

## NIETZSCHE'S CRITIQUE OF PURE REASON: WITH A NIETZSCHEAN CRITIQUE OF PARSIFAL

The reader of *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche's first major work, presented as it is in its later edition, preceded by Nietzsche's "Attempt at a Self-Criticism," finds, one might say, the germ of Nietzsche's overall thought. The "Attempt at a Self-Criticism" added later in Nietzsche's career makes it clear that the problems addressed in *The Birth of Tragedy* were not left behind in the later works; rather, there is a continuation of the same energetic contemplation of decline, decay, and nihilism which runs through *The Birth of Tragedy* explicitly.

That which changed in Nietzsche's later work as to the identification of the antagonist to a healthy culture was not the nature of the antagonist, but merely its specific form. The antagonist of *The Birth of Tragedy* was Euripides as the "mask" of Socratism, the same Euripides who gave birth to the new "theoretical man," the man of reason (of too much reason!) and therefore of a new scientific optimism, giving blind hope to a blind scientific cheerfulness, which cheerfulness covered over the very essence of tragedy, the highest art form, and all of its awesome, terrible and beautiful reasons for being. The antagonist in the "Attempt at a Self-Criticism" and in all later work from Nietzsche was a different form of this blind cheerfulness, manifesting itself now as traditional metaphysics, then as dogmatic religion, the former posing as a variety of "scientific optimism" which could only embrace life and the world as far as they could be rendered clearly and distinctly intelligible, the latter embracing life and the world only as far as they could be given a merely moral interpretation.

This essay, then, will attempt to show the elements of nihilism common to all of these forms of antagonism to a healthy culture, from "Euripidean Socratism," to "scientific optimism," to Wagnerianism, as Nietzsche presents them in *The Birth of Tragedy* and elsewhere. The end of the essay will present my own, more detailed Nietzsche-like criticism of Wagner's *Parsifal*, concerning that specific topic which is at the core of Nietzsche's criticism in *The Birth of Tragedy*: Self-understanding.

What really prompted the need for an "attempt at a Self-Criticism" on Nietzsche's part? That which prompted such self-criticism was, no doubt, a later disillusionment, which later disillusionment we must register in order to understand better Nietzsche's original task in the *The Birth of Tragedy*. After all, in *The Birth of Tragedy*, was there not reason for what might (ironically) be called a kind of "artistic optimism" or "Dionysian optimism?" Did not Nietzsche perceive in his own time at that early stage a cause for celebration of the rejuvenation of the Dionysian 'out of the spirit of music,' especially out of the music of Bach, Beethoven, and Wagner? Was there not also Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* and Schopenhauer's pessimism which seemed to draw limits to "science" and "morality" res-

pectively such that the way was paved for an obvious *need* for a fundamental, artistic thrust such as emerged in the very birth of tragedy?

What, then, prompted Nietzsche to write an “Attempt at a Self-Criticism?” With all that this new age had going for it, what was the source of that disillusionment? Most assuredly, the answer lay in the recognition of the failure of German music to fulfill wholly the need for a new, truly Dionysian music. In that fundamental art form which would overcome the decadence of the age was something plagued by the stench of that decadence. Wagner, no doubt the artist of the age, had become something worthy of the scorn of the instincts which drove Nietzsche in *The Birth of Tragedy*, instincts which later in the “attempt” were seen as “purely artistic and anti-Christian.”<sup>1</sup> Wagner, it would appear, had used art itself for the presentation of that which, by nature, is antithetical to art itself! Wagner had become incapable of the appreciation that Nature itself was, and here is where Nature has her sister in art, the truly indestructible, eternal power, the source of all overflowing and creativity in whatever form. Wagner had become a despiser of life and Nature. He had become a mere moralist, a “Christian.” Hence, Nietzsche had to withdraw his original dedication of *The Birth of Tragedy* to Wagner in the form of an “Attempt at a Self-Criticism.”

What, first of all, with respect to *The Birth of Tragedy*, do we learn from the “Attempt at a Self-Criticism?” We need not look too far beyond this very title in order to find our clue. Nietzsche offers us only an *attempt* at a self-criticism. It is presumed that Nietzsche had learned the limits of self-understanding by reason alone, for, after all, a certain kind of self-understanding remains the key to a comprehension of the main features of the birth and death of tragedy, as this essay will show. And, I will attempt to show, the matter of self-understanding is *the* clue to a proper understanding of Wagner’s *Parsifal* as well.

