

The Disconsolateness of Wagnerianism

by

Herman Dooyeweerd

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Translated by J. Glenn Friesen

Translator’s Note: This was an article written by Dooyeweerd when he was a 21 year old student, published under the name “H. Dooyewaard.” Many ideas in this early article are clearly echoed in his later mature work *De Wijsbegeerte der Wetsidee (1935-36)*, which was translated and revised as *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought (1953)*.¹ Thus, this early student article is important in showing how some ideas remained constant for Dooyeweerd. It is interesting in other ways, too: the article shows his love for music, his wrestling with romanticism, and his interest in Hinduism and Buddhism, which also continued in his later work. Dooyeweerd’s opinion of these eastern religions as being “pessimistic” shows the influence of Schopenhauer. That opinion is disputed today, but it is probably correct with respect to Wagner, who was influenced by Schopenhauer. The language used by Dooyeweerd is very flowery and often archaic.

The original page numbers are indicated in square brackets. Footnotes are Dooyeweerd’s except where indicated by my initials JGF.

[97] Whether in the uproar of the brightly coloured variegated world, or in the midst of the gray brickwork of dark factory towns, but also in the villages, a life that is emotionless and devoid of friendship is a life worse than death. It calls out, and continues

¹ JGF: I am grateful to Janet Danielson for pointing out some of these parallels.

to cry out with tears of longing based on dissatisfaction with mere appearance, with what is unreal [*wezenlooze*].² We often seek to avoid this, by letting ourselves go in wild worldly merriment, dissolving our will in unconscious surrender, our passion reeling upwards with its red flames. But this we know: the unreal remains around us like a veil, and it continues to call, it continues to cry out, the thirst, the *Sehnsucht* for the eternal and intangible. Behind this great miserable world of shadows,³ behind all of this ludicrously glossy [*polischinelachtig*] carrying-on, there is a higher, a brighter reality. It is fruitless to try to reason here; the voice of undecitful intuition is stronger here than any flood of arguments from the materialistic viewpoint: this higher reality is really there and remains so to all eternity!

A second word is also given, which for many is no more than a sound, but which for others awakens the emotion of high rejoicing in our consciousness, an experience in the deepest sanctuary of the soul, which for them has become the most beautiful, the most beloved experience: salvation! They can talk it with each other in hours of golden holiness; in gentle trust between them, knowing each other as brothers, for in them has awakened in bright purification [*verreining*] the feeling of having understood the harmony that binds creation with its God—but someone who stands outside does not understand this; he mockingly shrugs his shoulders and drinks his glass of beer.

² JGF: The contrast between reality [*wezen*] and appearance [*schijn*] continues throughout this article. Reality cannot be found in mere appearance. Dooyeweerd was familiar with Frederik van Eeden. One of Van Eeden's major works is the poem, "*Het Lied van Schijn en Wezen*." It was written between 1892 and 1922. At the time that Dooyeweerd wrote this article, only Book I had been published.

³ JGF: The idea that our present world is only a shadow reality is continued in Dooyeweerd's mature work:

Although the fallen earthly cosmos is only a sad shadow of God's original creation, and although the Christian can only consider himself as a stranger and a pilgrim in this world, yet he cannot recognize the true creaturely ground of meaning in the apostate root of this cosmos, but only in the new root, Christ. (*NC II*, 34)

[98] That second word is ‘rebirth’ [*wedergeboorte*].⁴ Full of homesickness, we seek it; the soul calls out to it endlessly.

We can say that all religious-feeling people have included this thought in their view of life; we come across it, sometimes in childlike primitiveness, sometimes also majestically developed, but everywhere referring to that one, inconceivable sacredness: new life.

Even the German [Wagner], the wild dreamer with his tendencies towards somber contemplation, seized upon it and vaguely explained it in the *Götterdämmerung*, the resurrection of Balder, the young sun god. You are familiar with the tragedy, which takes place in the castle of Valhalla; everything happened unavoidably, the sin, the sneaking in [*insloop*], its growing development and final consequence: the world conflagration against which even Wotan’s warrior spear can do nothing. Alvader [Wotan] himself, tempted by the gleaming Rhinegold, coveted the ring, which had been forged by Alberich from treasure stolen from the Rhine-daughters. The ring would elevate his power, which was bound by treaties, and the ring would become his free and personal possession; and so the ruler coveted the ring and did not give it back to its guardians who called for it in a futile way.

