

**Kevin O'Regan, 'Wackenroder and the Doctrine of the Soul', published in *Nineteenth-century Music Review* 5/1(2008), pp. 67-88**

**Please quote from the published version.**

The writings of Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder (1773-1798) constitute perhaps the most powerful and original source in the early German Romantic discourse on autonomous music, itself a spearhead of a European trend which matured at the turn of the eighteenth century.<sup>1</sup> Wackenroder's fervid yet strangely lucid and insightful observations on art and music are founded on the notion of *Kunstreligion* ('art religion'), which he uses to replace the rational explanations of art, based on knowledge and representation of the external world, and derived from classical philosophy. The presence of religion in Wackenroder's discourse brings about a number of contradictions, or paradoxes, which reinforce his thought on the aesthetics of music. 'Unmeaning' instrumental music, which had been problematized in eighteenth-century theory,<sup>2</sup> achieves in Wackenroder's aesthetic scheme a paradoxical status as the art embodying the highest meaning-without-meaning. Indeed, in order to conceive of music

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<sup>1</sup> For a comprehensive survey of the development of the idea of autonomy in musical aesthetics of the period, see Kevin O'Regan, 'Autonomistic aesthetics of instrumental music, 1800-1810: context, precedence and reception' (Ph.D. thesis: University of East Anglia, 1997).

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Bellamy Hosler, *Changing Aesthetic Views of Instrumental Music in 18<sup>th</sup>-Century Germany* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1981).

at all, particularly instrumental music, Wackenroder must utilize paradox which is epitomized in religiously-informed contrasts and contexts.

Wackenroder's aesthetics of instrumental music are centrally developed in his potent essay 'Das eigenthümliche innere Wesen der Tonkunst, und die Seelenlehre der heutigen Instrumentalmusik' ('The strange inner reality of the musical art, and the doctrine of the soul [soul-doctrine] of modern instrumental music'), published posthumously in 1799 by Wackenroder's friend Johann Ludwig Tieck in a collection entitled *Phantasien über die Kunst für Freunde der Kunst* (*Fantasies on art for friends of art*), which includes some of Tieck's own essays. Two years earlier, in 1797, just before Wackenroder's death, another collection, entitled *Herzensergiessungen eines kunstliebenden Klosterbruders* (*Heart-outpourings or Confessions of an art-loving friar*) had been published anonymously in Berlin. These collections – *Herzensergiessungen* perhaps more overtly – were inspired by Wackenroder and Tieck's famous travels to Catholic South Germany from 1793, which proved so influential on the aesthetic outlooks of the two young writers in retreat from the rationalist culture of Enlightenment Berlin.

The purpose of this article is to show how the ambiguities which the mysterious and powerful-sounding compound *Seelenlehre*, or doctrine of the soul, in the title of Wackenroder's essay on instrumental music, gives rise to, are essential to a proper understanding of his aesthetics of instrumental music. Wackenroder in fact comes quite close to identifying instrumental music with *Seelenlehre*. Once this somewhat difficult and elusive concept is introduced, the new nature and function of instrumental music, distinct from its versions in classically inspired theory, is revealed. *Seelenlehre* embodies two distinct elements, *Seele* ('soul') and *Lehre* ('doctrine'), which, although

needing to be considered separately, constitute together an indispensable though enigmatic unity, which calls Wackenroder's whole outlook on instrumental music into action. This article considers how paradoxes which are central in Wackenroder's text unite to form a whole philosophy of instrumental music which had vital implications for the wider nineteenth century.

For Wackenroder, the most important realities which influence human existence are communicated by means other than words. In the essay 'Von zwey wunderbaren Sprachen, und deren geheimnißvoller Kraft' ('Concerning two wonderful languages and their mysterious power'), earlier in *Phantasien*, Wackenroder expounds the significance of the annulment of words as a means of communication. Words enable the naming of things, but nature, as the expression of the divine creating hand, and art, which is a language reserved to but a few chosen souls, are languages which lie outside verbal meaning and construction and thus penetrate more deeply into the human being. 'Only the *invisible force which hovers over us*,' says Wackenroder, 'is not drawn down into our souls by words.'<sup>3</sup> Instrumental music, as a key art form, participates in all the mysteries that this wordlessness entails. Carl Dahlhaus writes on the early Romantics' aesthetic apprehension, or 'contemplation', of 'absolute music' (i.e. indeterminate instrumental

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<sup>3</sup> Mary Hurst Schubert (ed., tr.), *Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder's Confessions and Fantasies* (University Park and London: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1971), 118 (translation modified – Schubert's translation [hereafter Schubert] is that consulted for the present article); Silvio Vietta and Richard Littlejohns (eds.), *Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder. Sämtliche Werke und Briefe: Historische-kritische Ausgabe* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1991) i, 97 [hereafter *SWB*]: 'Nur das *Unsichtbare*, das *über uns schwebt*, ziehen Worte nicht in unser Gemüth herab.'

music or wordless vocal music) as a form of religious devotion, which is validated by the condition of absolute music as being elevated above words. (Ordinary experience tells us that in order for contemplative devotion to occur words must be not more than a background, if not eliminated entirely.) This link between instrumental music and devotion, explained in 1800 by Johann Gottfried Herder, originates via Wackenroder's fictional mouthpiece, the tortured musician and composer Joseph Berglinger (who appears in both *Herzensergiessungen* and *Phantasien*).<sup>4</sup>

Two central paradoxes, connected in theme, inhere in Wackenroder's two published collections. The first is that Wackenroder cannot describe his new aesthetic of wordlessness (particularly in relation to instrumental music) without words. This poses a fundamental problem, for, while Wackenroder decries the primacy of language, there is no doubt that his own literary language is of a high order, musical even, as Steven Paul Scher has shown. Language becomes musical, in analyses like Scher's, if it exhibits certain sonic characteristics which seem to raise it above the ordinary.<sup>5</sup> Language can evoke or represent music. It is musical. As a corollary, 'musical' (*musikalisch*) has its own self-contained privacy, its linguistically inaccessible world. Language delineates this, though Wackenroder himself decries its usage in conveying the musical experience. Wackenroder therefore cannot fling language aside because it is necessary and even worthy. The question entailed by the first paradox is: what is beneath this ugly contest between words and music? The second paradox is that Wackenroder never anywhere in

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<sup>4</sup> See Carl Dahlhaus, *The Idea of Absolute Music* (tr. Roger Lustig, Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1989), 78-81.

<sup>5</sup> Steven Paul Scher, *Verbal Music in German Literature* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1968), 13-35.

either of the two collections names a real musician or work. The brooding significance of real visual art and artists is certainly felt, but while the real musical world is suggested, it is not named. The question entailed by the second paradox is: why is it necessary for the development of Wackenroder's thought? Answers to these two questions may help in the understanding of the real consequences of the supernatural significance which Wackenroder attaches to music.

Broad stratification of the material in the main part of this article (following) is indicated by four subheadings: (1) Doctrine and Paradox; (2) Word and Soul; (3) Naming Music; (4) Paradigm and Religion. These markers are intended to serve as signposts rather than rigorously delimit boundaries within the article as a whole. Each one embodies a central theme and its placement within the overall argument signifies that point in the argument where the theme in question becomes prominent. The themes are intended to mark a general progression in the discussion of Wackenroder's paradoxes.

The material is laid out as follows: (1) Doctrine and Paradox - Material under this heading aims to show in a preliminary way the attachment of paradox to the concept of 'doctrine' in Wackenroder's work. It also aims to illustrate the prevalence of paradox in 'Das eigenthümliche innere Wesen'; (2) Word and Soul - This discusses the significance of the soul in contemporary aesthetics and how, in Wackenroder's scheme, words oppose the soul's mission or existence. There is a link to the next theme – the necessary absence of words entails the absence of real musicians and musical works from Wackenroder's narrative; (3) Naming Music - Here Wackenroder's lack of naming of music is shown to be bound up with the essential autonomy of music, the idea that music is (unlike other arts) self-contained, detached from programmes or specific

meanings, not a slave to conventional language; (4) Paradigm and Religion - The culmination of the preceding themes. Wackenroder's aesthetic paradoxes of wordlessness and anonymity are, it is theorized, united in one great religious paradox which is the archetype of *Seelenlehre*.

