.

[74] Ibid., 111.

demonstrates what he calls the "fusion of worlds" in Novalis's novel *Heinrich von Öfterdingen* (1806), the identity between the "inner self and the exterior world."[75] What Fichte and Schelling succeeded in creating through the medium of pure reason, Novalis (like that of his contemporary, Hölderlin) created through the aesthetic medium.

It only takes a first reading of the *Lehrjahre* to notice that Goethe presents to the reader a world where human existence-- like the nature of the everyday world that is perceived by the five senses-- is precarious. In the *Lehrjahre* Goethe's world is one where reason is often mitigated by un-reason, chaos or doubt. Universal-moral imperatives are constantly challenged by the concrete demands of life. Chance exists of a piece with fate (although a fate which is not administered by the gods, but at most by the hidden hand of human guidance).

For instance, both Wilhelm's planned meeting with Jarno and Lothario and his accidental meeting with members of the acting company he eventually joins after his unsuccessful business venture, have unpredictable and unresolved consequences.[76] These consequences, even by the end of the novel, hardly resemble the "universal education" program set forth by the German Idealist school.

The question needs to be asked as to why the German

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[75] Ibid., 125.

[76] Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (1795-1796) (Zürich: Artemis-Verlag, 1949), Book II. 9 and Book V.8.

Romantic school of the eighteenth century was so single-minded in its pursuit of a *universal* program of education. Since there was no (functionally) authoritative head governing Germany at this time, it was left to the leading philosophical and literary figures to lead the nation. Napoleon was busy with his campaign to Egypt, and Frederick III with governing Prussia. So for the time being, Germany's political arena was not located in the court but in the public theater, the place where the important issues of the day could be debated and discussed.

As we shall see, Goethe's *Lehrjahre* challenged the efficacy of this arena in providing practical leadership for Germany. Though desiring not to underestimate the importance of the theater in developing the individual and shaping the values of society, the *Lehrjahre*, nonetheless, took a hard look at the limitations of such a forum.

Goethe did not have a precise *Bildung* in mind when he sat down to revise the original *Wilhelm Meister* work. From the *Ur-meister* to the *Lehrjahre's* sequel (the *Wanderjahre*), one observes a complex working out of changes which were happening within their author as he was growing more aware of the ineffectiveness of a kind of thought whose steadfast purpose was to *envision unities rather than to practically revise actualities.*

One of the more obvious signs that Goethe's novel marked a point of transition from his initial acceptance of the idealist project to a thorough-going criticism of its psychotic tendencies, is the

coexistence of non-totalizing constellations within the novel. Unlike Goethe's earlier hypothesis of *Urpflanze* (a position holding the homological similarity between human nature and plants, suggesting a common origin and teleology), in the *Wilhelm Meister* novel *Goethe's de-scriptions of differentiation or opposition in life do not serve a presupposed vision of totality.*

An obvious example of this can be demonstrated in Wilhelm's ambivalent relationship to his mentors, Jarno and Natalie. At first, Wilhelm praises Jarno for introducing him to the works of Shakespeare, but then harbors resentful feelings toward him when Jarno condemns the illegitimate child, Mignon.[77] Concerning Natalie, it is only because of Wilhelm's blunted perception that he does not recognize that Natalie (his lover) is, as well, the "Amazon" who earlier wiped his wounds when the acting company was attacked by a band of robbers.[78] And although Wilhelm deepens his relationship to both Jarno and Natalie, by the end of the novel the reader is given no complete picture as to how these relationships will develop or what will result from them. For example, at the end of the novel, although Wilhelm is (supposedly) going to marry Natalie, he is more pre-occupied with his son Felix (who Wilhelm bore by another woman, Mariane, and with whom he is still in love).[79]

As concerns Wilhelm's relationship with Jarno, little is ever

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[77] Ibid., Book II. 8, 9.
[78] Ibid., Book VIII. 3.
[79] Ibid., Book VIII.10

revealed to the reader about the character of Jarno, yet he is one of the guiding forces which will determine the outcome of Wilhelm's apprenticeship.[80] In addition to these (planned) inconsistencies of Goethe, Natalie and Jarno's level of maturity is set in contrast to Wilhelm's naiveté, yet Wilhelm--not Natalie and Jarno--is the intended "hero" of the novel. Goethe's intentions here are, of course, obvious. *It will be persons who will be the principle guides toward an individual's practical growth, not the principle of reason.* Furthermore, this growth will be full of stops and starts, and *unresolved finishes-;* in short, a mirror image of life in the everyday world. An ideal will be naively adopted one day, and the next day abandoned, if another, more workable one, presents itself.

Yet, one can pinpoint three decisive turning points in Wilhelm's process of education. These are: 1) Wilhelm's initial foreclosure of the oedipal code and his subsequent initiation into the narcissan life of the theater, 2) Wilhelm's eventual *de-scription* of the narcissan code through his critique of the theater, and finally 3) Wilhelm's choice to re-enter the world of Oedipus, but in order to challenge and *trans-figure* the oedipal world by means of an indispensable tool Wilhelm fashions and carries back from the narcissan world.

Despite the fact that Wilhelm's apologia for the theater in his letter to Werner will be contradicted by the end of the novel, it is

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[80] Ibid., Book VII, 9.

obvious that Wilhelm's first turning point (his decision to leave the world of business) has made him richer for the experience.[81] The Abbot and Lothario have invited Werner to discuss a land deal. Wilhelm de-scribes Werner as someone who, in a short span of years, has become an old man. Werner's body is said to be "more scrawny," his face "more delicate," "his nose longer," and "his head is balding."[82] Wilhelm ends his description of Werner by saying that he has the appearance of a "compulsive hypochondriac."[83]

In contrast to Wilhelm's perception of Werner, Werner perceives Wilhelm as "larger," "stronger," "straighter," and "more cultivated and pleasing in his behavior."[84] Although Wilhelm will decide to leave the theater by the end of the novel, at this particular stage in Wilhelm's education, it is evident that Goethe is forwarding an implicit criticism of Werner's "exterior activity" which exists on the reified level of business transaction .[85]

Turning specifically to Werner's letter to Wilhelm, Werner writes to his brother-in-law in order to congratulate him on his initiation into the life of trade. It is Werner's insistence that Wilhelm "demonstrate his action" by taking on full-time the responsiblities of

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[81] Ibid., Book V. 3.
[82] Ibid., Book VIII. 1.
[83] Ibid.
[84] Ibid.
[85] Harold Reiss has remarked that "Werner's world is limited; trade is the experience of his life", and that the "whole development of the novel is an implicit criticism of Werner and his way of life"; Cf. Harold Reiss, *Goethe's Novels* (Florida: University of Miami, 1969), 105-106.

the business world, that plays the determining role in Wilhelm's decision to turn toward the life of the stage.[86] Werner mentions this particular kind of "action" twice in the same letter, once at the beginning and once at the end.[87] Werner goes so far as to compare his new relation to Wilhelm (by way of his marriage of convenience to Wilhelm's sister) to a marriage-of-sorts between themselves, one by which Werner and Wilhelm have become "bonded" through their shared life of trade Werner calls the "spirit of action."[88]

Werner speaks to Wilhelm about this superficial mode of (external) "action" much earlier in the novel, when Werner tells Wilhelm (before Werner is sent by his father on his first business venture) that he believes Wilhelm will be carried away by a "great moment of action," once Wilhelm has experienced the mercantile ongoings in the larger cities.[89] But to Werner's consternation, the very opposite happens to his brother-in-law. After Wilhelm meets up with a Shakespearian acting company, he gets distracted from his business responsibilities. It is not too long before Wilhelm will speak to Serlo of Hamlet's "great action of the spirit," which was too large for Hamlet to accomplish.[90]

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[86] *Lehrjahre* , Book 5. 2.

[87] Ibid., 307, 310.

[88] Ibid., 310.

[89] Ibid., Book 1. 10, 40.

[90] Ibid., Book 4. 13, 263; It is ironic that this "great action" which Werner has meant for Wilhelm to experience (having solely to do with the activity of commerce) is juxtaposed with Hamlet's failure to act by way of seeking revenge from his uncle who has taken Hamlet's father's place, and who is sleeping with his mother. Hamlet turns his vengeance inward. The tragic result is that Hamlet becomes melancholic.

Hence, it is Werner's superficial understanding of "activity" that Wilhelm comes to critcize, and Wilhelm will react by moving away from the oedipal life of trade and toward the narcissan life of the theater. The letter from Werner to Wilhelm (unbeknowns to Werner) seals Wilhelm's decision. However, it will take a long time before Wilhelm realizes that the actions upon the stage will not be fulfilling enough for him, or have the effect upon the everyday world he trusts these actions will have. *Wilhelm does not yet know that his "great action" lies both beyond the imaginary world of the stage and the reified world of business.*

If Goethe's *Bildung* in the *Urmeister* was one which intended to foster a strong national theater in Germany, the *Lehrjahre's* intention was to provide a critique of the (original) *Wilhelm Meister* work and its cause. This message is clearly given in the "Lehrbrief," the document presented to Wilhelm by the "Society of the Tower." At the end of Wilhelm's apprenticeship he learns that "where words do not have effect, action speaks."[91] It is at this particular turning point in the novel that the Abbot (who is the leader of the "Turmgesellschaft") presents to Wilhelm both the diploma and Wilhelm's son Felix and pronounces the end of Wilhelm's apprenticeship.[92]

The deeper message of the "Lehrbrief" is read to Wilhelm by

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[91] Ibid., Book 7. 9, 522.
[92] Ibid.

Jarno : "There are few who *at the same time* have thought and the capacity to action."[93] This appeal to measure thought *dialectically* by action and action by thought is implied by the phrase "at the same time" (in German, "zugleich"). This is not a lesson which Wilhelm will ever assimilate entirely within himself, but a guideline, a *vade mecum* which he will carry throughout his life.[94]

The *thought- (external) action dialectic*, which is given as a maxim to Wilhelm at the end of his apprenticeship, signals Wilhelm's final turning point away from the narcissan world of the theater (a world in which action on the stage-as-such is imaginery) and re-entry back into the oedipal world. However, Wilhelm's return to the world will no longer involve the superficial "spirit of action" he encountered in the marketplace. Wilhelm will also not acquiesce to the accepted oedipal "family" code for the sake of convenience and opportunism, as did his brother-by-marriage and comrade-in-business, Werner.

Wilhelm's new "family" will be made up of Felix (his son out

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[93] Ibid., Book 8. 5, 590. Italics mine.

[94] The "thought-(external) action" dialectic is further developed in Goethe's sequel to the *Lehrjahre* , which he did not finish until 1829, thirty-four years after the *Lehrjahre* was published. This goes to show that in spite of this length of time, Goethe never abandoned the thought-(external) action dialectic. For just as it was Jarno who read to Wilhelm from his "Lehrbrief" the thought-action maxim, in the *Wanderjahre* it is Jarno again who passes on the secret he has learned as the result of his own initiation process. It is this: "Thought and action, action and thought, that is the sum of all wisdom. Both must be like life itself, a breathing in and a breathing out, back and forth, in one continuous movement". Jarno adds that if one makes this a "law" for himself that "thought need be tested by action" and "action by thought", one cannot err; and if one does err, he will get back on the right track soon"; Cf. Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre* (1829) (Zürich: Artemis-Verlag, 1949), Book 2. 9, 284.

of wedlock by Marianne), Mignon (his daughter, who is the illegitimate child to the Harper[Augustine] and Sperata), and Natalie (a figure, who like Jarno, will play more the role of "teacher" than "lover"). As one can see, this is not the typical oedipal family on the road to neuroticized "success" in the world of transaction . The primary motivation behind Wilhelm's choice to enter into this unusual family bond is that circumstances have brought Wilhelm to the door of decision, where he desires to act responsibly, to show *care-for-others* in the everyday world, as the opportunity presents itself.[95] Wilhelm's decision to act at this particular crossroads in his life proves that he has taken to heart the *practical ideal* which Jarno imparted to him at the beginning of his apprenticeship: that one day a man need "learn to live for the sake of others" and begin to show" *responsible activity.*"[96]

Goethe's thought-(external) action dialectic, as lived out by Wilhelm, was Goethe's way of expressing his new "critical" attitude towards the German Enlightenment. In this sense, Goethe's Wilhelm is not only an explicit critique of Werner and his oedipal way of life (Reiss) and the narcissan life of the theater. The progressive de-neuroticization and de-psychoticization of Wilhelm Meister was an implicit critique of Goethe's own narcissan contemporaries within the German Idealist circle, whose preoccupation with imaginery

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[95] Cf. also notion of *Fürsorge* in Book 4.16, 280; Cf. also mentions of "Sorge" and "Sorglos" in Book 4. 16, 282.
[96] Ibid., Book 7. 9, 526.

activity and with the creation of non-dialectical, totalizing myths proved to be as ineffective as the introverted desire for revenge which plagued and eventually destroyed Hamlet. On the contrary, *Wilhelm Meister was Goethe's negative-dialectical image, based on German soil and German life, a negative-dialectical and non-totalizing image which sought a practical discourse with the everyday world.*

The last section of this chapter will focus on the *implicit hierarchy of health* within Goethe's *Lehrjahre.* Unlike Hölderlin's "hierarchy of knowledge" (which, as we already have seen, was a notion Hölderlin borrowed from Fichte as a way of basing his "all in one" principle on "intellectual intuition"), Goethe's "hierarchy of health" turns the tables on the German Romantic-Idealist school by basing its principle, not on a philosophical "all in one" formula, but on a psychological *thought-(external) action dialectic* .

When Hyperion is Healed the Neurotic-Psychotic Bind

is *De-scribed* and *Trans-figured* :

The Implicit Scale of Health in Goethe's *Lehrjahre*

Although there is no explicit mention of a "hierarchy of health," an *implicit* one can be located by a grouping of the major characters in the novel, from Aurelia and the Harper[Augustine] to Natalie and the leaders of the *Turmgesellschaft* (the Abbot and Jarno).

The measuring factor which places the main characters at a certain level on the scale of health is the amount of success each has in challenging the oedipal code without foreclosing it; in other words, the level of denial of the oedipal code which would amount to choosing the narcissan code. The extent of a character's health then will depend on the following: 1) the success that each character has in deconstructing the oedipal code by a critique of reified(external) activity, the family system, and the institutional religious code as defined by Oedipus, and 2) the success that each character has in deconstructing the narcissan code by a critique of interior mental activity, as well as a critique of auto-erotic love as defined by Narcissus.

"Health" in the *Lehrjahre* is defined then, in terms of the degree to which each character is both a successful decoder and supporter of an on-going practical self-critique, whereby neither Oedipus (the keeper of the neurotic world) nor Narcissus (the keeper

of the psychotic world) is foreclosed or devalued.

The Harper[Augustine] and his sister/lover Sperata occupy the lowest position on the narcissistic end of Goethe's scale of health. The Harper is a suicidal melancholic.[97] Wilhelm learns from a clergyman (who is treating the Harper's sickness) that "an idea" needs to have influence upon one's "active life," or one will become ill.[98] Later in the novel, Jarno informs Wilhelm that the Harper's condition is worsening, that he looks at nothing but "his empty self."[99] Concerning his own condition, the Harper claims that the only feeling that he can experience is the *"feeling* of guilt."[100] The Harper's physician unsuccessfully tries to get the Harper to confess what is on his mind. He knows enough about the Harper to tell Wilhelm that the Harper was once a clergyman (or a monk), and had an affair with a woman who gave birth to their child. Harper's lover has recently died, and the Harper, burdened with guilt, has acquired an *irrational* fear that he will die from a young boy's hand.[101]

Still later in the novel, the Harper's brother, the Marchese, appears on the scene and tells Wilhelm that early in life, the Harper

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[97] Ibid., Book 5. 16, 373.
[98] Ibid., 373.
[99] Ibid., Book 6. 4, 469. On the narcissism of St. Augustine (which happens to be the religious namesake of the Harper) Julia Kristeva writes: "The Narcissan Plotinian divinity is love, but it is a love of self and in itself. The one who constitutes himself through it creates himself in and for himself. Not for the Other. To be is to vanish, to integrate the other in bedazzlement...Augustine (354-430) on the road to Tagaste or in his garden, enlightened by revelation, is a reader of Plotinus." Cf. Julia Kristeva, *Tales of Love* , 113.
[100] *Lehrjahre* , Book 6. 4, 469. Italics mine.
[101] Ibid., 470.

"abandoned himself" to the *"feeling"* of a "holy enthusiam," to "half-spiritual, half-physical emotions."[102] As the story is told by the Marchese, the Harper (having taken the monastic name "Augustine") would from time to time experience alternate feelings of bliss and despair, thrown "toward an abyss of *powerlessness* and empty misery."[103]

The reader finally learns that the reason the Harper is stricken with guilt is that his lover Sperata is as well his sister, whose mother had given Sperata to a neighbor for keeping because Sperata had conceived at a socially embarrassing (late) age.[104] After Sperata and Augustine have their child, each withdraws into the solitude of the cloister. Sperata's clergyman promotes in her feelings of guilt so that her "solitude" might be utilized for "religious *feelings*."[105] Meanwhile, Augustine passes into a state of "unrest of body and spirit", and learns how to play the harp as a way of mitigating his illness.[106]

Following a brief recovery, Augustine, having always kept a vial of poison with him, unsuccessfully attempts suicide after he reads the Abbot's account of his life. Later, he slits his throat, *believing* (wrongly) that the child Felix has drunk from the bottle of poison he has left on the table. During the night he loosens his

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[102] Ibid., Book 8. 9, 622. Italics mine.
[103] Ibid.
[104] Ibid.
[105] Ibid., 627. Italics mine.
[106] Ibid., 631.

bandages and bleeds to death.[107]

It is first supposed that Sperata has died as a result of the vision of her child's death, from wanting to be reunited with her mother. But the reader later learns that Sperata's *vision* is incorrect; that is, her vision is a mere projection of her own guilt from having abandoned her daughter, Mignon. Her daughter is in fact alive and being cared for by Wilhelm.

Goethe's critique of the institutional code of religion as defined by Oedipus (through the caricatured lives of the Harper[Augustine] and his sister/lover Sperata) cannot be fully appreciated unless it is put into context with the Pietistic movement prevalent in his day (a subject I gave brief mention to in chapter one). The pious enthusiasm to which Goethe has the Harper[Augustine] and Sperata fall prone reflects the author's attitude toward the Pietistic movement of Goethe's time, a movement best explained in terms of its contrast to rational deism and pantheism (the intellectual religions of the German Enlightenment school).[108] Yet Pietism in another way shares

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[107] Ibid., 640-646.

[108] In *Karl Philipps Moritz. At the Fringe of Genius* (1979) Mark Boulby defines the pietism of the eighteenth century , contemporary with Goethe's *Lehrjahre* , in these terms: "Pietism proper was in its origins an introverted, emotional modification of Lutheranism, seeking the realization of the Kingdom of God on earth by the mystical transformation of the individual soul"; According to Boulby, MMe. de Guyon (one of the great spiritual leaders of the Pietist movement) warned against extreme forms of Pietism which often resulted in a "disregard of externals, including family obligation, unproductive time-consuming contemplation, inertia, vacuity and incessant brooding, sometimes shading into melancholia"; Cf. Mark Boulby, *Karl Philipps Moritz. At the Fringe of Genius* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1979) 7; Cf. also Robert Burton's classic *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1651), wherein he defines"religious melancholy" as the result of "galled [guilty] conscious" and unhealthy solitariness", and characterizes the illness as a "sickness of the soul

with its counterpart, rational deism and pantheism, a *preocupation with interiority* --Pietism, with individual *feelings* of guilt and remorse pre-requisite to belief, and rational Deism and Pantheism, with establishing a theology of *reason* as the necessary, moral basis of the philosophical project.

As one can see, the decisions of both the Harper[Augustine] and Sperata are not only dominated by *feeling* , but because each does *not think* things through, each is, in turn, self-deceived. The Harper's paranoia about dying from a boy's hand is true, yet only because he believes he has killed the boy but in actuality has not. Likewise, Sperata's vision of Mignon's abandonment is true, but only in the past tense. In fact, Mignon-- at the time of Sperata's vision-- is happy and being cared for, and it is only Sperata's unresolved guilt feelings from leaving her daughter that are the cause of Sperata's death-from-heartbreak, and not her daughter Mignon's.

Consequently, it is the narrow and absolutist introspections of both the Harper[Augustine] and Sperata that make knowledge of the outside world impossible. Each dies as the result of a misguided perception that endlessly reflects a series of events in the past that both have refused to accept, having little to do with the present world around them; namely, that they have crossed the boundary of Oedipus by experiencing the forbidden love of incest and have

without any hope or expectation of amendment"; Cf. Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (New York: Tudor, 1927) 872, 936, 942; Edited by Floyd Dell and Paul Jordan-Smith, based upon the text of the sixth edition posthumously published in 1651.

conceived a child outside the law established by the family code.

Furthermore, as a result of breaking the primary law of the oedipal code, the Harper[Augustine] and his sister/lover Sperata vow to make payments back to Oedipus through a life of seclusion from one another in the asocial world of Narcissus, in the world of auto-erotic love. But the life of solitude proper to the religious institutions which they join does not allow for any concrete reparation in the everyday world (e.g., through *care for* their child). They are allowed only an eternal re-enactment—within their consciences—of their lack of success in living within the boundaries of the oedipal family code, all the while claiming to follow the life of a man whose myth became famous for (deconstructively) challenging at its very center the oedipal code at every possible opportunity.

On still another level, the Harper[Augustine] and Sperata characterize the tragic result of internally-focused feeling which has been divorced from externally-focused thought. **The coexistence-by-direct-opposition of the pietistic movement and rational theology of the eighteenth century-German Enlightenment period is but an example of the schizophrenic condition of the overall cultural complex at this time, caused by the uneasy transference of power from church to state, whose beginning was effected by the emerging uncertainty within society's cultural consciousness about the absoluteness or given-ness of religious structures it had uncritically inherited. Perhaps the need for closure (to make a rapidly changing**

world manageable) caused an either-or situation: either absolute truth-through-belief, or absolute truth-through-reason. To waver between the two would be to fall between the shifting psycho-cultural plates.

At any rate, for Goethe, the Harper[Augustine] and Sperata's larger failure is not so much the *unlawful act* of incest or the child which was its result (the obvious genetic and social drawbacks not withstanding); rather, it is their present *inability to act*, to get out of their self-centered situation that Goethe loathes, and he suggests by their tragic lives that the pietistic-religious institution has not provided the Harper[Augustine] and Sperata with a program for (profound) external action. A life of interiority—at least, for these two-- can only result in an endless reflection on the taboo broken in the past and not on the life needed to be lived in the present.

Because the Harper[Augustine] and Sperata have not learned how to achieve fulfillment in the oedipal world by a sublimation of their instinctual feelings for one another (which is no more than the desire to return, not only to the pre-oedipal, but to the pre-natal situation of husband/wife-before-child), it stands to reason that they will be ruled by the schizophrenic feeling-structure that their particular religious institution offers; namely, simultaneous desire for self-annihilation and love of a hidden God. Both brother and sister are unaware of any alternate route of mediation whereby they might experience self-healing and affirmation. Moreover, rather than

choosing a life of reflective action, which might *positively* criticize the oedipal world by an *effective* integration of thought and feeling, reason and belief, spirit and body, the Harper[Augustine] have chosen to exile themselves within the most narrow circle of life possible, the mental prison of non-productive guilt.

This is a perfect example of how Narcissus (in the mode of institutionalized religious solitude) is forever bound to Oedipus and how Oedipus is able to continue on his way unchallenged, and whose illusion of absoluteness is strengthened by the alleged impotence of Narcissus.

To most of us who get along in the world of Oedipus, Narcissus represents both misdirected action and disembodied thought. But few of us dare to question the (equally pathological) mechanized action and reified thought represented by the world of Oedipus. We will return to this matter when we de-scribe Werner's status according to Goethe's implicit hierarchical scale of health.

