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**LEADING THROUGH INTELLECT**

**THE MEANING OF LEADERSHIP IN THE INTELLECTUAL HISTORY OF  
NINETEENTH AND EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY GERMANY**

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**Doctor of Philosophy**

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Aston University

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Katryn Louise Bradshaw, Doctor of Philosophy, 1998

**Summary**

This study examines the understanding of leadership in Germany, as it developed throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century. The investigation is based on the work of contemporary writers and thinkers, as well as on the leadership styles of key political figures. Given the ideological connotations of the term "Führung" in post-war Germany, the aim is to reconsider the meaning of leadership, with particular reference to the alternative notion of spiritual guidance.

The rise to power of Napoleon I fundamentally influenced the understanding of leadership in Germany, as is demonstrated through an analysis of the Napoleonic reception in contemporary literature. Despite polarised responses, the formation of the heroic ideal may be identified, the quest for spiritual guidance having become subordinate to the charismatic legitimisation of political authority.

As advocated by Thomas Carlyle, the mid to late nineteenth century witnessed the realisation of this ideal through Bismarck. The intellectual response to this development is characterised by the work of Wagner, Burckhardt and Nietzsche. In different ways each figure emphasised the need to redefine greatness and to seek spiritual guidance from alternative sources.

The reflection on leadership in the early twentieth century is traced through the work of Harry Graf Kessler and the circles around Stefan George. Hitherto unpublished material is examined, revealing both the influences of nineteenth century thought and reactions to the "persönliches Regiment" of Wilhelm II.

The intellectual debate culminates in Max Kommerell's 1928 study *Der Dichter als Führer*. Read in conjunction with unpublished notes and correspondence, this provides new insights into Kommerell's thought. The concept of poetic leadership constitutes a potential spiritual and intellectual alternative to the ideal of the political "Führer" which dominated the forthcoming era. It therefore remains of contemporary significance and may contribute to a broader discussion of the leadership dilemma in modern Germany.

**Key words**

Napoleonic myth

Spiritual and intellectual guidance

Charismatic legitimisation of authority

Hero-Worship

The poet as leader

*For my family*

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## *Foreword*

Komm Gottgesandter!  
Komm, ein lebendig Beispiel uns zu geben,  
Dass reiner Sinn und wahrer Himmelsglut  
Der schlaffen Mehrheit Woge bricht! - O komm!<sup>1</sup>

Hans Carossa's poetic appeal for a divine leader epitomises the ambiguous quest for spiritual guidance which was to characterise the intellectual discussion on leadership in Germany. Haunted by past eras of greatness and heroism, the poet longs for a future leader, yet suffers the realisation that his own, seemingly mediocre, era is unable to provide the type of leadership which he seeks. Written in 1896/97, the aptly entitled poem *Epigonenleid* reflects the need for orientation which was felt in *fin-de-siècle* Germany, evoking the senses of both loss and desire inherent within this potentially painful process.

Carossa's appeal is based on the notion of one almighty, almost mythical figure who will unite the people in one common goal, thereby providing a sense of purpose and direction within the "irren Zeitgewoge".<sup>2</sup> The qualities which the poet describes and the desperate sense of longing which his work evokes are representative of the intellectual discussion on leadership as it was to develop during the nineteenth century and were themselves to further characterise early twentieth century debate. The quest for such guidance being at its strongest in periods of social and political change, this phenomenon may be observed in particular in the early 1800s following the French Revolution and the rise to power of Napoleon I, as well as during the Weimar Republic.

National Socialist ideology was to later capitalise upon and subsequently misuse this quest for spiritual orientation, transforming it into the realisation of totalitarianism and

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<sup>1</sup> Hans Carossa, "Epigonenleid", in: Carossa, *Gedichte. Die Veröffentlichungen zu Lebzeiten und Gedichte aus dem Nachlass*. Hrsg. und kommentiert von Eva Kampmann-Carossa. Insel Verlag, Frankfurt am Main 1995, p. 128 (125-128). All footnote references in this thesis have been cited in their original form.



political dictatorship. As a result of this process the use of the word “Führung” in Germany remains highly problematic, evoking historical and ideological connotations which cannot be dissociated from the term itself.

During the post-war era German literature began to reflect this dangerous ambiguity of the leadership concept. Thomas Mann’s *Mario und der Zauberer* stands as an early example of the potential abuse of “Führung”, highlighting its close linguistic and conceptual alliance with the multifaceted term “Verführung” which had characterised Germany’s submission to the charismatic figure. This historical awareness led to a marked avoidance of the terms “Führung” and “Führer” and the leadership discourse continues to be characterised by the search for alternative formulations.

Nevertheless, the concept itself, however problematic, remains of great significance in both political and spiritual terms, and it is for this reason that the evolution of the meaning of “Führung” in Germany, prior to its misuse in the Third Reich, merits further investigation. This study therefore seeks to examine the development of intellectual reflection on leadership over the course of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, with particular emphasis being placed on the notion of spiritual guidance as a possible alternative to the politically oriented notion of a charismatic leader figure.

Due to the intellectual complexity of the discussion of leadership it was felt that a one-dimensional discourse analysis would prove inappropriate in this context, as it would fail to take account of the multifaceted dimensions of the literary and philosophical debate. The investigation will therefore be based on an analysis of the work of key literary and cultural figures of the period in question, whose interpretations of leadership provide an insight into the understanding of the concept within a given era.

Such an approach, centred as it is on individual figures, does not, in principle, stand in opposition to the social history school, but rather serves as a reminder of the meaning

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 127.

of the individual within a non-ideological historiography. Indeed, it is only by examining the work of those individuals who made a fundamental contribution to the wider debate on leadership that overall trends and developments within this particular aspect of intellectual history may be identified.<sup>3</sup>

In order to enable the broader contextualisation of this analysis, the literary investigation will be combined with a discussion of the theories and actions of contemporaneous political leaders, whose perceptions and styles of leadership often served as a catalyst for developments within the intellectual debate. This integrated approach enables a clearer understanding of the relationships between the two spheres, highlighting their interdependence, and will, as such, serve as a general framework for this study.