These markers or themes only 'superstructure' the argument in this article and should not be taken as outlining a definitive thematic plan for it. The body of the discussion encompasses additional, connected material which is related to the themes in complex and unexpected ways. In the same spirit in which 'Das eigenthümliche innere Wesen' unearths and explores paradoxes hitherto unperceived – according to Wackenroder - by the generality of the eighteenth-century musical establishment, this article explores a gamut of paradoxes which are contained in and evoked by Wackenroder's essay. Paradoxes appear and reappear throughout the discussion in this article. The markers or themes serve to articulate general changes in the way central paradoxes are being discussed. Also, there may be interrelationships between the themes in that they are indications of material which underlies them. 'Doctrine' is introduced first, in (1) Doctrine and Paradox, to lay the ground for its reappearance in (4) Paradigm and Religion. Material located under the first two themes explores the ambiguities contained in *Seele* and *Lehre*, which lays the ground for discussion of ever deeper paradoxes in (3) Naming Music and (4) Paradigm and Religion. (2) Word and Soul and (3) Naming Music generally and in turn discuss the two central paradoxes of Wackenroder's essay (and collections of essays as a whole). It is thus intended that the final discussion in (4) Paradigm and Religion will make sense in the light of the order in which the preceding material has been expounded.

## 1. DOCTRINE AND PARADOX

A concept common to the two central paradoxes in 'Das eigenthümliche innere Wesen', the verbal description of nonverbal realities and the anonymity or fictionalization of music and musicians, and which begins to answer the questions they pose, is the *Seelenlehre*, the linguistically articulated 'soul-doctrine' which Wackenroder is trying to propound in this essay, his key statement on the nature of instrumental music. The use of *Lehre* ('doctrine') may suggest rationalist inflexibility, which Wackenroder is in his writings concerned to annihilate. Though he recognizes that rationalism co-exists with the new thinking he is trying to introduce, he has completely left it behind. It is blotted out. More importantly, *Lehre* signifies Romantic fervour, a dogmatism that is antithetical to reason. It underscores the importance of Wackenroder's aesthetic theory as nothing else could. Wackenroder sees his theory as fixed and final. He does not speak simply of *Seele* ('soul') in the title of his essay, but of *Seelenlehre*. *Lehre* is common to the worlds of both rationalism and Romanticism, and Wackenroder uses it as a metaphor for the replacement of one paradigm by its successor. Similarly, instrumental music is the interface between what is external, identified by the old paradigm, and what is internal and newly identified by the new paradigm.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> In this connection the following remarks by Alexander Gillies may be pertinent: 'It is significant that Wackenroder's doctrine based itself on the state of music as Haydn and Mozart knew it. New efforts were being made to speak new messages, to embody new atmospheres, fresh surprises and mysteries, in the accepted musical forms. The transition to something different was in being. The Romantic writers – not merely Wackenroder, but also Novalis, Runge, Kleist, among others – voiced it and turned it into

*Lehre* admits of two semantic alignments, *Bildung* ('education', 'formation'), which is more secular in orientation, or *Doktrin* ('doctrine', 'principle'), which more conveys religion. Are Wackenroder's musings to be taken in a secular or in a sacred sense? This is a difficult point, even though the linguistic context could argue for a secular reading.<sup>7</sup> Contrasting the predominance of Christian religious fervour in the

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a philosophy, until in the end the whole German nineteenth century was one of music.

...In music the German soul could wallow in problems which it was an agony to bear and a torture to solve' (*Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder and Ludwig Tieck.*

*Herzensergiessungen eines kunstliebenden Klosterbruders, together with Wackenroder's contributions to the Phantasien über die Kunst für Freunde der Kunst* [Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1966], xl). Wackenroder could arrive at the aesthetic conclusions he did – which paralleled the musical abstraction attained by Beethoven – by considering repertoire prior to Beethoven, repertoire which had been born in the era of classical aesthetics. Instrumental music became the general exemplar symbolizing the transition, in the artistic and philosophical spheres, between classical and Romantic aesthetics, from a paradigm whose priority was based on external appearances to one which prioritized the indefiniteness of the private inner world.

<sup>7</sup> In a private communication (29 June 2001), Prof. Richard Littlejohns suggests that Wackenroder's use of *Seelenlehre* is akin to Karl Philipp Moritz's *Seelenkunde* ('soul-knowledge, -science'), bearing in mind Moritz's early influence on Wackenroder. Thus the 'symphonic narrative' evident in 'Das eigenthümliche innere Wesen' is concerned with evolutionary aspects of the symphony's expressiveness (its soul and personality) rather than with its spiritual advancement (devotional progress). While this argument raises some interesting dilemmas regarding Wackenroder's differentiation between



narrative, biographically-oriented *Herzensergiessungen* with the more abstract *Kunstreligion* of the *Phantasien* may indicate that the character of *Kunstreligion* is evolving, throughout the two collections, in the direction of secularity. The only firm conclusion is that, for Wackenroder, art secularizes religion but it must be described religiously. It is impossible to say definitely whether *Lehre* is secular or sacred. It is, however, certain that the 'secular sacred' is a central and special feature in Wackenroder's exegesis of music and that the sacred element must be taken into account in discussing *Seelenlehre*. The tone from the outset of his essay is therefore interpretable as religiously doctrinal.

This religiously doctrinal accent occurs in an atmosphere of paradox. Paradox informs Wackenroder's opening thoughts:

The sound or tone was originally a rude material in which the uncivilized nations strove to express their monstrous passions, since they, if their soul were disturbed, likewise agitated the surrounding air with shrieking and drum beating, in order to, as it were, set the outside world in a state of balance with the rebellion of their innermost heart.<sup>8</sup>

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secular and sacred, it is difficult to reconcile Wackenroder's explicit introduction of *Kunstreligion* ('art religion') – the notion that the appreciation of art is an intensely religious activity - with his clear separation of secular and sacred contexts and concepts.

<sup>8</sup> Schubert, 188 (translation modified); *SWB* i, 216: 'Der Schall oder Ton war ursprünglich ein grober Stoff, in welchem die wilden Nationen ihre unförmlichen Affecten auszudrücken strebten, indem sie, wenn ihr Inneres erschüttet war, auch die umgebenden Lüfte mit Geschrey und Trommelschlag erschütterten, gleichsam um die äußere Welt mit ihrer inneren Gemüthsempörung in's Gleichgewicht zu setzen.'

In Wackenroder's terms it is now permissible paradoxically to explain the external world as fantastically sympathetic to what occurs in the dark, secret fibres of the heart.<sup>9</sup> In the 1790s Aristotelian classicism still commanded respect.<sup>10</sup> Wackenroder is beginning one of his most seminal musical essays with what, to mainstream classicism, is an insidious qualification, the suggestion of a compulsory equipoise between the representable world and the indefiniteness of the rebellious heart.<sup>11</sup>

This is paralleled in what Wackenroder says about music itself:

Furthermore, no other art but music has a raw material which is, in and of itself, already impregnated with such divine spirit. Its vibrating material with its ordered wealth of chords comes to meet the creating hands halfway and expresses beautiful emotions, even if we touch it in an elementary, simple way. Thus it is that many musical pieces, whose notes were arranged by their composers like numbers in an accounting or like pieces in a mosaic, merely according to the rules, but ingeniously and at a fortunate hour, - speak a magnificent, emotionally rich poetry when they are performed on instruments, although the composer may have little imagined that,

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<sup>9</sup> Ian Biddle comments that Wackenroder in this essay 'heaps metaphor upon metaphor to affect and comprehensive semantic multiplicity thereby internalizing the external onto the fabric of music itself' ('Autonomy, Ontology and the Ideal: Music Theory and Philosophical Aesthetics in Early Nineteenth-Century German Thought' [Ph.D. thesis: University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 1995], 122).

<sup>10</sup> See, for example, Thomas Twining, *Aristotle's Treatise on Poetry, translated: with Notes on the Translation, and on the Original; and Two Dissertations, on Poetical, and Musical, Imitation* (London, 1789).

<sup>11</sup> Biddle, *ibid.*

in his scholarly work, the enchanted spirit in the realm of the music would beat its wings so magnificently for initiated senses.<sup>12</sup>

The pieces whose notes are arranged methodically constitute the representable world from which comes the heartfelt essence of music. Wackenroder wishes to point out that even musical creations which are constructed merely arithmetically nevertheless contain the very fabric of music itself. Thus the mysterious equipoise between things which are of a definite, representable kind, and indefinite and perhaps more unstable things is reflected at this level also.