The dialogue between Phylis (the schöne Seele), her Uncle, and her sister Natalie, best typifies Goethe's critique of that kind of internal activity which does not concern itself with the concrete demands of the external world. Phylis, like Sperata, has chosen the religious life of solitude. Phylis's uncle admires her for having the courage to explore her interior self through meditation and prayer, but not when it is at the expense of the body.[109] Phylis's uncle

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[109] *Lehrjahre* , Book 6, 436. It is important to note that Goethe must have had a plan

cautions her not to blame another for striving to know the "sensible self," the one who strives to "harmonize his (internal) powers through (external) action."[110] Phylis's uncle then speaks to her at length about this "art of thinking and acting."[111]

The uncle's "lesson" to his niece is meant as a reprimand for Phylis's loss of attraction for both her husband and society, which she has abandoned for the life of religous solitude. Then Goethe has Phylis's sister's oldest daughter Natalie enter the scene, and we read that Phylis is taken aback by Natalie's life of *Fürsorge* in the world; that is, "responsible care for" the "poor."[112] The reader learns that Natalie possesses the talent for "action without (self-) want," and a quality which Phylis (a religious person) openly admits not to have.[113]

Consequently, although Phylis has succeeded in transcending her own oedipalized family code, Goethe criticizes the solitary religious life that she has chosen based on the degree of her narcissan activity of internalization. The power which Phylis utilizes for meditation and prayer is, to a certain degree, a wasted power, because it remains isolated from the oedipal world it wishes to trans-figure.

in mind by placing Book VI ("Die schöne Seele") at the very center of the novel. Book Six creates a bridge from Natalie's (silent) critique of her sister Phylis, to Wilhelm's own critique of the life of the theater, and his subsequent choice to follow the *vade mecum* (namely, that of Fürsorge) of Natalie's, developed throughout in the novel.

[110] Ibid., 436. Parenthesis mine; literally, "to harmonize actively his powers".
[111] Ibid.
[112] Ibid., 449.
[113] Ibid.; Parenthesis mine; literally, "action without want".

Goethe, however, does not rule out the religious life as an effective mode which will promote his thought-(external) act dialectic. In fact, at the very highest level on Goethe's scale of health resides the *Turmgesellschaft*, the Abbot and Jarno. Their motto is simple: *practical guidance to others*. In a sense, one could say that it is the *Turmgesellschaft* who *de-scribes* both the rational theology of the German Idealist school and the inward-looking spirituality of the Pietist movement; that is, Goethe's secret society criticizes the prevailing religious codes by demonstrating an alternative.[114]

The "Society of the Tower" occupies a *subversive* position, a society of practical guides, a religious society, but one not dominated by in-house politics, building material wealth, idealist philosophies, pietist or rational theologies. The "Tower" is an institution of transcendence only in the sense of a consolidated extensive effort to break open the closed circle of totalizing, psychotic thinking by the deconstructive mechanism of self-critique. Overall visions--much less ideologies--are not in their keeping, only a desire for the most

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[114] It is no secret that Goethe in his later life was an advocate of the Masonic order, and there are surely resonances of that society's esoteric thrust in Goethe'sTurmgesellschaft . It is also known that Goethe's mother was a devotee of the pietist, Count von Zindendorf, the founder of the Brethren or Herrnhuters, and that in 1768 Goethe himself became a friend of Lady von Klettenberg, a member of the pietist group(who may have had an influence upon the creation of Goethe's "schöne Seele" in Book Six of the *Lehrjahre* . Gilles Quispel notes in connection with the gnosticism of Faust that the "Herrnhuters depart from the official doctrine of the Church: they conceive the Holy spirit as a feminine figure, a Mother." Cf. Gilles Quispel, "Faust: Symbol of Western Man" in *Eranos-Jahrbuch 37* , 1968, 277-298. At the same time, however, one must not forget that Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* work (contemporaneous with the *Faust* work) is a critique of Faustian self-willed striving for knowledge, and as well a critique of Pietistic passivism and inward looking enthusiasm.

productive "next step" for those whom they guide. One does not gain entry into the labyrinth of their inner thoughts and beliefs, only a glimpse of their *thoughtfulness in action.* Unlike their religious counterparts, whose life lines are brief, self-centered and tragic, their portraits suggest a life lived in abundance with wide horizons, with ever-expanding life lines.

Moving away from Goethe's critique of the (psychotic) internalized and bipolarized activities of thought/feeling and reason/belief as they manifest themselves in the religious life of solitude, on the other (neurotic) end of the scale of health, Werner occupies a low position as well, but this is due to Werner's preoccupation with unreflective, external activity. As already mentioned, at the beginning of the novel Werner has taken up the "spirit of activity" of the business world, but Wilhelm sees through the veneer of Werner's success.[115] For Werner is a mere functionary of his occupation, an efficient wheel in the machine of rationalized progress, whose principle concern is to reap the benefits of monitary trans*action* .

Yet, this single-purposed activity of Werner's eventually leaves him physically and mentally drained. His worn and contorted physical appearance is but a manifestation of his interior emptiness.[116] Although moving from the opposite end of the scale of

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[115] Ibid., Book 5. 2, 310.
[116] Ibid., Book 8, 536.

health that is proper to the psychotic activity of the Harper-[Augustine], Sperata, and Phylis, Werner ends up in a similar condition of physical and mental fatigue. Goethe completes his picture of Werner by listing him under the *neurotic* category of the "compulsive hypochondriac."[117] The oedipal world (at least at the reified level which Werner is living it) has been more unsuccessful for Werner than the narcissan world has been for Wilhelm.

Wilhelm is the only character in Goethe's *Lehrjahre* who fluctuates on the scale of health, moving from the oedipal world of business to the narcissan world of the theater, and back again to the oedipal world, though partially transformed. Wilhelm's character is one that is open to growth from the beginning to the end of the novel. Wilhelm makes great strides away from the dismal future in business which his father had mapped out for him.

Yet, even the life of the theater, though an integral part of Wilhelm's development, will be criticized and *practically* transcended through the lessons Wilhelm learns from the *Turmgesellschaft*. Wilhelm comes to observe the tendency in the actor toward "self love," but Wilhelm does not fully understand this until he sees the contrast between the "self love" of the actor and his own new profession as "caretaker" to Mignon.[118]

Later in the novel, Jarno will impart to Wilhelm the *practical*

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[117] Ibid.
[118] Ibid., Book 2. 14, 153.

ideal of "learning to live for the sake of others," the need for a person at a certain stage of development to begin showing "responsible activity."[119] Also, as already mentioned, the teacher role is only over for the Abbot and Jarno when the message is finally imparted to Wilhelm that "there are few who *at the same time* have thought and the capability for action."[120]

It is here that Goethe (through the character of Wilhelm) *describes* all of the main characters only in so far as they measure up to this (fully) unrealizable-- but nonetheless practical-- ideal. It is through this last lesson that the reader finally understands Goethe's demonstration of the *level of effectiveness of the various kinds of activity* that are exercised by the Harper[Augustine] and Sperata, by Phylis, by Werner, by Wilhelm, and finally by Natalie and the *Turmgesellschaft* .

It is only after the above lesson which Wilhelm learns by trial and error, that he is ready to receive his *Lehrbrief*. Now Wilhelm's apprenticeship process has reached a certain level of maturity. Wilhelm has at this point become Wilhelm *Meister* ; neither a "master" of ideas nor a master *in-scriber* of holy texts, but a master *describer* and *trans-figurer* of concrete, historical conditions.

Next, and on the uppermost level of Goethe's scale of health, resides Natalie, the (silent) heroine of the novel, and the (ever-

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[119] Ibid.
[120] Ibid., Book 8. 5, 590. Italics mine.

present, but hidden) *Turmgesellschaft*, headed by the Abbot and Jarno. As we remember, Natalie is the one who in her youth teaches the mystic Phylis that true spirituality need have its effects in the world through *Fürsorge*, "care-for-others." It is also Natalie who later in her life is depicted by Wilhelm as the beautiful, mysterious "Amazon" who ministers to him after he is robbed and beaten on the roadside. Much later, when Wilhelm discovers that it was indeed Natalie who cared for him, he witnesses to others about her capacity for demonstrating *Fürsorge* .

Finally, Wilhelm (Goethe leads the reader to assume) will marry Natalie after he receives his diploma, and after Felix and Mignon are put into his care. At this point, one wonders whether Natalie, the mysterious "Amazon" is not as well a member of the secret "Society of the Tower." For like Jarno, Natalie appears in the novel only when she is needed to show Wilhelm the practical ideal of *Fürsorge* .

Just as it is impossible to understand Hölderlin's Hyperion save in the context of his relationship to his *abstract ideal*, Diotima (Hölderlin's personification of Beauty), Goethe's Wilhelm Meister cannot be fully understood save in relationship to his *practical ideal*, Natalie (Goethe's personification of the thought-[external] action dialectic).

It is in this sense, that **Goethe's Wilhelm Meister is a dialectical-mythical image which succeeds as a critique of the neurotic**

(oedipal)-psychotic (narcissan) bind, as it *de-scribes* and *trans-figures* the philosophical, (institutional) religious, and familial codes of its period.

Goethe's Wilhelm succeeds as well as a *redemptive image* of Hölderlin's Hyperion. For Goethe's Wilhelm does indeed begin his apprenticeship with a foreclosure of the oedipal code through the affirmation of the imaginative life which he attempts to live out through the theater company, the portion of the novel which Hölderlin read and understandably loved. **Wilhelm's initial foreclosure of the oedipal world is seen by Goethe as a necessary stage before one can understand that the oedipal world needs not to be re-entered and assimilated only, but challenged and transformed.**

Although later in his life Wilhelm will come to criticize the above stage of development as part of a wider horizon of growth, and will begin a new discourse with the oedipal world which he foreclosed, the message is clear: that the mirror of Narcissus has been shattered not to end his life, but to give him vision to reach beyond himself, so that he may look Oedipus in the eyes, the one who stands behind the mirror and keeps Narcissus at arm's length, Oedipus mistakenly perceiving that his devaluation and foreclosure of the narcissan world is for his own good.

Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, in my view, marks a watershed point in eighteenth-century German literature, dividing the German Enlightenment and Post-Enlightenment periods. One

might read the *Lehrjahre* as the first major attempt to criticize, the prevailing Romantic tendencies (e.g., the psychotic escapism of Hölderlin's *Hyperion* novel and Novalis's *Heinrich von Öfterdingen*), the Idealistic preoccupation with the "pure activity of thought" (the psychotic domination of the internal activity of thought over external activity instanced by Fichte and Schelling's *Tathandlung*), the bipolarity between the rational theology of the intellectual bourgeoisie and the irrational theology of the pietistic movement, and finally, the non-reflective, external actions (ie., trans*actions*) of the neurotic in the world of business, whose non-imaginative and non-caring (external) activity works against the humanization process on both the personal and social level.

Through an appeal to "responsible activity" Goethe attempts to mediate between the *thought* of the subject and the *action* by which the subject interracts with the world. Goethe moves his non-totalizing and negative-dialectical image, Wilhelm Meister, through and beyond his self-preoccupation with his own internal conflicts, and as well through and beyond his desire to escape the external world, by means of an *anti-Romantic and anti-Idealistic Bildung* .

Goethe's unique use of irony went far beyond the demonstration of the comic-tragic character of human existence (as his critique of Hamlet's inability to act suggests). Goethe's irony (shown through his own critical interpretation of the Faust legend as well as his own Werther) was one which was based on a rigorous,

ongoing self-and-other-critique which sought a way out of the circular, destructive patterns of human behavior, other than by the psychotic path of escapism or the neurotic path of conformism, prefiguring the master of cultural critique, Nietzsche.[121]

Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* brought art (in the mode of the word-made-flesh) out of the exclusive world of ideas, and in so doing divulged the secret which both German Romanticism and Idealism perhaps (unconsciously) desired to keep from themselves and the world in which they thought, dreamed and lived: the secret that language had fallen--for good-- from the realm of the sacred and could no longer be inaccessible to the everyday concerns of the world.

Yet, as we have already observed, centuries before the work of the German Enlightenment thinkers, even before the invention of the printing press, the religious word (unbeknowns to its keepers) had already begun its practical incarnation through discourse with real, human conditions.

In the eighteenth century, although the process of the word's

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[121] Goethe's Faust (unlike the Middle Ages folktale) does not make a "pact" but a "wager" with Mephistopholes, and he is "saved" rather than "condemned", similar to the alteration in Lessing's Faust. It being the case that the *Wilhelm Meister* work was contemporaneous with the *Faust* work, Wilhelm Meister could be seen as a counter-balancing image to that of Faust, just like Goethe's two very distinct poems "Prometheus"(1773) and "Ganymede"(1774) written within one year of one another. Rather than the "I" being stressed, it is the "co-creationality" of existence that is emphasized in the "Ganymede" poem, the way of love "embraced embracing." It is in this sense that Goethe's Wilhelm Meister is a "Ganymedean self." Goethe's "Prometheus" poem stands for the creating and insisting self. Traditionally, it is understood that Prometheus cautions Zeus to "leave his earth intact" and teaches the human race "not to obey" the limits which Zeus has set for it. Goethe's Faust is the epitome of the "Promethean self."

practical incarnation was impeded by the *psychoticization* of the human subject (through German Idealism and Romanticism, rational theology, and inward-looking Pietism), and impeded, as well, by the *neuroticization* of the human subject (through the foreclosure of the imaginative life for the quantified life of trans*action*), the word was mobilized once again through the critical work of Goethe. *By turning aesthetic language outward, Goethe, in one fell stroke, made language unholy again; that is, useful, in terms of its becoming a practical instrument for the humanization process.*

The purpose of the next chapter will be to investigate the manner in which Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* project carried through the negative-dialectical work of myth we found (implicitly) operative in Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* novel, thereby re-mobilizing the word's process of practical incarnation on German soil.

Chapter Three. Amidst the World the Critical *Man-Child*

Creates and Destroys:

The Continual Rise and Fall of Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*

Nietzsche's Negative Dialectics: Continuing the *De-scriptive* and *Trans-figurative* Function of Goethe's Non-Totalizing Myth-Making

As we saw in chapter one, it is Adorno's philosophy of negative dialectics that is guiding our search (in this particular study) for negative-dialectical myths (namely, non-totalizing [de-psychotic] and historically trans-figuring [de-neurotic] myths), and we also found that the self-negating Kronos myth acts productively in the capacity of a working paradigm for such a de-scriptive and trans-figurative process.

We have found that psychotic thinking (in terms of the psyche's premature press for closure and meaning amidst an external world perceived as unmanageable) gives rise as well to man's totalized (and consequently, non-trans-figuring) myth-making, whose contents, nevertheless, tell the tale of man's history of domination by abstraction (both at the level of reified, oedipal thought and totalized, narcissan myth).

Also, as previously discussed in chapter one, it was German Enlightenment thinking that laid the foundation for the absolute

split between thought/being, and between nature/history, specifically through its attempt to "confuse" (in the literal sense of the word) the above through non-dialectic, non-mediatory reification and totalization.

Hence, as Adorno's negative-dialectical thinking is the mediating tool which enables thought to enter history-in-the-making, and history-in-the-making to enter thought, the same guideline need be followed in the search for negative-dialectical myths; that is, those mythical images which contain within themselves the *de-psychotic function of critique* are such because they are vigorously engaged in historical concerns, with establishing mediation between the subject and the exterior world within which that subject-as-social-animal dwells. Moreover, the fact that negative-dialectical myths are involved directly with the world they have as well a *de-neurotic function*,in the sense that their purpose is to trans-figure the accepted, oedipal code rather than to foster its non-critical continuation.

As we have already seen with Blumenberg's study of the German Enlightenment's "work *of* myth" and "work *on* myth," a "new" myth which does not have within itself this dialectical character, maintains an "iconic constancy"; that is, a timelessness whose survival throughout history depends on the new myth's ability to maintain the illusion of timelessness through distortion and inversion of the great myths, so that, in fact, this kind of myth is not a "new" myth at all, but a mere re-working of an old myth. One

need not be reminded that for Blumenberg this work on the old myths (especially the "inversion" of them) must be continued until the subject claims back for itself full autonomy.

Although Blumenberg cited only Schelling's and Fichte's work on the biblical creation myth as an example of this operation specifically at work within the German Idealism project, it was the purpose of the first half of chapter two of my study on Hölderlin to test out Blumenberg's theory by returning to the German Enlightenment project; specifically, as it relates to Hölderlin's work on myth, a work which Hölderlin inherited from his contemporaries Fichte and Schelling.

As we saw, the test results were positive: that indeed, much of Hölderlin's Enlightenment project (based on Fichte's and Schelling's idealism) can be read (in spite of the obvious platonic influences) as a distortion and inversion of the biblical creation myth, exemplified by Hyperion's idealistic alignment with the ebb and flow of nature, and his aesthetic return to the ("originally undivided") first nature (i.e., paradise) in order to partake of the "tree of life." Although Hyperion does not end up with the same kind of inversion as Fichte and Schelling (an absolute "I" who originally creates as opposed to a monotheistic Judaeo-Christian god), Hölderlin's *Hyperion can certainly be read as a character inversion of the biblical Adam,* in that Hyperion's "fall" and "return" to paradise occurs by an "act of knowledge" (in the mode of "intellectual intuition") which results in

an aesthetic-phenomenological re-alignment of the self with the cyclical ascension and descension of nature, rather than as the result of a primal act of disobedience and a subsequent life of domination over nature.

In addition, the Hyperion "Adam" does not have a mate called "Eve" who leads him into temptation and who is blamed for his fall from a previous unity with nature; rather, Nature herself, hypostasized in the image of Beauty, becomes for Hyperion the very unifying principle, a psychotic *vision of totality* for which he longs and one which the reader is led to believe Hyperion realizes at the end of the novel .

Goethe's Wilhelm Meister, on the other hand, as we saw in the second half of the previous chapter, succeeds as a negative- dialectical, mythical image, in that its primary function is a *self- critical* one, whose activity is not isolated from the everyday world, and whose freedom does not depend upon the distortion and inversion of an ancient god-myth, but rather on its ability always to surpass itself through critique of self and other. Ironically, *Wilhelm Meister's survival depends upon his ongoing apprenticeship to the principle of self-contradiction, in surpassing whatever might be his present stage of growth, and whose non-totalizing ideal of de-scription and trans-figuration through the practical ideal of Fürsorge hopes to insure the worldly focus of his goal.*

The purpose of the present chapter will be to investigate the

extent to which Nietzsche's use of myth continued (or hindered) Goethe's earlier project of self-critical myth, a work which desired to mobilize the word once again toward its practical incarnation; moreover, a route temporarily de-railed by Goethe's contemporaries who headed the German Enlightenment project.

To find out whether or not Nietzsche carried on the work of his predecessor, one need first locate a self-critical (that is, negative-dialectical) image whose integrity will be based initially upon the level of its function of *de-scription*; that is, upon the mythical image's rigorous display of the prevailing familial, hermeneutical, and religious codes whose security is guaranteed by the closed, neurotic-psychotic structure maintained by the mutual foreclosure of the oedipal and narcissan worlds. To say it in another way, the success of this self-critical, mythical image will be measured by the level at which it overcomes the oedipal and narcissan worlds, without, of course, foreclosing either of them. This mythical image (if found) will not be concerned with realizing historical goals *ideally* within an ahistorical realm-- with either establishing an "iconic constancy" or with *exclusively* promoting the distortion or inversion of an old, great myth (Blumenberg)--but rather, with the desire to enter the temporal stream of history-in-the making, thus de-scribing the major codes of the cultural structure within which it is embedded, a cultural structure which itself has achieved the status of unchangeable myth. This would then, at the very outset, demand from the author of such

a mythical image, direct involvement with, and (at the very least) a *critical* (that is, a de-psychotic or confrontational) attitude toward history.

Already with Nietzsche we are on solid footing in this regard. In the second meditation of Nietzsche's *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen* (1873-1874) he formulated a triadic concept of history. He distinguished between a "monumentalist," "antiquarian," and "critical" view.[1] The "monumentalist" view concerns itself with looking into the past to uncover the great "deeds and powerful actions" of humanity (e.g. the building of the pyramids). The "antiquarian" view wishes to turn its gaze totally away from the future, looking at the "things of the past." *Nietzsche calls the "critical" view " a new instinct", which courageously stands in the present "with the human things", taking only what is helpful from the past.*[2]

Nietzsche never abandoned his critical view of history. In *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches I* (1878), published several years after *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen* (1873-1874), Nietzsche defined the historical philosopher as one who searches for "no absolute truths," and whose method will lead "to a philosophy of universal negation."[3] This notion of "historical philosopher" as critic of culture

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[1] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Nietzsche Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe 3 . 1. Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen* (1873-1874) (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1972) 254.

[2] Ibid., 265, 166.

[3] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Nietzsche Werke 2* (Salzburg: Das Bergland Buch-Verlag, 1963) 137,145.

was certainly carried through in Nietzsche's later mythological figure, Zarathustra.

It need be mentioned in this regard that in the *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen* work, Nietzsche also distinguished between the "unhistorical sense" (which forgets what is not useful) and the "historical" sense (which takes into account "all the histories of peoples and individuals from within").[4] Commenting on the above passage Walter Kaufmann notes that Nietzsche's earlier work (*Die Geburt der Tragodie*,1872) had already interpreted real *and* mythical figures of the past from this perspective, whether it be "Dionysus and Apollo" or "Socrates and Goethe."[5]

So much is still being made of Nietzsche's fascination with the mythical god "Dionysus" (which was one among several of Nietzsche's critical images) that Jürgen Habermas's recent (implicit) diatribe against Adorno and Horkheimer (*Der philosophische Diskurs der Moderne: Zwölf Vorlesungen*[1985])attempts to tie Adorno and Horkheimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment* project of *reason against reason* exclusively to Nietzsche's Dionysus of the *Tragodie* (1872), the *Gut und Böse* (1886)and the *Geneologie* (1887) periods.

Habermas makes this "Dionysus connection" in hopes of deconstructing Adorno and Horkheimer's equation of (totalizing)

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[4] Nietzsche, *Werke 3* , 248-252.

[5] Walter Kaufmann, *Nietzsche. Philsopher, Psychologist, and Anti-Christ* , Third Edition (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968) 153.

myth and the German Enlightenment, by connecting the basis of their anti-enlightenment project exclusively to the Nietzschean Dionysus, which (in Habermas's view) personfied Nietzsche's attempt to transplant religion to the aesthetic realm, thereby returning to the enlightenment (i.e., mythical) project of the eighteenth-century German Romantics.

Before one can begin to evaluate Habermas's criticism of Nietzsche, we should start with the telling Introduction to the English translation of Habermas's *The Philosophical Discourse* by Frederick Lawrence, which informs the reader of the author's overall intentions of his book in the following way:

> [Habermas] uses this notion [reason understood
> as communicative action] to reconstruct Hegel's
> idea of ethical life .... Habermas follows Hegel also
> in viewing reason as a healing power of unifica-
> tion and reconciliation .... the unforced intersubjec-
> tivity of rational agreement.[6]

Habermas's return to the German Idealist project (strangely via a rather cumbersome synthesis between the idealist work of Hegel and the practical theory of the early Marx) wishes to go against the rigorous criticism of reason (as suggested by Adorno, Horkheimer, and their predecessor, Nietzsche) by way of an apologia for the German Enlightenment's use of reason, which Habermas articulates

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[6] Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity. Twelve Lectures* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1987) vii,xvi, parentheses mine. Translated by Frederick Lawrence, the book originally appeared in German under the title *Der philoso-phische Diskurs der Moderne: Zwölf Vorlesungen* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp-Verlag, 1985).

in terms of "the formation of expert cultures, within which carefully articulated spheres of validity. . . attain their own logic (as well,of course, . . . their own life . . .)."[7,8]

Habermas integrates his *positive approach to reason* in the post-modern world with Max Weber's claim of the "differentiation of value spheres in accord with their own logics," and cites examples of these "spheres" operative today, such as, 1) the "theoretic dynamic," which goes beyond mere technical utility in the sciences, 2) "universalist foundations of law and morality" which have been incorporated into "institutional government," and 3) "avant-garde art" which witnesses to the decentered understanding of the world.[9]

It is evident to the reader of *The Philosophical Discourse* that rather than criticize culture, Habermas would prefer to focus upon the brighter side of postmodernity and reason's positive role in the humanization process. He then begins a backward search in the history of German philosophy to find the crossroads where (according to his positive approach to enlightenment reason) the dialectic of enlightenment somehow got off track.