An essentially chronological structure has been adopted in order to demonstrate the progression of the discussion of leadership over time and the relationships and respective influences which exist between different interpretations. Nevertheless, adherence to a strictly chronological methodology would, in certain circumstances, have proven too dogmatic, in particular where overlaps in the work of individual figures necessarily occur, or where strong thematic similarities between the thought of a number of figures merits a more integrated analysis. Allowances have therefore been made in order to accommodate such features, whilst maintaining the overall structure.

This study has therefore been divided into three principal parts, each of which covers a given time period, namely circa 1800-1840, 1840-1890 and 1890-1930. Each period is characterised by particular political and intellectual developments, themselves marking the introduction of new dimensions within the overall discussion of leadership. This said, each section should not be viewed as a separate entity, but as

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<sup>3</sup> A similar approach is adopted by Wülfing *et al* in their study of the mythology of Germany, which uses nineteenth century literature in order to demonstrate the historical development of the Germanic myth. Literature is presented as the medium which integrates practice and experience and enables the popular understanding of science and politics, highlighting the interrelationships between different fields and therefore reflecting the development of society as a whole. (Wulf Wülfing, Karin Bruns, Rolf Parr, *Historische Mythologie der Deutschen 1798-1918*. Wilhelm Fink Verlag, München 1991, p. 2).

the reflection of the interaction between existing and new concepts within an overall thematic progression.

Part one will present the historical and conceptual framework of the discussion on leadership as it developed in the early nineteenth century under the influence of Napoleonic hegemony. In so doing attention will be drawn to those elements of the literary and intellectual debate which were to prove significant in the subsequent evolution of the meaning of the concept.

Part two will then expand upon individual themes highlighted in part one, in particular the aesthetic reinterpretation of leadership by Wagner and its *realpolitische* counterpart in Bismarck, as well as its intellectual transfiguration by Carlyle. The section will conclude with a discussion of the criticism levelled at these interpretations by both Burckhardt and Nietzsche.

Developing from this discussion, part three will be based on a substantial amount of unpublished sources, in particular with reference to the work of Harry Graf Kessler, Stefan George and Max Kommerell, which will be used in order to identify the further progression of the intellectual debate in the early twentieth century. This will provide a new insight into the meaning of leadership as it was understood in this period, and enable a reinterpretation of existing literature in the light of the previously unpublished material.

It has been agreed in co-operation with my supervisor not to write a formal literature survey to cover the whole period to be analysed, but rather to incorporate references to related publications within the footnotes of the actual text. This enables a more thorough analysis of relevant primary sources and places the academic discussions of particular texts and authors within their respective contexts.

Attention should however be drawn in general terms to the lack of academic investigation into the understanding of leadership in the period to be discussed. Although this aspect may be touched upon within more general analyses of the work of certain key figures, examination remains brief and tends not to be placed within a

broader context. This therefore hinders a detailed understanding of the progression of thought over time and the factors which influenced this development.

A partial examination of this evolution was carried out by Eric Bentley in his 1944 study *A Century of Hero-Worship*.<sup>4</sup> In contrast to more narrow or specialised publications, Bentley did consider the work of a number of key contributors to the intellectual debate of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, as viewed from the perspective of the so-called 'Heroenkult'. Adopting a similar approach to the one advocated here, he chose to focus on individual figures, although the analyses are of a predominantly biographical and psychological nature and, despite the author's intention of demonstrating the positive element within the doctrine of hero-worship, are inevitably viewed from the contemporary political perspective, written as they were in the shadow of World War II. Bentley therefore only considered one particular aspect or interpretation of leadership and, furthermore, failed to consider the origins of this line of thought in the early nineteenth century, an era which was to be of direct and fundamental influence on later periods.

Also of relevance in this context is the more recent investigation into the changing understanding of the concept of genius, traced by Jochen Schmidt from 1750 to 1945.<sup>5</sup> The author again adopts a methodology based on the chronological analysis of individual artists and intellectuals, situated within the wider political context. The notion of genius is, like that of hero-worship, a particular aspect of the broader leadership discourse and was to prove to be of particular significance in the early nineteenth century.

Despite these related, and in the case of Schmidt detailed, studies it is therefore necessary to consider the development of the concept of leadership from a broader perspective, to identify what was understood under this term during the period to be

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<sup>4</sup> Eric Bentley, *A Century of Hero-Worship. A study of the idea of heroism in Carlyle and Nietzsche, with notes on Wagner, Spengler, Stefan George, and D. H. Lawrence*. Beacon Press, Beacon Hill, Boston, (1944), 2nd edition 1957.

<sup>5</sup> Jochen Schmidt, *Die Geschichte des Genie-Gedankens. 1750-1945*. (2 Bände). Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, Darmstadt 1985.

analysed and to determine whether alternative elements to the notion of heroic genius may be observed.

## Introduction

In his 1939 essay *Bruder Hitler* Thomas Mann details the degeneration of the traditionally aesthetic understanding of genius to the charismatic madness and immorality of the contemporary political leader. Contrasting Napoleon, seen as the epitome of greatness, with Hitler, Mann highlights the manner in which the National Socialist era has led to the “Verhunzung des großen Mannes”.<sup>1</sup> Yet whilst emphasising the need to acknowledge this process, and indeed to recognise the levels at which genius may reveal itself, Mann nevertheless points out that it should not, in turn, mask the true phenomenon of greatness itself.

A similar approach may be applied to the concept of leadership, itself closely associated with that of the “großen Mann”. As a direct result of the degenerative process to which Mann refers, the term “Führung” evokes, at least in German, a number of historical connotations irrevocably associated with the National Socialist regime. Through the introduction of the “Führerprinzip” as a fundamental tenet of fascist ideology and the self-stylisation of Hitler as “der Führer”, the term became, and remains, the object of historical and ideological preconceptions.