Before we enter this matter of self-understanding explicitly, let us see, somewhat in general, what it was that Nietzsche learned from himself about his very need to attempt a self-criticism. What did Nietzsche’s self-critique reveal? He learned from the “Attempt” that the problem of *The Birth of Tragedy* was “The problem of science itself, science considered for the first time as problematic, questionable.”<sup>2</sup> (We will pardon Nietzsche for the phrase ‘for the first time,’ attributing it to rampant enthusiasm.) The task, then, was specifically “to look at science in the perspective of the artist, but at art in that of life.”<sup>3</sup> We can begin to see, then, why Nietzsche was hesitant, was careful only to “attempt” a self-criticism. *The Birth of Tragedy* was to be the criticism of science, of reason, Nietzsche’s ‘critique of pure reason’ if you will, and this criticism was to take place from the dynamic view of *art*; and, yet, this critical format is complicated further by the presence of life itself as the ultimate, fundamental critic. “Socratism,” “science,” lying behind the mask of Euripides, with his all-too-logical emphasis on the intelligible, represented that dogmatic attempt to appeal

to reason as the cool and final arbiter in all fundamental affairs. Life, itself, could be justified only if one could make clear and distinct sense of it, even if that meant trying to cover over the horrible and tragic parts in the whole of life. So too, “Christianity,” for one, would attempt to impose a merely moral interpretation on life everywhere so as to cover over its horrible and destructive side, even if this meant that one had to suppress the human spirit itself.

By contrast, Nietzsche suggests that only aesthetically could existence be justified, and, as he says in the “Attempt,” there was shown “a spirit who will one day fight at any risk whatever the *moral* interpretation and significance of existence.”<sup>4</sup> Nietzsche sums up the matter in one powerful paragraph: “In truth, nothing could be more opposed to the purely aesthetic interpretation and justification of the world which are taught in this book than the Christian teaching, which is, and wants to be, *only* moral and which relegates art, *every* art, to the realm of lies; with its absolute standards, beginning with the truthfulness of God, it negates, judges and damns art. Behind this mode of thought and valuation, which must be hostile to art if it is at all genuine, I never failed to sense *ahostility to life* ...”<sup>5</sup> Perhaps now we are ready to see more precisely how the problem of self-criticism, of self-understanding is the key to *The Birth of Tragedy* itself and how Wagner, having become all-too-Christian in the end, caused Nietzsche to re-evaluate his early Dionysian optimism.

### *The self-understanding of the Dionysian man*

For Nietzsche, as if fairly well known, Greek tragedy was the highest of all art forms, essentially the showplace of the fusion of the two fundamental forces in work in Nature at bottom, the Dionysian and the Apollonian. Yet, this ancient poetical/theological presentation of the union of Being and Becoming, of creation and destruction, of image and impulse, is really best understood when one discovers the necessary component of self-understanding of the individual within this dynamic play of forces. The point of focus in proper tragedy was, according to Nietzsche, the Dionysian chorus which “ever anew discharges itself in an Apollonian world of images.”<sup>6</sup> In the event of the tragedy, the spectator undergoes a very fundamental transformation. His everyday awareness, his all-too-common self-understanding takes a new twist. By way of the chorus “the Dionysian reveler sees himself as a satyr, and as a satyr, he sees the god.”<sup>7</sup> The spectator undergoes at least a twofold turn in self-consciousness to “another vision outside himself.”<sup>8</sup> The Dionysian spectator is, then, a wholly ecstatic phenomenon unto himself and he even begins ‘*sich selbst zu handeln*’ as though he had entered into another body or character. One might argue that this new self-understanding is no self-knowledge at all, that the spectator here is mindless, oblivious. Nietzsche claims, however, that we must