Habermas puts the blame on Nietzsche and his Frankfurt School successors, Adorno and Horkheimer, by suggesting that the problem is not too much enlightenment, but not enough

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[7] As a corrective to Hegel's idealism, Habermas attempts to follow Marx's "indication that philosophy must become practical, that its rational content has to be mobilized in practice". Ibid., xv.
[8] Ibid., 112-113.
[9] Ibid., 113

enlightenment. After (correctly) locating the origin of Adorno's self-critique of reason in Nietzsche, he then begins by interpreting Adorno and Horkheimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment* as a critique of "instrumental reason" due to its having "assimilated itself to power . . . thereby relinquish[ing] its critical force," but (wrongly) concludes that this inherent contradiction usurps reason's ability to be self-critical.[10]

On the contrary, it is my understanding of the Frankfurt school program (as Adorno and Horkheimer have defined it) that *it is precisely the negative-dialectical character of reason (i.e., reason's self-contradictory character) that enables reason to criticize its own pathological tendency to both reify and totalize the concrete and precarious human world , thereby mistaking the map for the territory.*[11] Negative-dialectical thought is built for the job of decodifying the mental creations of instrumental (reified) reason and totalizing myth. Hence, negative-dialectical thinking is not counter-productive at all, but rather, desires to be counter-cultural in the following way: to break open the systematized and dogmatized layers of thought which the instrumental dynamic within reason generates solely for the utilitarian purpose of organizing a chaotic world.

The negative-dialectical dynamic within reason desires to inject (paradoxically) a *positive,* mobilizing force into its own reified

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[10] Ibid., 119. parenthesis mine.

[11] Alfred North Whitehead has called this tendency of human consciousness to totalize untotalizable reality the "fallacy of misplaced concreteness."

layers of thought. *Negative-dialectical reason is a prime example of the myth of Kronos at work, continually creating and destroying what it creates in order to prevent reification and totalization.*

Habermas claims that (what he calls) Adorno/Horkheimer's "totalizing critique" of reason is self-contradictory, because an "explanation of the corruption of all rational criteria" would presuppose at least one criteria left "intact."[12] But this way of thinking disregards the capacity for reason to be self-critical; that *reason contains within itself a de-psychotic (non-totalizing) and de-neurotic (trans-figuring) mechanism* , one which is not at all destructive in the pathological sense, but quite the contrary.

Habermas rightly blames Nietzsche for Adorno's attitude of a "thorough" critique of reason in his *Negative Dialectics* work.[13] But then Habermas attempts to locate Nietzsche's critique of reason solely within the aesthetic project of the German Enlightenment, and claims that this makes Nietzsche revert back to "a world fallen back into myth."[14] Habermas sets out to prove that Nietzsche inherited the aesthetic program of Idealism, whereby "poetry alone can, as soon as it becomes public in the form of a new mythology, replace the unifying power of religion."[15]

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[12] Habermas, 127.

[13] Since Habermas has taken the liberty to create a pun on Adorno's anti-totalitarian project, by referring to his Nietzschean "totalizing critique of reason", I have changed Habermas's word "totalizing" to "thorough", which I believe is less biased and more accurate.

[14] Habermas, 125.

[15] Ibid., 89

Habermas then connects Nietzsche's exaltation of Dionysus to Hölderlin's Dionysus in *Bröt und Wein* .[16] For Habermas, Nietzsche's Dionysus, "the god who is coming" is the Anti-Christ, the "god of the future who will renew the lost, primordial forces."[17] For Habermas, Nietzsche's subversive intent (an intent which Habermas interprets as destructive) is to exchange reason and institutionalized religion, for poetry and myth, which (according to my reading of Habermas) is equal to un-reason.[18]

It is true that Nietzsche's Dionysus succeeds as a distortion and inversion of the biblical "Christ," and in this sense, corresponds to Blumenberg's revival of the German Idealism project. But the fact is that Nietzsche never relied exclusively on Dionysus as *the* counter-cultural image. [19]

In Nietzsche's *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen*(wherein he articulated his "critical " view of history), and especially within the *Zarathustra* work, he does not focus primarily on the narrow anti-Christian image, Dionysus). I am not saying that by the time of

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[16] Ibid., 90.

[17] Ibid., 92.

[18] In my view, Habermas faults Nietzsche because Nietzsche will not tell Habermas where he stands. Habermas seems discomforted that Nietzsche "moves about, according to his own analysis, in a world of illusion, in which lighter shadows can be distinguished form darker ones, but not reason from unreason". Habermas concludes that this makes Nietzsche revert back to "a world fallen back into myth." ; Habermas, 125.

[19] For a thorough treatment of Nietzsche's Dionysus throughout his whole corpus cf. Strong's Chapter Five ("Who is Dionysian? The Problem of the Immoralist") and Chapter Six ("What is Dionysian? Nietzsche and the Greeks") in Tracy B. Strong's, *Friedrich Nietzsche and the Politics of Transfiguration* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1975), 108-185.

Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*fable his critique of Christianity or his admiration for the mythical image of Dionysus ceased. I am only pointing out (and intend to show later on in the next section of this chapter) that*the critical dynamism within Zarathustra cannot by limited to a critique of the prevailing religious code* of Nietzsche's day, that *Zarathustra--as a the personification of Nietzsche's unilateral principle of critique--* goes far beyond the romantic (and therefore, "psychotic") function proper to Nietzsche's Anti-Christian figure, Dionysus.

The importance of the above fact has critical bearing on the extent to which Habermas's delineation of the "two roads to postmodernity" theory may have been influenced somewhat by Habermas's ulterior motive; namely, by his attempt to deconstruct Nietzsche's reason-against-reason project (and hence, Adorno's project) by positioning Nietzsche's effort within the German Romantic thrust toward the ontologization of aesthetics.

For instance, in *Also Sprach Zarathusta. Ein Buch für Alle und Keinen* (1883-1891) Nietzsche wrote:

> *Drunken joy* and loss of self the world once
> seemed to me.... the image of an eternal con-
> tradiction, an *imperfect image* .... Thus, I too
> once cast my delusion beyond man, like all
> the afterworldly.... *this god whom, I created*
> was man-made and madness, like all gods!...
> What happened, my brothers? I *overcame*
> myself.... I carried my own ashes to the moun-
> tains; .... And behold, then this *ghost* fled

from me.[20]

And in the same book, (obviously including himself among the "poets") Nietzsche had this to say about the poet in connection with Dionysus:

> But suppose somebody said in all seriousness
> the poets lie too much: he would be right: *we*
> do lie too much. We also know too little and
> we are bad learners; so we simply have to lie.
> And who among us poets has not adulterated
> his *wine* ?.... how weary I am of poets .... "Alas, I
> cast my net into their seas .... but I always pul-
> led up the head of some *old god* . Thus the sea
> gave him who was hungry a stone.[21]

The allusions to Dionysus (if not the entire entourage of the Greek Pantheon which were the favorites of the German Romantic poets) in the above passages are obvious, not to speak of *Nietzsche's explicit critique of aesthetics*. But just in case his readers have missed the point, Nietzsche goes so far as to deconstruct the poetic genre itself by reiterating his critique of aesthetics in the magician's poem. In this regard Nietzsche writes:

> "Suitor of truth?" they mocked me; "you?"
> No! Only *poet* !
> An animal, cunning, preying, prowling,
> *That must lie* ,
> That must knowingly, willingly lie: ....
> No! Only fool! Only poet!
> Only speaking colorfully....[22]

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[20] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Nietzsche Werke. 6. Also sprach Zarathustra. Ein Buch für Alle und Keinen* (1883-1891)(Leipzig: Alfred Kröner-Verlag, 1923), 41-42. emphasis mine.

[21] Cf. "On Poets", 187-189. Italics mine.

[22] Cf. "The Song of Melancholy", 434. Italics mine.

Another telling passage in *Zarathustra* comes earlier in the fable, again from the mouth of the magician, and is written in poetic form. Zarathustra sees a man from a distance and thinks it is "the higher man."[23] But when Zarathustra approaches, he finds a "trembling old man with vacant eyes . . . like one abandoned and forsaken by all the world."[24] The magician then begins to speak in the form of a poem, and tells Zarathustra about his "hangman god" (i.e., his "pain" and "happiness") by whom he remains captive.[25] But Zarathustra shows no compassion for the magician. Instead, he chides him, and tells him to cease with his "moaning," and says to him, "Stop it, you actor! You counterfeiter! You liar from the bottom! . . . you actor from the bottom!"[26] Immediately after Zarathustra's words, the "magician" (who also calls himself a "poet") says the following to Zarathustra:

> And you may as well confess it: it took a
> long time, O Zarathustra, before you saw
> through my art and lie.[27]

Already, within a few short passages in Nietzsche's great fable, one can recognize a wider critical mechanism at work in the mythical figure of Zarathustra than that of Dionysus, similar to Goethe's mythical Wilhelm Meister, whose own advance involved (like

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[23] Cf. "The Magician", 366.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Ibid., 371-372.
[27] Ibid., 372.

Nietzsche's Zarathustra) a critical look at the narcissan life of the actor and the poet, and his capacity for effecting real change in the oedipal world. One already sees in Nietzsche's Zarathustra more than just an anti-Christian figure who will signal a new religion of aesthetics now that the god which has been formed b y institutionalized religion has been proclaimed "dead."[28]

At first glance, one of course sees the obvious difference in intensity between the more docile figure of Wilhelm Meister and the assertive character of Zarathustra. Zarathustra's movements are sure and agile (unlike the pensive and clumsy steps of Wilhelm's), and he walks with mile-long strides. His friends are the proud "eagle" and the worldly-wise "serpent," not the benign and patient *Turm-gesellschaft* of the *Lehrjahre*.

But the point is that, before one even begins more than a superficial look into the mythical figure of Zarathustra, one certainly is in the presence of a figure whose intent is not drunkeness and ecstasy (like that of the mythical god, Dionysus), nor is there any resemblance to the reasonable sobriety of an Apollo. There is, as well, no calculated and balanced synthesis between Dionysus and Apollo, or between feeling and reason (Heller and Kaufmann).[29] There is,

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[28] Cf. "On the Virtue That Makes Small", 250.

[29] Erich Heller agrees with Walter Kaufmann's view--that Nietzsche "from *Birth of Tragedy* onwards, is seeking spiritual employment in the service of a god who is a synthesis of Dionysus and Apollo". Cf. Erich Heller,*The Disinherited Mind. Essays in Modern German Literature and Thought* (London: Bowers and Bower, 1975) 136-137.

however, the consistently rigorous and tireless desire to overcome the self at every stage of growth, and it is in this sense that Nietzsche can be said to continue the work of Goethe's Wilhelm Meister. This is why *Zarathustra's ultimate goal is partially embodied in the Über-mensch--that is, in the continually self-overcoming(critical)man.*[30]

In the section of *Zarathustra* entitled "On the Thousand and One Goals," Zarathustra, echoing the great negative-dialectical myth of Kronos, proclaims what he calls the "law of self-critique":

> Change of values--that is a change of creators.
> Whoever must be a *creator* always *annihilates* .[31],[32]

Later, in one of the most central vignettes of the fable entitled "On Self-Overcoming," Zarathustra defines the **"Wille zur Macht"** precisely in terms of the Kronos-like power of self-critique:

> "Whatever I *create* and however much I love
> it--soon I must *oppose* it and my love; thus my
> will wills it"... And whoever must be a *creator* in
> good and evil, truly he must be a *destroyer* and
> break values. Thus the highest evil belongs to

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[30] In his book on Nietzsche, Walter Kaufmann has noted that Nietzsche regards the "Übermenschen" in his *Fröliche Wissenschaft* as metaphors for the "repudiation of any conformity to a single norm: antitheses to mediocrity and stagnation" (Kaufmann's *Nietzsche* , Third edition , 309). Kaufmann translates *der Übermensch* as "overcoming man" based on Nietzsche's use of *Überwindung* ("overcoming") in Zarathustra : " Ich lehre euch den Übermenschen. Der Mensch ist Etwas, das überwunden werden soll" (*Nietzsche Werke 6* , 1,8.) The *Übermensch* , in this sense, is the "self-overcoming man". Taking Nietzsche's central project of self-critique (in *Zarathustra*) into account, it would be more accurate(not to mention less cumbersome and academic) to translate Nietzsche's *der Übermensch* as "the self-overcoming(critical) man"; i.e. one who is constantly engaged in the "overcoming" (negative-dialectical) process.

[31] literally, the "law of overcoming" ("diese Tafel der Überwindung") in *Zarathustra* , "On the Thousand and One Goals", 85.

[32] Nietzsche, *Zarathustra* , "On the Thousand and One Goals", 86. Italics mine.

the highest goodness: but this is creative.[33]

Therefore, it is to Nietzsche, indeed, that one need look to find the source of Adorno's negative-dialectical myth of Kronos, but not to Nietzsche's Dionysus (Habermas); rather, to Nietzsche's Zarathustra. Moreover, if Nietzsche is hearkening back to any program of eighteenth century German thought, it is certainly not to any ideas of Schelling's, Schlegel's (Friedrich), Novalis's or Hölderlin's; but rather, to the non-totalized and non-reified, mythological work which began in eighteenth century Germany, back to Wilhelm Meister's *de-scription and trans-figuration* of the prevailing familial, religious, and hermeneutical codes. Unfortunately, the crystallization of the oedipal-narcissan structure (despite Goethe's work) continued to be reinforced long after Goethe's death by idealist philosophy and mythology.[34]

To ask the question, "What difference does it make whether or not Zarathustra or Dionysus be seen as Nietzsche's primary mythical figure?," would be like asking, "What difference does it make to say Nietzsche's overall project was either a romantic, totalized, psychotic and non-critical, neurotic effort, or if Nietzsche's life's work was primarily an anti-romantic, non-totalizing, de-psychotic, and critical,

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[33] Ibid., 168-169. Italics mine.

[34] Without question, Habermas sees Hegel (rather than Hölderlin) as the sole author of the *Systemprogramm* essay: "...the notion that with the new mythology art will take the place of philosophy..." (Habermas, 89). Habermas identifies Nietzsche's Dionysus with the "romantic messianism" of Hölderlin and Novalis, thereby pigeon-holing Nietzsche in the mythical world of German Romanticism (Habermas, 92). As we have seen, this is a vast oversimplification of Nietzsche's highly complex use of mythological figures in his work.

de-neurotic effort.

In short, it makes a big difference. The former image (Dionysus) points only to Nietzsche's psychotic (and hence, foreclosing) counter-cultural aspect. The latter image (Zarathustra), as we shall see, points to Nietzsche's *grand effort to both de-scribe and trans-figure culture* from within as well as from without.

Habermas needed to refute Nietzsche (and Nietzsche's successors, Adorno and Habermas) through a critique of Dionysus because *for Habermas, myth is un-reason, and as such desires to annihilate culture/civilization through reason's opposite, which Habermas would interpret as Nietzsche's will to power* .[35]

Therefore, (according to Habermas) a "thorough critique" of reason cannot be trusted because it is subversive, counter-cultural. Moreover, Habermas's underlying intent to show Nietzsche's "reversion" to myth (as a way of undercutting Adorno and Horkheimer's work) still does not overshadow the weakness of Habermas's own narrow definition of myth, which has nothing to do with Nietzsche's negative dialectical myth-making. Nietzsche's myth-making is clearly subversive alright, but only of those totalizing myths generated by instrumental reason, whose result always serves to support rather than challenge the *totalitarian* (i.e.,*totality-become-*

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[35] This is why Habermas spends a goodly portion of his critique of the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* attempting to prove that Odysseus is journeying away from the mythical and toward the future of the reasonable self no longer dominated by the gods; Habermas, 108-109.

ideology) powers that be through that mythology's desire to transform the external world through rationalized illusions of wholeness.[36]

As we will later see, Nietzsche was attracted to non-totalizing myth-making, precisely because he opposed the absolutist tendency of instrumental reason, for good reason! When Nietzsche says that "knowledge must turn its sting against itself" he is not (as Habermas maintains) a thinker who has taken the "leap out of the dialectic of enlightenment." On the contrary, Nietzsche is making this cultural-critical claim as one who has entered the very dialectical center of German enlightenment consciousness (in the mode of idealism), diffusing its reifying power by turning reason against itself for the mobilization of the humanization process—namely, the resurgence of the ongoing, practical incarnation of the word that was freed long ago from the prisonhouse of institutionalized religion, but ended up captive once again within the closed circle of idealism.[37]

Hopefully, it has now become clear that Habermas's critique of Nietzsche can be supported only if one not only disregards Nietzsche's critical view of history and his mythical work of self-overcoming (critique) embodied partially in the *höhere Mensch* (Zarathustra) and the searched for the *Übermensch*, but if one disregards as well the whole of Goethe's critical work on the major

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[36] I am thinking specifically here of Novalis's romantic novel, *Heinrich von Öfterdingen* .

[37] Nietzsche, *Zarathustra* , "On the Thousand and One Goals", 86-87.

movements during the German Idealist period, not to speak of the oedipal-narcissan structure which was fostered by that movement which Goethe effectively criticized.[38]

Habermas claims that Nietzsche opened up two roads into postmodernity, one leading to the "ontologization of art" (Heidegger), the other leading to the "totalizing critique of reason" (Adorno and Horkheimer).[39] Actually, Habermas's "two roads" metaphor is useful, but the landscape of the roads needs to be reshaped. If anything, **Nietzsche did open up two (if not a number of) roads into postmodernity, but there is a road which leads not to the "ontologization of art" but rather to the *politicization of art* (Rilke and Benjamin), and still another road that leads not to a "totalizing critique of reason," but rather to what I will term the *thorough***

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[38] To my knowledge Habermas's book neither mentions Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* fable nor does he mention the name of Goethe as a possible source of Nietzsche's thought.

[39] Habermas's critique of Heidegger runs thusly: "Heidegger's later philosophy" involves moving "from the area of an aesthetically revitalized mythology [Nietzsche] to that of philosophy". According to Habermas, Heidegger wants to put "philosophy in the place that art occupies in Nietzsche..."(*The Philosophical Discourse* , 97). In summary, according to Habermas, Heidegger wanted to accomplish what German Romanticism tried to accomplish in art; "namely, creating an equivalent for the unifying power of religion , in order effectively to counter the diremptions of modernity" (Ibid., 98-99). According to Habermas, Nietzsche tried to overcome nihilism through "the aesthetically revived Dionysian myth". Heideggar's "critique of reason" (Habermas concludes) ends up moving "away from autonomy and toward a self-surrender to Being..." (Ibid., 99). Habermas is correct here, but this is merely reiterating what scholarship already knows about Heidegger's phenomenology of being; namely, that it is a renewal of Hölderlin's resignation to the all-encompassing ebb and flow of nature. Heidegger in fact tried to redeem Hölderlin (unfortunately ,without critique) by supplanting aesthetics with a phenomenology of being.Thus,if a road into post-modernity has indeed been opened up leading to the "ontologization of art", as Habermas claims, it was not Nietzsche's doing, but rather the work of totalizing idealism espoused by Hölderlin, Fichte and Schelling. It is obvious that Habermas here is trying to do Adorno's critique of Heidegger (see my chapter one) one better.

critique of reason (Adorno and Nietzsche understood).[40]

The more immediate goal of the next section of this chapter will be to test more thoroughly Nietzsche's mythical figure, Zarathustra, in order to investigate the extent to which this negative-dialectical image--in its non-totalizing and historically trans-figuring capacity--succeeded in continuing Goethe's decodification of the bi-polarity of Oedipus and Narcissus by way of the *de-scription and transfiguration* of the prevailing hermeneutical, familial, and religious codes.

[40] Cf. chapter four of my dissertation.

Zarathustra *De-scribes* and *Trans-figures* the Oedipal-Narcissan Code

In Gilles Deleuze's contribution to David Allison's *The New Nietzsche. Contemporary Styles of Interpretation* (1977) entitled "Nomad Thought," he notes that, as Marx and Freud "represent the dawn of our culture," Nietzsche represents the "dawn of our counterculture."[41] Unlike Habermas (who would agree with this statement, but who would give Nietzsche's subversity a negative valuation), Deleuze views this counter-cultural quality in Nietzsche in a positive way: that to be counter-cultural does not necessarily mean to be asocial or counter-productive in society.

In summary, Deleuze's article on Nietzsche makes the point that--in distinction to Marx (who recodified the notion of "state") and Freud (who recodified the notion of "family")--Nietzsche "made no attempt at recodification;" rather, he sought to "confound all codes."[42] Deleuze views Nietzsche's rigorous method of decodification in terms of Nietzsche's primary regard for the relationship between "thought" and the "exterior world," by way of "nomadic association," which wants nothing to do with "petty narcissicism" or the "cult of

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[41] Gilles Deleuze, "Nomad Thought" in David Allison's *The New Nietzsche. Contemporary Styles of Interpretation* (New York: Dell Publishing Company, 1977) 142.
[42] Ibid., 143,147.

interiority."43,44 Deleuze concludes by saying that--unlike "philosophic discourse," which brings "meaning" to an already closed cultural unit--Nietzsche "was the first to conceive of another kind of discourse as counter-philosophy."[45]

The present section of this chapter will attempt to "flush out," as it were, specific codes which Nietzsche's Zarathustra sets out to *describe*, as a nomad whose only law is *the law of self-critique*. The overall intent will be to suggest that Nietzsche's landscape of "deterritorialization" as Deleuze has defined it can be entirely located within the Zarathustra myth: that *Nietzsche's Zarathustra initially desires the unilateral de-scription of the hermeneutical, the familial and religious codes.*[46]

As we shall see, Zarathustra's deterritorialization process attempts to shatter the mirror that keeps Oedipus and Narcissus caught in a neurotic-psychotic bind; that is, in the sense that Oedipus is the one who (unknowingly) holds the mirror in front of Narcissus, disallowing Narcissus's entry into the oedipal world which would be for Oedipus's own good.

Although a fair portion of Zarathustra's critique is levied against the religious institutional code, he is just as much concerned

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[43] We are reminded, of course, of Goethe's Wilhelm in the *Lehrjahre* work, whose whole apprenticeship leads into this very direction, i.e. the dialectical relationship between thought and action.
[44] Deleuze, "Nomad Thought", 147-148.
[45] Ibid., 148-149.
[46] Ibid., 144.

with de-scribing the very *basis* of that religious code, and how it feeds into the oedipal-narcissan pathology of western culture as a whole, than with any idealistic distortion or inversion of the biblical myth for the sake of self-autonomy (Blumenberg).

One readily finds an example of this in the section Nietzsche calls "On the Afterworldly." In it Zarathustra says:

> It was the sick and decaying who despised
> body and earth and invented the heavenly
> realm and the redemptive drops of blood. . .
> Zarathustra is gentle with the sick .... May
> they become convalescents, men of over-
> coming, and create a higher body for themselves! [47]

What Zarathustra has against the Judaeo-Christian code is not that it supports a god-myth which makes individual freedom impossible (Blumenberg), but that the the Greek hermeneutic itself which developed along with the myth has become sick due to Judaeo-Christianity's neo-Platonic devaluation of the body, which has exiled the body from the "mental" world of the reasonable. Zarathustra retorts with the following words in the next section, "On The Despisers of the Body":

> *The body is a great reason* , a plurality with
> one sense, a war and a peace, a herd and a
> shepherd .... There is more reason in your
> body than in your best wisdom.[48]

In one felled stroke, Nietzsche analyzes one of the main

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[47] Nietzsche, *Zarathustra* , "On the Afterworldly", 43-44.
[48] Ibid., "On the Despisers of the Body", 46-47.

problems of Western culture which has been reinforced by centuries of Christian thought and practice. **Nietzsche's Zarathustra is aware that the Christianity of his day supports a schizophrenic relationship between what is sensible and what is reasonable, defining an absolute schism between the narcissan and oedipal worlds, vicariously maintaining the pathological character of both.** As a result, reason makes war upon the body (and vice versa) dividing the self from itself, disabling the self from doing what Nietzsche's Zarathustra believes it was intended to do— simply to "create beyond itself."[49]

In short, the body has given away its own reasoning power to instrumental reason, which in turn has abused the stewardship quality of this power, thereby making a travesty of what it means to be human. In the section immediately following, Zarathustra will call this kind of oedipal reasoning, "poor reason: madness *after* the deed," which in turn has left the body "poor" as well.[50]

As long as the body remains un-empowered, the self will be fated to project its dream of overcoming itself onto the heavenly screen where gravity is non-existent. However, in this regard, it is not the weight and eventual decline of bodies which concerns Nietzsche's

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[49] Ibid. In *The Myth of Analysis: Three Essays in Archetypal Psychology* (1972) James Hillman has noted that the somatic symptoms of hysteria have a positive meaning; that "hysteria somatizes consciousness", and discloses one of the aims of psychotherapy whereby "the lowering of the mental level becomes a gain in value", 286. Hillmann ends by saying that "hysterical reactions may be seen as desperate attempts to refind body, to incarnate, to find initiation into life", 286. Cf. James Hillmann, *The Myth of Analysis. Three Essays in Archetypal Psychology* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1972).