Although equipoise is maintained on a number of levels, Wackenroder is committed to the Romantic logic of rejecting what is definite in favour of what is somewhat less tangible:

Whoever *believes* in a *system* has expelled universal love from his heart! Intolerance of feeling is more endurable than intolerance of reason; - *superstition* better than *belief in a system*. -<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Schubert, 189; *SWB* i, 217-18: 'Demnach hat keine andre Kunst einen Grundstoff, der schon an sich mit so himmlischen Geiste geschwängert wäre, als die Musik. Ihr klingender Stoff kommt mit seinem geordneten Reichthume von Akkorden den bildenen Händen entgegen, und spricht schon schöne Empfindungen aus, wenn wir ihn auch nur auf eine leichte, einfache Weise berühren. Daher kommt es, daß manche Tonstücke, deren Töne von ihren Meistern wie Zahlen zu einer Rechnung, oder wie die Stifte zu einem musivischen Gemählde, bloß regelrecht, aber sinnreich und in glücklicher Stunde, zusammengesetzt wurden, - wenn sie auf Instrumenten ausgeübt werden, eine herrliche, empfindungsvolle Poesie reden, obwohl der Meister wenig daran gedacht haben mag, daß in seiner gelehrten Arbeit, der in dem Reiche der Töne verzauberte Genius, für eingeweihte Sinne, so herrlich seine Flügel schlagen würde.'

The system-belief Wackenroder refers to here pertains to the rigid ideals of *mimesis*, the to him dreaded organizing principle of art in all its forms.<sup>14</sup> Against this there appears the Romantic idea of religion, even if it were to consist in nothing but surreal fantasies. Raymond. Murray Schafer puts his finger on the importance of Wackenroder's work: 'The close identification of music with religion can be sensed everywhere in German Romanticism.'<sup>15</sup> For many Wackenroder remains the first Romantic precisely because he enacted this identification. His writings, while giving an idea of soul which is unattached to a specific spirituality (what might be called the secular soul), qualify him as a Christian mystic also. In her study of 'musical depth', Holly Watkins, while drawing extensively on the history of the early Romantics' engagement with Pietism, relies principally on the correlation of music with the deepest recesses of the self rather than with the divine as mystical origin of the subject.<sup>16</sup> She sees Wackenroder's writings on art and music as perpetuating the diversity of inspirations, in which the divine was simply one strand (though a central one), which underlay the Romantic canonical view

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<sup>13</sup> Schubert, 111 (translation modified); *SWB* i, 89: 'Wer ein *System glaubt*, hat die allgemeine Liebe aus seinem Herzen verdrängt! Erträglicher noch ist Intoleranz des Gefühls, als Intoleranz des Verstandes; - *Aberglaube* besser als *Systemglaube*.'

<sup>14</sup> Cf. John M. Robertson (ed.), *The Third Earl of Shaftesbury. Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times* (Indianapolis, New York: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1974), 189: 'The most ingenious way of becoming foolish is by a system.'

<sup>15</sup> *E. T. A. Hoffmann and Music* (Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1975), 98.

<sup>16</sup> 'From the Mine to the Shrine: The Critical Origins of Musical Depth', *19<sup>th</sup>-Century Music* 27/3(2004), 179-207.

of music.<sup>17</sup> The present article embodies a different perspective, that Wackenroder conceives music to be inseparable from religion in supplying the most fundamental basis for the divination of inner meaning. In other words, it is music as a religious manifestation which potentiates the full knowledge of the subject.

Wackenroder's aesthetic ideology, based on religion and paradox rather than the knowledge-centredness of classical theory, permeates the rigorous scientific explanation of music he uses to support it. Classical precepts of order and harmony are recontextualized within the reverential atmosphere of Wackenroder's narrative to become essential concomitants of music's original beauty reinforcing the profundity of its essence rather than prescriptive and abstract criteria enforcing the rules of its construction. He refers to 'the new doctrine' of sound, 'written in profound numbers' (*die neue Lehre, in tiefsinnigen Zahlen geschrieben*).<sup>18</sup> The theory or doctrine of music which Wackenroder expounds rests on a parallel development or emergence of the powers of the human heart/soul and the laws of music, between which 'an inexplicable sympathy' (*eine unerklärliche Sympathie*)<sup>19</sup> exists. The power of sound, or music, is, therefore, on one level unknowable. Yet Wackenroder later emphasizes: 'The human heart becomes acquainted with itself in the mirror of *musical sounds*; it is they through which we learn to *feel emotion*' (*In dem Spiegel der Töne lernt das menschliche Herz sich selber kennen; sie sind es, wodurch wir das Gefühl fühlen lernen*).<sup>20</sup> What is knowable is accessed by means of what is unknowable. Wackenroder reaches paradoxical insights

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 188-191.

<sup>18</sup> Schubert, 188 (translation modified); *SWB* i, 216.

<sup>19</sup> Schubert, *ibid.*; *SWB* i, 217.

<sup>20</sup> Schubert, 191; *SWB* i, 220.

such as these through his gradual unfolding of *Seelenlehre*, placing human emotion in what he considers to be its rightful, religious setting - fixing it in the soul - and wedding dogmatic languages of religion and natural philosophy to provide a new and universal framework for music.

Thus paradox operates in the very concept of Wackenroder's project, in *Seele* and in *Lehre*, a paradox which illuminates musical aesthetics. David Charlton notes: 'For Wackenroder, as other early Romantics, paradox leads closer to truth than does cold reasoning.'<sup>21</sup> Through paradox, Wackenroder stresses the sublimity of music. Like some of his Romantic contemporaries, he accords very special treatment to instrumental music as paradigm. Ultimately Wackenroder seems to be arguing that music and soul so complete each other as to interpenetrate. It is only through attempting to read his work with this in mind that his true attitude to music, which was so significant for early Romanticism, can be discerned.

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<sup>21</sup> David Charlton (ed.), *E. T. A. Hoffmann's Musical Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 14.

## 2. WORD AND SOUL

'Soul' had an ancient pedigree. Plato's concept of the soul is quite amenable to the Christian theology with which Wackenroder was familiar. Plato designates the true aspirations of the soul, i.e. to perceive and accompany its divine and immortal kin.<sup>22</sup> Aristotle adds that contemplation is the highest activity.<sup>23</sup> But even these passages, which summarize classical thinking on the concept of transcendence, probably fall short of Wackenroder's aims and ideals. Wackenroder espouses what has been referred to as 'Romantic humanism', opposing it to the Enlightenment soul, which, as James Engell points out, 'had become too intellectualized and dissected, and consequently was ensnared by mechanistic circumstances of a social and economic order that was deemed by some to be necessary.'<sup>24</sup> In Romanticism art was to be judged on a new level according to its effect rather than its function. The locus of this effect was the soul itself.

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<sup>22</sup> *Republic*, 611e.

<sup>23</sup> *Ethics*, 1177.

<sup>24</sup> 'The Soul, Highest Cast of Consciousness', in Robert Bain, Beverly Taylor (eds.), *The Cast of Consciousness. Concepts of the Mind in British and American Romanticism* (New York and London: Greenwood, 1987), 3-19 (7). Engell stresses (3) that Romantic humanism need not be tied to the Christian or any religion. In this light it can be seen as a reaction against the notion of Romantics purely as devout and nostalgic rediscoverers of the art of the great Christian eras. Wackenroder may be participating in both spheres. He uncovers the implications of specific high art of the Christian past for his own message, whether that be of a sacred or secular cast. It is as if he is a theologian of art, ennobling its secular side.

While Andrea K. Henderson has justly warned against institutionalizing 'depth psychology' as the prime feature of Romanticism, wishing to emphasize 'the existence and importance of conceptions of the self that do not involve a notion of depth, ...to examine a set of non-canonical models of the self – models that could, nevertheless, lay a claim to being peculiarly "Romantic" in that they were clearly shaped by the major social, philosophical and aesthetic issues of the day',<sup>25</sup> it is more important for present purposes to note how Wackenroder conforms to, rather than challenges, popular stereotypes of Romanticism. In Henderson's spirit John Daverio lists stereotypical Romantic features which he says are only of secondary concern to 'pre-ideological Romanticism', and notes: 'The heady mixture of escapism and ecstasy that it is still too often taken as a defining feature of the Romantic endeavour was in fact a surface phenomenon, an artful camouflage for a penetrating and carefully circumscribed societal critique that attempted to come to grips with the disquieting moments in an emerging modern world, thereby wresting from them a measure of value and hopefulness.'<sup>26</sup> Wackenroder's psychical conflict between the public world of his compulsory legal career and the private world of his artistic wanderings may in fact have been so intense as to escape generalization in the terms Daverio proposes here. For Daverio, Romanticism remains 'primarily self-critical and reflective'. The stereotypical characteristics he notes are 'unremitting individuality of expression, the recovery of a chivalric past, the cultivation of the marvellous or fantastic in literature, a

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<sup>25</sup> *Romantic Identities. Varieties of Subjectivity 1774-1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 2.