But the Niebelung’s curse was in the gold. Subdued by the cunning of Wotan and Loki, and lying in powerless wrath at their feet, he had pronounced the ominous prophecy:

A disastrous day dawns for the gods, Valhalla shall sink in a blood-red blaze of fire, and there shall be no end until this ring is given back to the one who possessed it before desire robbed him of it.

But when this prophecy was fulfilled, then there would also be new life. Balder, who died young, the undefiled one, the sinless one came [as] Siegfried, the childlike sun-hero, once treacherously killed by the spear of Hödr⁵, but after expiation of guilt, he was reborn in flourishing beauty. He would bring the new light and renew the earth, as sin was to sink in the purifying flames [99], with the gods, and with the fallen heroes, who with them had sinned. And although this idea of regeneration might not keep the somber tempered

⁴ JGF: Note that Abraham Kuyper was criticized for his belief in regeneration. See J. Stellingwerff: *De VU na Kuyper* (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1987).

⁵ In the well-known *Nibelungenlied*, Hödr is the same figure as Hagen, son of Alberich.

German from his pessimism, because his soul lived entirely in the world doomed to destruction, and because he there knew only one kind of desire, to die in an honourable war, by being brought to Odin by the quick Valkyries, in order to stand by his side in the great battle of the gods, and with Odin to die in the approaching catastrophe—yet this idea deepened religion, even if only faintly, to a clearer perspective; the gentle spring at the end of the world year that has ended its winter storms.

Yet again they [gods and heroes] will glitter anew in the same religion, but now with a foreign oriental appearance, which suddenly accentuates it far more brightly than it had ever been before. Richard Wagner tried to give it the background of Buddhist Nirvana, where there is no delusion and no more desire, and to which Death, who is unjustly feared, shows us the only way.

Listen to Brünhilde's call at the end of the *Götterdämmerung*, as the composer originally conceived it⁶:

Aus Wunscheim zieh ich fort
Wahnheim flieh ich auf immer
Des ewgen Werdens offne Thore
Schliesz ich hinter mir zu.
Nach dem Wunsch—und Wahnlos heiligstem Walland
Von Wiedergeburt erlöst, zieht nun die wissende fort.

[I depart from the home of desire
I flee forever the home of delusion
The open gates of eternal becoming
I close behind me now:
To the holiest chosen land, free from desire and delusio
Redeemed from rebirth, the enlightened one now goes.]⁷

In the following lines we will try to demonstrate the results to which this combination [the old religion with Buddhism] led Wagner, and in relation to this to show the disconsolateness and inner emptiness of Wagnerianism, the aesthetic religion of Bayreuth. Now that romanticism after long [100] being reviled begins again to be in great

⁶ JGF: These lyrics, influenced by Schopenhauer and by Buddhism, were in some printed editions, but Wagner ultimately did not use them; he used music alone.

⁷ JGF: Translation partly based on the version at [<http://www.statemaster.com/encyclopedia/The-Ring-of-the-Nibelungen>]

demand, and Wagner is adored perhaps more than ever, except for his first triumphs, these considerations seem to us to be not “*onzeitgemäß*” [not in keeping with the times].⁸

Wagner's primary idea is this: man lives his life, piteously blinded by the *maya* of appearance. That makes life toneless and dull, without musical depth, and also without a goal. That is why he seeks rebirth. That makes life toneless and deaf, without musical deepening, and also without a goal. Because of this he seeks rebirth. Christianity in its historical appearance has long since coddled this idea and made it unfruitful by dogmatizing it into a cold “truth.” The church has failed to appreciate life by denying its fluctuating character, but the soul is an undulating sea, which cannot be held back by any stone walls. With redemptive power, music grasps it by the power of the tone world, which blinds the eyes and yet makes one see the only reality, brighter than sensory things. Music shall lead on high inexpressible things; it shall enlighten life like a friendly Redeemer and with divine breath wafting through the individual arts, which will be united in a single grasp. The arts will be elevated to a power, unknown and strange bringing forth the higher life.