[50] Nietzsche, *Zarathustra* , "On the Pale Criminal", 53.

Zarathustra, but the illusion that there exists within ourselves the "spirit of gravity" whose business it is to impede the humanization process.[51]

Zarathustra has a similar view on the Judaeo-Christian notion of "eternal life;" namely, that it only draws attention away from *this* life wherein we came into this world in order to continue the never-ending task to overcome ourselves; that is, continually to annihilate our reified theories, doctrines, opinions, customs, patterns of reified thought and behavior (all our absolutized codifications which have ciphered down from the realm of religion into the realm of the bourgeois state); to destroy these for the sake of our continual recreation. This is the meaning of Zarathustra's decodification of the fifth and seventh commandments:

> And let this be the doctrine of your virtue.
> "Thou shalt kill thyself! Thou shalt steal away!" [52]

Nietzsche continues his decodification of the ten commandments in "On the Thousand and One Goals," where he cuts beneath the quick of the fourth commandment with the following words:

> "To honor father and mother and to follow
> their will to the root of one's soul"—this *was*
> the tablet of overcoming ....[53]

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[51] Cf. "On Reading and Writing, 57. Cf. also "On the Spirit of Gravity", where Zarathustra's "old devil" is characterized by "constraint, statute, necessity and consequence and purpose and will and good and evil", 289.

[52] Cf. "On the Preachers of Death", 64.

[53] Cf. "On the Thousand and One Goals", 85. Italics mine.

For Zarathustra, a human being need follow only one principle, and that is *the law of never-ending self-critique.* Therefore, the biblical "ten laws" are not enough--they are too soft-hearted and serve only to justify a minimalistic way of life.

Nietsche's Zarathustra continues with his de-scription of the Mosaic rule-become-custom in the "On Love of the Neighbor" segment, wherein he views the second Deuteronomic maxim as the subject's excuse to hide from its more demanding, self-critical task. Hence, to follow blindly the biblical commandments is to live out a "selflessness" of weakness and cowardliness, merely avoiding the more difficult path which takes strength and courage:

> [Y]our love of the neighbor is your bad love
> of yourselves. You flee to your neighbor from
> yourselves and would like to make a virtue
> out of that: but I see through your "selflessness."[54]

In the segment "On the Virtuous" Nietzsche shows that the motivation behind the virtuous activity is similar to the oedipal trans*action* proper to commerce. The assumption here is that those who are fully initiated into the cult of Oedipus spend their whole lives repressing their desires with the promise of a reward in the "next" world. The oedipal code is structured in such a way that it sends the unspoken message to the worker (to the relief of the

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[54] Cf. "On Love of the Neighbor", 88.

employer) that it is a value to hold off his desire for full gratification, and that he will be paid for his sacrifice, if not sometime in the future, in the next world beyond death.[55] So too, for the "virtuous" who hold at bay their desires. For these, virtue remains something outside of themselves, something done only as a means to a codified end which is not of this world:

> *You who are virtuous still want to be paid!*
> Do you want rewards for virtue, and heaven
> for earth, and eternal for your today? And
> now *you are angry with me because I teach*
> *no reward and no paymaster?* .... That your vir-
> tue is your self and not something foreign, a
> skin, a cloak, that is the truth from the foun-
> dation of your souls, you who are virtuous.[56]

Another segment which supports the above argument (from the bottom up) is "On the Virtue That Makes Small." Nietzsche's Zarathustra believes that "virtue," having become the basic Judaeo-Christian value towards society's presumed divinization process, has on the contrary rendered the individual docile, less than human. In this context Zarathustra proclaims:

> Virtue to them is that which makes modest and
> tame: with that they have turned the wolf into
> a dog and man himself into man's best domestic
> animal.[57]

Continuing with this line of thought, Zarathustra continues to

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[55] Although Nietzsche never knew Marx (and certainly none of Marx's later interpretors), I do not think a Weberian interpretation of the above passage is out of line here.

[56] Nietzsche, *Zarathustra* , "On the Virtuous", 135-136.

[57] Cf. "On the Virtue That Makes Small", 249.

de-scribe the decadence of the modern ethical-religious code. This time by turning upside down the black-and-white contrast western religion has made between "good" and "evil." In the following passage from the segment entitled "On the Higher Man," Zarathustra says:

> The greatest evil is necessary for the self-critical
> man's best ....
> But this is not said for long ears. Not every word
> belongs in every mouth. These are delicate distant
> matters: they should not be reached for by sheep's
> hoofs.[58]

Zarathustra's intent here is obvious. He is certainly not advocating less morality, but--on the contrary-- all one can give.[59] Zarathustra only wants to bring home the fact of the pettiness of what gets categorized under the rubric of "good" and "evil." Zarathustra admires Jesus, because--unlike the religion of "good conscious" morality, which was erected after his death--

> .... one man saw into the hearts of the good and
> the just and said, "They are pharisees." But he
> was not understood. The good and the just them-
> selves were not permitted to understand him:
> their spirit is imprisoned in their good conscience.[60]

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[58] Cf. "On the Higher Man", 420.

[59] Cf. in this regard "On Old and New Tablets" wherein Nietzsche is either reminiscing on Napolean's reign or the dictatorial rule of others before him, or perhaps prophesying the dictatorial reign of Hitler: "A great dictator might come along, a smart monster who, according to his pleasure and displeasure, might constrain and strain all that is past till it becomes a bridge to him, a harbinger and herald and cockcrow. This, however, is the other danger and what prompts my further pity...", 296.

[60] Cf. "On Old and New Tablets", 310.

Towards the end of the Zarathustra tale, a group of his disciples have made their way toward his cave at the noon hour. As Zarathustra (who has been searching in vain for "the higher man") approaches, he finds only the "melancholy group" waiting for him within his cave consisting of "the king at the right and the king at the left, the old magician, the pope, the voluntary beggar, the shadow, the conscientious in spirit, the sad soothsayer, and the ass."[61]

The spokesman for the group (the "king at the right") further defines the "melancholy group" as "the last remnant of God among men--that is, all the men of great longing, of great nausea [i.e. the sea-sickness that results from the feeling of having been cut adrift from the stable shores of absolute meaning], of great disgust, all who do not want to live unless they learn to *hope* again." [62,63]

It is in the context of the above passage that one learns the *subversive* intent of the segment immediately following "The Welcome," entitled "The Last Supper." At the table of the "Last Supper" the soothsayer (and not Zarathustra) wants "wine" for the company, and says that *"not everybody is born a water drinker like Zarathustra,"* and the "king at the left" comments that "nothing is lacking but bread."[64] Zarathustra replies with the following,

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[61] Cf. "The Welcome", 405.
[62] One can safely assume that the two kings in Zarathustra's tale represent Jesus and his Father in heaven, at whose right side Jesus is positioned, according to the fourth century-Christian credal formula, "He sitteth at the right hand of the Father."
[63] Cf. "The Welcome", 409. Brackets mine.
[64] Cf. "The Last Supper", 414.

anticipating the next segment "On the Higher Man":

> But man does not live by bread alone .... Thus we
> shall have a good meal in a short while .... Stick to
> *your custom* , my excellent friend, crush your
> grains, drink*your water*, praise your fare; as long
> as it makes you gay! " *I am a law only for my kind.... .*" [65]

The nourishment which Zarathustra wants (but fails) to give his company is the "law of self-critique." He refers to the individuals around him as a "melancholy group" (and therefore deserving of criticism by his joyful message), but his wish is not to take their Christian "custom" away from them if they are not ready to hear "*water* [not, by the way, Christian or Dionysian wine] splashing nearby like speeches of wisdom."[66]

In "The Last Supper" passage Nietzsche's Zarathustra is seen as one whose overall purpose is not to distort or invert the god-myth at the basis of Christianity (Blumenberg), but the Christian myth of sin and guilt that emerged after Christ's death, especially the kind of Christianity begun by St. Paul.[67] It is the deep sense of sin and guilt, then, which has prevented Zarathustra's company from following Zarathustra's law of self-critique.

The point Nietzsche is trying to make is that Zarathustra does

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[65] Ibid. Italics mine.

[66] Ibid.

[67] Tracy Strong's reading of Nietzsche's "Antichrist" forwards the convincing thesis that for Nietzsche, the villain is not Christ but St. Paul: "Paul feels the necessity of emphasizing 'guilt and sin'. Paul, in fact, erects 'in a grand style precisely that which Christ had annihilated through his life." Hence, Strong thinks that a more appropriate title for Nietzsche's diatribe entitled *Anti-Christ* would be "Anti-Christian". Cf. Tracy Strong's *Friedrich Nietsche* , 124.

not wish to condemn the Jesus of Christianity, but he does want to do away with what he perceives as a perversion of the god-myth. Commenting on Nietzsche's *Anti-Christ* [*ian*] work, Tracy Strong explains it in this way:

> Nietzsche lays a continuing emphasis on the
> differences between between the life that
> Christ lived and the requisities of the faith
> that evolved to allow people to become epi-
> gones of this 'most noble' life .... If one looks
> only at Christ, one sees 'no concept of guilt
> or punishment'; in fact, 'any distance hold-
> ing apart God and man is abolished'."[68]

As I have been trying to point out about Nietzsche's comprehensive de-scription of the religious code, his problem is not with the god-myth as such but rather with the "customs" which developed out of this god-myth, which (to Nietzsche's view) perverted its original intent, feeding only the all-pervasive cultural structure which Nietzsche perceives as pathological through and through.

The segment that clarifies Nietzsche's purpose of unilateral *decodification of religion-become-custom* in the *Zarathustra* work, called "On Old and New Tablets," will, I trust, both give credence to my reading of the work and serve as a bridge to *the second of Zarathustra's decodification projects; namely the de-scription of the*

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[68] Strong, *Friedrich Nietzsche* , Ibid. Cf. also "On the Old and New Tablets" in Nietzsche's great fable wherein Zarathustra says that "one man once saw into the heart of the good and the just and said, ' They are the pharisees.' But he was not understood.", 310.

hermeneutical code of eighteenth and nineteenth-century German Idealism , a code with which Zarathustra proceeds to reckon.

In the "On the Old and New Tablets" segment Zarathustra calls for a decodification of the Judaeo-Christian commandments which have only reinforced the minimalist ethics of oedipalized society. Again, he specifically recalls the fifth and seventh commandments (as in the earlier "On the Preachers of Death" segment), but only as a way of deconstructing them once and for all, uncovering the "one" commandment of Zarathustra:

> "Thou shalt not rob! Thou shalt not kill!"
> Such words were once called holy....
> O my brothers, break, break the old tab-
> lets! .... Your will and your foot which has
> *a will to go over and beyond yourselves--*
> that shall constitute your new honor.[69]

What Zarathustra means by breaking the "old tablets" is that one must "kill" any doctrine which has become stultified and static and one must "steal" this *one* truth of self-overcoming (critique), a rule which will not be ours unless we take it and put it into action, "the audacious daring, the long mistrust, the cruel No. . . ."[70] Yet, even all the manifestations of Zarathustra's "one" truth eventually need to be annihilated, for he says, "Break, O my brothers, break this *new* tablet too. . . for behold, it is also an exhortation to bondage." [71]

According to Nietzsche's Zarathustra, the ethical code of

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[69] Nietzsche, *Zarathustra* , "On Old and New Tablets", 295-296. Italics mine.
[70] Ibid., 293.
[71] Ibid., 300.

Judaeo-Christianity is built upon the "violent desire" of Oedipus, and Zarathustra is no longer befuddled over Judaeo-Christianity's justification to the world for its holy wars, concerning specifically the murderous campaign of the "crusades" led by the "Holy Spirit" in the Middle Ages.[72] Thus, it is not people who need to be murdered for the sake of absolute doctrine, but the absolute "truths" themselves that need be killed, those significations of a culture's decline that allow such historical travesties to occur.

Finally, *Zarathustra calls for a deconstruction of "self-denial"-- which is the very basis of the Judaeo-Christian ethical code--by way of the rigorous law of self-overcoming(critique).*[73] However, as one can see, this is a far cry from the German Idealist inversion of the biblical, creator god through the affirmation of an absolute "I" (Fichte and Schelling), or for that matter, the subjugation of the "I" in an all-embracing first principle of nature (Hölderlin).

Zarathustra does not wish in any Promethean fashion to steal any fire from the gods, nor in any Ganymedian manner subjugate himself to any transcendent figure who would mitigate Zarathustra's obligation to overcome his own reified, human condition. In short, this means that **Zarathustra's project is not to invent a way by which to overcome the gods** (Nietzsche's Zarathustra is too knowledgable of the power of such "forces") **but the ongoing overcoming of all codes**

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[72] Ibid., 297.
[73] Ibid., 312.

which have altered the original form of the great god-myths for the sake of a culture's survival, however pathological that survivial may be. Nietzsche's Zarathustra sees through the ideological character of the Judaeo-Christian ethical code which has served only to maintain the oedipal-narcissan structure, and Nietzsche is aware that this structure has endured for centuries, the decline of which he sees to be in the far distant future.[74]

"On Old and New Tablets" is equally significant for Zarathustra's *hermeneutical decodification of the German Enlightenment project*. At the beginning of the "Tablets," one finds Zarathustra back in his cave "surrounded by broken old tablets and new tablets half-covered with writing," and *Zarathustra wants to move out of his solitude* in order to "go among men once more," which he will eventually do (contrary to Hölderlin's path) at the end of the fable.[75] Here we find Zarathustra disgruntled because his teaching of the "self-overcoming(critical)man" has not fallen on ready ears. Zarathustra has unsuccessfully tried to get the "old academic chairs" to:

> laugh at their great masters of virtue and
> saints and*poets* and world-redeemers .... laugh
> at their gloomy sages and at whoever had at

[74] Certainly Nietzsche's critical work on the relationship between Judaeo-Christianity and the decline of modern culture (especially, through the mouthpiece of his mythical figure, Zarathustra) opened the path ahead for the political-religious criticism of Max Weber.

[75] Nietzsche, *Zarathustra* , "On Old and New Tablets", 287. Cf. "The Sign" wherein the narrator tells us: "Thus spoke Zarathustra, and he left his cave, glowing and strong as a morning sun that comes out of dark mountains.", 476.

any time sat on *the tree of life* like a black scarecrow.[76]

Zarathustra then recapitulates what he has spoken in different ways many times, that what he does not like about these learned ones (be they saints, poets, or those academicians who study them) is that "their best is still too small," that he "flew. . . into hotter souths than artists ever dreamed of," and tells the reader that he is "ashamed" that he "must still be a poet."[77] In this context (in the midst of "broken," "old" tablets and the "fragments" of the "new") Zarathustra proclaims the following *program of redemption* :

> .... to create and carry together into One [rule]
> what in man is *fragment* and riddle and dread-
> ful accident; as creator, guesser of riddles, and
> redeemer of accidents , I taught them to work
> on the future and to redeem with their creation
> all that *has been* .... this I call *redemption* .[78]

Zarathustra's "program of redemption" is strikingly reminiscent of the later redemptive critical work begun by Nietzsche's non-totalizing successors, Rilke and Walter Benjamin, whose de-scriptive project in relation to Nietzsche's I will discuss later in chapter four. But the fact remains that Nietzsche's Zarathustra at every possible opportunity criticizes a certain kind of aesthetic program which supports the oedipal-narcissan structure, a matter in need of further consideration.

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[76] Ibid., 288. Italics mine. Certainly one recalls the "tree of life" to which Hölderlin surrenders in *Hyperion* .
[77] Ibid., 288-289.
[78] Ibid., 290. Italics mine.

If Narcissus could be said to be the child-prince of solitude, Zarathustra seems tò be *both* an advocate and adversary of this solitary prince, moving further into the world of solitude (i.e., into his cave in the mountains) when his contempt for the oedipal world becomes unbearable. Yet, when Zarathustra takes refuge in his mountainous abode, he discovers other demons which serve to only nurture in his spirit another contempt for the escapist, narcissan mode of dealing with the oedipal world.

A perfect example of this dual deterritorialization process occurs in two segments (appearing almost side by side) at the beginning of the Zarathustra fable, entitled "On the Tree on the Mountainside" and "On the Flies of the Marketplace." In the former segment Zarathustra meets an un-named "youth" who is "leaning against a tree" in the mountains. Contemplating the tree beside which both Zarathustra and the youth are standing, Zarathustra makes the following critical statements:

> "This tree stands lonely here in the mountains...
> It dwells too near the seat of the clouds: surely
> it waits for the first lightning."[79]

Then, after a brief walk with the "youth," Zarathustra makes the following remarks about the "dangers" he sees in the youth's solitary lifestyle which does not have the aspect of deliberate and free motion about it:

> You are not yet free, you still *search* for free-

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[79] Cf. "On the Tree on the Mountainside", 60.

dom. You are worn from your search and over-
awake. You aspire to the free heights, your soul
thirsts for the stars .... To me you are still a priso-
ner who is plotting his freedom.[80]

It is not so much the youth's choice to dwell in the mountains

that bothers Zarathustra but the youth's apparent exhaustion which

leads him to dwell too long under the shade of the tree. The first

thing that the reader of the fable recognizes is that Zarathustra (unlike

the youth he recognizes under the tree) is constantly on the move,

always in a liminal relationship to the space he previously occupies.

Zarathustra remains in a constant position of critique, even when it

means (as we shall see) criticizing his preferred abode of solitude in

the mountainous heights.

Immediately following the above segment, Zarathustra begins

a lashing critique of the oedipalized world of the city, beginning with

"On the New Idol" (where Zarathustra looks with disdain at those

"superficial ones" who are caught in the mechanistic web of money-

making for the sake of "power" within the "state"), culminating with

an equation of the flies in the marketplace with the city dwellers,

whose sustenance depends (like the flies) on unregulated

consumerism.[81] At the sight of this, Zarathustra, before turning away

in disgust, says to those who would listen:

Flee, my friend, into your solitude! I see you
dazed by the noise of the great men, and stung
all over by the stings of the little men ....

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[80] Ibid., 61.
[81] Cf. "On the New Idol", 72.

> Far from the marketplace and from fame hap-
> pens all that is great: far from the market place
> and from fame the inventors of new values have
> always dwelt. Flee, my friend, into your solitude:
> I see you stung all over by poisonous flies.[82]

Thus, back to the solitude of the mountains Zarathustra returns . . . but not for long. In the segment called "The Child With the Mirror," Zarathustra is said to have "returned again to the mountains and to the solitude of his cave."[83] However, Zarathustra, awakening abruptly from a deep sleep, remembers a child carrying a mirror, beckoning him to look at himself in it, wherein Zarathustra sees "a devil's grimace and scornful laughter."[84] Frightened by what he has seen, Zarathustra arrives at the following conclusion:

> I may go down again to my friends, and to my
> enemies too .... From silent mountains and thun-
> derstorms of suffering my soul rushes into the
> valleys .... Too long have I longed and looked into
> the distance. Too long have I belonged to lonli-
> ness .... I want to plunge my speech down into the
> valleys .... the river of my love carries it along,
> down to the sea .... How I now love all to whom I
> may speak! My enemies too are part of my bliss.
> My wild wisdom became pregnant on lonely moun-
> tains .... Upon your hearts' gentle grass, my friends,
> upon your love she would bed her most dearly
> beloved.[85]

As mentioned before, *Zarathustra is always in a constant position of self-critique, be it in the mountains of narcissan solitude*

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[82] Cf. "On the Flies of the Marketplace", 73-75.
[83] Cf. "The Child With the Mirror", 119.
[84] Ibid.
[85] Ibid., 121-122.

or in the city of oedipalized relationships based on superficial transactions . The negative-dialectical at work within this particular segment occurs when *Zarathustra deconstructs the classical myth of Narcissus, who (in the ancient myth) is eternally captivated by his own image. In contrast to Ovid's rendition of the tale, in Zarathustra's dream, the narcissan child carries his own mirror to Zarathustra, in order that Zarathustra might see his danger, break away from his narcissan world ,and return again to the world of Oedipus, though trans-figured.*

It is only after this realization that Zarathustra attempts to re-enter the oedipal world with the eyes of the *freed child,* and it is from this perspective that the reader understands Zarathustra's contempt (in the later segments of the fable) for the "Learned Ones" (i.e., bourgeois philosophers whose uncritical stance towards reason serves only to maintain the oedipalized world) and the "Poets" (i.e., narcissists whose visions of totality do not reflect the actual, unreconciled conditions in the oedipalized world).

In the segment "On the Learned Ones," Zarathustra claims that his message of *freedom and non-intellectualized intimacy with nature* can only be received by "children," and consequently, is a world closed off to those philosophers enclosed within the "dusty," narrow walls of the academic institution, whose abode reflects their way of thinking. In this regard Zarathustra writes:

I am still a learned one to the *children* , and also to

> the *thistles and red poppies* ....
> I have moved from the house of the learned ones
> and I even banged the door behind me ....
> I love *freedom* and the air over the fresh earth;
> rather would I sleep on ox hides than on their eti-
> quettes and respectabilities ....
> I am too hot and burned by my own *thoughts* ; often
> I must go *out into the open* and away from all dusty
> rooms.[86]

From an initial reading of the above passage, one may be led (wrongly) to assume that Zarathustra has chosen the idealized return to a first "nature," succumbing to a narcissan *Weltflucht* notion of freedom likened to the poetic project of the eighteenth century German Romantic school. However, once again, Zarathustra surprises the reader with a diatribe against such a project in the segment immediately following, entitled "On Poets."

Although I have already quoted from this segment (in connection with my earlier argument with Habermas's view that Nietzsche's principle desire was to return to the German Idealist project of aesthetics), the segment is a crucial one, so I will quote from it once again. In a self-deprecating tone about the danger of the poet foreclosing the world of Oedipus for that of Narcissus, Zarathustra writes :

> This, however, all poets believe: that whoever pricks
> up his ears as he lies in the grass or on lonely slopes
> will find out something about those things that are
> between heaven and earth. And when they feel ten-
> der sentiments stirring, the poets always fancy that

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[86] Cf. "On the Learned Ones", 183-184.

> nature herself is in love with them ....
> Alas, there are so many things between heaven and
> earth of which only the poets have dreamed ....
> Ah, how weary I am of poets! [87]

Here, Zarathustra has a particular kind of aesthetics in mind. The reader discovers that the two misleading pictures of reality which these poets offer their "spectators" are none other than *the illusory visions of totality and beauty* :

> [The poets] all muddy their waters to make them
> appear deep. And they like to pose as *reconcilers* :
> but mediators and muddlers they remain for me,
> and half-and half unclean ....
> From the sea [the poets] learned even its vanity ....
> Even before the uggliest buffalo [the peacock] still
> spreads out its fan of silver and silk. Sulky, the buf-
> falo stares back, close to the sand in his soul, closer
> still to the thicket, closest of all to the swamp. What
> are *beauty* and sea and peacock's finery to him? This
> parable I offer the poets.[88]

Zarathustra knows that the kind of poet to which he is speaking cannot answer the parable unless the poet (through self-contradiction and negation) de-scribes himself and the natural world of which he is a part as a reality not reconciled and not capable of reconciliation through a mere aesthetic principle of beauty. Zarathustra is fully aware that this mental closure upon reality would be an illusory totality, fine for the musings of the tired bourgeois in his parlor, who would use that kind of poetry as a temporary escape from the "evil routine" within which he is captured; thus, merely

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[87] Cf. "On the Poets", 187-188.
[88] Ibid., 188-189. Italics mine.

tightening the grip of the neurotic-psychotic bind.[89]

Since the narcissan child is trapped within the world of the ahistorical, the historical world (of which Oedipus is a part) remains unchanged by his psychotic adventure. This is why Zarathustra cleverly sets the eccentric appearance of the buffalo (more likened to human nature) in contrast to the perfect symmetry of the peacock; and prefers the rough-edged, murky ambivalence of the sand and swamp to the smooth clarity of the sea.