<sup>26</sup> *Nineteenth-Century Music and the German Romantic Ideology* (New York: Schirmer, 1993), 2.



delight in insoluble contradictions, the mystical union of subject and object, yearning for the infinite'.<sup>27</sup> Wackenroder's introspective mission does not primarily make an idealistic appeal for social reform (to acknowledge the need for recreation through art as the road to higher truth). If it does hint at this, Wackenroder never presents himself as an activist: his aims are still psychological.

Fundamental to Wackenroder's psychological thought is the soul's origin, the divine. Two points about the meaning of the divine for Romantics deserve emphasis. Firstly, in contradistinction to classical idealism, the divine realm blended with human experience.<sup>28</sup> It thereby became accessible, especially to artistic creators. In this Wackenroder also includes those who, while not themselves artists, are eminently capable of appreciating art, since he deems the act of appreciation to be itself creative (the term he uses to denote this way of thinking is *Kunstenthusiasmus*, 'art enthusiasm'). Secondly, 'divine' need not be defined exclusively in theological terms (despite the emphasis on recovery of the Christian past, present especially in Wackenroder's essays on the visual arts). Wackenroder begins with the conviction that the divine element has to many people not been obvious:

So many anecdotes have been noted down and told again and again, so many significant slogans of artists preserved and continually repeated; and how has it been possible that people

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> As Francis Xavier Shea puts it, 'to locate reality, even transcendent reality, in experience aroused human consciousness to the possibility of a more pervasive sacredness, present in this world' ('Religion and the Romantic Movement', *Studies in Romanticism* 9(1970), 285-96 [288]). Shea goes on to remark that Classical idealism burns itself out, making way for Romantic consciousness (290).

listened to them merely with superficial admiration, so that no one came to suspect in those expressive signs the most holy aspect of art toward which they were pointing and to acknowledge here also, as in the rest of nature, the trace of the finger of God?<sup>29</sup>

Art thus becomes the 'new altar' of divine worship.

The predominance of *mimesis* in the eighteenth century was counteracted by the redefinition of genius as, in Frederick Burwick's phrase, 'a repetition of divine creativity'.<sup>30</sup> Genius, or rapture, as distinct from actual experience, is ever more closely aligned with imagination, or image-making power (*Einbildungskraft*). In the Romantic understanding imagination mediates the divine. Genius has drawn imagination into its new project of opposing the rational real with the divine. Imagination has been transformed so that it now has the necessary power to be the new perceptual tool for genius. Through the new organ of imagination the soul itself is the standard of judgement in respect of creative art, is its most penetrating interpreter.<sup>31</sup> Genius, imagination and soul are caught up together in a complex coincidence in order to give, through art, expression to a divine realm. *Kunstreligion* meant an identification of art

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<sup>29</sup> Schubert, 83; *SWB* i, 56: 'Man hat so manche Anekdoten aufgezeichnet und immer wieder erzählt, so manche bedeutende Wahlsprüche von Künstlern aufbehalten und immer wiederholt; und wie ist es möglich gewesen, daß man sie so bloß mit oberflächlicher Bewunderung anhörte, daß keiner darauf kam, aus diesen sprechenden Zeichen das Allerheiligste der Kunst, worauf sie hindeuteten, zu ahnden? und nicht auch hier, wie in der übrigen Natur, die Spur von dem Finger Gottes anzuerkennen?'

<sup>30</sup> *Poetic Madness and the Romantic Imagination* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996), 22.

<sup>31</sup> See Mary Warnock, *Imagination* (London: Faber, 1976), 13-71.

with the divine, the ineffable region of the loftiest human awareness. Wackenroder works from this background, shaping it into prominence.

Hans-Georg Gadamer writes on the place of the soul in the Romantic hermeneutical project (which he regards as suspect).<sup>32</sup> For him, hermeneutics as a science is not 'just one more stage in the history of the art of understanding'. In reaction not only to aesthetic paradigms but also to methods of writing which support or which depend on them, Gadamer sees as a principal Romantic achievement 'the conception of a universal hermeneutics for which the special exemplariness of tradition is no longer a presupposition of the hermeneutical task'.<sup>33</sup> The 'soul seeking understanding'<sup>34</sup> is now, more than simply being anti-rational (i.e. in transcendence of a former aesthetic paradigm), actually not bound to take into account the concept of tradition (in the sense of established custom) at all. In Wackenroder's work, the soul can move freely in time, choosing historical artefacts, like medieval and Renaissance works of art, which are important to the framing, in the present moment, of a discourse of eternity. The soul thus carries within it time and eternity: music liberates it from time and fuses with it to constitute eternity.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> *Wahrheit und Methode* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1960), Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (trs.), *Truth and Method* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., New York: Continuum, 1989).

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 178.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 180.

<sup>35</sup> See, for example, 'Ein wunderbares morgenländisches Märchen von einem nackten Heiligen' ('A magical Oriental tale of a naked saint') in *Phantasien*.

In *Herzensergiessungen*, when Wackenroder's persona switches from that of friar to his famous fictitious musician Joseph Berglinger, the insistence that the soul should reach its highest potential remains:

- but heaven had endowed *him* [Berglinger] in such a way that he always aspired to something *even higher*; mere *health* of the soul did not satisfy him, and that it perform its ordinary functions on earth, such as working and doing good; he also desired that it should dance about in exuberant high spirits and shout up to heaven, as if to its point of origin.<sup>36</sup>

The soul's activity is not to be confined merely to moral behaviour, which can be achieved with ordinary effort. The concept of art solely as edification provides an incomplete picture. It takes the artistic or religious sensibility to potentiate the soul. Once it is realized that this is achievable primarily through mystery and paradox, music comes into its own:

Thus has the strange inner reality of today's music developed. In its present perfection it is the youngest of all the arts. No other is capable of fusing these qualities of profundity, of sensual power, and of dark, visionary significance in such an enigmatical way. This remarkable, close fusion of such apparently contradictory qualities constitutes the whole pride of its superiority;<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Schubert, 147 (translation modified); *SWB* i, 131: ' – aber *ihn* hatte der Himmel nun einmal so eingerichtet, daß er immer nach etwas *noch Höherem* trachtete; es genügte ihm nicht die bloße *Gesundheit* der Seele, und daß sie ihre ordentlichen Geschäfte auf Erden, als arbeiten und Gutes thun, verrichtete; – er wollte, daß sie auch im üppigem Übermuthe dahertanzen, und zum Himmel, als zu ihrem Ursprunge, hinaufjauchzen sollte.'

<sup>37</sup> Schubert, 189 (translation modified); *SWB* i, 217: 'So hat sich das eigenthümliche Wesen der heutigen Musik, welche, in ihrer jetzigen Vollendung, die jüngste unter allen

Music best aspires to 'strange inner reality' and it characterizes the soul's existence.

Wackenroder specifies the unique role of instrumental music in this characterization:

And yet, and I cannot refrain from extolling, in addition, the latest, highest triumph of musical instruments: I mean those divine, magnificent symphonic pieces (brought forth by inspired spirits), in which not one individual emotion is portrayed, but an entire world, an entire drama of human emotions, is poured forth.<sup>38</sup>

In the new viewpoint emotions are wordless, words being by definition rational. In other essays Wackenroder frequently attacks the concept of reason or reasoning, which is embodied in descriptiveness. Words are essential to rationality because it is through them that rationality, a concept of the world grounded in reality, is achieved. Here Wackenroder may be rejecting words as principal expressive means by laying stress on the multiplicity of emotions afforded by the varied palette of symphonic music. To narrow down the *Affekt* of a musical work to a separate emotion is to remain rooted in a verbal base.

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Künsten ist, gebildet. Keine andre vermag diese Eigenschaften der Tiefsinnigkeit, der sinnlichen Kraft, und der dunkeln, phantastischen Bedeutsamkeit, auf eine so räthselhafte Weise zu verschmelzen. Diese merkwürdige, enge Vereinigung, so widerstrebend-scheinender Eigenschaften macht den ganzen Stolz ihrer Vorzüglichkeit aus;'

<sup>38</sup> Schubert, 193; *SWB* i, 221-2: 'Und doch kann ich's nicht lassen, noch den letzten höchsten Triumph der Instrumente zu preisen: ich meyne jene göttlichen großen Symphoniestücke, (von inspirirten Geistern hervorgebracht,) worin nicht eine einzelne Empfindung gezeichnet, sondern eine ganze Welt, ein ganzes Drama menschlichen Affekten ausgeströmt ist.'