As a result of these implications, academic discussion has tended to focus on the particular elements of the “Führerprinzip”, analysed within the overall context of the development of German nationalism and, more specifically, National Socialist ideology.<sup>2</sup> Yet, to apply Mann’s theory, this “Verhunzung”, although itself worthy of

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Mann, “Bruder Hitler”, in: Mann, *Gesammelte Werke in dreizehn Bänden*. Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, Frankfurt am Main 1990. Band XII, Reden und Aufsätze 4, p. 852 (845-852). For further analysis of this essay, in particular with regard to Thomas Mann’s self-perception, see: Rüdiger Görner, “Peinliche Verwandtschaft. Formen der Selbstdiagnose in Thomas Manns Versuch ‘Bruder Hitler’”, in: Ingrid Fichtner/Rainer Wunderlich (Hrsg.), *Doppelgänger. Facetten der Literatur/St. Gallener Studien*. Bern / Stuttgart / Wien (due in 1999).

<sup>2</sup> For a more detailed discussion of the National Socialist “Führerprinzip” and its political, social, economic and judicial implications see Dietmut Majer, *Grundlagen des national-sozialistischen Rechtssystems: Führerprinzip, Sonderrecht, Einheitspartei*. Kohlhammer, Stuttgart / Berlin / Köln / Mainz 1987. Analysis of Hitler’s self-stylisation as the “Führer” and the reinforcement of the hierarchical structure within both the NSDAP and society as a whole, as also carried out through other leading party figures, is provided in Joachim C. Fest, *Das Gesicht des Dritten Reiches*. R. Piper & Co. Verlag, München 1963. Fest also outlines the various forms of the so-called “Führer-Kult” in Joachim C. Fest, *Hitler. Eine Biographie*. Verlag Ullstein, Frankfurt am Main / Berlin / Wien 1973, p. 610-615. The leadership ideology within the NSDAP is also the subject of Wolfgang

detailed and repeated analysis, should not be allowed to overshadow the fundamental concept itself, the dilemma of the leadership debate remaining of contemporary political and intellectual significance.

The question therefore arises as to how the term leadership was understood in Germany prior to this association, and whether alternatives existed to the military and political interpretation of a charismatic individual in possession of absolute power at the head of a strictly hierarchical social and political structure. It is the aim of this study to investigate this question through an analysis of the evolution of the intellectual understanding of leadership in Germany and to examine the factors which influenced this development. In so doing it is hoped that the German leadership dilemma will be opened up into a wider discussion, encompassing elements which may contribute to a more objective debate.

Any discussion of leadership must be preceded by an explanation of what is understood under this term. No single definition of such a broad concept may be established, as it is itself dependent upon the time period and the context in which it is being discussed. From the classical theories of Plato and Machiavelli onwards, a range of theoretical approaches have been developed according to different time periods and fields of academic study, with attempts being made at comparative analyses of various forms, styles, behavioural patterns and impacts of individual leaders and leadership types. Such a theoretical discussion clearly lies beyond the scope of this study.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, it is important to establish a particular frame of reference within which the historical development of the concept may be discussed.

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Horn, *Führerideologie und Parteiorganisation in der NSDAP. (1919-1933)*. Droste Verlag, Düsseldorf 1972. The extent to which the ideal of the "Führerstaat" was actually realised is investigated in *Der "Führerstaat": Mythos und Realität. Studien zur Struktur und Politik des Dritten Reiches*. Hrsg. v. Gerhard Hirschfeld und Lothar Kettenacker mit einer Einleitung von Wolfgang J. Mommsen. Ernst Klett, Stuttgart 1981.

<sup>3</sup> For further details on the historical development of the intellectual reflection on leadership through until the early twentieth century see Irving Babbitt, *Democracy and Leadership*. The Riverside Press, Cambridge Massachusetts 1924 (1962). For more recent investigations into this concept see, for example, James MacGregor Burns, *Leadership*. Harper and Row, New York 1978 and Jean Blondel, *Political Leadership. Towards a general analysis*. Sage Publications, California 1987.

In formulating such a definition it is first necessary to determine whether this should be established according to the person, or persons, exercising the leadership, or the impact of the leadership itself, that is to say, to use Jean Blondel's distinction, whether a definition is essentially behavioural or positional.<sup>4</sup> This theory is associated with the definition given by James McGregor Burns, which distinguishes between transforming and transactional leadership, an interpretation based on analysis of the respective impact of various forms of guidance.<sup>5</sup>

For the purposes of this study, concerned as it is with the development of thought as opposed to specific organisational structures, it is necessary to focus on the transforming, or behavioural definition of leadership in a broad sense, that is to say to establish definitions which are based not on the specific position of a given leader within the political and social structure, but rather the desired or achieved impact of a particular individual, movement or ideology.

The majority of analyses of leadership concentrate on the political and, more recently managerial, dimension of this concept, although additional types may also be identified. Irving Babbitt for example highlights political and spiritual leadership as the two principal forms in society, referring in addition to aesthetic, intellectual and what he terms 'Nietzschean' guidance, based on an interpretation of the theory of will to power.<sup>6</sup> In his more recent study Burns divides the category of transformational leadership into intellectual, reform, revolutionary and charismatic leadership, the latter being provided by "heroes and ideologues".<sup>7</sup>

It is clear that these various forms are not necessarily mutually exclusive, and that a fixed definition is consequently not attainable. This said, for the purposes of this study three main types may be identified which are of direct relevance to the subject of investigation: political and/or military; spiritual; and intellectual guidance.

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<sup>4</sup> Blondel, *op.cit.*

<sup>5</sup> Burns, *op.cit.*

<sup>6</sup> Babbitt, *op.cit.*

<sup>7</sup> Burns, *op.cit.*, p. 242.