So music is to bring about rebirth in this aesthetic religion. Bayreuth saw a musical Valhalla arise on its green hills, the temple of the new light. From here outwards pessimism and at the same time redeeming death would be preached, the denial of the will to life, just as one finds in Wagner's heroes in his musical dramas.

Wotan, the father of conflict, is resigned to his coming demise:

Um der Götter Ende
grämt mich die Angst nicht
seit mein Wunsch es will!

[Fear of the gods' downfall
grieves me not,
since now I will it so!]⁹

He, the All-knowing, had already foreseen the regeneration of the family of the gods in Siegfried, bringer of light from the bold race of the Wälsungen.

⁸ JGF: A double negative here, so he means, these considerations are appropriate to the times.

⁹ JGF: translation at [<http://www.rwagner.net/libretti/siegfried/e-sieg-a3s1.html>]

The Valkyrie Brünnhilde has chosen love for the same Siegfried, although she knew that their union meant death for both. A moment of doubt, of feared disaster for the beloved hero, a hesitating entreaty [101]:

Siegfried! Siegfried!
Leuchtender Sproß!
Liebe dich
und lasse von mir,
vernichte dein Eigen nicht!

[Siegfried! Siegfried!
Radiant youth!
Love yourself
and let me be:
do not destroy what is your own!]

But then he approaches her, the strong blond youth with unbridled passion in his eye, she submits herself and in highest rejoicing of love, she laughs wildly:

Lachend muss ich dich lieben,
Lachend will ich erblinden,
Lachend lass uns verderben,
Lachend zu Grunde gehn!

[Laughing, I must love you,
laughing, I will bear my blindness;
laughing let us ruin,
laughing let us perish!]¹⁰

In this way, Tristan and Isolde also die consciously, willing a love that seemed to embrace even the world, nameless and without end:

Der uns vereint,
den ich dir bot
laß ihm uns weihn,
dem süßen Tod.

[He who makes us one,
whom once I offered you,
Let him bless us,
sweet death.]

A strange, I would say almost poisonous intoxication comes from this preaching of death, by the power of the harmonious music. From the musical drama they come over us, “the

¹⁰ JGF: translation at [<http://www.rwagner.net/libretti/siegfried/e-sieg-a3s3.html>]

eternal melody,” murmuring around us with inner *Sehnsucht*, speaking a language that no words can tell us; not following it, slowly and thoughtfully like the classical music of Mozart and Haydn, but being carried along by it from out of unknown heights to unknown depths.

In the most substantial reality of life and then: regeneration, the will towards death. Disconnection from all bonds of habit and convention. We should be gods, like the young [102] Balder himself, creating our way with our own daring, entering death with a proud laugh, as we are called by fate. Freia may become incensed as the strong Siegfried tramples on the holy laws of marriage, taking his own sister as his bride; her divine partner did not share this abhorrence. “She saw what had not yet happened and happily she allowed the incestuous union to be blessed.” For Wotan was bound to treaties, but with quiet longing he looked up to this hero who in self-conscious power, without—and even against—Valhalla’s will, would break these bonds and obtain freedom.

It cannot be denied that we are impressed by this gospel preached with the intensity of music that carries us along with it. Whoever listens to it experiences irrevocably the emotion of its sweet allurements, even if at the time he perhaps does not give account of it.

Because feeling in this way becomes an evil temptress, we need to take a moment of critical self-reflection in order to avoid the siren song of Wagnerianism, in order that we do not let ourselves be tempted by something that shall be seen as having no inner reality, no inner power.

Let us look first at the strange phenomenon, that Wagner could find no better apostles for his Buddhist philosophy than the giant figures from the hoary German mythological world.

The combination is strange enough, the somber passion, the strong life of action of the West next to the passionless passivity of the East. And I have seldom seen an art form, where massive hero power is seen next to such a sickly effeminacy, a grim fighting next to a powerless submission, a Siegfried, a Parsifal next to a Tristan!