consider this ecstatic state as only the negative side of the spectator’s transformation. This transformation has another side, a positive side, which is expressed as a more specific mode of knowledge. This is, in fact, that “mystery doctrine of tragedy: the fundamental knowledge of the oneness of everything existent, the conception of individuation as the primal cause of evil, and of art as the joyous hope that the spell of individuation may be broken in augury of a restored oneness.”<sup>9</sup> Art, tragedy, has the power of restoring a sense of unity, perhaps the most fundamental one of all, that which lies with Nature in her creative/destructive power operative at every moment. This transfiguring phenomenon is that by which Nietzsche ultimately accounts for the delight in and need for tragedy. He calls it “metaphysical comfort...without which the delight in tragedy cannot be explained at all.”<sup>10</sup> This metaphysical comfort comes with the spectator’s self-understanding that he is a part of this dynamic “Urwesen” itself. Here the spectator understands himself as a piece of life which flows on indestructibly and eternally, which greater flux will eventually engulf his mere individuality and render him at one with that fundamental ‘music’ which is at the heart of Nature as it regenerates itself at every instant.

This traditional terminology employed here by Nietzsche in *The Birth of Tragedy*, in calling this phenomenon “metaphysical comfort,” was rescinded in the “Attempt.” After all, in a way, there is nothing traditionally comforting in the realization gained from tragic insight, for that insight suggests that the very “principium individuationis” is negated, where the individual feels himself not as something like an enduring finite substance hovering above the flux of becoming, but rather as something like a piece of Nature itself which is to be destroyed in that creative/destructive play between the Apollonian/Dionysian forces in Nature, which forces are utterly indifferent to the feelings of the individual. The dynamic outcome of this Dionysian ecstasy, then, is that by art one gains a visceral kind of self-understanding of *life* itself and its creative/destructive flow which eternally raises and razes the world, in which dance the individual becomes nothing more than a phrase in this cosmic symphony, but nothing less than an integral line in the forceful procedure of reality itself.

### *The self-understanding of the theoretical man*

We have just seen briefly the kind of visceral, ecstatic self-understanding assumed by the Dionysian man, the spectator of tragedy at its highest point. What then of the self-understanding of the “theoretical man,” the man whose advent marked the demise of tragedy?

Who ushered in the death of tragedy by ushering out Dionysus from the theatre? Euripides. And what was the cause for the abolition of the Dionysian from tragedy itself? What was the condition which gave birth to the introduction of the “theoretical man?” Nothing less than a form of troubled self-understanding!

To whom has Nietzsche's focus shifted now in the tracing of the death of tragedy? It has shifted from an observation of the spectator in the Dionysian throng to a more "elevated" spectator, Euripides. And whom does Euripides view and present in the spectacle of tragedy but two spectators, two spectators before whom Euripides has become obsequious! Who are they? One is Euripides himself "as thinker" and not "as poet." The "poet" Euripides pales and acquiesces before the calculating "thinker" Euripides, for Euripides had come to revere that other spectator who appeared above, namely, Socrates. Dionysus-dry, Euripides athetizes the significance of the chorus by bringing "man," indeed, the "many" into prominence on the stage, by bringing the common spectator onto the stage. When the everyday man, not the Dionysian man or chorus, takes center-stage, what have we? So to speak, a new theatrical epistemology.

Euripides had apparently taken the Apollonian dictum "know thyself" so seriously and to such an extent he optimistically concluded that the spectator was capable of knowing himself without the medium of the Dionysian chorus in prominence. Hence, he relegated the chorus to a nearly static backdrop, essentially banishing that mysteriousness inherent in it. Euripides' work was the first dramatic sign of "scientific optimism," the optimism and faith that man, even the all-too-human man, would grasp himself immediately in the drama, would know himself immediately, would feel himself divine, clearly, without the mediation of the force of the divine in the Dionysian chorus.

The Euripidean spectator now views himself immediately on the stage. But with the ostracization of Dionysus, what does he see? The oneness of all, the horror of existence, the awesomeness of Nature in all of its destructive forces which assure the ultimate annihilation of every individual, in short, *life* in all of its beautiful, powerful overabundance? Hardly. As Nietzsche says, Euripides is full of cool, paradoxical thoughts (replacing occasional Apollonian contemplation) juxtaposed to fiery, all-too-passionate affects (rather than Dionysian ecstasies). (Who, really, can stomach Medea's ravings?) The difference between Sophocles and Euripides would be the difference between tragic, noble, almost laconic expression of *amor fati* opposed to the misguided paradox and mere paroxysms of passions which make up, for example, *The Trojan Women*. Euripides, it would seem, upheld the Socratic principle of aesthetics, insisting that "to be beautiful everything must be intelligible, as though it were the poet's function to provide a sufficient reason for suffering at every turn. With Euripides, the self-understanding of the spectator is not that of himself as an ephemeral piece of Nature joyfully succumbing to the destructive flux of the Dionysian impulse. There is here, rather, thanks especially to the Euripidean prologue, a spectator who supposedly can intellectualize the trials of art and life and find his moral bearings in a world where there is always reconciliation. Euripidean drama is the beginning of the death of tragedy because it is the first manifestation of art in the service of *Wissenschaft*. It is bad enlightenment.