Focusing initially on the political aspect, this may be defined in general terms, to use a concept detailed by Babbitt in his study of the leadership dilemma in modern democratic societies, as the provision of “outer authority”.<sup>8</sup> This may itself be combined, for the purposes of this discussion, with the issue of military leadership, these two forms being, particularly in nineteenth century Europe, frequently interlinked.

A more detailed definition is provided by Max Weber, whose analysis of political leadership still stands as one of the most comprehensive investigations of this concept and may, as such, provide the terminological parameters for this discussion. In his speech *Politik als Beruf* (1919), Weber defines politics as an essentially power-related phenomenon: “Streben nach Machtanteil oder nach Beeinflussung der Machtverteilung, sei es zwischen Staaten, sei es innerhalb eines Staates zwischen den Menschengruppen, die er umschließt”.<sup>9</sup>

Understood in this context, the three types of legitimisation of political authority identified by Weber are ‘traditional’, ‘charismatic’ and ‘rational-legal’. The first two definitions are of particular relevance to this study, Germany having witnessed the transformation from traditionally dynastic leadership to charismatic rule during the period in question. This process was itself initially instigated in France following the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century and the subsequent Revolution of 1789.

Moreover, the analysis of charismatic leadership, as also detailed in Weber’s discussion of “charismatische Herrschaft” in *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*,<sup>10</sup> is especially pertinent, this form having exercised a considerable, and indeed ultimately dangerous, influence over the political and military stage of nineteenth and early

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<sup>8</sup> Babbitt, op.cit.

<sup>9</sup> Max Weber, *Politik als Beruf*, in: Weber, *Gesamtausgabe*. Im Auftrag der Kommission für Sozial- und Wissenschaftsgeschichte der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften. Hrsg. v. Horst Baier et al. J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), Tübingen 1992. Abteilung I: Schriften und Reden. Bd. 17, p. 159 (157-252).

<sup>10</sup> Max Weber, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft. Grundriss der verstehenden Soziologie*. 5., revidierte Auflage, mit Textkritischen Erläuterungen hrsg. v. Johannes Winckelmann. J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), Tübingen 1976. 1. Halbband, p. 140-148; 2. Halbband, p. 654-687.

twentieth century Europe. The distinction made by Weber between the “Berufspolitiker” or civil servant and the “politischer Führer” should be noted in this context, the latter constituting the understanding of political leadership to be adopted in this study.

In his aforementioned study Babbitt explores the dilemma of how to achieve a successful form of leadership in a democracy, a constitutional form which he believes to be in constant danger of being transformed into imperialism if not properly guided. The author’s fundamental tenet is the need for the provision of spiritual guidance within the political sphere, with the aim of encouraging the individual to exercise inner control in a period of emancipation from a traditional, outer provision of moral and ethical authority.

Attempts were made during the post-war period to introduce such a concept of “innere Führung” into the German ‘Bundeswehr’. This educational programme, centred on the “Schule der Bundeswehr für Innere Führung”, focused on the development of a sense of personal, social and political responsibility within the consciousness of the individual, thereby contrasting with the strict hierarchy and loss of individuality and moral conscience fostered within the Third Reich.<sup>11</sup>

Extended beyond the military sphere to encompass society as a whole, this notion of “innere Führung” may therefore be understood as an aspect of spiritual leadership: the provision of inner authority, expressed through the exercise of moral and ethical constraint. Burns refers in this context to the need to transcend everyday wants, needs and expectations in order “to respond to the higher levels of moral development, and to relate leadership behaviour [...] to a set of reasoned, relatively explicit, conscious values”.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> For further details on the concept of “Innere Führung” in the German army see Model-Creifelds, *Staatsbürger-Taschenbuch*. C. H. Beck’sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, München 1973 (12. Auflage), p. 520f.

<sup>12</sup> Burns, op.cit., p. 46.

Spiritual leadership may however also encompass the provision not of constraint but of inner freedom, in the sense of revelation, redemption or emancipation. Be it of either a secular or a religious nature, it is, above all, concerned with guidance of the inner self and will be understood as such in the context of this investigation.

Intellectual leadership is essentially concerned with thought and the critical analysis of ideas and values. It may be understood in educational and cultural terms as an attempt to further the development of society in general or to influence established schools of philosophy and thought. Similarities may be identified between this interpretation and the above definition of spiritual leadership, and both forms may therefore be more accurately described under the German term “geistige Führung”.

In addition however, intellectual leadership may be understood as an attempt to exercise, through the medium of language, a direct influence over contemporary politics, a tendency which, as Burns suggests, frequently arises in periods of social and political conflict.<sup>13</sup> This was particularly apparent during the French Revolution and was, as will be demonstrated, to become a decisive factor in the German Wars of Liberation against Napoleon; the beginning of the nineteenth century had witnessed the rapid development of this form of politically motivated intellectual endeavours. Horst Grünert in his study of “politische Dichtung” during this period interprets literature both “als Appell zur aktuellen (politischen) Tat” and “als Antwort auf die suchende Frage nach der gegenwärtigen Zeit”<sup>14</sup>: a dual interpretation of intellectual leadership which may be used as a framework for this study.

It is therefore clear that leadership cannot be divided into strictly separate entities, but that, as Babbitt’s appeal for the provision of spiritual guidance from the political leaders suggests, all forms are interlinked and mutually dependent: Plato’s concept of the philosopher-king standing as a prime example of this interrelationship. This study will therefore trace the development of the various forms of leadership identified

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 141ff.

<sup>14</sup> Horst Grünert, “Politische Rede und politische Dichtung in Deutschland unter der Herrschaft Napoleons”, in: Werner Link (Hrsg.), *Schriftsteller und Politik in Deutschland*. Droste Verlag, Düsseldorf 1979, p. 47f (27-48).

above and demonstrate how, over the period in question, the specific forms reacted towards one another, the divisions between them becoming increasingly blurred.