Psychologically there was only one point of contact between both worldviews—pessimism. But how differently it was carried out! The German with the

wild, effervescent yet still deep-feeling [*grootvoelende*] temperament carried it out in a frenzy of wars: to fight and to perish was the gloomy theme of his battle songs.

But such passionate language would sound strange to the sensitive gentle Indian. [103] In his soul, pessimism becomes a subtle joy, a knowledge that frees him from the world of appearance, elevating him above the passions that weave the veil of *maya*, and bringing him to true life in the glory of eternity. Whereas in German Valhalla, death was the beginning and end, the center of world events, in Buddha's Nirvana it was rest, stillness and contemplation. Here it is irrefutable that pessimism was thought through in an infinitely deeper way, and this was to be expected in this further developed state of culture [in India]. If we bear this contrast in mind, then the elevated resignation, the philosophical calm, with which Wotan, the powerful German god of war, prepares himself to perish in the "*Götterdämmerung*," must bring a smile to our lips. The command to fell the world ash-tree, from which Wotan's battle spear, the symbol of his power, had been hewn, and the attitude of the gods thereafter, seated at his table¹¹ in Valhalla, drawn up around their ruler and waiting in somber silence until Loki lets his flames touch the top points of the castle—this could have been a splendid "*coup tragique*" in a Buddhist drama. But in a German *milieu*, this passivity goes too far. Here we rather expect the tragic *dénouement* of a wild battle, with Wotan, conscious of death, mustering his troops for the last time, the light of the last sunset not glowing red over peacefully assembled gods, but flashing lightning on their copper shields and lances, the fire of a world conflagration burning over a defeat of the Valkyries! The same holds for the hero Parsifal. "Pure Thor," who in compassion should consciously redeem the sinful king, has little to do with the Germanic Parsifal from the romantic stories of the knights; he has become a charming youth, a model of naive purity (think of the *tête à tête* with the corrupt Kundry), a quiet dreamer, who preaches a Buddhist wisdom of life. The wandering Jew from the *Fliegende Holländer* [Flying Dutchman] has through love for a maiden become a "stay-at-home" and has put aside his strange wanderers' whims, in order to lead a respectable philosopher's life. These are some examples of the strange metamorphosis in operation, which could be multiplied *ad libitum* [at will].

¹¹ JGF: The text incorrectly has 'Walhalladisch'

But it is not my intention to give a cheap critique of this work of art as such. One might argue whether or not it is possible to bind together two absolutely differing worldviews while still holding the essence of both. Wagner has placed us on the other side of the fact of such an aesthetic combination, which we then have to merely honour as such.

Psychologically, it was certainly correct to see how the entrance to the soul of the German people—to open it to the foreign child from the east [Buddha], could take place by putting him under the patronage of Germany's strong ancestors. Christianity had in fact thrown the old gods from their thrones, but the quiet contact with this past had never been completely broken. The Siegfried saga always remained as an element in Germanic culture, and soon Nietzsche would with shattering energy proclaim the dictatorship [*diktatuur*] of the Superman [*Übermensch*].

The above examples were therefore not intended to detract from the aesthetic worth of Wagner's figures but only in order to come to the goal of our considerations, to show the pernicious and empty tendency of these works.

But from out of this mixture of German-dom and Buddhism this old wizard has brewed a drink that goes to the head with overpowering force for everyone who brings it unknowingly to his lips.

There is no question that pleasing offerings are here being brought to the Buddha. Or is perhaps Tristan cannot be doing this when he chooses death, not based on any ascetic considerations (O disgraceful remembrance of the eastern penitent [*boetgezant*]), but only in order that disenchantment should not come after a dream of pure false happiness [*schijngeeluk*]!