In Wackenroder's thinking words are the enemy of the soul. Without music the soul would lack a vital means of asserting its existence. Wackenroder complains of 'the faint-hearted and doubting reasoners' (*die zaghaften und zweifelnden Vernünftler*): Are they trying to measure the richer language by the poorer and to resolve into words that which disdains words? Or have they never felt without words? Have they filled up their hollow hearts merely with descriptions of feelings?<sup>39</sup>

It is at this point in the essay that Wackenroder really begins to attack language as a means of explaining art. Words must go. The essence of music is not enunciable, but it is felt through the aesthetic substitution of instrumental music for the word painting of vocal genres. Music becomes instrumental music. Wackenroder, paradoxically by verbal means, devolves the merit and power of music from its co-casting with words in forming meaning to reliance on its autonomous inner characteristics. Words about music are the very means by which Wackenroder expresses the 'paradigm shift' which points to instrumental music as being irreconcilable with verbal meaning. They are his only recourse. However, as Dahlhaus claims in respect of Romantic musical aesthetics, 'literature about music is no mere reflection of what happens in the musical practice of composition, interpretation, and reception, but rather belongs, in a certain sense, to the constituent forces of music itself.'<sup>40</sup> It is just as vital as music itself. The central paradox that words are tools of reason inadequate to convey music's special role, and yet are

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<sup>39</sup> Schubert, 191; *SWB* i, 219: 'Streben sie die reichere Sprache nach der ärmern abzumessen, und in Worte aufzulösen, was Worte verachtet? Oder haben sie nie ohne Worte empfunden? Haben sie ihr hohles Herz nur mit Beschreibungen von Gefühlen ausgefüllt?'

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

employed as the first means of doing so, cannot be overcome, and this is why music becomes the highest, most extreme form of *Kunstreligion*.

Dahlhaus's historical account of *Kunstreligion* conceptualizes art as a purely human activity which acquires a transcendental standing: he speaks of *Kunstreligion* as 'the belief that art, though created by humans, is revelation'.<sup>41</sup> However, this definition does not stress enough the divine inspiration which, for Wackenroder, is the genesis of art: art is, for Wackenroder, created rather *through* humans than *by* them. Dahlhaus is thinking more of Tieck, who, in (Dahlhaus's quotation from) his own essay 'Symphonien' ('Symphonies'), declares music to be a mystical revelation, meaning, it seems, that it is an instrument by which eternal realities are uncovered rather than the manifestation and aspect of the eternal realities themselves.<sup>42</sup> Dahlhaus pinpoints Schleiermacher as having coined *Kunstreligion* and Tieck as its doctrinal formulator but says that it was Wackenroder 'to whom...it was an original experience.' This was because Wackenroder's *Kunstenthusiasmus* was perfect: he knelt down in homage before art.<sup>43</sup> Dahlhaus thus illustrates the successive characters of *Kunstreligion* as they are fused in Wackenroder's experience. He concludes the topic by noting that the extreme poles of faith and despair which characterized Pietism, a partial origin of Wackenroder's *Kunstreligion*, infused Wackenroder's Berglinger narrative with dangerous instability.<sup>44</sup> This type of instability, nevertheless, does not seem to occur at all in 'Das eigenthümliche innere Wesen', which adheres unerringly to the central tenets

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 88.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 89.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 90.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 91.

of Wackenroder's *Kunstreligion* as defined by Dahlhaus - a retreat from worldly preoccupations, kneeling before art.

For Dahlhaus, the *Kunstreligion* of instrumental music depends on the 'aesthetic contemplation' of art (one of Schleiermacher's 'three paths that allow one to go from the finite to the infinite').<sup>45</sup> This aesthetic contemplation, or devotion, is, in Herder's theory, the crucial outcome of the experience of music. To achieve this outcome there must be at least a separation of music from words, if not a rejection of words. But, Dahlhaus emphasizes, this devotional state is, for Herder, to be identified not with the structure of absolute music itself but with 'the constitution of the listener's consciousness.'<sup>46</sup> This point further illustrates the rejection of words: the structure of absolute music need not necessarily entail the acceptance or rejection of words, since pure music is pure music whether attached to words or not; however, the listener's inner consciousness must be free from verbal intrusion in order to constitute a vehicle receptive to music (a reversal of Johann Georg Sulzer's dictum that the 'empty' sounds of instrumental music should actually stimulate conversation by the listener<sup>47</sup>). The translation of devotion or aesthetic contemplation from the sphere of the sacred (sacred music and art) to indeterminate instrumental music Dahlhaus says 'represented nothing less than the discovery, fundamental to the musical culture of the nineteenth century, that great instrumental music, in order to be comprehended as "musical logic" and "language above language", required a certain attitude of aesthetic contemplation...through which

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 88-89.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 79.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 80.



it constituted itself in one's awareness in the first place.'<sup>48</sup> Essentially, what Dahlhaus is saying here (and Wackenroder would agree) is that devotion or reverential awe is the primary structural means of cognition which instrumental music has. Dahlhaus' whole account of *Kunstreligion* thus depends in no small way on explaining why a wordless music which rises above words entails the fusion of the devotion of the religious world and the contemplative apprehension of absolute instrumental music.<sup>49</sup>

Wackenroder's exaltation of instrumental music, through the paradox of verbally outlining its essential condition of wordlessness, for him renders necessary the second paradox: the absence from his narrative of real musicians and works. The link between the two paradoxes is myth. Lilian R. Furst quite unnecessarily places as opposing alternatives the value of *Herzensergiessungen* as 'a concrete exemplification of a certain position important for the closing years of the eighteenth century' and its value as a myth.<sup>50</sup> Isaiah Berlin's argument is more to the point: 'When we try to describe the light we can describe it accurately only by putting it out. Therefore do not let us attempt to describe it. But you cannot not attempt to describe it, because that means to stop expressing, and to stop expressing is to stop living.'<sup>51</sup> Berlin holds that it is only myth which achieves this communication of the ineffable, which words cannot do because in

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> 'In Other Voices: Wackenroder's *Herzensergiessungen* and the Creation of a Romantic Mythology', in Frederick Burwick and Jürgen Klein (eds.), *Literature and Art in England and Germany* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1996), 269-85 (276).

<sup>51</sup> *The Roots of Romanticism* (London: Pimlico, 1999), 105.

codifying things they slash them asunder and sever their vital continuity.<sup>52</sup> In his myth Wackenroder is attacking the 'reasoners', the wordy bourgeoisie that Roland Barthes says 'has obliterated its name in passing from reality to representation [...] It comes to an agreement with the facts, but does not compromise about values, it makes its status undergo a real *ex-nominating* operation: the bourgeoisie is defined as *the social class which does not want to be named*.'<sup>53</sup> Wackenroder in fact disparages only one real Enlightenment theorist.<sup>54</sup> The rest of the culture whose ideas he is taking issue with he simply omits.

It may be Barthes' fragile-sounding characterization of the mythologist that is the readiest image of Wackenroder: 'Justified by the political dimension, the mythologist is still at a distance from it. [...] He can live revolutionary action only vicariously: hence the self-conscious character of his function, this something a little stiff and painstaking, muddled and excessively simplified which brands any intellectual behaviour with an openly political foundation'.<sup>55</sup> If this characterization is followed, there is a contradiction between Wackenroder's narrative mode and the revolutionary nature of this thought. Myth, however, allows him to convey the importance of the ineffability and anonymity of music and to hold them together. In not naming the bourgeoisie Wackenroder wants to express his reluctance to bring music into a realm where he knows it will not be appreciated.

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 49.

<sup>53</sup> Annette Lavers (tr.), *Mythologies* (London: Vintage, 1972), 138.

<sup>54</sup> Schubert, 81; *SWB* i, 53.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 156. Barthes has already explained (146) that 'revolutionary language proper cannot be mythical.'

### 3. NAMING MUSIC

Unlike E. T. A. Hoffmann, Wackenroder has no masterwork like Beethoven's Fifth Symphony to review critically. No specific work of that stature is involved in his discussion. Wackenroder's words name nothing. He has no actual music in his sights. But in what way does Wackenroder name music? If he wants to exalt music over other forms of art and knowledge, he must be able or desire to name some music.