However, as one clearly sees, *Zarathustra's particular kind of critical poetics does not allow that easy coming and going between the world of the narcissan child and the oedipal man.* **The "new child" of Zarathustra's dream teaches us "something higher than any reconciliation," which is none other than the "will to power," a recreation, but one which emerges only from annihilation; that is, rigorous self- (and historical) critique.[90],[91]**

If this is true, then it would follow that Zarathustra's child (the personification of recreation) also needs to be "overcome;" that is, criticized, negated. This will be the subject of the last section of this chapter on Nietzsche's negative-dialectical myth-making.

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[89] Cf. "On Daughters of the Wilderness", 442.
[90] Cf. "On the Higher Man", 424.
[91] Cf. "On Redemption", 209.

The Critical Capacity of Zarathustra as *Man-Child*

One finds a precedent for this *negation of the child* in the Zarathustra myth, in the following passage from "The Stillest Hour," wherein an unknown voice tells Zarathustra:

> "You must yet become as a child and without
> shame... but whoever would become as a child
> must overcome his youth too."[92]

So there we have it. *Zarathustra tells us that the child must become the man* . But what kind of man? And does the becoming process end here? If so, does not Zarathustra's myth end in a "logical" contradiction, a utopian world led by *der Übermensch* who remains a liminal figure outside the context of the real, historical world? And what are we to make of the Heraclitan child, *das Kind*, who affirms rather than negates?[93] If this positive image is the last of the metamorphoses, then where does the great negator come in, Zarathustra's "higher man" or the "self-overcoming(critical)man"?

And what about Nietzsche's central doctrine of "eternal recurrence?"[94] Does this doctrine not contradict Nietzsche's critical view toward history which has only contempt for the ahistorical and demands a concrete dialogue with the present historical situation?

The answer to these dilemmas is to be found within the

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[92] Cf. "The Stillest Hour", 218.
[93] Cf. "On the Three Metamorphoses", 34.
[94] Cf. "The Convalescent", 321.

principle negative-dialectical mechanism of the Zarathustra myth, which one finds at the beginning of the fable wherein Zarathustra speaks of the three "metamorphoses of the spirit." What is significant is that throughout the threefold process of the metamorphoses Zarathustra neither mentions the "higher man" (der höhere Mensch) nor the ultimate "self-over-coming(critical)man"(der Übermensch); only the "camel," the "lion," and the "child."[95] Yet, it is precisely the *höhere Mensch* and the greater *Übermensch* whom Nietzsche holds before his readers as Zarathustra's primary goal for humanity.

Nonetheless, it is Zarathustra's "camel" who-- after taking history upon his back-- transforms into the "lion," who negates the history he has carried, who then transforms into Heraclitus's "child," who in turn begins the never-ending game of creation.[96]

We have here the interior mechanism (a constellation of sub-images) which defines the perpetual itinerary of Zarathustra, an image itself which is a negative-dialectical one through and through. Nietzsche was all too familiar with the notion of *Aufhebung* which literally means to make a dialectical movement of preserving, negating, and lifting up. In this sense, the "camel" symbolizes the *preservation* of those historical images of the past which prove to be useful.[97] The "lion" symbolizes the *negation* of those images of the

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[95] Cf. "On the Three Metamorphoses", 33.
[96] Ibid., 27.
[97] Cf. "aufheben" appearances in *Zur Genealogie der Moral* (1887), 2. 10; 3. 27 and *Ecce*

past so that no images resolve into codifications; that is, unquestioned, absolute truths. Finally, the "child" symbolizes the *lifting up* of the new images for the sake of history-in-the-making.

Nietzsche (to my understanding) leaves it to the reader to connect the image of the "child" (the last of the three metamorphoses) to the "man;" that is, the "self-critical (overcoming) man." The two images can only be connected by contradiction, a fact which by itself leads the reader to believe he is moving in the right direction!

Thus, for Nietzsche, the "child" of the *Zarathustra* fable is a temporary image of recreation, which itself will eventually negate by growing into the "man," who then begins once again the perpetual, threefold process of de-scription and trans-figuration.

This "man" of Nietzsche's (as we have already seen) is not a mere oedipalized adult. Nor is the "child"(as we have as well already seen) a mere pre-oedipalized, narcissan infant. The hidden image which emerges (only suggested by the "higher man" who is Zarathustra himself) is the dialectical image, *man-child*. The world in which Nietzsche's "man-child" resides is neither a foreclosed oedipal nor a repressed narcissan world, and yet not an "afterworld" either. It is an historical world of "eternal recurrence," the continual negative-dialectical movement of self-instigated strife; the eternal dynamic of the human subject's transformation from *camel* (the assimilation of

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Homo , GT in Kaufmann's *Nietzsche* , 238.

whatever is past history) to *lion* (the negation-by-criticism of that past history) to *child* (the recreation of a new history which is non-biased and non-prejudiced), and then back again to the camel when the child becomes an adult. **The man-child is a self-over-coming (critical) subject who cautions against the pathological drive within culture which desires its own totalization, absolutization, decadence, and final decay.**[98]

This dynamic of *creative repositioning through self-critique (rather than the reified repositing of old dogmas or absolute truths) "eternally re-occurs", undoing at every opportunity the neurotic-psychotic bind that keeps western culture from continuing the process of its needed convalescence* . This, then, is one possible interpretation of Nietzsche's doctrine of *ewige Wiederkehr* from a negative-dialectical perspective.

It is useful to step back at this point and look at Nietzsche's initial understanding of the relationship between the "child" and the "man." One immediately notices that Nietzsche (outside the *Zarathustra* work) did not always look positively upon the image of the "child." Nietzsche's "child" image (in relationship to the "adult," oedipalized world) underwent a certain amount of revision, which may provide a clue as to the stages of awareness and critical point of awakening in Nietzsche when he finally came to realize that the very culture which he was relentlessly de-scribing was itself a reflection of

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[98] Cf. *Zarathustra* , "The Convalescent", 321.

a deeper, neurotic-psychotic (oedipal-narcissan) structure, one which-- despite Nietzsche's subversive efforts-- would not be broken, consequently taking a grand toll on his mental health, breaking instead the critical man-child who set about decoding it .

Nietzsche's *initial* use of the image of "childhood," rather than one expressing Heraclitus's creative principle (as in the later *Zarathustra* fable), was instead an image which Nietzsche employed to criticize the German Romantic nostalgia, that desire to return to a pristine past stimulated by a disenchantment with present historical conditions.

In *Menschliches Allzumenschliches 1* (1878), ("Glück und Kultur") Nietzsche chides the one who is moved by the surroundings of his "childhood . . . the garden house, the Church with its graves."[99] According to Nietzsche, if the one who returns home to his childhood surroundings wants comfort and happiness, he should not have left the "simple culture" that belongs to the lost world of his childhood.[100] Nietzsche ends his aphorism with the vindictive statement that if one chooses the culture of the child, he must forego "higher culture."[101]

In *Menschliches Allzumenschliches 3* (1879) ("Die blaue Ferne") Nietzsche has less than admiration for the one who wishes

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[99] Nietzsche, *Werke 2* , 257.
[100] Ibid.
[101] Ibid., 258.

he could be a "child throughout life."[102] Nietzsche points out that only from a "blue distance" could this "puer aeternus" maxim look appealing.[103] Consequently, the "eternal child" of this maxim perpetuates his own narcissan stage as a way of coping with the fear of painful growth in the following way: through nurturing the "immature child [in himself] throughout life."[104]

In *Maxim #281* ("Thüren") the "child" is understood as inferior to the "man" who not only "goes to" doors (like the child), but "goes through" them.[105] In *Maxim #265* ("Das Kinder-Himmelreich") Nietzsche refers to to the notion of the "child's kingdom of heaven" as a "myth" (in the negative sense), because this kind of myth-making is born out of "sentimentality."[106]

In *Maxim #270* ("Das Ewige Kind") the sarcasm continues. Although Nietzsche believes that the "fairy tales and play" are not only for children but for adults too, the reader can only suspect that the fairytale which is the child's truth (as well as the play which is the child's work) is a back-handed criticism of what Nietzsche believes society is taking for "truth" and "work."[107] For in *Menschliches Allzumenschliches* Nietzsche ironically defines metaphysics as the

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[102] Nietzsche, *Werke 3* , 133.
[103] Certainly here, in the image "blue distance," Nietzsche is intending to compare the poet of German Romanticism with the immature child, with whom Nietzsche's *das Kind* has nothing in common.
[104] Nietzsche, *Werke 3* , 133. Parenthesis mine.
[105] Ibid., 142.
[106] Ibid., 332.
[107] Ibid., 139.

forgetting of one's true origins, and the task for the thinker is to find out humanity's "errors," because there is no "one truth" available.[108]

Hence, Nietzsche's negative view of the "child" image at this period in his de-scriptive writing need certainly be connected to his growing anti-romantic and anti-idealist attitude and the narcissan associations which he saw connected to the image of the "child." In every passage where the *Kindheit* motif appears in *Human All Too Human* one can observe an implicit polemic between *sentimentality* and *naiveté*, a contrast which Nietzsche discussed in his *Nachlass* five years before he completed the above work.[109]

It was at this time that Nietzsche left the academy at Basel and began his systematic relativizing of Wagner, Schopenhauer, classical Parmenidian metaphysics, and Christianity.[110] In this context it would be understandable how Nietzsche could be opposed to the "sentimental" view of *Kindheit* which romantically longs for a recoverable past of innocence in the French Enlightenment tradition of a Montesquieu. The "child" in this sense, could only be for Nietzsche an image connoting weakness, connected not only with romantic and idealist philosophical notions but also with the petty narcissan values of bourgeois-Christian purity and goodness.

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[108] Nietzsche, *Werke 2*, 17-18.

[109] Cf. Nietzsche's *Nachlasse*, #41 (Sommer-Herbst, 1873), KGW 3/4, 292=KSA 7, 683f, made available to Emory University graduate students by . W. C. Zimmerli, Professor of Philosophy at the Technische Universität, 3300 Braunschweig.

[110] Cf. Nietzsche's *Menschliches Allzumenschliches 1* , "Vorrede" and "Von den ersten und letzten Dingen" in his *Werke 2* , 1-18.

However, as we have already seen, by the time of Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* myth (1882-1891) one receives an altogether different notion of the relationship between the "child" (das Kind) and the "man" (der höhere Mensch/Übermensch). In fact, *the whole negative-dialectical work of Nietzsche's Zarathustra is an ode to the new man-child, a metaphor for the overcoming of the Persian high-priest of opposites through dialectical opposition rather than through absolute dualism.* For we find that before the reader arrives at the "three metamorphoses of the spirit," Zarathustra is said to have *already* "transformed" into a "child" and into "an awakened one."[111]

Thus, in the "Three Metamorphoses" Nietzsche expresses none other than his own *Bildung* or process of education: the development of one who bears the weight of history, to the negator of all truths and values which cultures through the ages have absolutized, to the affirmer/creator of a "new beginning, a game, a self-propelled wheel, a first movement."[112]

In the segment "On the Child and Marriage," Zarathustra proposes that one see in the marriage ritual an image for the new subject whose dialectical task is (qualitatively not quantitatively) to reproduce itself by becoming a "higher body."[113] Against the dualist notion of body versus spirit (which we already mentioned is an

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[111] Nietzsche, *Zarathustra* , Prologue, 11.
[112] Cf. "On the Three Metamorphoses", 35.
[113] Cf. "On the Child and Marriage", 102.

oedipal claim inherited from neo-Platonic Christianity), Nietzsche's man-child--who is both the "higher body" *and* the last of the metamorphoses of the "spirit" born out of the self-critical man--collapses the binary opposition between Oedipus and Narcissus; that is, spirit-as-repressed-body and body-as-constrained-spirit.

There is also for the man-child, Zarathustra no such thing as the binary opposition between "good" and "evil." Zarathustra now refers to each as an "old illusion."[114] Moreover, no longer is reality seen in terms of mediating subjects and objects. Zarathustra has moved from a Parmenidian doctrine of stable essences to a Heraclitian affirmation of "everything in flux."[115]

In the*Nachlass* (1881) contemporaneous with the*Zarathustra* myth, Nietzsche was experimenting with another collapse of oedipal-narcissan opposition, the absolute separation between "dream" and scientific "truth."[116] In this thought-experiment Nietzsche anticipates Freud by observing that the dividing line between what we often call "truth" and "fantasy" is not as clear as one might think. Moreover, that our dreams are just as much an element of our knowledge as

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[114] Cf. "On the Old and New Tablets", 294. Cf. also Nietzsche's *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* (1886), completed after *Zarathustra* , where Nietzsche uses the "child" motif in the same postive way he speaks of it in the *Zarathustra* tale, as a way of attacking the dualistic thought and action of Christianity, in the sense of the phallocentric worship of reason and preoccupationwith the minimalistic morality of oedipalized man. In the *Beyond Good and Evil* work, Nietzsche is impatient for the day when the *"opposite" terms "god" and "sin" will seem no more important to us than a child's toy, and a time when even the "old man" in us will "still be child enough, an eternal child"*. Cf. Nietzsche, *Werke 7* , 81.

[115] Ibid.

[116] Cf. Nietzsche's *Nachlasse* , #52 , 623.

what we call empirically verifiable truth.[117]

Nietzsche's preoccupation with collapsing the binary oppositions of the oedipal-narcissan cultural structure (such as man/child, body/spirit, good/evil and dream/truth) was also a way by which he attempted to demonstrate that *behind the seeming stability of ideas, values, and even the structure and various genres of the written word lay a world which the critical man-child as destroyer-creator recognizes as the one most humanly habitable.*

As one can now see, **Nietzsche's notion of negative-dialectical consciousness found its ultimate expression in the critical *Mensch-Kind* .** Nietzsche's *critical man-child* was forged as an ideal of a new, higher culture, wherein Oedipus would no longer have to repress his desire to return to his mother and Narcissus would be a freed child pulled away from his mirror.

But as mentioned earlier, Nietzsche never managed to actualize fully his dream of the critical man-child, a fact to which his ten years of madness (beginning in 1888) attests.[118] It would not be

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[117] "Und doch soll allmählich 'die Wahrheit' sich in unserem Traum verketten und--wir sollen einmal wahrer träumen!", Ibid. Nietzsche's revival of interest in the Heraclitan principle of becoming (rather than preoccupying himself with the attempt to define with precision the absolute "nature" of a thing) anticipates both the twentieth-century metaphysics of Bertrand Russell and the process thought of Alfred North Whitehead, not to speak of the pragmatic school led by James and Dewey. In the *Nachlasse* (1885-1886) Nietzsche wrote that "one cannot 'grasp', but can merely 'name' "(man nicht 'begreifen', wohl aber bezeichnen kann.) Hence, when one does "grasp" or "name" reality , he has fixed it, turned it into an abstraction, removing himself from the "becoming" character of reality ; Cf. Nietzsche's *Nachlasse* , #59, 22.

[118] Tracy Strong in this regard writes the following: "No matter how one understands the psychological processes, Nietzsche moves to gradual isolation from the world around him because, in his understanding of it, he has less and less in

misleading to suggest that Nietzsche's de-scription of the neurotic-psychotic cultural structure was managed with such thoroughgoing intensity that--unlike the myth of Zarathustra's freed man-child who has pulled away from the mirror and has re-entered the oedipal world in *critical de-scription and joyful trans-figuration,*--Nietzsche ended his own psychological health by having no place upon which he might lay his head as the result of having foreclosed and devalued both the worlds of Oedipus and Narcissus.

Hence, although Goethe's Wilhelm is obviously a more modest mythical image than Nietzsche's Zarathustra, Nietzsche's own person did not turn effectively toward the world but rather turned against both Oedipus and Narcissus. Nietzsche's madness was the result of his having foreclosed the neurotic-psychotic structure at the basis of western culture.

Nonetheless, the honest hope of this trans-figuration was certainly embodied in Nietzsche's critical man-child. Moreover, in the tradition of Goethe, Nietzsche did succeed in mobilizing once again the process of the German word's practical incarnation, and

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common with that world." Cf. Strong's *Friedrich Nietzsche* , 10, and cf. also Herbert Roeschl, "Nietzsche et la solitude," *Societé francaise des études nietzschéenes* , Bulletin (1958) in Strong, 300. Having access to Nietzsche's medical records at Jena, E.F. Podach takes particular pains to note the ambiguity of Nietzsche's "syphilitic infection" diagnosis by the medical community at Jena. The author writes the following: "The entry 'syphilitic infection' has raised more dust than was necessary. There is no certain evidence of such an infection. Nor is there any sure evidence of Nietzsche's 'paralysis'. In all probability there can be no definite verdict on the matter because of the inadequacy of the data."; Cf. E.F. Podach, *The Madness of Nietzsche* (London & New York: Putnam, 1931), 235. Translated from the German by F.A. Voigt. Originally appeared under the German title *Nietzsche's Zusammenbruch* , 1930.

certainly gave to posterity more finely tuned tools by which to continue the process.

The next and final chapter will attempt to show to what degree the negative-dialectical image of Nietzsche's Zarathustra as *critical man-child* was carried over into the twentieth century and redeemed by the historical poetry of Rainer Maria Rilke and poetical history of Walter Benjamin.

Chapter Four. Toward the *De-Neuroticization* of Politics and the *De-Psychoticization* of Poetry : Rainer Maria Rilke's and Walter Benjamin's Turn Toward the World

Two Nietzschean Nomads On the Border and Dispossessed:
A Literary-Biographical Sketch

_____In 1875, seventeen years before Walter Benjamin was born in Berlin to German-Jewish parents, Rainer Maria Rilke was born in Prague into a German-Catholic family. Rilke had already completed his first period of writing and had moved to Paris in order to write a monograph on Rodin when Benjamin was still a student in the Youth Movement under Wyneken at the Friedrich-Wilhelm Gymnasium in Thuringia.[1] Before Benjamin's eighteenth birthday, Rilke had completed *Die Neue Gedichte* (1907-1908) and *Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge* (1910).

Benjamin eventually broke with the Youth Movement because of its growing nationalist sentiment. He decided to pursue his literary interests including George Lukács' pre-Marxist works.[2] Between 1914 and 1915, Benjamin studied the Kabbala under the

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[1] By this time, Rilke had already written the *Cornet* novel, *Das Stundenbuch* , and the *Worpswede* monograph.

[2] Cf. George Lukács' *Soul and Form* (1910) and *Theory of the Novel* (1914).

guidance of Gershom Scholem, professor of Jewish mysticism in Jerusalem. During this time, Benjamin constructed his theory of redemptive criticism in *Über Sprache überhaupt und über die Sprache des Menschen* (1916). In 1917, Benjamin moved to Bern, Switzerland, continuing his studies in philosophy, literature, and aesthetics. By 1919, he had written his dissertation *Der Begriff der Kunstkritik in der deutschen Romantik* which was rejected by the academic establishment.

As Benjamin's Swiss habitat and cultural studies during this period suggest, he kept himself at a distance from the political conflicts of war-torn Europe. Such was the case for Rilke as well. The war so affected Rilke's creativity that he was unable to write any poetry. He took to composing letters, solely to confidantes and business acquaintances. With the characteristic restlessness that goes with a period of non-productivity, Rilke stayed on the move, making frequent trips throughout Italy and Switzerland. On January 4, 1915, Rilke wrote to his publisher Anton Kippenberg that while the war continued, his only respite was to take shelter in the Psalms and a few books.[3] By 1921, Rilke had established permanent residence outside Germany at Muzot, Switzerland. In January, 1922, Rilke wrote to Lottie von Wedel about the aftermath of the *Kriegsjahre* : "I am still far from this good turning point; to 'take down,' so to speak, the hindrances of the war years . . . that seemed

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[3] Rainer Maria Rilke, *Briefe* 2. 1914-1916 (Wiesbaden: Insel-Verlag, 1950) 18.

to separate me from the past as much as from everything that might have come . . . ."[4] Only two weeks later, Rilke submitted the *Duineser Elegien* and *Die Sonette an Orpheus* to Kippenberg.[5]

Rilke spent the last four years of his life primarily as a translator of French literature. He would become a leading figure in *deutschen und französischen Schrifttums*, introducing German readers to the writings of Marcel Proust, Paul Valery, Andre Gidé, Paul Claudel, Anna de Noailles, Edmond Jaloux, and others.[6]

A couple of years before Rilke's death, Benjamin wrote to him because Rilke had recommended him to his publisher who wanted to make available a German edition of St. John Perse's *Anabase*.[7] This was the only direct communication between Benjamin and Rilke.

In 1921, contemporaneous with Rilke's "correspondence" period from Muzot, Benjamin composed his *Theologisch-politisches Fragment*. Although the essay did not exemplify the mature thought of the later *Über den Begriff der Geschichte* (1940), it laid the groundwork for Benjamin's *Lebensphilosophie*, the integration of theological-aesthetics and politics through a critique and revision of the meaning of history.

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[4] Rilke, *Briefe* 2, 306.

[5] Rilke, *Briefe* 2, 308. Not to be mistaken with Rilke's last period, the Second Elegy was written between January and February, 1912.

[6] Cf. Wolfgang Leppmann's *Rilke: A Life* (New York: Fromm International Publishing, 1984) 389. Translated from the German in collaboration with the author by Russell M. Stockmann.

[7] Walter Benjamin, *Briefe* 1 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp-Verlag, 1966) 369.

In 1924, Benjamin entered upon his second period. After reading Georg Lukács' recently published Marxist work, *Geschichte und Klassen-bewusstsein*, Benjamin began to call into question the esoteric basis of his earlier method of redemptive criticism. Seeking to ground his redemptive theory in the political world situation, Benjamin envisioned a future historic reality which he believed would be initiated by a series of apocalyptic moments.[8] This new concern with mediating aesthetic theory and political action through a process of inscribing concrete historical de-scriptions, led him to compose between 1924-1928 a series of vignettes on Paris street scenes entitled *Einbahnstrassen*.

In 1927, Benjamin wrote a brief *Glosse* on Rilke in response to Franz Blei's satirical eulogy of Rilke after his death in 1926. In his sermon, Blei suggested that Rilke's poetry was bound "mit allen Schwächen, mit allen Lästern seiner Generation" because it was not "politisch und didactic."[9] Benjamin thought well of Rilke's poems "L'ange du Meridien," "Kretische Artemis," "Östliche Taglied," and "Archäische Torso Apollo," but was concerned that these poems were being exploited by the Nationalist-Socialist party to bolster the German folk-spirit.[10] In the *Glosse*, Benjamin noted a bourgeois intellectualism in Rilke's poetry but at the same time nostalgically

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[8] Richard Wolin, *Walter Benjamin: An Aesthetics of Redemption* (New York: Columbia University, 1982) 113.

[9] Walter Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* 4. I (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp-Werlag, 1972) 453.

[10] Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* 4.1, 454.

recalled a past when in Europe the "pure lyric" was still possible.

In connection with Benjamin's *Glosse* on Rilke, Andras Sandor has mentioned that Benjamin preferred Rilke's second period poems and concluded from the *Glosse* that "we do not learn whether he even read *Die Aufzeichnungen*."[11] Sandor proceeds to draw connections between Rilke and Benjamin on the theme of rescue, much of which he bases on Rilke's *Die Aufzeichnungen*. However, there is evidence which suggests that Benjamin was indeed familiar with Rilke's *Notebooks* .