And the Buddhist confession of Brünhilde, set out [115] at the beginning of this article still to be taken “*au serieux*” when at the time of her last “redemptive” deed she says to her horse Grane:

Grane, mein Ross!
Sei mir gegrüsst!
Weisst du auch, mein Freund,
wohin ich dich führe?
Im Feuer leuchtend,
liegt dort dein Herr,

Siegfried, mein Seliger Held.
Dem Freunde zu folgen,
wicherst du freudig?
Lockt dich zu ihm
die lachende Lohe?
Fühl' meine Brust auch,
wie sie entbrennt;
helles Feuer fasst mir das Herz
ihn zu umschlingen,
umschlossen von ihm,
in mächtigster Minne
vermählt ihm zu sein!
Heiajoho! Grane!
Grüss' deinen Herren!
Siegfried! Siegfried! Sieh!
Selig grüsst dich dein Weib!¹²

[Grane, my steed,
greetings!
Do you too know, my friend,
where I am leading you?
Radiant in the fire,
there lies your lord,
Siegfried, my blessed hero.
Are you neighing for joy
to follow your friend?
Do the laughing flames
lure you to him?
Feel my bosom too,
how it burns;
a bright fire
fastens on my heart
to embrace him,
enfolded in his arms,
to be one with him
in the intensity of love!
Heiajoho! Grane!
Greet your master!
Siegfried! Siegfried! See!
Your wife joyfully greets you!]¹³

¹² JGF: Dooyeweerd quotes the last lines as “Grüss den Freund! Siegfried! Siegfried! Sieh! Selig gilt dir mein Gruß.”

¹³ JGF: Translation at <http://www.rwagner.net/libretti/gotterd/e-gott-a3s3.html>

That really sounds a whole lot warmer than the cold cloister language used just before, but for that we cannot blame the poor Valkyrie. For she suffered the same lack as her brilliant creator [Wagner]; it is the old sin or virtue, whatever one calls it, of nature, which is stronger than teaching. Wagner has [106} always and everywhere held high the idea of world denial [*Weltverneinung*], as long as the artist's blood was not too powerful for him, and therefore one must not be too hard on him regarding the relation of theory and practice. For a passionate artistic spirit like his own, the absolute asceticism of Buddhism can be no more than a golden doctrine, which one can ardently defend against contemplative old men or sentimental young ladies, but suddenly, behind the veil of aesthetics is again abandoned "mit gelassem Sinne" [with a sense of resignation]. It is true that the Buddha, if he had had anything to say, would have chosen better apostles than the old Germanic gods and battle heroes; he would have whispered quietly in Wagner's ear that a fox may well lose its fur, but not its tendencies.¹⁴ The warm-blooded Valkyries, who preach world denial, are in danger of dishing up a phrase that they in fact interpret in a completely non-Buddhist way.

Faced with the dilemma of either being a philosopher *à tout prix* [at all costs] or to follow the irresistible force of his artistic genius, Wagner's choice was not in doubt. World flight, the morality of the cloister was the enemy of artistic life; the admirer of the "Homerische Heiterkeit" [Homeric serenity], of the aesthetic, in-the-world Greek culture, could not have more than a Platonic love for world-flight. But if he is here untrue to Schopenhauer (the Ur-theoretician) and to the eastern teacher of wisdom [Buddha], the problem of redemption remained—it was the center of all his thought and feeling. A surrogate must be found for Buddhist world denial: a Wagnerian kind, dressed in its eastern prophet's cloak, came up in its place.

Chamberlain, the well known biographer of the master, who, just like his kindred spirit Tappert, has a strange bravado, in trying to envelop his master's failings with a ray of enlightenment, calls this the point where Wagner went beyond Schopenhauer. [107] The denial of the will to life here becomes the highest affirmation of the will—that is the key to

¹⁴ JGF: "Een vos verliest zijn haren, niet zijn streken." This proverb means that a fox may change his appearance but not his tendencies. Dutch