Wackenroder cannot name 'great' music because it is ineffable, though he does find works which are, in his scheme, despicable because of their association with reason. [In] man there is a great desire, never fulfilled; it has no name, it seeks no object, it is nothing that you call it nor any joy; [...] But this desire, to which nothing can give a name, our songs and harmonies name it to the human spirit – the longing spirit then weeps the more vehemently and can control itself no longer and calls amid the music in sobbing rapture: Truly, all that you name, I lack.<sup>56</sup>

This is not Wackenroder writing but Jean-Paul, in 1795. Wackenroder feels similarly, and expresses himself even more intensely: 'I desire for myself no glittering earthly happiness, but it is not even to be granted unto me to live once, O holy art, totally for you?'<sup>57</sup> For Wackenroder also emotions are spontaneously reducible to harmonies: music 'portrays human feelings in a superhuman way, [...] shows us all the emotions of our soul above our heads in incorporeal form, clothed in golden clouds of airy

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<sup>56</sup> Oliver Strunk (ed.), *Source Readings in Music History. The Romantic Era* (London and Boston: Faber, 1965), 27.

<sup>57</sup> Schubert, 86; *SWB* i, 59: 'Wünsch' ich mir doch kein glänzendes Glück dieser Erde; aber soll es mir auch nicht einmal vergönnt seyn, dir, o heilige Kunst, ganz zu leben?'

harmonies'.<sup>58</sup> In music emotions are rendered anonymous. This changes its nature, distinguishes it in some way. Wackenroder cannot name specific real musical works because he sees them as vessels of elements which have been made anonymous.

Saying what are the deeper implications of anonymity in Wackenroder's writings is not at all straightforward. Wackenroder's anonymities cause his own identity to recede. He is self-effacing. The result is that music constitutes the whole surface area of his literature-about-music: it is the total interface with the space of the reader, who cannot but encounter it. In the transmission of the idea of the supremacy of music's being a law unto itself, its *autonomia*, there is paradox. Something which is intrinsically bound up with 'self' is being communicated not principally through its authorship, its origin, but through its readers, its destination. The primary source of the self is external to it, located in its base of reception. Wackenroder's readers are the *Freunde der Kunst*, the art enthusiasts who become themselves anonymous coordinators of information. Everything is now anonymous, sourceless.<sup>59</sup> There is thus a relationship between anonymity and autonomy. Autonomy in music properly belongs to instrumental music, through instrumental music's 'namelessness', its lack of specification of namable

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<sup>58</sup> Schubert, 180; *SWB* i, 207: 'weil sie menschliche Gefühle auf eine übermenschliche Art schildert, weil sie uns alle Bewegungen unsers Gemüths unkörperlich, in goldne Wolken luftiger Harmonieen eingekleidet, über unserm Haupte zeigt, -'

<sup>59</sup> See Roland Barthes, 'The Death of the Author', in Stephen Heath (ed., tr.), *Image Music Text* (London: Fontana Press, 1977), 142-8. For a comprehensive overview of the theory of reading and authorship in the early Romantic period, see Friedrich Kittler, Michael Metteer and Chris Cullen (trs.), *Discourse Networks 1800/1900* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), 108-23.

identity. The story of music Wackenroder tells in 'Das eigenthümliche innere Wesen' occurs in the context of references to darkness, ineffability and profundity, which accentuate his not naming music. This is the same kind of language he uses to convey the inadequacy of words, so that these two central paradoxes are thereby linked.

Wackenroder stresses the consistency between the soulfulness of music and its mathematical logic:

Between the individual, mathematical tonal relationships and the individual fibres of the human heart an inexplicable sympathy has revealed itself, through which the musical art has become an abundant and malleable mechanism for the portrayal of human emotions.<sup>60</sup>

This description anonymizes music, for it is still poised in 'airy harmonies' (*luftige Harmonieen*). It has not been brought to earth. It is 'abundant' (*reichhaltig*) but also 'malleable' (*bildsam*), indicating that Wackenroder is avoiding precise delineation.

Wackenroder marks out music as 'the youngest of all the arts' (*die jüngste unter allen Künsten*). It is the newcomer in the history of the arts. Because it generates a unique fusion of deep and contradictory qualities, music possesses a peculiar level of truth, its

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<sup>60</sup> Schubert, 188 (translation modified); *SWB* i, 216-17: 'Es hat sich zwischen den einzelnen mathematischen Tonverhältnissen und in den einzelnen Fibern des menschlichen Herzens eine unerklärliche Sympathie offenbart, wodurch die Tonkunst ein reichhaltiges und bildsames Maschinenwerk zur Abschilderung menschlicher Empfindungen geworden ist.'

philosophical truths to some degree stemming from the mathematical and scientific truths it embodies.<sup>61</sup>

However, scientific truth, which is given for the purpose of exalting music and setting it as the key unifying art, can be abused:

The scientific profundities of music have attracted many of those speculative minds, who are rigorous and sharp-witted in all of their activities and who do not seek the beautiful for its own sake, out of an open, pure love, but treasure it only because of the coincidence that unusual, strange powers can be aroused by it.<sup>62</sup>

While Wackenroder praises these researchers' development of music as a science, necessary to its supreme artistic potential, the individual musical works which they produce are artificial and far behind the implications of their researches:

The inner machinery of music, like an ingenious weaver's loom for woven cloth, has been developed to a level of perfection worthy of astonishment by these learned men; their

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<sup>61</sup> Cf. Andrew Bowie's discussion of German Idealist and Romantic philosophies (including remarks on music) in his *Aesthetics and subjectivity: from Kant to Nietzsche* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2003), 49-68 (51).

<sup>62</sup> Schubert, 189; *SWB* i, 217: 'Die wissenschaftlichen Tiefsinnigkeiten der Musik haben manche jener speculirenden Geister herangelockt, welche in allem ihren Thun streng und scharf sind, und das Schöne nicht aus offener, reiner Liebe, um sein selbst willen, aufsuchen, sondern es nur des Zufalls halber schätzen, daß besondre, seltene Kräfte daran aufzureiben waren.'

individual works of art, however, are often to be regarded no differently from excellent anatomical studies and difficult academic postures in the art of painting.<sup>63</sup>

This is where Wackenroder's naming divides. Now the world of musical creations is divided into worthy examples, which may or may not be 'great', and sterile, synthetic pieces which show only an allegiance to prescriptive rules. Whereas Wackenroder often gives the impression that music is one exalted unity, the question poses itself: is all music, in fact, for him, 'great' music?

Wackenroder perhaps reaches an assessment of this question by considering music's individuality. He inserts this plea:

What do they want, the faint-hearted and doubting reasoners, who require each of the hundreds and hundreds of musical pieces explained in words, and who cannot understand that *not every piece* has an expressible meaning like a painting?<sup>64</sup>

For Wackenroder, many pieces of music may evoke the same kind of emotion, but this very idea, that there can be many pieces expressing generally the same emotion, indicates music's inability to fulfil the drastically mimetic roles in specific contexts

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<sup>63</sup> Schubert, 189; *SWB* i, 217: 'Durch diese gelehrten Männer ist das innere Maschinenwerk der Musik, gleich einem künstlichen Weberstuhle für gewirkte Zeuge, zu einer erstaunenswürdigen Vollkommenheit gebracht worden; ihre einzelnen Kunststücke aber sind oftmals nicht anders als in der Malerey vortreffliche anatomische Studien und schwere academische Stellungen zu betrachten.'

<sup>64</sup> Schubert, 191 (emphasis added); *SWB* i, 219: 'Was wollen sie, die zaghaften und zweifelnden Vernünftler, die jedes der hundert und hundert Tonstücke in Worten erklärt verlangen, und sich nicht darin finden können, daß nicht jedes eine nennbare Bedeutung hat, wie ein Gemählde?'

envisaged for it by rational thought, contexts where almost any music exhibiting generic characteristics would do. Wackenroder pleads that each piece is individual and, by implication, that each emotion is individual, each context different. The fact that manifold emotions congregate in one piece does not prevent it from being individual and special. A piece of 'great' music, but certainly any piece of music, except a sterile and synthetic piece (which to Wackenroder is non-music), is essentially individual. In this respect details concerning the stature of a musical work (whether it is 'great' or not) are unimportant. The individuality of a single piece is not undermined by the anonymous nature of instrumental music.