Thinking back on his own Paris experiences, Benjamin mentions in his *Berliner Chronik* (1932) that the city opened up to him "in the footsteps of a hermetic tradition," a method of observation that he could "trace back at least as far as Rilke."[12] One of the "great cities" for Benjamin was Paris, the setting for his first "street" essays and his literary-critical work on Baudelaire.[13]

Paris was also the scene for Rilke's *Notebooks*, written more than fourteen years before Benjamin's "street" essays. Moreover, Baudelaire, a major source for Benjamin's redemptive theory, is given critical attention in Rilke's *Notebooks*. This matter will be

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[11] Andras Sandor, "Rilke and Walter Benjamin's Conception of Rescue and Liberation," *Rilke. The Alchemy of Alienation* , eds. Frank Baron, Ernst S. Dick, and Warren R. Maurer (Lawrence, Kansas: The Regents Press of Kansas, 1980) 226.

[12] Peter Demetz, ed., *Reflections. Walter Benjamin. Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings* (New York and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978) 19.

[13] For a clear explanation of Benjamin's work and revisions on Baudelaire, cf. Lloyd Spencer's "Introduction to Central Park" in *New German Critique* 34 Winter, 1985: 28-31.

dealt with in greater detail in the third part of this chapter.

By the 1930's, Benjamin was looking for an art medium which could more directly effect the social transformation of the masses, "a more direct Marxism."[14] In 1934 Benjamin established a personal and intellectual friendship with Bertolt Brecht. Brecht's use of the theater as a political forum influenced Benjamin's positive theory of mass culture.

In 1940, partially in response to the recent Hitler-Stalin pact, Benjamin completed his last work, the *Geschichts-philoso-phischeThesen*. In the *Theses* Benjamin attempted to redefine the meaning of history by way of the dynamic of "revolutionary remembering" (Gedächtnis). This work contains Benjamin's final experiment with "remembering," which he used as a means to bridge dialectically the gap between the theological-aesthetic and political, the utopic and ideological, the individual and communal, and the natural and technological aspects of his thought. These were ongoing tensions, from the beginning of his Neo-marxist turning point in 1924, until the year of his suicide in 1940.

From this brief literary biography, it is not difficult to see the evident differences between Rilke and Benjamin. To begin with, Benjamin's religious-cultural background was Jewish and Rilke's Catholic. Rilke was born among a generation of European intellectuals whose preoccupation with aesthetics always superseded

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[14] Ernst Bloch, et. al., *Aesthetics and Politics* (London: New Left Books, 1977) 102.

(if not overlooked entirely) an involvement with politics. Benjamin, on the other hand, was part of an emerging generation of writers whose work was constantly being challenged by a deepening social awareness.

In addition to being both German and Jewish, Benjamin lived his brief life between two world wars, in the midst of a well-defined and threatening fascist ideology. He was born into an intellectual environment (previously made up of *hommes des lettres*) which had split into what Hannah Arendt has called the "cultured" and "professional revolutionary."[15] Benjamin was a peculiar combination of both the poetic and political sensibility, one which he never totally reconciled.

To enclose Rilke totally within the "cultured" intellectual circle of his day would be an oversimplification. Ulrich Fülleborn put it this way: "A lifework such as Rilke's--work with repeated new starts, which nevertheless fails to resolve its inner tensions, which offers solutions but then supercedes them . . . the 'yes' also seems to require a 'no'."[16]

If we look beyond Benjamin and Rilke's obvious differences (their different political and religious affiliations and their immediate socio-historical contexts), we find two men who lived most of their lives on the border and dispossessed, as did their

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[15] Hannah Arendt, introd. *Illuminations. Walter Benjamin* (New York: Harcourt Brace & World, 1968) 22.
[16] Sandor, x.

predecessor, Nietzsche[17]. We find that both men (although German by birth) for much of their lives remained relatively homeless, and that each moved at critical points in their careers outside Germany to Switzerland, one to Bern, the other to Muzot. Perhaps it was this liminal relationship to their native country which enabled them to see more clearly the larger vista.

In a letter to Bertolt Brecht on July 25, 1934, Benjamin wrote that the Germans were "ein Scheissvolk" and that everything in himself which could be identified as German was "schlecht."[18] In "The Author as Producer" (1937), Benjamin defined the revolutionary intellectual as one who "appears first and foremost as the betrayer of his class of origin."[19] On September 11, 1915, Rilke wrote to Ilse Erdmann the following: "I do not feel and sense things in a 'German' way—not at all . . . How can I—who was formed and educated by Russia, France, Italy, Spain, the desert and the Bible ."[20] And as early as 1905, during his first years in Paris, Rilke wrote in his poem "Der Dichter" that the poet had no "no home" and "no profession."[21]

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[17] Tracy B. Strong has noted that by the 1880's, Nietzsche "had cut himself off from most 'normal' institutional attachments. For the rest of his coherent life he wandered back and forth in Switzerland and Italy, rarely, if ever, setting foot in Germany..." (2). Cf. Tracy B. Strong's *Friedrich Nietzsche and the Politics of Transfiguration* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1975).
[18] Walter Benjamin, *Briefe* 2 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp-Verlag, 1966) 741.
[19] Demetz, 237.
[20] Rilke, *Briefe* 2, 45.
[21] Rainer Maria Rilke, *Gesammelte Gedichte* (Frankfurt am Main: Insel-Verlag, 1962) 267.

It would be imprudent to interpret the above statements by Rilke and Benjamin merely as expressions of Benjamin's anti-fascist paranoia or Rilke's elitism. Rather, both Benjamin and Rilke sought to read their historical texts from as many vantage points as each (given their limitations) could allow himself. Their geographical mobility and *self-critical* natures (in the tradition of their predecessors, Goethe and Nietzsche) contributed to their ability to observe closely the movements of their age. One could say that Benjamin (and Rilke especially during his second period) were part of the Goethean and Nietzschean tradition of the **"polito-phulax"**, a term Aristophanes used to describe the political person as "one who watches citizens."[22]

In the proceeding sections of this chapter, I will proceed to show how Rilke was a major influence in Benjamin's turning point from aesthetic concerns to political ones: more specifically, how Rilke's *Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge* provided Benjamin with a basic formula which he employed in his *descriptive* "street" essays. Furthermore, I will show that Benjamin continued and developed in his own way the *redemptive criticism* Rilke began in his second period, thereby achieving his own literary redemption of Rilke; and finally, that **both Benjamin and Rilke continued on one of the first roads to postmodernity marked out by**

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[22] Liddell and Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon* (New York: American Book Company, 1888) 654.

Nietzsche and Goethe, leading to *the de-psychoticization of poetry (Rilke) and to the de-neuroticization of politics (Benjamin).*

I will proceed along these lines:

(i) To show the similarities between the early Rilke and the early Benjamin concerning the adamic theory of language which each inherited from the Judaic-biblical tradition;

(ii) To show specifically how Rilke contributed to Benjamin's theory of redemptive criticism through a secularizing process of biblical naming, which Benjamin (following Rilke's lead) assimilated into his own work; and finally,

(iii) To show how Benjamin's understanding of history involved an integration between a mythical (that is, aesthetic-religious) and political mode of thinking by a dialectical process of historical *de-scribing* and revolutionary *re-membering*; how this method of "de-scribing" (the actual) and "re-membering" (the useful), enabled Benjamin to achieve--not only a literary redemption of Rilke's de-scriptive work proper to the *Notebooks* -- but the remobilization of *the process of practical incarnation* which desires to break the neurotic-psychotic bind reinforced by the prevailing cultural code; a process re-initiated by Goethe and Nietzsche, and continued by Benjamin's immediate predecesor, Rilke; and finally, how Rilke's *Elegies* may be read both as a literary redemption of his own de-scriptive work (which he began for the first time during his Paris period), as well as a continuation of

Goethe and Nietzsche's project by which Rilke first set out to *describe the totalizing function of mythical history and historical myth and then offered a non-foreclosing and critical (i.e. de-psychotic and de-neurotic) mytho-historical alternative that desired to trans-figure the world he de-scribed.*

It is significant that each writer began his life of acute observation with a similar aesthetic-religious belief in an*Urzeit* when words accomplished more than representation, when words contained the power to engender life. It was from this dialectical vantage point, from a belief in a biblical theology of naming and a driven-ness to "see"-- whatever the consequences-- that both Rilke and Benjamin began their literary careers.

The *Adamic* Theory of Language in Rilke and Benjamin

Although Benjamin's religious thought was rooted in the Jewish Kabbala and Rilke's in the Judaeo-Christian tradition, both thinkers took for granted a biblical theology of naming. This notion is found in the Pentateuch where God *through speech* effects the creation of the world (Gen. 1: 3-31), and is said to give Adam the power to "name" the animals (Gen. 2:19). A similar motif emerges in the synoptic Gospels where the speech of Jesus (the "new Adam") has direct effects upon nature and upon persons with whom he comes into contact (Mark 4:35-41; 5:1-20; 6:37; Matt. 8:18, 23-34; 14:13-21). A more sublime version of the return of this original Edenic alignment between language and creation appears in the Fourth Gospel where the pre-existent Jesus (Christ) is identified with the *Ursprache* (i.e., the "Word") whose power engenders life itself (John I: 1,14). This divine attribute (the ability to create through speech) is an inversion of the empirical fact in human experience; namely, the irrevocable rift between *saying* and *being*, the historical, unempowered quality of language.

Although a theology of naming can be found in both the Jewish and Christian traditions, neither Benjamin nor Rilke felt totally at home in them. Both would never have professed membership in their churches nor for that matter have been accepted by the religious status quo of their day. As early as 1899, in *Das Buch vom Monschischen Leben*, Rilke depicted God as one whom the author of the poem "does not yet know" (weiss noch nicht) and whose God is "dark" (dunkel).[23] This "dark" God is unlike the God in the Gospel of John who was the "light" which "darkness" could not comprehend (John 1:5). The God in Rilke's poem resembles more the God of the Old Testament who could only be known in the "darkness" (Exodus 33: 22-33).

In a later poem, *Der Ölbaum Garten* (1906), the protagonist, who has taken on the personality of Jesus at Gethsemane, blasphemes when he cries "den ich durch Dich zu lindern unternahm, der Du nicht bist, O namenlose Scham."[24] The middle-class Christianity of Rilke's day (if not our own) would certainly have been disturbed if from the pulpit Rilke proclaimed to the congregation that the "angel" resides in the realm of the "transformed visible," and if the angel could enter the world he would do so not to "strengthen" but to "test" and "reshape" it.[25,26]

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[23] Rainer Maria Rilke, *Sämtliche Werke* 1 (Frankfurt am Main: Insel-Verlag, 1966) 253-254.

[24] Rilke, GG, 250.

[25] Rilke, *Briefe* , 1, 263.

[26] Rilke, SW, 1, 508-509.

A typical Christian of Rilke's time would have been more familiar with the benign guardian angel who guides and protects rather than with an angel who inhabits the "world of the terrible."[27] Rilke's angel resembles more closely the Old Testament cherubim whom Jahweh (after the fall of Adam) stations to "guard" the gate before Paradise with a flaming sword (Genesis 3:24).

Rilke carried this notion of the terrifying angel into his later works. In the second Elegy, he wrote that "Jedes Engel ist schrecklich."[28] Rilke's angel lives in the fulfilled or the historically redeemed portion of the world. The poet does the work of redemption for the angel (who is not allowed admittance to the historical world) by "naming," that is, engendering the fleeting world with enduring life (metaphorically) through language.

In *Aufzeichnung über Kunst* (1900), Rilke defined the artist as one who is "the dark wish of all things" and the "things" of creation are "dankbar und dienend wollen sie die *neuen Namen* tragen."[29] Twenty-two years later, Rilke repeated the same motif, writing that the poet attempts to "transform" the things: ". . .aber *zu sagen*,verstehs, o *zu sagen* so, wie selber die Dinge niemals innig meinten *zu sein* . . . ."[30]

Rilke wished to overcome the duality between "zu sagen" (to

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[27] Rilke, *Briefe* , Ibid.
[28] Rilke, GG, 445.
[29] Rilke, SW. 1, 1161.
[30] Rilke, GG, 474, emphasis mine.

say) and "zu sein" (to be). The things of this world are silent, and without a word perish. The poet re-invests language with creative power by bringing speech out of its ossified state of oedipal convention. The poet becomes the signifier of a future *Urzeit* when naming (sagen) and being (sein) might one day exist in a co-creative, causal relationship. **Redemption becomes a process of bridging the absolute schism between saying and being, whereby** *the possibility of fulfillment for transitory reality is poetically expressed,* **and this dream for humanity is passed from generation to generation.** *The poet, however, can at most mimic the original power of God* (which was [mythologically] shared by Adam and the angels), when acts happened as a result of speech. The poet can at most keep this dream alive in hopes of its one day being fulfilled in "fallen" creation.

Already one sees hints of Rilke's later **mytho-historical theory of language,** which will move away from the ontologization of aesthetics proper to the German Romantics like Hölderlin and Novalis, or, for that matter, Schelling's and Fichte's inversion of the creator God into the absolute "I." **For Rilke, the poet's task will be to confess the inability of pure aesthetics to trans-figure reality, to make the word flesh, yet nonetheless, through poetry's de-scriptive and trans-figurative function, to perform a critical mytho-historical service for humankind.**

A similar mytho-historic function can be located in Walter

Benjamin. In Thesis IX of *Über den Begriff den Geschichte* (1940), Benjamin interpreted Paul Klee's painting "Angelus Novus" (younger angel) as the "angel of history," one whose face is turned toward the "past" (Vergangenheit) and who watches a storm blow up from Paradise. The storm catches the angel's outspread wings and blows him toward the "future" (Zukunft). The storm is called "progress" (Der Fortschritt) which heaps ruin upon ruin before the angel's face.[31] Jürgen Ebach has connected Benjamin's "younger angel" in Thesis IX to a later fragment wherein he defines the "children" (die Kinder) as "representations of Paradise" (Reprasentanten des Paradies[es]). Ebach interprets the "child" and "younger angel" as metaphors for the "fulfillment of human possibilities."[32]

Benjamin's angel represents metaphorically the opposition to the continuum of profane history. "Progress" is equated with the movement of unredeemed history which has been disassociated from the authentically creative or novel in the world. The future toward which the angel is being hurled is an apocalyptic moment which (according to Talmudic legend) can only happen at a point of ultimate crisis.[33] The ever-present possibility of the apocalyptic

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[31] Walter Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* 1.2 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp-Verlag, 1972) 697-698.

[32] Jürgen Ebach, "Der Blick des Engels. Für Eine 'Benjaminische' Lekture des hebräischen Bibel," *Walter Benjamin. Profane Erleuchtung und rettende Kritik*, eds. Norbert W. Boley and Richard Faber (Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann-Verlag, 1969) 86.

[33] Walter Benjamin, *Illuminationen. Ausgewälte Schriften* 2 (Frankfurt am Main:

moment happening, is kept alive by the "younger angel's" constant backward glance to Paradise.

Richard Wolin understands Benjamin's "Kabbalistic idea of redemption" as that which does not merely look back to Edenic origins, but as well to the "fulfillment of a potentiality which lies dormant in origin ."[34] Benjamin's "Angelus Novus" never loses sight of Paradise, and this is why it remains a possibility for profane history to be redeemed. The younger angel remains the only connection to the *Urzeit* , but the storm (i.e., progress) has rendered him helpless to accomplish the redemptive task.

For Benjamin the "historian" (der Geschichtschreiber) attempts to do the redemptive work of the angel. For Rilke, it is the "poet" (der Dichter) who accomplishes the redemption because the angel (due to his nature) is not permitted total access to the perishing world of humans and things. *Both poet (in the capacity of historian) and historian (in the capacity of poet) are mutual redeemers of profane history.*[35]

In *Über Sprache überhaupt und über Sprache des Menschen* (1916), Benjamin developed his theory of redemption. In the *Über Sprache* essay, Benjamin steered a course midway between what he

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Suhrkamp-Verlag, 1969) 374.
[34] Wolin, 39.
[35] A similar idea was shared by Dilthey who wrote "...den wir dem Geschichtschreiber und dem dichter verdanken...Der Lebensverlauf vollzieht an jedem Menschen einen beständige Determination, in welcher die in ihm liegenden Möglichkeiten eingeschränkt werden" (cf. Dilthey's *Gesammelte Schriften* , 7 [Berlin: B.G. Teubner-Verlag, 1927] 215).

called a "bourgeois" theory of language (language as a system of signs not necessarily related to being) and a "mystical" view (one which identifies word and being).[36] The essay holds an "Adamic" view of language whereby the things of creation silently ask to be "named." They wish for "translation" (Übersetzung) into the human realm of mental being.[37] This process of "redemptive translation" is the ultimate human task accomplished by the "original word" (Ursprung der Sprache) which engenders human language with the creative power it possessed before the Fall.[38]

As one can see, Benjamin's Adamic theory of language which he developed in 1916 (and reappropriated, as we shall see, in his later "street" essays) is consonant with Rilke's early linguistic view, which he first constructed in his 1900 fragment *Aufzeichnung über die Kunst*, and re-defined in his second and third periods, culminating in the *Elegies* and *Sonnets* .

By 1924, Benjamin's theory of aesthetics (originally based upon a biblical theology of naming) underwent a secularization process. In *Einbahnstrasse* (1924), Benjamin attended to particular things, not to general ideas such as a machine at a filling station, a city clock, and a planetarium.[39] From each of these concerete moments, Benjamin wished to witness the emergence of some all-

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[36] Walter Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* 2.1 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp-Verlag, 1977) 141, 144.

[37] Benjamin, *Schriften* 2.1, 151.

[38] Benjamin, *Schriften* 1.1, 151-152.

[39] Benjamin, *Schriften* 4. 1, 85, 88, 146.

encompassing significance. In Richard Wolin's book on Benjamin, he writes that Benjamin's method in *Einbahnstrasse* was one of "micrological thinking . . . compressing the particular until the universal seemingly bursts forth from within."[40]

In the "Filling Station" segment, Benjamin set forth his theory of particularity: to look at "inconspicuous forms" rather than the "universal gesture of a book."[41] Oil is not poured over the whole machine, but only on certain individual parts, if the motor mechanism is to be activated with efficiency.

In "Standard Clock," Benjamin noted that the writer's "fragments" are better than drawn "conclusions" because these fragments disclose what is actually the case in the world of continual becoming; i.e., the transitory character of things.

In the "Planetarium" fragment, Benjamin defined in more detail what he meant by his future project to "politicize aesthetics." As he beholds the vast array of planets, he juxtaposes the birth of the cosmos (and the positive advances of technology) with the destructive turn he believes technology has taken in the production of high-scale weapons. He nostalgically looks back to a time when, he believes, humans were closer to nature. He concludes that World War I was the pathological result of humanity's attempt to master nature rather than commune with it. He writes that

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[40] Wolin, 121.
[41] Benjamin, *Schriften* 4. 1, 85.

"technology is not the mastery of nature but has to do with the relation between nature and man."[42]

Although within the "Planetarium" fragment there is no overt anti-fascist sentiment, Benjamin writes that it is the "power of the proletariat" which will heal the rifts in the cosmos caused by the "avarice of profit" through an "ecstasy of procreation."[43] This underlying anti-fascist sentiment was brought out into the open in the *Kunstwerk* essay (1936). Here Benjamin criticized fascism's intrusion of aesthetics into politics whereby people are allowed to express themselves but without changing "property relations."[44] This Benjamin called *the "aestheticization of politics"*. [45]

It was not until his study on *Surrealism* (1929) that Benjamin spoke of the surrealist movement as a focused attempt to politicize art, a value he would ascribe to "communism" in the *Kunstwerk* essay: "Der Kommunismus antwortet ihm mit der Politisierung der Kunst."[46]

Benjamin's *Der Sürrealismus* (1929) was an attempt to focus on the surrealist's notion of "poetic life" which he believed to be a correct observation of the volatile environment in which he lived.[47] He saw the surrealist effort as one which applied the notion of

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[42] Benjamin, *Schriften* , 4. 1, 146.
[43] Ibid., 146-147.
[44] Benjamin, *Illuminationen* , 176.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Benjamin, *Schriften* 2. 1, 296.

Aufhebung to language itself, whereby a poem is constructed not on a preconceived "concept," but rather from experiences.[48] Benjamin employed for the first time the phrase "profane illumination" in reference to the surrealist method of "wrenching elements of everyday life from their original contexts and rearranging them in a new constellation."[49]

Rilke's relationship to the surrealist project still remains unclear. In *Rilke and France: A Study in Poetic Development* (1966), K.A.J. Batterby has noted Rilke's swift passage "from romanticism to something which approximated symbolism" but adds that "Rilke brushed against several literary movements, but belonged to none."[50] In "Rilke und Mallárme: Entwicklung einer Grundfrage der Symbolistischen Poetik" (1971), Beda Allemann has categorized Rilke's third period as "late symbolist."[51] He bases this view on Rilke's "transformation" motif as well as on the emphasis Rilke placed upon "Figur," which Allemann likens to Mallárme's "constellation."[52] Finally, Allemann focuses on the "principle of absence" in Rilke and Mallárme whereby words are used to express the fact of inexpressability; that things which "present" meaning

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[48] Benjamin, Ibid., 297.
[49] Wolin, 64.
[50] K.A.J. Batterby, *Rilke and France: A Study in Poetic Development* (London: Oxford University, 1966) 60.
[51] Beda Allemann, "Rilke und Mallarmé: Entwicklung einer Grundfrage der symbolistischen Poetik," *Rilke in neuer Sicht* ...Käte Hamburger (Stüttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1971) 66.
[52] Allemann, 69.

through words only reveal to us vast lacunae about the thing.[53]

Earlier, Heidegger expressed a similar view concerning Rilke's understanding of a "thing": "It shows itself and hides itself in the way in which everything presences, namely, in the fact that despite all conquests of distances the nearness of things remains absent."[54] One can see that both Mallarmé and Rilke certainly represent the antithesis of the German Romantic enterprise, which desired to fashion an idealistic-poetic universe of totality within which it could dwell, safe from the precarious (though, nonetheless, real) world.

From these views alone, it is clear that Paris greatly influenced Rilke's *Lebensphilosophie*. In his biography on Rilke, Wolfgang Leppmann notes that Rilke's Paris experience (unlike Stefan Georg's German Romantic dedication to the aesthetics of pure form), influenced this new desire to show through his own unique lyrical form the alignment between language and "concepts lying at the edge of the indescribable."[55]

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[53] In one of his later poems, Mallarmé prophesied the twentieth century "crisis of language" when in "Le vierge, le vivace, et le bel aujourd'hui..." (1885) he likens the poet to a swan, a creature who is beautiful, but whose heavy feathers hinders his flight. The poem is perfect in form (abba, abba, aab, aba) but breaks down in content, because the swan is a "Fantome qu'a ce lieu son pur éclat assigne" (a phantom condemned to this place by his pure brilliance). One could say that (unlike Hölderlin's "swan" poem "Hälfte des Lebens" [1803] which compares the swan to the poet who is content to hide his head "ins heilignüchterne Wasser") Mallarmé's poem sings the swan song of aesthetics: that language made into a beautiful and perfect totality is language made still, powerless to effect more than aesthetic transformation.

[54] Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971) 166.

[55] Leppmann, 172.

In *The Age of Surrealism* (1960), Wallace Fowlie located the origins of surrealism in the desire to arrest the primacy of the unconscious through language. Benjamin himself noted that the surrealists' language reveals the unconscious and fragmented ambiguities of existence and brings the immense forces of "atmosphere" concealed in these things to the point of explosion.[56] Fowlie also has observed that "surrealism was founded upon the doctrine that the artist does not belong to any one period."[57]

What Fowlie may be getting at here, is that the true artist cannot make any one historical epoch his home. The true artist-- by definition--must go to the very center of and yet simultaneously remain liminal to the society he sets out to *de-scribe* and ultimately, *trans-figure*, claiming as his own no one concept or ideology; initially, becoming a kind of social barometer of feeling.

Paradoxically, it is by means of this liminal relationship to the congealed identity of western society (i.e., the oedipal-narcissan structure upon which that society is based) that the artist can begin his initial de-scription; that is, the detailed observation of society's transactions , its reified comings and goings, yet at the same time sensing acutely what is fermenting below its surface, ultimately serving as a catalyst for society's trans-figuration.