Wagner's philosophy. There is no disputing about tastes, and one temperament has more worldly tendencies than another, but we would do well to set clearly before our eyes just exactly what makes up Wagner's superior view of life. And that is nothing other than this, that Wagner (certainly not least *pour besoin de la cause* [for the sake of the cause]), simply wants life at the cost of life, a passionate world of feeling which points to death as redemption from his own misery. He creates with deceptive beauty before our eyes, a new enchanted garden of Klingsor, and drives the devil out of Parsifal. In this sense, death is certainly a redemption: it is the victory of those who create their own way with their own pride and who follow this way to their last breath; nothing stands in the way of the Wälsungen spirit anymore since his wishes, led by music to a higher level, desire Death, which is merely false terror [*schijnverschrikking*]. This is the deepest idea of Wagnerianism, and at the same time, the kind of rebirth to which art as a friendly saviour of life must lead him. Parsifal himself has no higher gospel to preach to you: "Tod, Sterben, einzige Gnade" [Death, Dying, only Grace]. That is the last wish of King Amphora, the fallen holder of the Grail, and death is the only solution to the problem of the Grail—to give it to the one who desires, the holy priestly act, the redeeming service of love by the pure fool, who by knowing compassion, reconciles sin and gives back peace.

Music should open our eyes, and should make us seers! But what does Wagner do with it? He lets it be penetrated by passion and affect (note how in almost every one of his dramas love or compassion forms the *Leitmotiv*) and lets this be heard exhaustively. He certainly achieves something great with this: man's life of feeling—but then nothing more of man is brought to our consciousness with this powerful sensation.

[108] We admit that Wagner by his strangely adequate use of "eternal melody" speaks to us infinitely more than a thousand words can say. I still think of the almost drunken joy, with which I always listened to *Tristan*, where the music shuddered through the spoken word like a hot wind along white invisible harps, strung with silver strings and all of them ringing in wonderful sounds. But—it almost causes me pain to say it—this sensation is false and its purification (*catharsis*) is pretence. The Grail music from *Lohengrin* or *Parsifal* may even awaken a pure religious attitude, but let us remember Klingsor's enchanted garden and how Kundry introduced her necromantic arts by speaking of blameless purity.

.....

In conclusion, this music gives no more than “the reality of appearance” [de wezen van den schijn¹⁵] since it only makes sounds in an ineffable way—the vacuous [*wezenslooze*], an unreal life of passion.

Or may it give us more [than appearance], where it so irrefutably springs from the earth and refers to the earth?

Pay attention, too to the overwhelming of the senses and the delusion, on which the central action in Wagner’s dramas so often rests.

In *Tristan* there is a real *Midsummer Night’s Dream* atmosphere.

Exchange the love potion prepared by Brangäne with the flower nectar that Puck playfully puts in sleeping eyes, and you immediately feel how in both dramas we have nothing more than a play of enchantment, of “*reine Täuschung*” [pure deception]. But here is the distinction between them and at the same time what is dangerous in Wagnerianism: Shakespeare expressly says that he wants to set before you an airy summer evening play.

With laughing humour of the gods he [Shakespeare] lets you see what is unreal, the comic-deceptive in humans’ love life. The dreaming-hovering dances of the elves leave you in no doubt: you are dreaming in the high woods under a bright moon and whispering night music. What an enchanting vision!

[109] But not so in *Tristan*. The enchanted potion at the beginning—do not forget it, for in *Midsummer Night’s Dream* the happy dwarf of Oberon returns each moment to remind you that you are not awake. But here [in Wagner] you must be on your own guard.

All that may further emotionally move you, even though beauty’s speech quakes and shudders through the listening soul, is awakened by deception, an unreal appearance. What will you now do as you awaken from this dream of fascinatingly sad and beautiful misery? At first there will be a longing to return to the tender world of passion, as the crying sounds of that immeasurable beauty still murmur in our ear, a scrupulous gripping

¹⁵ JGF: Dooyeweerd seems to mean that Wagner’s music remains in the realm of appearance and the unreal.

and holding on to each returning passage and finally the sermon of the drama: redemption by means of death. “Man sieht bald das wohl, was man gerne wünscht,”¹⁶ [Indeed one soon sees what one really wishes for]—one perhaps draws a new veil in front of one’s eyes, a new world of unreality, more beautiful and rich, but nevertheless unreal, is risen in place of the old.

Do not let yourself be led on the wrong path by the old enchanter [Wagner].

The yearning *Sehnsucht* of his works does not bring you even one step closer to what you seek: rebirth to true life; he gives merely a *fata morgana*, a mirage. No, he gives more, he leaves a poisonous atmosphere behind and it regenerates you towards death!