What, then, can we say finally about the birth of this Euripidean/Socratic “theoretical man” and his understanding of himself, art and life? Nietzsche suggests rather briefly: the “theoretical man,” the man who seeks a scientific, supposedly controllable resolution of every dilemma, says to life “I desire you; you are worth knowing.”<sup>12</sup> The “theoretical man” in his scientific optimism attempts to subdue life in all of its vastness, without acknowledging that vastness, without acknowledging that life can undercut cool contemplation at any instant. Perhaps the key characteristic of this “theoretical man” is that he “no longer wants to have anything whole (*ganz*), with all of nature’s cruelty attaching to it.”<sup>13</sup> (We will return to this whole later!) There is no place in the world-view of the “theoretical man” as such for that which tragedy in its birth in the Dionysian chorus revealed: That life and nature are indestructibly destructive, innocent, eternal, and unfathomable. The “theoretical man” takes his ‘part’ to be a ‘whole,’ failing to admit that art alone can show him this horrible whole in such a way that he can, and must, see it.

What art form, then, emerges from the theoretical man later? According to Nietzsche, opera. The culture of the “theoretical man” is the culture of the opera. The theoretical man, a man desirous of clarity and distinctness, insists upon having words with his music, the latter, the very Dionysian mirror of the world, not being enough to gratify the theoretical man’s logic avidity. The words are to the harmony as the soul is to the body, so the theoretical man reasons, the man for whom the body is too earthy, too mysterious and best to be ignored if not also despised.

With the birth of the opera came a dramatic change in the role of the spectator. In Euripides, the spectator himself came on-stage, for as a clear and consummate knower, he no longer needed the mediation of the Dionysian chorus. With opera, further, not only is the scientific spectator on the stage, he is also implicitly recognized as himself an artist! Nietzsche writes: “the premise of the opera is a false belief concerning the artistic process: the idyllic belief that every sentient man is an artist.”<sup>14</sup> The self-understanding of the spectator now is just as immediate in Euripides, but with a more specific twist. The Euripidean drama assured the abolition of the mysterious art impulse from the god Dionysus. The opera now blindly avers this abolition, for it thrives on the false belief that true artistic power springs originally from each and every mortal, merely because he is a knowing subject. It would appear that the theoretical man is complacently happy with opera (provided he can understand the words!). Further, the niceties of opera again assure the theoretical man that desultory paroxysms of passion have their isolated place in the world. Art is pronounced as the mere release of mere passion, as long as one’s paroxysms are intelligible.

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*The self-understanding of the Wagnerian man*

It is time now for Wagner to come on the scene. What was implicit in Nietzsche's young and original vision of the re-awaking of the sense of the Dionysian from the spirit of music, particularly from the music of Bach, Beethoven, and Wagner? What was the main medium of this last character? Opera, the medium of the theoretical man. But what was missing in opera until Wagner? The majestic power of *mythos*. Might there not have been born, then, a music-practicing Socrates in the case of Wagner, in an artist who might have been able to justify the theoretical man by redeeming opera itself, by breathing *mythos* into this everyman-as-artist art?

Initially, perhaps, yes. But Nietzsche concludes, if Euripides employed art in the service of *Wissenschaft*, Wagner became guilty of employing art in the service of traditional religion, that domain which would cover up parts of the whole of life by moralizing about it at every turn. Life, in all of its awesome, dark, and tragic wealth is spurned again ultimately. Hence, Nietzsche's disillusionment with Wagner and his eventually sentimental preoccupation with redemption.