Reflecting the historical and conceptual development highlighted by Thomas Mann from Napoleon through to Hitler, the threshold between the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries has been chosen as the initial focus of this study. This period, introduced by the French Revolution and consolidated by the rise to power of Napoleon, constitutes a caesura in political and intellectual thought across Europe, not least in Germany, and as such provides a suitable parameter for discussion.<sup>15</sup>

Napoleon is particularly significant in this context because he revolutionised the political and territorial status quo in the German speaking principalities, introducing a new understanding of leadership which was to remain of influence throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century and which continues to be of contemporary significance. An examination of the work of political and literary commentators from 1800 through until the early to mid twentieth century indeed reveals repeated references to Napoleon and the Napoleonic myth, and the former Emperor of the French remains the subject of widespread interest, as demonstrated by the recent exhibition *Napoleon. Feldherr, Kaiser, Mensch* at the Historisches Museum der Pfalz in Speyer.<sup>16</sup>

The question may be raised within this context as to the political and intellectual influence of Frederick the Great, whose reign from 1740-1786 was undoubtedly of considerable significance in German, or more specifically Prussian, history. As King of Prussia Frederick the Great did indeed serve as a powerful inner-German figurehead and exercised an important influence over the political style in Germany throughout the following century.

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<sup>15</sup> For the same reasons the transition from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century was also chosen as the initial period to be analysed by Wülfing *et al.* (Wülfing/Bruns/Parr, *op.cit.*, p. 1).

<sup>16</sup> The exhibition ran from 24th May to 27th September 1998. For further details see the exhibition catalogue *Napoleon. Feldherr, Kaiser, Mensch*. Hrsg. v. Meinrad Maria Grewenig mit Texten von Bernard Chevalier *et al.* Hatje, Historisches Museum der Pfalz, Speyer 1998.

This said, his influence, particularly in relation to the future development of German history through until the Second World War, is, although related to the subject of investigation, nevertheless a separate theme which has itself already been researched in considerable depth.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, the reception of this former Prussian King in German culture of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was, especially when viewed in comparison with the Napoleonic reception, relatively limited, as highlighted by both Rudolf Augstein and Horst Steinmetz.<sup>18</sup>

In contrast, the impact of a notably non-German leader on German literature and politics through until the twentieth century has not received such academic attention, and it is for these reasons that, although the specific Prussian dimension will be considered in a broader context, the beginning of Napoleon's rule will serve as the initial focus of this discussion. An overview of the reception of the Napoleon phenomenon in Germany is therefore necessary in order to provide a detailed foundation for subsequent discussion.

Part I of this study will examine the reception of Napoleon in the early nineteenth century, with particular emphasis being placed on the response from German writers and intellectuals of that period. In addition to relatively well-known literary commentators such as Goethe, Hegel and Heine, attention may be drawn in this context to August von Platen, whose poetry, though rarely considered from this angle, reveals a complex response to the French Emperor, which ranged from violent criticism to extreme glorification. As such his work highlights both extremes of the frequently polarised Napoleonic myth.

Also of particular note is the attention given in part I to Karoline von Günderrode, whose work tends to be overlooked in this context, although her poem *Buonaparte in Egypten* provides an important insight into both the political and charismatic origins

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<sup>17</sup> See Rudolf Augstein, *Preußens Friedrich und die Deutschen*. Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, Frankfurt am Main 1981 (1968). For links between the Bismarck myth and Frederick the Great see Wülfing/Bruns/Parr, op.cit., p. 178ff.

<sup>18</sup> See for example Augstein, op.cit., p. 88 and Horst Steinmetz (Nachwort), in: *Friedrich II., König von Preußen und die deutsche Literatur des 18. Jahrhunderts. Texte und Dokumente*. Hrsg. v. Horst Steinmetz. Philipp Reclam jun., Stuttgart 1985, p. 333-352.

of the Napoleonic myth. Günderröde represents a significant contributor to the female discussion on leadership, which will be considered where relevant throughout this study, in particular with reference to the work and reception of Queen Luise of Prussia. This element will however be viewed not from a specifically feminist perspective, but rather within the wider intellectual context.

Part II of this study will then investigate the different political and intellectual contributions made to the leadership debate in the mid and late nineteenth century, a period dominated by the Bismarckian era. Particular attention will be given to the theoretical advocacy of the power ideal by the British intellectual Thomas Carlyle, whose work was of considerable influence in Germany, and its subsequent practical realisation through Bismarck.

The response to this political domination from intellectual circles, in particular from Wagner, Burckhardt and Nietzsche, will be examined, enabling an analysis of their work from the leadership perspective. This angle is itself often neglected in favour of investigations into the theoretical roots of National Socialism, and it is therefore hoped that this broader analysis will enable a reconsideration of the fundamental contribution made by both Wagner and Nietzsche to the German leadership dilemma.

Through this analysis it will be shown how the actions and thought of these individual figures of both the political and intellectual stage were integrated into and influenced by the wider debate, itself being seen against the background of the Napoleon phenomenon. Forming the central part of this study, this section will also link forward into the leadership discussion of the early twentieth century, itself heavily influenced by earlier trends.

The final period to be considered is therefore that which encompasses the Wilhelminian era and the Weimar Republic, ending prior to the rise of National Socialism and Hitler's *Machtergreifung*. The latter era introduced a totalitarian understanding of leadership, the further discussion of which has, as stated above, been

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the object of numerous analyses and is itself worthy of separate investigation. Prior to this development however, the late 1920s saw the culmination of the intellectual debate as it had progressed from the Napoleonic era, and as such the close of the first three decades of the twentieth century provides a suitable parameter for this study.

Examination of the intellectual response to the so-called 'persönliches Regiment' of Wilhelm II, itself to be discussed in order to ensure a continued contextual representation, will focus on the work of both Harry Graf Kessler and Stefan George. In the case of the former this examination will include the analysis of previously unpublished entries in Kessler's diaries, thereby providing new insights into both his cultural and political thought and its development over time. Similarly, the work of George and the George-Kreis will be examined from a fresh perspective, enabling the study of unpublished correspondence between George and, in particular, Max Kommerell.