As Bayreuth comes to be the temple of redemption, know what it shall receive: laughing love—laughing death! Just as Brünhilde the combative Valkyrie, as she throws herself on her steed Grane with untamable force, and joyously slings the red torch of destruction, as quick flames crackle upwards until the fire can no longer be held, a fire which will destroy herself, her beloved Siegfried, Valhalla and all the gods. But then, after the destruction has spent itself, then all beauty, all that is proud and powerful has been consumed, and you have no more, for everything is lost in the so very splendid glowing lake of fire.

[110] The character of musical drama, the great work of art of Wagner’s view of life, is completely in agreement with the great paradox from which he cannot free himself, since it forms his being. Here, too I will not speak about the aesthetic worth of this art form; for myself I hold it very high, although it places tremendous demands on its performance. But for now we will give merely an immanent critique.¹⁷ In Wagner’s own line of thought, it is a great [logical] inconsequence for musical drama to be a redemptive work of art that frees our eyes from the veil of *maya*—it is fortunate that someone can be so gloriously inconsequent.

.....

¹⁶ JGF: It is unclear where this quotation comes from.

¹⁷ JGF: This is the first reference I know of Dooyeweerd’s idea of “immanent critique.”

For music is to immediately reveal the “Wesen des Dinges an sich” [Essence of things in themselves]; Wagner, following Schopenhauer, praises music’s great excellence as being that it reveals this without any image [*vorstellung*] and without any work that can be seen [*oogenwerk*]. But the greatest dramaturge, in his blind love for Attic tragedy, in which all arts were united, as if they were born from the people themselves, followed tragedy in this respect, and he allowed the shadow world to appear before us again. But how does one explain this strange mixture of appearance and being? Wagner says that music is a feminine organism. Therefore it must be impregnated with appearance in order to bring forth reality! With my human mind I can’t think anything other than that what is born here will be of very mixed blood and not at all capable of the task assigned to it by Wagner; his well-known saying, that music must take form, shows at the same time the paradox of his system which holds that form must be rejected as belonging to the unreal. Did Wagner not realize that Schopenhauer must be absolutist, and that he believed that the ambiguity of program music should be forbidden?

Leaving aside the fact that Schopenhauer’s theory is a great *a priori*, even in terms of this theory, Wagnerianism and its brilliant work of art is a despairing and confusing dualism. A religion where music must bring regeneration is empty, for according to Wagner’s own words, music is feminine and must be impregnated by appearance. [111] And what kind of appearance? One where the whole world, with its red sky of passionate fire and its eastern luxurious enchanted gardens, its white citadels of the Holy Grail and its brilliant Supermen [*Übermenschen*]: these pass us by in the stormwind of its harmonies, they consume themselves in the fire of its destruction.

Wagnerianism as religion is a phrase, a hollow appearance. That is the conclusion to which we are led by critical self-reflection.

Over against this slogan I place Christianity, much despised but in which is found the radiant ray of light, the star of hope: rebirth by the Holy Spirit. But we should not work here with contradictions: the comparison with what is most holy, what is known by the soul, would in itself already give too much honour to this sickly outgrowth of romanticism.

.....

I ask you this: How is it, that the whole world around us can seem so empty, like the lead-grey clouds hanging low or the plaintive noise of rain trickling down on disconsolate grey towns, as a weeping melancholy comes over us and we see nothing but ghostly shadows of an unreal world, and hear nothing in our ears but monotone sounds from far away?

How is it that the world, which has been created by the Father, can seem so lamentably empty to the Christian?¹⁸ Is it not because we do not see things in the way that regenerated persons must see them, everything under that single category of their goal?¹⁹

.....