Instrumental music is anonymous, but it names music. It is instrumental music that, for the hearer, calls forth the very concept of music. It is as if Wackenroder is going to extreme lengths – the conspicuous lack of real music and composers – in order to demonstrate the identity between the instrumental manifestation of music and its conceptual essence. Wackenroder proclaims instrumental music, which proclaims itself. This can be linked to the modern project of self-realization and proclamation so thoroughly mapped out by Charles Taylor.<sup>65</sup> On one level, Wackenroder's essay does not strongly or explicitly propagate a notion of autonomy, which characterizes the advent of modern ideas of self-worth as the essential preliminary to a new conception of individual rights and determination, but instead reads like a catalogue of emotions. There is a significant connection, however, between anonymity and autonomous music, in that the anonymity featured in Wackenroder's work strangely yet effectively points to the precept of autonomy much more than if he had simply eulogized prevailing

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<sup>65</sup> *Sources of the Self. The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).



masterworks. Wackenroder may not quite reach E. T. A. Hoffmann's formulation, in the 'Review of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony', of music as refraining from 'all admixture of other arts',<sup>66</sup> but from Wackenroder's work as a whole the autonomy of music emerges as a central fact worthy of acceptance. Autonomy itself is so vital to modern existence, even if it gives rise to crisis. Wackenroder, through asserting the centrality of music, shares in this building up of the modern mentality. He puts forward new consequences of art which touch on the modern way of living.<sup>67</sup>

The paradoxical phenomenon of the unnamings of music in Wackenroder's work thus embeds instrumental music in wider repercussions. This can only be the case if there is an intimate connection between anonymity and instrumental music. The surface area of *Herzensergiessungen* and *Phantasien* shows an autonomous music which is anonymous: anonymity points up autonomy. This provides an important clue to the continuing question about the necessity of the paradox of the absence of real musicians and music examples. It is a matter of the emphasis anonymity gives to autonomous instrumental music. In this sense anonymity acts as a strategy for Wackenroder in his quest for a paradigmatic change in the function of instrumental music, by throwing autonomy into relief. Fundamentally, anonymity is a special means necessary in order to lend real conviction to the notion of the autonomy of instrumental music and its universal ramifications. The final image in 'Das eigenthümliche innere Wesen', of the 'formless' (*gestaltlos*) festival which Berglinger intoxicatedly observes after the almost deliberately and ironically picturesque drama of emotions cataloguing his symphonic

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<sup>66</sup> David Charlton (ed.), *ibid.*, 236.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. Richard Eldridge, *Leading a Human Life. Wittgenstein, Intentionality and Romanticism* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1997), 20-1.

experiences, can only be brought about by Wackenroder's providential omission of any reference to the real musical world.<sup>68</sup>

#### 4. PARADIGM AND RELIGION

The two central paradoxes - the verbal description of the essentially wordless and the anonymity of the real musical world - which are predominant in Wackenroder's discursive yet pointed essays on music come together in his concept of 'soul', most specifically the powerful paradigmatic combination 'the sounding soul' (*die tönende Seele*), which inaugurates the symphonic catalogue of emotions in 'Das eigenthümliche innere Wesen'. But this is more than merely a sensual catalogue of emotions. It has momentous proportions which vindicate concurrent and subsequent Romantic philosophies of truth. All of life resides in the description that Wackenroder gives to these most recent symphonies. A soul which sounds is a vital and expressive being in which there is the sense of separation from previous models of more passive, moralized entities. It is music which, through a culmination of factors, becomes the feeling organ of truth and concentrates the human sphere in its material. Maria M. Tatar sets out the situation in respect of this passage quite sharply:

This 'tönende Seele' can be characterized as both the soul of music and the music of the soul, for it follows a path much like Berglinger's own route through life. References to the innocence of childhood, the rash plunge into the mainstream of life, the initial joys of testing new emotions, the pain of disillusion, the moment of catastrophe, the desperate attempt to find salvation, the recollection of innocence, and the final collapse all evoke stations of Berglinger's own life [...]

The verbal transcription of this symphony depicts at once the soul of music and the music of

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<sup>68</sup> Schubert, 193; *SWB* i, 222.

Berglinger's soul. The inner world of that musician has become a work of art, the *Klosterbruder* shows less concern for the artistic creations of his subjects than for their inner lives. He explores the labyrinth of thoughts and emotions that constitutes the soul of each figure. Like Joseph Berglinger's verbal music, the verbal portraits drawn by the *Klosterbruder* present biographies of the soul. In listening to the music of Berglinger's soul, the *Klosterbruder* becomes inspired to transmit the story of its life. The music of the soul, as much as any work of art, can serve as the impetus for the creative act.<sup>69</sup>

Tatar's intense and provocative phraseology here seems, like Wackenroder's own, to be the only way of raising key issues.<sup>70</sup> Even though Tatar stops short of recognizing the interpenetration of music and soul in endless interplay of reciprocal fulfilment, the fact that she can talk at all of 'biographies of the soul' brought on by music shows indeed how far Wackenroder had advanced musical aesthetics to include human life in its intrinsic complexity. It is very tempting to witness in 'Das eigenthümliche innere Wesen' Wackenroder's immersion of humanity in the symphony (whether or not 'symphony' is generically intended for all forms of instrumental music). What one might almost call the system of the soul cannot be resisted. Whether the soul and music are separate or one does not matter in comparison with what their metaphysical union actually achieves. This union illustrates music's indispensability to the human condition, the fact that man must have music, because in a supernatural way it articulates him, it recounts

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<sup>69</sup> Maria M. Tatar, 'The Art of Biography in Wackenroder's *Herzensergiessungen eines kunstliebenden Klosterbruders* and *Phantasien über die Kunst*', *Studies in Romanticism* 19(1980), 233-48 (244-6).

<sup>70</sup> Cf. Edward Lippman, 'The Tonal Ideal of Romanticism', in *The Philosophy and Aesthetics of Music* (Lincoln, Nebraska, and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), 123-35.

the story of his soul. Instrumental music is, like self-determination, so endemic to contemporary existence that it is taken for granted. Contemporary society may have lost the connection between instrumental music and personal autonomy which so fascinated early Romantics, but it has not lost its implicit dependence on either.

Wackenroder precedes Schopenhauer in explaining all of this, as he was the first in German literature to treat music as the epitome of the true meaning of art.<sup>71</sup> One feels that he could with little effort have coined the ultimate paradox, the *Seelensystem*, the mystical communion of human affairs with instrumental music which is implied by the imagery in 'Das eigenthümliche innere Wesen'.

In this article something has been seen of one half of the puzzle of *Seelenlehre*, 'soul' (which is perhaps the more notoriously Romantic component). Why should Wackenroder utilize *Lehre*, doctrine, in relation to soul? How paradoxical is this? As already argued, the religious overtones of *Lehre* are to be taken seriously in interpreting 'Das eigenthümliche innere Wesen', even though apotheosizing art in a religious sense entails the secularizing of religion itself. *Seelenlehre* is a dated term for 'psychology' (the translation rather clumsily accepted by Mary Hurst Schubert). However, the literal compound 'soul-doctrine' is more appropriate to what may be at work on the level of paradox.

In Wackenroder's work, especially *Herzensergiessungen*, water metaphors abound. 'Soul' occurs in the context of fluidity, it has the characteristic of being free and flexible. 'Doctrine', on a semantic level, lacks this freedom. Wackenroder's paradigm

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<sup>71</sup> See Herbert Lindenberger, 'Literature and the other arts', in Marshall Brown (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism. Volume V – Romanticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 362-86 (374).

shift is from a mimetic aesthetic doctrine to a reconfigured religious doctrine which in its turn unshackles and revolutionizes aesthetics. This occurs through music, certainly, but there are contradictions within the process which are independent of music. 'Soul' was hitherto governed by doctrine. In the Christian Enlightenment its political survival as well as eschatological fortunes depended on conformity with doctrine, whether it was with Protestant Biblical logos or with Catholic sacramental observance.

The theological and practical contrasts between Protestantism and Catholicism are singularly exemplified in sixteenth-century Christianity. Eucharistic piety, commonly what Gary Macy calls 'a fresh and alarmingly personal veneration',<sup>72</sup> was the essential characteristic of late medieval Catholicism. In the first centuries the eucharistic celebration, as the high point of the liturgical service, had been reserved to baptized persons so that children and catechumens were excluded.<sup>73</sup> By the thirteenth century it had become clericalized – for example, the congregation no longer received communion wine as there was a general fear that it would be spilled and the sacrament profaned.<sup>74</sup> Alongside the Eucharist there occurred the paraphernalia of religion:

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<sup>72</sup> 'Commentaries on the Mass during the Early Scholastic Period' in Lizette Larson-Miller (ed.), *Medieval Liturgy. A Book of Essays* (New York and London: Garland, 1997), 25-60 (43).