Kommerell's *Der Dichter als Führer* (1928) constitutes the culmination of the intellectual debate on leadership as studied from the Napoleonic era onwards, combining aspects introduced by earlier commentators with contemporary political and philosophical thought. This book has however received relatively limited academic attention beyond the confines of investigations into the author's association with George and the George-Kreis, and further discussion tends to focus on a predominantly literary analysis of Kommerell's later poetry. The book is however worthy of a more detailed analysis from the broader perspective of the theory of leadership. A range of hitherto unpublished material by and relating to Kommerell will therefore be examined, thereby providing a new insight into his work and his intellectual and political thought.

As *Der Dichter als Führer* represents both the chronological and the thematic culmination of the intellectual reflection on leadership within the chosen time frame, it will be the subject of the closing chapter of this study. It is hoped that analysis of Kommerell's work will bring together the constituent elements of the hitherto discussed debate, thereby enabling a clearer understanding of those factors which exercised a significant influence over the course of the nineteenth and early twentieth

centuries. Through this detailed examination it should therefore be possible to ascertain whether the concept of the poetic leader constituted an alternative to the National Socialist interpretation of leadership, or whether it merely served as an intellectual reinforcement of this essentially political ideology.

In a fictional conversation written in 1798, entitled “Haß dem Königthum!”, Wieland outlined the need for a new leader in the wake of the French Revolution, suggesting that Napoleon Bonaparte, at that time ranked as a general in the French army, could fulfil this role. Wieland, then unaware of the meeting he was to experience with the “außerordentlichsten Mann unsrer, und, meines Wissens, aller Zeiten”<sup>19</sup> in 1808, denied English accusations that he was part of a plot to assist Napoleon’s rise to power. Emphasising his own surprise at the accuracy of a statement which he himself did not believe possible, he criticised attempts at predicting the future, thereby reflecting his own reticence in the expression of specific political opinions in favour of the more general fostering of intellectual reflection on the political sphere.<sup>20</sup>

This said, the passage in question remains an accurate prophecy of events that were to follow, and Wieland’s description, given through the mouthpiece of the monarchist Wilibald, provides, albeit unwittingly, a detailed summary of the principal elements which were to constitute the Napoleonic myth and, hence, to dominate the leadership debate throughout the coming century and beyond. As such it merits being cited in full, and, itself requiring no further comment, may serve as a literary introduction to the subsequent analysis:

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<sup>19</sup> Christoph Martin Wieland, *Mit fliegender Feder. Ausgewählte Briefe*. Hrsg. v. Heinrich Bock. Insel Verlag, Frankfurt am Main 1990, p. 305.

<sup>20</sup> See Jan Philipp Reemtsma, Vorwort, in: C. M. Wieland, *Politische Schriften, insbesondere zur Französischen Revolution*. 3 Bände. Hrsg. v. Jan Philipp Reemtsma, Hans und Johanna Radspieler. Franz Greno, Nördlingen 1988. Band I, p. XXII f and LXXII f f; and Sven-Aage Jørgensen *et al*, *Christoph Martin Wieland. Epoche - Werk - Wirkung*. C. H. Beck, München 1994, p. 115 f. Despite the denials made by Wieland in response to the accusations made in the *St. James Chronicle* (see Wieland, *Politische Schriften*, op.cit., p. 583-604), Hacks suggests that the writer was nevertheless expressing his own hopes for the future, being himself a supporter of Napoleon. (Peter Hacks, “Die wissenschaftliche Gesellschaft und ihr Herr Nachbar. Beobachtungen zu C. M. Wieland ‘Politische Schriften, insbesondere zur Französischen Revolution’, herausgegeben von Reemtsma”, in: Hacks, *Die Maßgaben der Kunst. Gesammelte Aufsätze. 1959-1994*. Edition Nautilus. Verlag Lutz Schulenberg, Hamburg 1996, p. 368 [357-371]).



Wenn ihr dem Königthum nicht einen so unauslöschlichen Haß geschworen hättet, und wieder einen König haben wolltet und könntet, so müßte es ein liebenswürdiger junger Mann, von großem hohen Geist, von den größten Talenten im Krieg und Frieden, von unermüdlicher Thätigkeit, von eben so viel Klugheit als Muth, von dem festesten Charakter, von reinen Sitten, einfach und prunklos in seiner Lebensart, immer Meister von sich selbst, ohne irgend eine Schwachheit, wobey ein andrer ihn fassen könnte, zugleich offen und verschlossen, sanft und heftig, geschmiedig und hart, mild und unerbittlich, jedes zu seiner Zeit, kurz, ein Mann seyn, wie es in jedem Jahrhundert kaum Einen giebt, und dessen Genius alle andre in Respekt zu haltigen und zu überwältigen wüßte. [...] Da ihr nun keinen *König* haben könnt, so müßt ihr einen *Diktator* suchen, der Alle diese Eigenschaften in sich vereinige.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> C. M. Wieland, "Zweytes Gespräch, über den neufränkischen Staatseid >Haß dem Königtum!<," in: Wieland, *Politische Schriften*, op.cit., p. 358 (340-360).

## *Part I: The formation of the myth*

### *Introduction: The Notion of Leadership under Napoleon I*

Having seized power in France on 18. Brumaire 1799, Napoleon progressively established a “plebiszitär legitimierten Cäsarismus”,<sup>1</sup> which combined strongly monarchical tendencies with the essentially charismatic elements of leadership. By declaring himself hereditary Emperor in December 1804 he then transformed this system into a charismatic-dynastic rule which he attempted to extend to the rest of Europe and beyond. Public plebiscite was used in order to sanction the constitutional changes brought about by Napoleon, though the overwhelming majorities accorded in his favour merely provided official confirmation of what was essentially an autocratic dictatorship.