Benjamin believed the environment most congenial to this

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[56] Wallace Fowlie, *The Age of Surrealism* (Bloomington: Indiana Press, 1960) 29.
[57] Benjamin, *Schriften* 2. 1, 300.

kind of observation was "the proletarian quarters of the great cities."[58] One of the "great cities" for Benjamin was Paris, the setting for many of his "street" observations and his redemptive critical work on Baudelaire.

As mentioned earlier, Paris was as well the setting for Rilke's *Notebooks* (1910). It was here in the *Notebooks* (written four years before World War I and fourteen years before Benjamin's "street" essays) that Rilke, perhaps more profoundly than in any future period, sensed the unrest beneath the surface of a mechanized world, unknowingly on the verge of explosion.

As we shall see, Rilke's *Die Aufzeichnungen* seems more closely connected in mood to the surrealist than the symbolist school.[59] Also, the biblical theme of *redemption through naming* (so central to Rilke's earlier thought) is subordinated to a new driven-ness to *see* nothing more than the empirical world. It was this kind of **de-scription--to see and articulate the fragmented and broken character of humans and the world which they inhabit--that** went beyond the lesson in formal aesthetics which Rilke had acquired from his Paris mentor, Rodin.

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[58] Ibid.

[59] Cf. Gaeton Picon's *Surrealists and Surrealism 1919-1939* (New York: Rizzoli International, 1983) 19-21; Cf. also Uwe M. Schneede's *Surrealism* . Translated by Maria Pelikan (New York: Abrams, Inc., 1973) 27.

Malte's *De-scription* and *Trans-figuration* of the Oedipal-Narcissan

Code:

Rilke's Mytho-Historical Contribution to Benjamin's *Revolutionary*

Re-membering

In Benjamin's *Der Sürrealismus* , he toasted the *flâneur* as one of the "illuminati" of the profane world.[60] So too, in the beginning pages of Rilke's *Die Aufzeichnungen*, the protagonist, Malte, after several days wandering about the streets of Paris, asks himself: "Is it possible that the whole of the *history* of the world has been misunderstood? . . . Is it possible that all these people know with perfect accuracy a past that never existed? Is it possible that all realities are nothing to them . . . like a clock in an empty room?"[61]

The entire account of Rilke's Malte proceeds in surprising shifts, abrupt movements, and unresolved fragments. In

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[60] Benjamin, *Schriften* 2. 1, 305.
[61] Rilke, SW. 6, 711.

Benjamin's *Berliner Chronik* (1932), he wrote that "remembrance must not proceed in the manner of a narrative . . . but must, in the strictest epic and rhapsodic manner, assay its spade in the ever-new places, and in the old one's delve to ever deeper layers."[62]

In Book I, Malte says twice that he is "learning to see."[63] As he continues walking down the Rue Toullier, he only sees "quantities of human beings" (eine Menge Menschen). Malte becomes "fearful" because he senses that (for the world he is observing) "it is quantity that counts" (Die Masse macht es). After struggling with an unidentifiable illness, Malte immediately goes to the city hospital for the poor. He reflects on the factory-like death all around him "where production is so enormous an individual death is not so nicely carried out."[64]

As we see, Rilke's Malte can be considered in terms of an *uneasy flâneur*, a *Grübler*, *(i.e., a depressed individual)* because he is depicted not as a man of leisure strolling about the city street but as a man who is anxious and out of control among the crowd. He is aware of society's ossified state of consciousness which can only perceive the world in terms of "quantities." It is here that *Malte describes none other than Oedipus's state of reified, neurotic consciousness.*

In *Über einige Motive bei Baudelaire* (1939), Benjamin

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[62] Demetz, 26.
[63] Rilke, SW. 6, 710-711.
[64] Rilke, Ibid., 714.

criticized Baudelaire's equation of the "man of the crowd" with the "flâneur," writing that "the man of the crowd is no *flâneur*" (der Mann der Menge ist kein Flaneur).[65] Also, in Benjamin's *Die Wiederkehr des Flaneur. Zu Franz Hessels "Spazieren in Berlin"* he reflected back and forth from the streets of Berlin to the streets of Paris (just as in *Der Berliner Chronik*). Benjamin noted that the "philosophy of the flâneur" is based on the principle of "seeing only what appears to us." He ironically calls the flâneur "the priest of the *genius loci* " and "the man of quantity" (der Mann der Menge).[66]

It is significant that more than fourteen years before Benjamin, Rilke had de-scribed the demise of the *flâneur* in the same city. What is more, Rilke (and Benjamin after him) understood that-- earlier still--Baudelaire had witnessed the trans-figuration of the city stroller into the depressed individual on the same city-streets of Paris.

In Benjamin's interim essay on Baudelaire, *Zentral Park*[67] (July, 1938-February, 1939), he refers to the new idler on the street, the *Grübler* (the depressed man) whose startled gaze falls upon the fragment in his hand.[68] Benjamin is referring here to Baudelaire's "La vie Anterieure," most probably the last line, "Le secret

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[65] Benjamin, *Illuminationen* , 218.
[66] Walter Benjamin, *Angelus Novus. Ausgewälte Schriften* 2 (Frankfurt am main: Suhrkamp-Verlag, 1966) 418, 420.
[67] Cf. note number 13.
[68] Spencer, 44.

douloureux qui me faisait languir." [69] Benjamin notes the "audible overtones" in Baudelaire's verse when Baudelaire comments on the "ruinousness and fragility" of Paris.[70]

A specific example of this is in a poem where Baudelaire shows extraordinary sensitivity to the detail of a Paris street in the moments just before dawn, when he notices an estranged man and woman walking in "Le Crépuscule du Matin": "l'ais est plein du frisson des choses qui s'enfuient / et l'homme est las d'ecrire et la femme d'aimer."[71] In the later essay on Baudelaire (*Über einige Motive*), Benjamin quoted from Baudelaire's diaries that "lost in this mean world, jostled by the crowd, I am like a weary man.[72] Benjamin concludes that "the man who wrote these pieces was no *flâneur* ."[73]

For Benjamin, the significance of Baudelaire's "profane illumination" lies in the possible "redemption" accomplished in part by "the perception of that which is being irredeemably lost." This perception "flashes up in the Now of its perceivability" (im Jetzt der Erkennbarkeit aufblitzendes).[74] *For Benjamin, the ultimate task of the literary critic begins first with a detailed description of the fleeting, fragile character of things. The trans-*

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[69] Francis Scarfe, *Baudelaire. Selected Verse* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1964) 103.

[70] Spencer, 42.

[71] Scarfe, 103.

[72] Benjamin, *Illuminationen* , 239.

[73] Ibid.

[74] Benjamin, *Schriften* 1. 2, 682.

figurative aspects of this observation only become apparent when this "consummate negativity, once squarely faced, delineates the mirror image of its opposite through a *dialectical process of describing and revolutionary re-membering."* [75] Benjamin believed that despite Baudelaire's incorrect equation of the *flâneur* with *der Mann der Menge*, Baudelaire nevertheless acutely perceived the emerging quantification and reification of the world as it exhibits itself in the uneasy *flâneur, der Grübler,* the "depressed individual."

Rilke's Malte is much like Baudelaire's "man of the crowd." Malte does not feel at home in the once-familiar city but has become aware of the quantified human existence around him, the "quantity/crowd of human beings" (eine Menge Menschen).[76] It is more than just circumstance which leads Malte to empathize with Baudelaire's poem "Une Charogne."

In the above passage, Malte becomes both a de-scriptive and trans-figurative literary critic. From his reading of Baudelaire's poem, he concludes that "it was his (Baudelaire's) task to see in this terrible thing (i.e., a putrifying carcass), seeming to be only repulsive, that existence which is valid among all that exists," the fleeting, perishable existence of all things.[77]

Rilke's Malte discovers that Baudelaire has an insight into the nature of creation which contains irrevocably the element of

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[75] Spencer, 30.
[76] Rilke, SW. 6, 711.
[77] Ibid., 775.

transience. To "be" means as well "not to be," to pass away. With Baudelaire, one witnesses *the self-willed movement of poetic language away from the inner world of totality and toward the exterior, historically-concrete world of particularity. It is an anti-psychotic movement* which (as we already saw) had both positive and negative-psychological influences upon the poet.

So, Rilke's Malte "took the enormous decision at once and single-handedly so to magnify these *minutia* (die Winzige) these ruins and fragments of the city."[78] The preceding words spoken from Malte might as well have proceeded from Benjamin's mouth. Benjamin's concern for the "smallest of things" (das Kleinste) began with his turning point in 1924 from a concern with pure aesthetics to an appeal for the *politicization of aesthetics* .

Once Rilke's Malte has squarely faced the consummate negativity of existence (death) and has *de-scribed* the reified subject of quantity, he then *remembers* the universally understood *image of childhood* which glimmers faintly beneath the image of his own youth. The image that surfaces from Malte's unconscious he calls "the endless reality of my childhood being" (die unendliche Realität meines Kindseins).[79] Malte juxtaposes this "endless childhood being" with its opposite "death," "the big thing" (das Grosse).[80] He perceives that oedipalized adults experience existence quantitatively

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[78] Ibid., 784.
[79] Ibid., 892.
[80] Ibid., 764.

"from without" (von aussen).

The narcissan child, on the other hand, views the world qualitatively "from within" (von innen).

Ultimately, *the man-child is an image which suggests the possibility of an authentic, unreified existence of trans-figured narcissan and oedipal life; i.e., a man-child who goes about describing and re-membering the world without crystallizing (within the mental realm of human consciousness) already totalized-cultural patterns, which, characteristically, have always supported the language of prejudice and convention.*

Nonetheless, the lesson that the narcissan child can give to the world is that non-biased language (or fluidly non-prescribed gesturing) is not separated from what it perceives. The child's world is an Edenic world of life-engendering language whereby the naming of a thing sets it free rather than limits it because the child does not attempt to enclose a thing in a word or a concept. The child does not exist in a slave-master relationship with things. This is why the child's borders are limitless, "das eigentümlich Unbegrenzte der Kindheit."[81] But this is also why the child, unfortunately, is oedipalized for the sake of his adaptation and survival. If the child is not initiated successfully into the cult of Oedipus, he will become Oedipus's enemy. The child will become Narcissus.

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[81] Ibid., 891.

The notion of *Kindheit* in *Die Aufzeichnungen* seems to be more than just a naive or romantic longing for the recovery of lost innocence (in the spirit of a Montesquieu). Rather, for Malte it is an ongoing, negative-dialectical image that emerges from his unconscious as a future possibility, but only after a historical observation of his present (oedipalized) situation.

The perception of *Kindheit* as something that is yet to be realized by the so-called "adult," is made clear in the last paragraphs of the *Notebooks* where Rilke's Malte ends by saying about himself that "he resolved to retrieve the most important of the things he had not been able to accomplish . . . the more calmly he thought, the more unachieved did it [childhood] seem to him."[82]

During the course of Malte's wanderings, he makes a threefold movement in perception and thought: (i) the de-scription ("naming") of the *flâneur* or man of leisure; (ii) a recognition of himself as a *Grübler*, the demise of the *flâneur* in the experience of his own uneasiness and fear of being a man of the crowd; and, (iii) the re-membering of a *forgotten name* , a name which suggests how he might trans-figure himself and the world of which he is a part; namely, by *remembering* the mytho-historical image of childhood, which Malte will read as a clue to his survival in the oedipal world he must learn to live in, albeit as a de-scribing and trans-figuring

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[82] Ibid., 945. This is certainly reminscent of Nietzsche's man-child of the *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* and *Zarathustra* works.

man-child.

This threefold movement in Malte's awakening consciousness is strikingly similar to Benjamin's notion of *Gedächtnis*, the "active remembering of the past, on the basis of real discontinuity."[83] Within Benjamin's *Der Berliner Chronik* (1932) are traces of Rilke's own journeys through Paris in the *Malte Laurids Brigge* work. As noted earlier, Benjamin mentions Rilke in the essay as one who chronicled Paris before him.[84] Like Rilke's Malte, only after Benjamin confronts a city which "shows itself full of dead" does he then perceive that it is this initially negative awareness which "confers on childhood memories a quality that makes them at once as evanescent and as alluringly tormenting as half-forgotten dreams. For childhood, knowing no preconceived opinions . . . is as clearly attached . . . to the realm of the dead . . . as to life itself."[85]

In *Die Aufzeichnungen* , Malte as well notes this continuity between life and death experienced by the child when he writes that the child has "death in itself like the fruit contains the kernel."[86] Confronted with the reality of death in the streets of Paris, Benjamin overcomes it through a contradiction instigated by a remembrance of a privileged moment of his past, through the memory not only of his personal pre-oedipal, childhood being, but childhood as a

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[83] Spencer, 57, note 32a. 2.
[84] Demetz, 9.
[85] Ibid., 28.
[86] Rilke, SW. 6, 715.

universal-mythical image as such. *This image of the narcissan child is then assimilated by the adult subject into the oedipal world—not as a mere past memory but as a future possibility.* We only need recall that earlier in the second section of this chapter Benjamin referred to the "children" as "representatives of Paradise."[87] In Wolin's book on Benjamin, he writes that Benjamin's "theory of dialectical images proceeds from the following conviction: From the ruins of modernity . . . there arise in the 'collective unconscious' wish images which are harbingers of a new order . . . *images of a classless society.*"[88]

Benjamin and Rilke's (implied) *Mensch-Kind* certainly fits into this category. It is a classless (and hence, de-neuroticized and de-psychoticized) image of redemptive transformation, neither male nor female, master or slave; neither *exclusively* oedipal nor narcissan. **Mensch-Kind holds to no particular ideology, nor for that matter any one historical epoch, but it is a recoverable *name* that emerges from the individual's forgotten narcissan world in proportion to the felt quality of its perverted, oedipal opposite:** *the reified "man of the crowd", the "depressed man" who is none other than Oedipus.*

Mensch-Kind is as much something to be critically *achieved* as it is something to be hopefully *re-membered* . It was Rilke who

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[87] Rilke, SW. 1. 3, 1243.
[88] Wolin, 175.

wrote that one would become the better for believing that one's "destiny is no more than the substrate of childhood" (7th Elegy).

The Historic Poet's and Poetic Historian's Name is *Man-child* :

The *Practical* Incarnation of the Word is Re-mobilized

The last part of this chapter will seek to explain how both Benjamin's and Rilke's leitmotif of de-scribing the actual and re-membering the useful was based primarily on an "historical" concern, which involved the effort to dialectically integrate politics and aesthetics, the world and the word.

This concern for *the revision of history through myth and the re-vision of myth through history* was shared by a number of their predecessors. In *Germany 2000 Years. Vol. II. The Second Empire and the Weimar Republic* (1962), Kurt Reinhardt notes the importance of Nietzsche and Dilthey (among others) in laying the groundwork for a "new cultural synthesis" in that both thinkers "advocated a *Lebensphilosophie* which was to reunite *Wissenschaft* and *Leben*."[89]

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[89] Kurt Reinhardt, *Germany. 2000 Years. Volume 2. The Second Empire and the Weimar Republic* (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1962). Cf. Walter Hofer's "Toward a Revision of the German Concept of History," wherein he mentions the importance

As already mentioned in the previous chapter, in the second meditation of Nietzsche's *Unzeitgëmasse Betrachtungen* (1873-1874), he formulated a triadic concept of history. He distinguished between a "monumentalist," "antiquarian," and "critical" view.[90] The "monumentalist" view concerns itself with looking into the past to uncover the great "deeds and powerful actions" of humanity (e.g., the building of the pyramids). The "antiquarian" view wishes to turn its gaze totally away from the future and looks only at the "things of the past." Nietzsche calls the "critical" view "a new instinct" which courageously stands in the present "with the human things," taking only what is helpful from the past.[91]

Nietzsche also distinguished between "the unhistorical" sense (*das Unhistorische*, which forgets what is not useful), "the historical" sense (*das Unhistorische*, which remembers what is useful), and the "supra-historical" sense (*das Üeberhistorische*, which takes into account "all the histories of peoples and individuals from within.[92] In other words, the great themes of the past are to be taken out of their historical contexts and practically utilized in the present. As already mentioned in chapter three, Kaufmann noted that Nietzsche's earlier work (*Die Geburt der*

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of Benedetto Croce (1866-1952) for the 19th-20th century historical-revisionist project, in Han's Hohn's *German History. Some New German Views* (London: Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1954) 191.

[90] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Nietzsche Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe*. 3. 1. *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen* (1873-1874) (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1972) 254.

[91] Ibid., 265, 166.

[92] Ibid., 248-252.

Tragödie,1872) had already interpreted history from a mythical point of view and vice versa. In other words, be they "historical" or mythological" figures, all Nietzsche's images, "Dionysus and Apollo, Socrates and Goethe . . . became in Nietzsche's vision, symbols of timeless themes."[93]

Later in *Also Sprach Zarathustra* (1883-1891), Nietzsche would subsume these great figures within the symbols *das Kind* and *der Übermensch*.[94] As early as Nietzsche's *Menschliches, Allzumensch-liches I* (1878), he spoke of "earlier cultures" as the one "mountain of humanity" where one could discover the "deeper formations."[95]

Dilthey defined the "historian" (Geschichtschreiber) as one who stands in the middle of the "ruins" (Trümmerfelder) of his age and considers all his work as the "recalling" (zurückrufen) of the "dead kingdom of remembering" (Totenreich des Gedächtnisses).[96]

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[93] Walter Kaufmann, *Nietzsche. Philosopher, Psychologist, and Anti-Christ* , third edition. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968) 153.

[94] At the beginning of Zarathustra, Nietzsche expresses the individual's "third and last transformation" in the metaphor of the "child". (*Nietzsche Werke* 6.1. *Also Sprach Zarathustra. Ein Buch für Alle und Keinen* [1883-1885] [Berlin: Walter de Gruyter-Verlag, 1968] 27.) Walter Kaufmann translates der Übermensch as "overcoming man" based on Nietzsche's use of *überwindung* in *Zarathustra* : "Ich lehre euch den *übermenschen* . Der Mensch ist Etwas, das *überwunden* werden soll" (Nietzsche Werke 6. 1, 8; emphasis mine). According to Kaufmann, this view was held earlier by Ludwig Klages who believed that the *übermensch* cannot be separated from the notion of "overcoming", for "the man who has overcome himself has become the overman." the übermensch in this sense is the "self-overcoming man"; hence, Kaufmann's translation "overman" (cf. Kaufmann, 200, 309). As mentioned in chapter three, I have taken the liberty of translating Nietzsche's übermensch as "self-critical man", or better, "critical man", which preserves Klages' and Kaufmann"s sense of "overcoming", but which more accurately de-scribes Nietzsche's life project, which was "critical" through and through.

[95] Nietzsche *Werke* 4. 2, 43, 64.

[96] Dilthey, GS 7. 3, 279.

Dilthey wrote that both the "historian" and "poet's" life vocation should be one which uncovers the "kingdom of possibilities" (Reich von Möglichkeiten) inherent within humanity. Elsewhere, Dilthey wrote that the "poet" points out the "limitless possibilities" (die grenzenlosen Möglichkeiten) that life brings to us.[97]

Following Dilthey and Nietzsche's lead, in the *Geschichts-philosophie Thesen*, Benjamin focused on those accumulations of "decentered images" which become a driving force in the redemption of profane history.[98] For Benjamin, this process of transforming the continuum of history involves first getting in touch with the constellations of particularities, then a diligent search for past (non-ideological) images of privileged moments which display a potentiality for the future. According to Benjamin, this is a task for the "historical materialist" as opposed to the historicist who thinks "universally" and "quantitatively."[99] With the exception of the Marxist overtones, Nietzsche's historian, who searches for mytho-historical images, resembles both Benjamin's "historical materialist" who searches for privileged moments of the past in hopes they will break into the unredeemed confines of profane (quantified) history, and Dilthey's historian who remembers the "kingdom of possibilities."

Benjamin's historical materialist who looks for privileged

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[97] Dilthey, GS 8. 93.
[98] Benjamin, *Schriften* 2. 1, 204.
[99] Benjamin, *Schriften* 1. 2, 702.

moments of the past in order to mythologize history and historicize mythology in a non-totalizing way is not unlike Rilke's Malte, who believes that "the whole of the history of the world has been misunderstood", and follows the thread of his memory into the "past" which those around him do not know exists.[100]

Walter Adamson, in *Marx and the Disillusionment of Marxism* (1985), defines Benjamin's process of re-membering as one which not only recovers the past (as Marx held in the *Grundrisse*) but one which expresses a "disruption that breaks through to the unconscious."[101]   Benjamin hoped that profane history, the "always-the-same" (like Nietzsche's "evil routine") would continue to be violently interrupted by the intrusion into consciousness of future possibilities, possibilities which lay dormant in the unconscious as ever-present images.[102] One need always keep in mind that, for Benjamin, these "possibilities" only emerge as a result of an acute observation of "actualities."

I have already discussed at some length Benjamin's observation of the *flâneur* and the *Grübler* (what he took to "be" the case as he viewed the ongoings in the streets of Paris and Berlin) and

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[100] Rilke, SW. 6, 726.

[101] Walter Adamson, *Marx and the Disillusionment of Marxism* (Berkeley: University of California, 1985) 233-236.

[102] Nietzsche, *Werke 6* , *Also sprach Zarathustra. Ein Buch für Alle und Keinen* (1882-1885) (Leipzig: Alfred Kröner-Verlag, 1923); Cf. "Unter Töchten der Wüste", 442. Nietzsche's "evil routine" is similar to Benjamin's das Immergleiche and is certainly to be juxtaposed with the "eternal recurrence of all things" in "Der Genesende", 321.

the image which emerged from his remembering, the pre-oedipal and post-oedipal *remnant of Kindheit* I located the same process at the end of Rilke's "street" work, *Die Aufzeichnungen*, as well, wherein Malte, the troubled *flâneur*, resolved to retrieve . . . the thought above all of his childhood."[103] *The image of childhood surfaced only after Malte observed the reality of the fully-oedipalized world in the city.* The "real" which Malte de-scribed were the "ruins and fragments of the city" which he called "minutia."[104] The "real" for Benjamin (similarly observed by Rilke's Malte) was the "smallest of things" (das Kleinste).[105]

Rilke and Benjamin followed Dilthey's dictum for the historian who stands in the middle of the "ruins" and "recalls" the "realm of possibilities." Moreover, both Rilke and Benjamin set out as well to accomplish the task of the poetic historian and historic poet—set forth by Dilthey and Nietzsche—as one who points out the way things are *and* the "limitless possibilities" that life brings our way. Finally, Benjamin and Rilke concerned themselves with Nietzsche's mythological mode of historicizing, in that both looked for "symbols of timeless themes" which could be useful for the humanization project.

A problem arises concerning the motivations behind Benjamin and Rilke's preoccupation with looking into the past for

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[103]Rilke, SW. 6, 945.
[104] Ibid., 784.
[105] Benjamin, *Schriften* 4, 88.

possibilities for the future. If this was a major historical concern for the two, it no less expressed a characteristic of their political tendencies.