In fact, Nietzsche calls Wagner's opera the opera of "redemption," and, indeed, it could be argued that no work anywhere, save the Bible, speaks more of redemption than does Wagner's *Parsifal*. The Wagnerian man, as spectator, has now to look beyond his art, not "back" to life in its tragic and dynamic overabundance, but beyond, to salvation in the form of an odd combination of religion and *Wissenschaft*, beyond to a comprehensible resolution of suffering, which reasoned intelligibility the Dionysian man can do without and must do without, if it covers up a part of the whole of life.

Nietzsche does not provide us with a detailed criticism of Wagner in order to lay out definitively that which he finds nihilistic in Wagner's drive for redemption in *Parsifal*, so here, in conclusion, I will attempt a Nietzsche-like criticism of Wagner, concentrating particularly on this topic of self-understanding, to see if life in its Dionysian dynamism is affirmed or is avoided by way of an appeal to a redeeming self-understanding.

We can take our clues in our criticism from the main characters of *Parsifal*: Parsifal and Kundry. Kundry (the name being etymologically related to *Kunde*, itself related to *Kennen*) stands as a representation of a kind of intermediate understanding (*Erkenntnis*), not merely animal and not yet approaching the divine (not yet *Wissenschaft*). Kundry, the nearly bestial woman, must herself find redemption in a higher kind of understanding, as Amfortas must also, for he loses the great sword from Monsalvat (Mount Salvation?) by succumbing to an all-too-passionate, all-too-earthly tryst. Passionate Kundry's state of mind is, then, merely a kind of "Kennen," one of only a limited self-understanding. Her knowledge is merely 'familiar,' always ambiguous, at one moment under the sway of the evil Klingsor, at another devoted to the service of the knights of Monsal-

vat. Without redemption through a higher kind of knowledge, Kundry is morally impotent.

This higher form of knowledge she will not find in herself, but she will come to recognize it in Parsifal, the hero who is transformed from an essentially unconscious innocent, to a passionate lover of Kundry, that is, to a higher consciousness, "Kennen" or "Erkenntnis," finally to a semi-divine, intellectual, saviour-knight.

In what may be seen as an Hegelian subtlety, (and Nietzsche suggests that Wagner's music is seductive in the same way in which Hegel's dialectic is seductive), with brilliant irony, Wagner has Parsifal utter as his first word: "Gewiss!"<sup>15</sup> Parsifal, in his early self-understanding, is "certain," but of what? The 'perfect fool' is certain about one thing, the most minimal of animal acts, that is, that he can hit with his weapon anything that flies. Parsifal in this ignorant state is rather dangerous and has much to learn, and, in fact, Gurnemanz his mentor tells us explicitly that he desires to see what knowledge ("welche Wissen") might be divulged to Parsifal.<sup>16</sup>

Parsifal's self-understanding changes when he is transfixed at the observation of the Eucharist on Monsalvat. Yet, Parsifal does not reach the highest self-understanding in this observation. He is merely transfixed by this beauty, not yet transfigured. Thus, Gurnemanz impatiently challenges Parsifal, and, thanks to a pun, actually exhorts him to stop killing beasts like a beast and to seek the "whole" (Ganz): "lass du hier kuenftig die Schwaene in Ruh' und such dir, Gaensen, die Gans."<sup>17</sup>

What is the "whole" Parsifal is to come to know? And how is he to come to know it? Parsifal begins to become self-conscious as Kundry relates to him his own story. Kundry knows that Parsifal's mother wished to keep him ignorant of Kunde (Kundry) ("nie sollte Kunde zu dir hergelangen") so that he would not meet the same fate, death, as his soldierfather.<sup>18</sup> Yet, Kundry seems to know intuitively what form of knowledge will overcome this ignorance: "Bekentnis wird Schuld in Reue enden, Erkenntnis in Sinn die Torheit wenden."<sup>19</sup> Parsifal must proceed through confession and familiarity, as he can proceed to his recognition of his need for redemption only through a passionate kiss from Kundry. Upon this passion, then, Parsifal is at once able to commiserate Amfortas, whose succumbing to passion caused the relinquishing of the great sword of salvation to Klingsor. The fiery, prophetic words of the grail now begin to make sense: "Durch Mitleid wissend, der reine Tor, harre sein, den ich erkor." Parsifal's entrancement at this point shows the supersession of Kundry's merely passion-guided knowledge. Parsifal has come to know sympathy and so is prepared for a yet higher transfiguration.