Following the *coup d'état* of 1799 Napoleon therefore became, after Cromwell, the first major self-declared European leader, thereby introducing a new political constitution and regime to Europe which fundamentally influenced both political and intellectual debate. His form and style of leadership contrasted with the traditional feudal structure of the German-speaking states, effectively forcing a reconsideration of the conception and role of a leader. This influence was to continue to be felt in Germany throughout the nineteenth and into the early stages of the twentieth century.

The detailed characteristics of Napoleon's leadership are the subject of numerous analyses which themselves draw widely differing conclusions and which lie beyond the framework of this study.<sup>2</sup> However, of particular importance in this context are, in general terms, the high degree of personal autonomy sought by Napoleon, in both the

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<sup>1</sup> Manfred Botzenhart, *Reform, Restauration, Krise - Deutschland 1789-1847*. Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt am Main 1985, p. 26.

<sup>2</sup> The Dutch historian Pieter Geyl made the following statement on the difficulty of judging Napoleon: “History can reach no unchallengeable conclusions on so many-sided a character, on a life so dominated, so profoundly agitated, by the circumstances of the time”. Nevertheless, his book *Napoleon For or Against*. Penguin, England 1949, provides examples of the varied opinions of French writers and historians, dating from directly after the Napoleonic era to the late 1930s. For a detailed account of Napoleon's life, based largely on his correspondence, see J. M. Thompson, *Napoleon Bonaparte*. Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 2nd edition 1988 (1952).

military and the political sphere, and the importance of his “willensstarken Herrscherpersönlichkeit”,<sup>3</sup> the two characteristics being irrevocably linked. To quote Grappin: “In der Nation drehte sich [...] alles um des Kaisers Persönlichkeit”.<sup>4</sup>

An overview of the reaction of German intellectuals to Napoleon has previously been provided by both Heit (1975) and Grünert (1979), although neither study focuses on the particular question of leadership, but rather provides a general summary of the different, and indeed polarised, political groupings during this period.<sup>5</sup> A more detailed account is provided by Wülfing *et al* (1991), although in this instance attention is accorded to the historiography of the Germanic myth.<sup>6</sup>

It is therefore necessary to reconsider reactions to Napoleon from a more specific angle and to investigate in greater depth the influence exercised by the French Emperor over the understanding of leadership in Germany. Consequently this analysis will concentrate on those writers and poets whose work demonstrates an intellectual reflection on leadership, highlighting those aspects which were to be of continued influence in both the nineteenth and early twentieth century.

To refer in general terms to the popular response from within the German speaking principalities, it may be stated that Napoleon, having first seized power in France, initially enjoyed an admiring reception:

Als Bonaparte, November 1799, die Regierung in Frankreich übernahm, war er überall beliebt und bewundert. Er galt als ein Held und ein Philosoph. Er war jung, genial, tugendhaft, ein Mann der kühnen Tat und ein Mann der Versöhnung.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Horst Dippel, “Die politischen Ideen der Französischen Revolution”, in: *Pipers Handbuch der politischen Ideen. Band 4. Neuzeit: Von der Französischen Revolution bis zum europäischen Nationalismus*. Hrsg. v. Iring Fetscher und Herfried Münkler. Piper Verlag, München 1986, p. 60.

<sup>4</sup> Pierre Grappin, “Goethe und Napoleon”, in: *Goethe Jahrbuch*, Band 170 (1990), p. 79 (71-80).

<sup>5</sup> S. Heit, *Napoleon and the German Intellectuals*. Diss., Florida State University 1975. Ann Arbor, Michigan. Also Grünert, *op.cit.*

<sup>6</sup> See Wülfing/Bruns/Parr, *op.cit.*

<sup>7</sup> Golo Mann, *Friedrich von Gentz - Gegenspieler Napoleons - Vordenker Europas*. Fischer Verlag, Frankfurt am Main 1995, p. 96.

This was due largely to his self-portrayal as a man capable of both returning order to France and consolidating the achievements of the French Revolution, thereby restoring peace in Europe.

Furthermore, many Germans were dissatisfied with the leadership provided in their own principalities by the nobility, who appeared weak and powerless in comparison to the new, dynamic French leader. Reflecting the desire for one individual figure which was to mark the subsequent leadership debate, they believed that “die frisch, vielvermögende Hand eines einzigen, unumschränkten Beherrschers [...] alles verjüngen und beleben [würde]”.<sup>8</sup> Gentz himself increasingly saw the failures of the German ruling class to respond to the changing spirit of the time as the reason for Napoleon’s success, as opposed to his own personal talent, an opinion summarised by Golo Mann as follows: “Die Stärke, das Recht Napoleons lagen nicht in ihm selbst; sie lagen in seiner Gegner erwiesener Nichtigkeit”.<sup>9</sup>

Developing from an appreciation of Napoleon’s military and political skills, popular admiration of the French Emperor was gradually transformed into the legend of an undefeatable war hero and a great political leader, bringing peace and reform to a Europe united around the central power of France. This took on increasingly mythical proportions as time progressed, the image of Napoleon being based primarily on his perceived quasi-divine personal qualities as opposed to his political achievements.

This transformation cannot be located in one particular time period; rather it is to be viewed as a progressive development which could be observed throughout Europe, not least in Germany, and which continued to be of influence in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Promoted by Napoleon himself through manipulation of the

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 168.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 189. This conviction is applied to leadership in general by Bernard Shaw in his play *Caesar and Cleopatra*: “The capacity of any conqueror is therefore more likely than not to be an illusion produced by the incapacity of his adversary”. (Bernard Shaw, “Caesar and Cleopatra”, in: Shaw, *Three Plays for Puritans*. Penguin, England 1976 [1901], p. 251 [127-254]).

media, during both his rule and his exile on St. Helena,<sup>10</sup> it was adopted and expanded upon by many writers and intellectuals across Europe, reaching a climax in the period following his death in 1821. This phenomenon is reflected in the works of, in particular, Hölderlin, Günderrode, Hegel, Goethe, Heine, Platen and Grabbe.