Although Benjamin, unlike Rilke, was part of the intellectual left, both writers were part of a wider anti-modernist sentiment. In *Walter Benjamin. An Aesthetic of Redemption* (1982), Richard Wolin has noted in George Lukács' *Preface* to *The Theory of the Novel*, the phrase "romantic anticapitalism" defined in terms of a widespread phenomenon within the larger European intellectual community at the turn of the century.[106] Following upon Lukács' observation, Wolin believes that part of the movement was characterized by a look into the past "feudal age" for an answer to the problems presented by the modern industrial world. However, he observes another current which was "future-oriented by virtue of a utopian vision which seeks to discover in the past forgotten semantic potentials relevant to the present needs of humanity." Wolin locates Benjamin within this current.[107]

In "Revolution Against 'Progress,' Walter Benjamin's Romantic Anarchism" (1985), Michael Löwy sees Benjamin as part of "the dominant trend among the German intelligentsia from the end of the 19th century to the rise of fascism which advocated a *Neo-romanticism*, as a moral and social critique of 'progress' and of

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[106] Wolin, 14.
[107] Ibid., 15.

modern *Zivilisation.*"[108]

Löwy argues that Benjamin's unique struggles between Jewish theology and Marxist materialism were important ones but that another tension between "conservative romanticism and nihilist revolution" existed within Benjamin.[109] Löwy believes that Benjamin's criticism of technological "progress" (a romantic attitude) was countered by a "messianic/revolutionary concept of destruction" (a nihilistic attitude).[110] Within the *Kunstwerk* essay (1936), there are hints of an unresolved nostalgia for earlier authentic and unique (auratic) forms of art before man's reproduction destroys them.[111]

In the same essay, Benjamin interweaves Jewish apocalyptic language with Marxist language. For example, the anarchistic overtones in the words "blasting" and "explode," refer to images of privileged moments of the past which are waiting to interrupt violently the everyday continuum of history. Benjamin's revolution of re-membering contains within it a kind of Marxist organic necessity (Lukács), but as well presupposes elements of

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[108] Michael Löwy, "Revolution Against 'Progress': Walter Benjamin's Romantic Anarchism," *New Left Review* 152:42. Susan Buck-Morss has written that a "sense of historical destiny had lured people into the catastrophes of fascism and war: and that Benjamin's "last charge" in the *Theses* was "the mandate to negate the idea of history as progress" (Cf. Susan Buck-Morss's *The Origin of Negative Dialectics* [New York: The Free Press, 1977] 168).

[109] Löwy, 43.

[110] Ibid., 52. Certainly Nietzsche was a major influence here.

[111] Benjamin, *Schriften* 1. 2, 711.

Jewish apocalypticism.[112] One should not lose sight of the fact that Benjamin's chief interest was in the historically *redemptive* aspects of revolution.

Benjamin's romantic attitude of longing for a pre-industrial utopia was one which was, as well, grounded upon a biblical belief (which Benjamin never quite lost) in the sudden realization of a paradisical kingdom on earth. One can see this dynamic at work in Benjamin's "Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century" where he saw traces of prehistoric life-abundance in the "arcades."[113]

In this sense, one can say the "revolutionary" aspects within Benjamin's character were primarily intellectual and religious ones. In "The Author as Producer" (1937), Benjamin defined the person who "appears first and foremost as the betrayer of his class of origin" as a "revolutionary intellectual."[114]

It is this meaning of "revolutionary" *as one who stands in a relation of criticism to his community of origin* that also complies with Rilke's peculiar brand of romantic-anticapitalism. In the 1981 translation of Egon Schwarz's *Das Verschluckte Schluchzen. Poesie und Politik bei Rainer Maria Rilke* (1972), he includes Rilke among those members of the European right who were advocates of a "pre-industrial," "pre-capitalist society."[115] Also, in "Stationen der

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[112] Sandor Radnoti, "Benjamin's Politics," *Telos* 37 (1978): 76.

[113] Demetz, 146.

[114] Ibid., 237.

[115] Egon Schwarz, *Das Verschluckte Schluchzen. Poesie und Politik bei Rainer Maria Rilke* (Frankfurt am Main: Athenäum-Verlag, 1972) 43.

marxistischen Rilke-Konzeption" (1976), Manfred Stark places Rilke in the intellectual stream that in the early part of this century responded to the mechanization of man by a reactionary "romantischer Antikapitalismus."[116]

As already mentioned, in a 1906 poem contemporary with *Die Aufzeichnungen* , Rilke defined the "poet" as one who has "no loved one, no home, no profession."[117] I also noted earlier that in 1915 Rilke wrote to Ilse Erdmann that he did not "feel and sense things in a 'German' way--not at all" and saw himself as one educated by Russia, France, Italy, Spain, the desert and the Bible.[118]

In 1918, Rilke wrote Freifrau von Ledebur that during the "last cruel war years" he wished that humanity "turn up an entirely new page of the future, into which the whole wrong addition of the unfortunate past" would not be carried over.[119] In the same letter, Rilke defined "revolution" as the "conquering of abuses for the benefit of the *deepest tradition*.[120] There are certain anarchistic overtones in Rilke's "book" metaphor which suggests the destruction (or forgetting) of those pages which have been written prior to the "entirely new page of the future."

Rilke's definition of "revolution" sets him outside of that

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[116] Manfred Stark, "Stationen der marxistischen Rilke-Konzeption," *Rilke Studien. Zu Werk und Wirkungsgeschichte* (Berlin and Weimar: Aufbau-Verlag, 1976) 274.
[117] Rilke, GG, 267.
[118] Rilke, *Briefe* 2, 45.
[119] Ibid., 1914.
[120] Ibid., 1921, emphasis mine.

romantic sentiment prevalent in his day which looked to a certain historical period of the past (e.g., Hölderlin's ancient Greece or Marx's pre-capitalist Middle Ages). The above passage implies that Rilke's "deepest tradition," which will be victorious over the abuses wrought by the war, is the *biblical tradition*, i.e., the Heilsgeschichte, the Edenic paradise as depicted in the Bible. Yet this "deepest tradition" for Rilke was not something owned by any particular religious tradition. In this sense Rilke's religious past had little to do with the boundaries of the religious code of his day. Only the mytho-historical character of "Paradise" interested him throughout his literary career.

After the war ended, **Rilke set forth in lyrical form his own revolution of remembering.** Rilke defined "memory" (die Erinnerung) as that connection to a time when "before that toward which we strive had been nearer, truer" (8th Elegy). Yet this connection is only seen when one is "turned toward creation" in which we see only an "image of the free darkened by us" (die Spiegelung des Frei'n von uns verdunkelt) (8th Elegy). The utopian reality toward which we strive Rilke called the "temple of the future" (die Tempel der Zukunft), a trace of which lies at the "substrate of childhood" (der Dichte der Kindheit) (7th Elegy). Rilke's statement bears resemblance to Benjamin's "children" who are the "representations of Paradise."[121]

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[121] Walter Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* 1. 3 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp-

This brings us to Benjamin's notion of "second nature" as sketched out by Theodor Adorno in "The Idea of Natural History" (1932). In the essay, Adorno interprets some of the key insights of Benjamin's *Kunstkritik* (1919). According to Adorno, one of the achievements of Benjamin was that "he brought the resurrection of second nature out of infinite distance into infinite closeness."[122] Adorno explains that the "allegorical poet" of the classical Greek tradition separated the essence or "nature" of a thing from its "historical," existential or transitory character.

To Adorno's mind, **Benjamin brought the nature of a thing back into history and the historical transitory character of a thing back into nature:** "The deepest point where history and nature converge lies precisely in this element of *transience*."[123] Any notion of a "second (redeemable) nature" must then be found in the world, not outside it, for "this world is a second nature."[124] Since "nature itself is transitory" it must include the historical.[125] Because all historical being is marked by the "sign language of transience," the fleeting things of the world "return in the allegorical, return as script."[126] **It is precisely this fact of the fleeting, perishable quality of things that Rilke's Malte claims as "that existence which is valid**

Verlag, 1974) 1243.
[122] Theodor W. Adorno, "The Idea of Natural History," *Telos* 60 Summer 1984: 119.
[123] Adorno, 119, emphasis mine.
[124] Ibid., 118.
[125] Ibid., 120.
[126] Ibid., 119,121.

among all that exists."[127]

Rilke carried this notion of the transitory into his late period. In the *Elegies*, he wrote that "nothing remains" (First Elegy), and all our ordering of reality is in vain because though "We order. It breaks" (Eighth Elegy). Rilke then claims that the transitory character of things is only a sign for "us the most transitory" (Ninth Elegy). He concludes that the "transitory" things of creation "trust us for redemption." *Rilke's world of created things is redeemed (or trans-figured) by its returning as allegory, as script.*

In the *Sonnets*, Rilke makes an appeal to what the historic poet regards as the final human project: ". . . here, be among the transitory things, in the kingdom of decline, be a resonating glass, that breaks while it rings."[128] For Rilke, **The person who would live most freely would become a de-scriber of an important historical perception: the irrevocability of our transience. In other words, the finitude of things is an allegory for human finitude, the script which we are obliged to read if we wish to understand our own brief passage across the countenance of this world.**

It is unfortunate that despite this post-modern stream in Rilke's thought, Theodor Adorno (in his "Rede Über Lyrik und Gesellschaft" [1958]) used Rilke's poetry as an example of a "weak aestheticism" which exalts the "things" of creation as a reactionary

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[127] Rilke, SW. 6, 775.
[128] Rilke, GG, *Sonnets* 2. 13.

movement against their loss of aura in an era of vast reproduction. According to Adorno, the result is the establishment of a *Dingkult* which represents a rift between subject and object because it refuses to accept that the nature of a thing is tied to its use value.[129] As a result, concern for the form of a thing becomes ineffectively counter-cultural, because there is no possibility for real dialectic with the common, utilitarian world of things.

Although Rilke's second period poems were much the result of his apprenticeship with Rodin, a time when he concerned himself with "form" and "objectivity," as we have found, it was more Rodin's and Baudelaire's deeper lesson in *seeing* that enabled Rilke to begin more profound thought experiments on the following: 1) on the alienated relationship between persons and things and between first and second nature, 2) on the meaning of the mythological character of history and the historical character of myth, 3) on the need for a non-foreclosed and non-devalued relationship between the poet and the historian, 4) on the problem of redemption after Nietzsche; and more specifically, 5) on a possible way to recover Nietzsche's notion of the critical man-child who redeems the world through de-scription and trans-figuration .

As we saw in Rilke's last period before his death, the lessons Rilke learned from the *Notebooks* were carried over into the *Elegies*

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[129] Theodor Adorno, *Noten zur Literatur* 1 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp-Verlag, 1958) 78.

and *Sonnets*. Adorno must have had Rilke's (second period) *Dinggedichte* in mind when he referred to Rilke's*"Dingkult."* However, these poems represent but a small fraction of Rilke's Paris period--not to speak of his life's work--which was in constant process and underwent many shifts and changes of perspective. Among the poems of Rilke's second period, there are those which cannot be categorized under the title *Dinggedichte*. Poems such as "Liebes-lied," "Abschied," "Der Dichter," (including all the poems dealing with the image of *Kindheit*) are vastly different from the "thing" poems (e.g., "Der Ball," "Der Panther," and "Römische Fontane").

Unfortunately, due to the limitations of this essay, most of the *Menschheitgedichte* or "humanity poems" cannot be dealt with.[130] These poems were experimental poems wherein Rilke attempted to

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[130] Cf. Rilke's "Mädchen Klage," "Der Ölbaum Garten," "Der Tod des Dichters," "Die Erwachsene," "die Erblindede," "Todes-Erfahrung," "Auferstehung," (GG, *Neue Gedichte* , 1906-1907); "Der Tod der Geliebten," "Klage um Jonathan," "Ein Prophet," "Legende von drei Lebendigen und den drei Toten," "Toten-Tanz," "Der Alchimist," "Der Auferstandene," "Irre im Garten," "Der Blinde," "Eine Welke," " Don Juans Auswahl," "Die Schwestern," "Die Liebende," "Dame vor dem Spiegel," "Schaflied," "Der Einsame" (GG, *Neue Gedichte* , July 1907-1908).
These poems simply cannot be categorized under the term *Dinggedichte* . They have little to do with that part of Rilke's apprenticeship under Rodin, which involved exclusively his aesthetic attempt to achieve through language what Rodin achieved through the medium of stone. Rather, the above poems have to do with Rilke's language crisis. For lack of a better term, I have categorized them under the term *Menschheitgedichte* , namely, "humanity poems". In another unpublished study, "Rilke and the Paris Crisis: More than a Question of Aesthetics," I have discussed these poems in greater detail and have put forth the thesis that Rilke's *Menschheitgedichte* are to be connected to the *Notebooks* which were written during the same time period. In that essay I then proceed to show how the issues proper to these poems, and those written in the *Notebooks* depict Rilke's more central project, one which found its final expression in Rilke's *Elegies* and *Sonettes* . *Gesammelte Gedichte* (Frankfurt am Main: Insel-Verlag, 1962).

work out more complex human issues. They were continuations of the deeper social crisis Rilke was observing in himself and in the world around him. These were issues which surfaced in the *Notebooks* and found full articulation in the late works.

In conclusion, Benjamin was an "historic poet" in the Diltheyan sense, as one who primarily "stood in the middle of the ruins" (Dilthey's historian) but as well uncovered the "kingdom of possibilities" (Dilthey's poet) inherent within humanity. Rilke was a "poetic historian" in that Rilke primarily went about the task of uncovering the lost images of possibility, the "dead kingdom of remembrances." However, Rilke's Malte deemed it necessary as well to " . . . magnify these minutiae [single-handedly], these ruins and fragments of the city."[131] In this sense **Rilke (as well as Benjamin) accomplished his own "politicization of aesthetics."**

Fourteen years before Benjamin, Rilke became a **polito-phulax** , "one who watches citizens" in the tradition of Aristophanes (and one need add, Goethe and Nietzsche), and Benjamin continued in this tradition.

It is true that some of Rilke's influences were rooted in bourgeois art (e.g., Rodin and Cézanne) and not in those of a Lukács, Brecht, or André Breton. **But Rilke was no less influenced by Goethe, Baudelaire, Nietzsche and Dilthey, all of whom laid the groundwork for the much needed dialectic between art and society,**

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[131] Rilke, SW 6. 7, 54. Parenthesis mine.

for a *non-totalizing(de-psychotic)* and *trans-figuring (de-neurotic)* *notion of history and myth* which would make possible a new and effective dialogue between poetics and politics, mythology and history. This concept of historical myth (or mythological history) would try to bridge the gap between politics and poetics by integrating *visions* for the future (based on remembered universal images) with *observations* of the day-to-day social interactions between human persons.

Both Benjamin and Rilke (like their predecessors Nietzsche and Goethe) understood the link between history and "nature" (for centuries understood as the unchanging essence of a thing) by re-emphasizing the importance of *transience*. Each saw that the transformation or redemption of the individual and society demanded an initial understanding of "nature" not associated with any particular philosophy or ideology. The non-totalizing notions of *transience* (passing away), *de-scription* (observation of the concrete, particular), and *trans-figuration* (redemption by revolutionary re-membering) cross all political-ideological boundaries.132 The notion of a classless image crosses all political-ideological boundaries for the same reason that whether one be a socialist or a capitalist, one would find it difficult to locate an exclusive historical context for *the critical man-child,* who is *the continual,*

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132 I am choosing to distinguish between "totality" and totalitarian" in the following way: by "totalitarian" I mean all visions of totality which have become ideological or, one could say, nationally-interested.

"revolutionary subject" for each and every epoch.

The *man-child* is one who has taken the lonely road in the midst of the crowd-- this revolutionary subject *is Narcissus and Oedipus de-scribed and trans-figured* , walking in the light of day with a lantern, laughing, yet not confined within those institutions wherein dwell both the non-adaptable (narcissan) and adaptable-though-nonetheless-pathological (oedipal) individual. This subject walks with its lantern, not because it is eccentric, but in order to de-scribe and trans-figure the codes of the world that most have taken to be written in stone, and, therefore, regard as holy and unchangeable.

The importance today for establishing a world-wide dialectic between the "poetic" (the remembering of the possible) and the "political" (the observing of the actual) cannot be over-estimated. Our unfortunate past has shown us that politicians without a deep humanitarian sensibility are destined to deteriorate into something less than human. Likewise, if the visions of our poets are not in some way instigated by the present problems of the age, they will become esoteric and ineffective critics of the long and arduous human project which still remains in dire need of *dialectical describing and trans-figuring.*

Goethe, Nietzsche, Rilke, and Benjamin carried to their concrete worlds (and still carry to ours) the message that the word has indeed begun the process of being made flesh. But who among

us has the courage to engage himself fully in that process ?

Perhaps it would do best at least to learn from the only one, out of the four great thinkers discussed herein, whose lifeline was the longest and--as far as we know--least fraught with debilitating tragedy and pain. The critical man-child, if he is to survive *and* transform this world of ours, would do well to continually *think* and put into *action* the universal mantra that has certainly been with us at least since that moment when the first human beings stood up, when they were perhaps less civilized but conversed more intelligently and intimately with the world around them; when mind was body and body was mind, before Oedipus and Narcissus; when human existence saw the things of creation in the sign language of transience; when the world was seen for the first time, without names, perhaps possessing only the nameless name of becoming; when one only breathed in and breathed out the non-institutionalized, sacred word FÜRSORGE....FÜRSORGE...FÜRSORGE.

But for now, it is the more humble task to sit and to take stock of the world which we have made over in our own image. Rodin's "Thinker" might teach us, because he looks downward with his thoughts, like a dethroned king. And if we look even closer we might notice that indeed, there is no crown on his head or sword in his hand. There is only a hand touching the chin of a thoughtful head, *body discomforting mind* . He is a man who is neither resting

on a seventh day nor proclaiming that all the things which he has created are good.

And if the bronze figure could speak, he might say to us and to all "civilized" humanity across the centuries: "here, be among the transitory things, in the kingdom of decline, be a resonating glass that breaks while it rings." (Rilke)

Conclusion

Taking my cue from Rilke's above dictum, it is time to make a brief assessment of what I believe to have accomplished in this dissertation, and some areas concerning the limitations and problems of its horizon. In other words, the elemental ideas herein have been brought together, heated through the friction of critical discourse, and now that this fragile, glass-like text has been blown and shaped and set to cool, it now needs to reverberate with both the harmonious and dissonant song of criticism. It needs to become itself "a resonating glass that breaks while it rings."

The accomplishments of this study (moving from the "general" to the "specific") are as follows:

1) I have opened up the discourse between the "philosophical" text that is idealistic and its own subtext of repressed desire (i.e., the longing for totality), and have shown that a literary-critical discussion about neurosis and psychosis can no longer be limited to the more apparent genre proper to the "literary" text such as the novel or the poem.

2) I have continued Deleuze and Guattari's work on the deconstruction of the classic, western psychoanalytic code (as defined by the neurotic-psychotic construct) by investigating how neurosis and psychosis are defined by the "oedipal" code (i.e., the prevailing

institutional code of a given historical epoch), and the subsequent devaluation by that code of *the positive aspects of psychosis*. Society's continued devaluation of the more subtle aspects of the psychotic world (in favor of neurosis as the only viable alternative, or at most, the brief entrance into the world of psychosis through the logging of dreams, the reading of an entertainment novel, or the viewing of television or film) can only result in the pathological reification of consciousness. It is a consciousness destined to invent ever new ways by which to suppress, dominate, and render ineffective the world of Narcissus, who is the keeper of myth, image, dream, the lost sensibility of childhood, the hidden power of the feminine, embodied thought, practical mysticism, and the entire catalogue of oedipal devaluations western society has--through the ages-- sought to solidify within the neurotic-psychotic construct.

3) More specifically, I have explored the critical capacity of negative-dialectical myth, those mythical images which set out to *de-scribe* and *trans-figure* a given cultural code rather than just promote that code's crystallization, as do the totalizing myths whose repressed desire for wholeness configurate into a reality which remains imprisoned in the realm of idealist thought.

4) Utilizing Hans Blumenberg's *Work on Myth* I have shown that as much as Fichte, Schelling and Hölderlin distorted and inverted the biblical creation and paradise myths (thereby remaining in the ahistorical realm of iconic constancy mythwise), Goethe's

Wilhelm Meister, Nietzsche's Zarathustra, Rilke's Malte, and Benjamin's historical materialist desire to move in the opposite direction, mythographically; i.e., into the very center of the historical world, yet with a wish not only to observe acutely the outside world's ongoings (via de-scription), but, as well, disclose a yearning to transform the very make-up of the lived world (via trans-figuration).

5) Having traced Adorno's negative-dialectical interpretation of the myth of Kronos to Nietzsche's Zarathustra figure, I have correctly suggested that Habermas's "two roads to postmodernity" theory needs to be re-shaped due to the fact that Nietzsche's Zarathustra myth leads to the historical poetry of Rainer Maria Rilke and the poetical history of Walter Benjamin, and not to the ontological aesthetics of Heidegger via Hölderlin. Nietzsche's Dionysus myth certainly echoes Hölderlin's inversion of Christology, but Habermas's central focus on Nietzsche's Dionysus is too narrow, and the road to postmodernity that this Dionysus marks out, although an existing one, is a road with a cul de sac, and does not do justice to the influence that Nietzsche has had on other postmodern styles of thinking. Habermas makes too much of Nietzsche's irrational Dionysus, so much so that **Nietzsche's more central, negative-dialectical project (continued by Rilke, Benjamin, Adorno and Horkheimer) under Habermas's definition gets reduced to the formula** *anti-reason/anti-enlightenment,* **rather than the**

more subtle dynamic, *reason-against-reason/deconstructive criticism of enlightenment in the mode of idealism.*

6) The search for a guiding image, a **new subject,** an intellectual-revolutionary subject that would be non-totalizing, non-ideological, classless, de-psychotic and de-neurotic, mythologically historical and historically mythological, politically poetic and poetically political, was found through a negative-dialectical process of de-scribing and trans-figuring the philosophical and literary texts/subtexts of the writers herein. The image found was that of the *man-child,* who is no orphan, but who, as well, is not limited to oedipal devaluation or narcissan foreclosure; *the man-child* **is neither male nor female, neither master nor slave; an image of hope, yet one based on and forged from the sensible world of concrete actualities.**

Some of the limitations of this work are easily seen but not as easily overcome. These are but a few:

1) A study such as this needs to define as clearly as possible the meaning of "word"(written and unwritten) and "text" (including context and subtext), as these deal with distinct genres; such as the "philosophical" or "literary" word/text.[133] The present study does move fluidly between these two genres, and there is always the danger of cross-contamination with those other texts labeled

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[133] Cf. Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976). Translated from the French by Gayatri Spivak.

"theological" and "psychological" with which this work has also dealt. If certain, clear guidelines are not rigorously followed, the result will be no more than an eclectic potpourri of "interpretations" of "written texts in general."

I have attempted the difficult task of both remaining within the clear horizon of the external "text," realizing at the same time that the *subtext of repressed desire* flows in and out of that easily manageable sphere of organized rationality. Because it is this "subtext" that I have painstakingly attempted to de-scribe, it is unfortunate that the more"logically"-minded reader (for whom this work is especially meant) might very well not choose to venture too far out upon that dark sea of desire wherein dwells the unfinished business, the unresolved story, the dissonant music, all the fragments within our lives that-- as fragment-- attempt to tell us something disturbing about who we have been as a human community, who we are, and for what we are meant, discernable beyond the borderlines of comfortable rationality.

2) Finally, due to the somewhat "esoteric" nature of the texts investigated (the popularity of Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* not with-standing) the question as to the breadth of readership remains to be seen. This is unfortunate in that the *practical incarnation of the word* (the central focus of this study) is a non-theological expression of the deep wish (shared by Marx and Benjamin) that *philosophy* (and in this case, theology, psychology, history, myth, and poetry as

well) *become worldy for the sake of the world.*

Consequently, one of the dilemmas of an "academic" work such as this is the question as to whether or not the nature of the beast is unchangeable: whether or not the creative word is condemned to display yet another realm within the labyrinth of that peculiar mechanism we call mentality, the abstract thought, and the written genre of discourse (though critical), with no guarantee that the world it has sought to de-scribe is but another world of ideas having no trans-figurative force in the concrete, historical world.

Nonetheless, the above work (if at most is [mis]taken as one more critique of the enlightenment) remains--at the very least--a witness that **thought desires more than abstraction** via the positing of envisioned totalities, or the creation of another universe of thought *ad infinitum*, safe from the relentless chaos of the unmanageable, fragmented and precarious, historical world.

Indeed, the present effort attests to the fact that thought desires not merely the creation of another thought, or the longing for any one body of thought to be in-scribed in stone; but that **thought desires living and dying body,** and the only foreseeable conduit (at this or perhaps at any future juncture in history) is along the precipitous passageway of painful and self-critical observation, whereby the courageous among us will take up the task of de-scribing and trans-figuring, continually creating and destroying, yet always re-membering with urgency all of that which silently waits

for us to give it a new name, the nameless name of becoming. The language which simultaneously names and gives life remains deeply embedded within the great stories of the earth, and it is fitting that this language to this day dwells there for earth's (and not for heaven's) sake.

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