<sup>73</sup> Jeanne E. Krochalis and E. Ann Matter, 'Manuscripts of the Liturgy' in Thomas J. Heffernan and E. Ann Matter (eds.), *The Liturgy of the Medieval Church* (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Medieval Institute Publications, Western Michigan University, 2001), 433-72 (433).

<sup>74</sup> Elizabeth Parker McLachlan, 'Liturgical Vessels and Implements' in Heffernan and Matter (eds.), 369-432 (385).

indulgences, sacramental confession, devotional cults of the saints and of the Blessed Virgin, veneration of images, pilgrimages, feast days etc. All of these were underpinned by a fine and complex fabric of certain dogma which permeated the religious and social atmosphere. Organizationally, too, the universality of the Church was reflected in its institutions, all of which (even the regular monastic orders which had had their own independence) became centralized and subject to discipline – for example, the celibacy of consecrated souls. The temporal influence of such a complex monolith was, on the eve of sixteenth-century challenges and changes, paramount and all-pervasive.

In one of his classic studies of the Reformation, Steven Ozment hits upon what may be the exact image and tenor of Protestantism: the dispelling of fantasy. Ozment observes:

Every person has been inspired and carried away at least once in life by an idealistic fantasy, and it is an experience entire nations also know. Sometimes such fantasies are wholesome and enlightening. At other times they can prove to be purely seductive and even devastating.

German Protestants in the sixteenth century claimed to be expert in knowing the difference between the two. They despised nothing so much as the illusions that robbed individuals and societies of their peace of mind and took a sizeable toll of their substance as well. Whether one views the Reformation in terms of its literature, its laws, or the lives of the laity who embraced it, it portrays itself as the hand that interrupts unrealistic dreams and exposes false prophets. Protestant faith promised to save people above all from disabling credulity.<sup>75</sup>

Core elements of Catholic doctrine and practice were targetted as fantastical and submitted to the dictates of scripture or even of simple common sense. The reformers disclaimed the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist and the Mass as a whole because

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<sup>75</sup> *Protestants. The Birth of a Revolution* (New York: Doubleday Image Books, 1991), 5-6.

of its connotations as an efficacious sacrifice to intercede for the dead. Saints, images, clerical celibacy and auricular confession all came under attack. The battleground between Lutheran and Reformed traditions over the common altarpiece forms a microcosm of the Reformation as a whole, as Bodo Nischan's fascinating essay shows.<sup>76</sup> In late medieval practice the altar had become central to liturgical worship, the new situation of the priest before the altar and therefore between it and the people of the congregation visually confirming the priestly function as mediating between God and man.<sup>77</sup> For Wackenroder, art served precisely this priestly function and a metaphor of the altar would not have been lost on him. When Wackenroder exaltedly reviews the panorama of medieval and Renaissance artists in 'Die Mahlerchronik' ('The chronicle of artists', in *Herzensergiessungen*), it is through the mouth of an (anonymous) old and learned priest. From the 1520s, however, the Lutherans insisted that the priest should face the people from behind the altar: he became one of them rather than merely an instrument of God. The Reformed churches, for their part, did away with the concept of altars altogether, maintaining that they were unscriptural and that their affinity with images rendered them idolatrous.<sup>78</sup>

Some mainstream eighteenth-century versions of the basic Protestant ethical outlook, which had in its original manifestations engendered such radically hostile

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<sup>76</sup> 'Becoming Protestants: Lutheran Altars or Reformed Communion Tables?' in Karin Maag and John D. Witvliet (eds.), *Worship in Medieval and Early Modern Europe. Change and continuity in religious practice* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2004), 84-114.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 95.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 96, 98.

criticism of received tradition, may have been more moderate (there is still much unknown territory in eighteenth-century ecclesiology). In Wackenroder's day Protestant Berlin saw a peaceful co-existence of Lutheran and Reformed confessions.<sup>79</sup> The problem which faced contemporary German society was a more general one centring around church and state, as Gerhard Benecke's analysis demonstrates.<sup>80</sup> The beneficent former Baroque Catholic *Reichskirche* ('imperial Church') was replaced by an interfering Enlightened secularity. Benecke puts the point potently as follows: 'The eighteenth century produced an officially orchestrated campaign against popular excesses in religion.'<sup>81</sup> Popular piety had had positive social aspects in Germany and Wackenroder may well have been lamenting its endangerment, of which possibly both sides of the theological divide were casualties.<sup>82</sup>

The distinction between Protestant and Catholic Christianities also embodies a split between the two central paradoxes examined in this article. Protestant Christianity is centrally represented by the Word and rational justification. Henry Sussman notes,

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<sup>79</sup> Nicholas Hope, *German and Scandinavian Protestantism 1700-1918* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 235.

<sup>80</sup> 'The German *Reichskirche*' in William J. Callahan and David Higgs (eds.), *Church and society in Catholic Europe of the eighteenth century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 77-87.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

<sup>82</sup> On popular piety see Marc R. Forster, *Catholic Revival in the Age of the Baroque. Religious Identity in Southwest Germany, 1550-1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Bob Scribner and Trevor Johnson (eds.), *Popular Religion in Germany and Central Europe, 1400-1800* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996).



with particular reference to the Reformation, that ‘each writing project, both “primary” artefacts and critical ones, is the result of an interface between subjectivity and rhetoric.’<sup>83</sup> Wackenroder rejects this, although Sussman pinpoints Lutheran psychology, as culturally read, as the ‘ultimate precedent’ for ‘the notion of the artist – or the intellectual – as a hypersensitive, hyperbrilliant, singular individual who bridges the gap between normality and sublimity, an idea so well-entrenched as to be naturalized in many cultural quarters today.’<sup>84</sup> Wackenroder rejects words. Catholic Christianity is centrally represented by both Word and symbol and a mystical theology of partially earned, partially conferred grace. Wackenroder embraces this, recognizing the intensity offered to art by the medieval past, in the synthesis of *Kunstreligion*. Something of the ‘conversion process’ is elegantly described by Benedetto Croce:

And so these feminine souls, these ‘romantics’, dreamed of returning to religious transcendence and the peace that it seemed to promise, to the cessation, in silence and in renunciation, of the doubts and anxieties of thought, to the norm accepted because of its very character as a norm that imposes itself and exonerates from all independent solution of the battles waged within the conscience. And as the highest expression of this sort of transcendence and of this imperative ruling was the Catholic faith; not only those who belonged to Catholic peoples and had been brought up from childhood in Catholicism, but also Protestants, Lutherans, those of other confessions, or even men from the most distant religions or from no religion at all, became Catholics again or for the first time and even were converted with the due rites<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> *The Aesthetic Contract. Statutes of Art and Intellectual Work in Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 67.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

<sup>85</sup> Henry Furst (tr.), *History of Europe in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Unwin, 1934), 47.

Wackenroder has reinterpreted the Catholic religion to become the standard-bearer for the new Romantic aesthetic of instrumental music (not only music in general). The desirable aspects of Catholicism have become secularized in support of the new paradigm. Catholic mysticism identifies and aids the essential anonymity of instrumental music. If Croce's model of the Romantic conjoining of desires for tenderness and for a systemic rigour to end all arguments is accepted, then the Catholic idea of doctrine is more likely to be amenable to Wackenroder's mystagogic enterprise of *Seelenlehre* in 'Das eigenthümliche innere Wesen' than the rigid closure of its Protestant counterparts.

The religious parallels with the two central paradoxes of verbal wordlessness and anonymous music may work in a multiplicity of ways. The obvious primary case is that Protestantism, with its emphasis on what might be called the verbal condition, expresses the first paradox, and Catholicism, with its connotations of mystical ineffability and therefore anonymity, expresses the second. A secondary parallel may occur in the contrast between the masculine severity and detachment from ritual evident in the Protestant faith and the perceived tender mysteries of Catholicism. So the list might continue.

Whereas previously the two paradoxes were considered semi-independently, now their interrelationship is clear. What implications does this have for the paradigmatic nature of Wackenroder's position? Wackenroder seems to have intended that it should not matter whether or not his work amounts to a landmark within a series of positions effected by massive and uncertain transitions, or to a single moment lying indistinguishably on a continuum of individual moments. What does matter is paradox. The specific religious contradiction which lies everywhere in Wackenroder's project

implies the deepest oppositional contradictions within the human soul. These can be assuaged only by music, specifically instrumental music. Musical sounds in fact fracture verbal language and so replace it as the first line of defence of the soul. This *Seelenlehre*, or doctrine of the soul, underlies ideas of a cosmic future which would be developed in the visions of nineteenth-century thought.<sup>86</sup>

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