This transfiguration, appropriately enough, takes the form of "Erlocungswonne," the bliss of redemption. The miraculous placement of the sword in his hands, his recognition of himself as a kind of redeemer, further shows Parsifal his yet higher station in knowledge. Parsifal, as redeemer, now possesses "reinsten Wissens Macht," the purest knowl-



edge.<sup>20</sup> Parsifal has progressed from the pure fool to the pure saviour. But what does this pure *Wissenschaft* entail? What is that *Ganz* the gander Parsifal was to come to know? Certainly it is not that horrible, eternally destructive *whole* of tragedy which even the theoretical man refused to touch. What happened on that day of redemption gives us a hint. Gurnemann announces that “die entstundigte Natur heut ihren Unschuldstag erwirbt.”<sup>21</sup> In redemption, Nature had been rendered innocent and in a manner of speaking, ineffective.

We can see, then, why Nietzsche came to rebuke Wagner. The tragedian sees the destructiveness of Nature as innocent and necessary, as so much dynamic play. Wagner sees Nature, as do all moralists and “scientists,” as something to be overcome, something from which one needs redemption.<sup>22</sup> Oedipus is swallowed up body and soul into the bowels of the earth. Parsifal, on the other hand, is freed from the earth and finds salvation on Monsalvat, far from the dark mysteries of tragic destructiveness.

Wagner, according to Nietzsche, then used art to turn away from art and life and to turn rather to morality and *Wissenschaft*. Therefore, Nietzsche seems to desire to ask again and again: When will art once again serve life?

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#### Notes

1. Nietzsche, Friedrich, “Attempt at a Self-Criticism,” from *The Birth of Tragedy*, from *The Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, trans., Walter Kaufman (New York: Random House, 1968) p. 24.

2. Nietzsche, “Attempt,” p. 18. Here it appears as though Nietzsche had reached a complete reevaluation of his early main influences, Kant and Schopenhauer (and Wagner), the thinkers who sought to limit the pretense of “science,” the former from within reason, the latter from without a “system.”

3. Nietzsche, “Attempt,” p. 19.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 22.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 23.

6. Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, p. 65.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 64.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 64.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 74. Despite a disclaimer of specific aesthetic influence from Schopenhauer, it is obvious that Nietzsche retains the Schopenhauer principle of evil’s source lying in the self-pre-occupied individual, yet retaining this notion in such a way so as to re-think it and to affirm this original recognition of the self as a part of a greater will of nature, only to rejoice in fact in the ultimate destruction of this part in the tragic but beautiful destructiveness of this superceding Will.

10. Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, p. 108.

11. *Ibid.*, pp. 83-84.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 109.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 113.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 117. Nietzsche does say elsewhere that every man is more of an artist than he realizes (see *Die Froehliche Wissenschaft* 301), yet of course, the meaning there is entirely different. In this first instance Nietzsche is critical of the sentimental aestheticism who would praise *feeling* too highly (in fact who by doing so would suggest that feeling is the very essence of art). In the latter case, Nietzsche is again the keen psychologist, noting that men, who

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rarely can tolerate the truth of his dynamic, dangerous and mortal condition, fabricates his "world" at all times, in fact, fabricates "truth" more often than not 'so as not to perish of the truth,' the world underlying his fiction which makes his life livable.

15. Wagner, Richard, *Parsifal: A Stage-Consecrating Festival-Play*, trans., Margaret Glyn (New York: Schirmer, 1904) P. 48.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 68.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 101.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 177.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 182.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 268.

21. *Ibid.*, pp. 251-252.

22. While my concentration here emphasizes the life-denying tendency in this late Wagner from the *libretto*, a similar conclusion is drawn from a consideration of the music itself by Adorno:

Wagners use of the wave as a form in his attempt at musical resolution to the contradiction between expression and gesture, long before he rationalized it in terms of Schopenhauer's philosophy... Contrary to Schopenhauer, however, is the creation of comforting equilibrium, the aesthetic consecration of everything that is insufferable in the actual social reality from which his work is attempting to flee.

See Adorno, Theodor, *In Search of Wagner*, trans., Rodney Livingstone (London: Verro Editions, 1981), p. 40.