¹⁸ JGF: See the mature Dooyeweerd, where he also refers to the emptiness of the Christian whose heart is not opened to Divine word-revelation:

Every Christian knows the emptiness of an experience of the temporal world which seems to be shut up in itself. He knows the impersonal attitude of a “Man” in the routine of common life and the dread of nothingness, the meaninglessness, if he tries to find himself again in a so-called existential isolation. He is acquainted with all this from personal experience, though he does not understand the philosophical analysis of this state of spiritual uprooting in Humanistic existentialism. But the Christian whose heart is opened to the Divine Word-revelation knows that in this apostate experiential attitude he does not experience temporal things and events as they really are, *i.e.* as meaning pointing beyond and above itself to the true religious centre of meaning and to the true Origin. (NC III, 30)

¹⁹ JGF: Dooyeweerd had obtained this idea of everything under one category, that of their goal, at a 1915 conference of the NCSV (Nederlandse Christen-Studenten Vereniging). Dooyeweerd wrote a review of the conference:

Zie er is één allesomvattende kategorie in de schepping, waarin alle andere kategorieën momenten zijn, dat is die van *het doel*. Uit het doel is het wezen genomen en dit is daarbuiten niet te vinden. Van uw doelstelling hangt alles af, uw gansche levensbeschouwing uw gansche filosofie van het zijnde. Want alles word belicht van binnen uit, de gansche wereld door het vuur, dat in ons brandt. (cited in Marcel Verburg: *Herman Dooyeweerd: Leven en werk van een Nederlands christen-wijsgeer* (Baarn: Ten Have, 1989, 24).

[See, there is a category in creation that includes everything, in which all other categories are moments; it is the category of *the goal*. Being comes from the goal, and outside of the goal it cannot be found. Everything depends on your goals, your whole view of life, your whole philosophy of

For everything works in one single direction, everything is the working out of a single thought, the praise of Him, who was from the beginning and who created the heavens and the earth and the creatures who live there. What a puppet show! Man with his illusions of power, his development in family, state, church, and in nature around us and in us—everything is separate, without a background, without harmony, without music. It is the game of children, who pretend to have no father. But now: let the regenerated renew their soul and let the veil be torn from our eyes. In wonder we now see the unity, the beauty of everything that has been created. The light of transfiguration breaks through and illumines all of life,²⁰ which is now deepened²¹ to an infinite perspective, and experienced in its wonderful harmony. We no longer seek the essence of things in themselves, but we seek it in their fulfillment.²² Our life attains a direction, we now seek

being. For everything external is illuminated from within, the whole world by the fire that burns within us.]

²⁰ JGF: This idea continues in the mature Dooyeweerd:

In the Biblical attitude of naïve experience the transcendent, religious dimension of its horizon is opened. The light of eternity radiates perspectively through all the temporal dimensions of this horizon and even illuminates seemingly trivial things and events in our sinful world. (*NC* III, 29)

Baader speaks of a similar experience that he calls the ‘*Silberblick*’ [Silver Vision]. In this experience, there is a reintegration of feeling and knowledge in self-transcendence; it is an unreflective reaching out (*übergreifenden*), an anticipation that manifests itself as a transient *Silberblick* (*Werke* 4, 114). It is achieved when our intuition (*Anschauung*) moves in the anticipatory direction (*Zeit* p. 58, ft. 14; *Fermenta* I, 23). We then can see with a “double light”—from out of the Center but also into the periphery. There is a coherence of inner and outer seeing. Ecstasy is an anticipation of this integrity.

In der Ekstase als Antizipation jener Integrität blickt darum (wenn schon nur momentan) das himmlische Auge als Silberblick durch das bloß äußere Sehen, oder es blickt das infernale Auge durch. Shakespeare nennt diese Momente bedeutend: “Eternal moments.” *Zeit* 58, ft. 14).

[In ecstasy as anticipation this integrity is seen by the heavenly eye (if only momentarily) through the purely outer seeing, or it is seen through the infernal eye. Shakespeare calls these moments “Eternal moments.”]

²¹ JGF: note this first use of ‘deepening.’

²² JGF: In his mature thought, Dooyeweerd continued to deny the Kantian idea of things-in-themselves.

the Sun of life, who dawns on the golden horizon, toward whom all creatures now direct themselves in great love—in longing for light!

The unifying breath of eternity wafts everywhere. And everywhere, the separate tones unite themselves into melody lines that flow out in a song of creation that reverberates through the whole world.

Music! The first fruit of rebirth.

H. Dooyewaard

Amsterdam, May 27, 1915.