However, opposition to Napoleon from within the Germanic principalities increased as he attempted to expand his imperial regime throughout Europe. This became particularly apparent following the foundation of the Confederation of the Rhine in 1806, which subjected its members, amongst them Bavaria, Württemberg and Baden, to French foreign and domestic policy. This territorial reorganisation effectively forced Franz II to relinquish the title of German Emperor, resulting in the dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation, which had, although archaic and exercising little real power in Europe, served as a framework for political co-operation between the principalities.

Opposition was divided between a reactionary stance predominantly supported by Prussian court and government circles and a more liberal approach adopted by the so-called German patriots, who advocated military action against Napoleon combined with domestic reform. This group included political reformers such as Freiherr vom und zum Stein and Freiherr von Hardenberg. Their opinions were largely supported by many writers and poets, such as Ernst Moritz Arndt, Heinrich von Kleist and Achim von Arnim, a number of whom belonged to the patriotic “christlich-deutsche Tischgesellschaft”, formed by Arnim in 1811.

The negative reaction developed a mythical dimension similar to the positive myth, a trend perceived by Gentz to be the root of Napoleon’s success: “Die Quelle aller

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<sup>10</sup> In exile on St. Helena Napoleon began to write his memoirs, a task also undertaken by four of his companions on the island, who noted his conversations and chronicled the latter stages of his life - Gourgaud, O’Meara, Bertrand und the Marquis Las Cases. Probably the most renowned and influential of these books is *Mémorial* by Las Cases, which, although of questionable accuracy, paints the portrait of a great Emperor and man of the people. According to Las Cases Napoleon inherited the French Revolution and succeeded in both saving France and Europe from impending chaos and consolidating the achievements of the Revolution in political form. The book therefore represents the basic tenets of the Napoleonic myth. For further details and analysis see Geyl, op. cit., p.11-16.

großen Irrtümer und aller großen Leiden der Zeit war, daß man Napoleon durchweg entweder für einen Halbgott oder für ein Ungeheuer oder allenfalls für beides zugleich hielt".<sup>11</sup> This common belief led to the search for what may be referred to as a Germanic, or more accurately Prussian, counter-balance to the Emperor of the French, and consequently the glorification of potential alternative leaders, amongst them Prince Louis Ferdinand and Queen Luise of Prussia.

Although the divisions between the so-called 'positive' and 'negative' response to Napoleon were neither fixed nor mutually exclusive, for ease of analysis they will be treated separately, thereby facilitating the simultaneous discussion of opinions which spanned the time period in question yet shared a number of common elements. Whilst maintaining an essentially chronological structure, adaptations have therefore been made in order to allow for thematic similarities and hence to enable a clearer depiction of the development of particular concepts.

It is for this reason that the work of Hölderlin and Günderrode will be analysed prior to that of Goethe and Hegel. In general terms the observations made by Hölderlin and Günderrode with regard to Napoleon pre-date Goethe's more detailed discussion of the French leader, Goethe's own comments sharing a number of similarities with the Hegelian approach. On a more fundamental level however, Hölderlin and Günderrode represent two intellectuals who were, to use a concept introduced by Rüdiger Görner in his book *Grenzgänger*, living 'on the border' and should, as such, be considered at the beginning of this section.<sup>12</sup>

The French Revolution and subsequently Napoleon brought into question the established political, geographical and moral boundaries of Europe on the threshold of the nineteenth century, a time when politics, literature, art, religion and thought were all experiencing fundamental changes. Observing this period of uncertainty, Hölderlin and Günderrode were both seeking, from their position "im Dazwischen", a form of essentially spiritual guidance which would provide them with a sense of

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<sup>11</sup> Quote from Golo Mann, op. cit., p. 252.

orientation or “Maß”. It was in the light of this quest that they perceived Napoleon and hence developed their own, essentially spiritual, understanding of leadership, an understanding which was itself to exercise a considerable influence over subsequent debate.

Later commentators, in particular Goethe and Hegel, were able to view the changing political and historical scene from a different, and to a certain extent more objective, perspective. Both figures lived to witness the development of the Napoleonic regime across Europe and its subsequent downfall. It was during this later period that the political element became an increasingly marked characteristic of the response to Napoleon and hence of the discussion of leadership in general, as also demonstrated through the work of the German patriots, in particular Kleist, who, as Görner points out, himself transcended all existing boundaries.<sup>13</sup>

During the Restoration period the political ideology increasingly gave way to an extreme, mythical glorification of the individual, as revealed in the work of Heine and Platen and, subsequently, Grabbe. It is the latter, another “Grenzgänger” whose work explores the contemporary absence of moral and ethical boundaries, which shall therefore complete this section, demonstrating the culmination of the debate on leadership as it developed during the Napoleonic era, through until the 1830s.

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<sup>12</sup> Rüdiger Görner, *Grenzgänger. Dichter und Denker im Dazwischen*. Klöpfer und Meyer Verlag, Tübingen 1996.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

## Chapter One

### *The foundations: the poetic quest for spiritual guidance, as seen through the work of Hölderlin and Günderrode*

The work of Friedrich Hölderlin, in particular his poems *Die Friedensfeier* and *Der Einzige*, written in the initial stages of Napoleon's rule, may be judged as an early example of the poetic quest for and reflection on spiritual, if not political, leadership, as felt at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Three draft poems written between the end of 1797 and early 1798, though largely incomplete, also provide evidence of the poet's image of Napoleon, as perceived before his seizure of power in France.

*Friedensfeier* was written in 1801 after the conclusion of the Peace of Lunéville which ended the wars of the Revolution. Hölderlin perceived this peace to be a spiritual rather than a political necessity, as indicated in a letter written to his brother:

Nicht daß irgend eine Form, irgend eine Meinung und Behauptung  
siegen wird, dies dünkt mir nicht die wesentlichste seiner Gaben.  
Aber daß der Egoismus in allen seinen Gestalten sich beugen wird  
unter die heilige Herrschaft der Liebe und Güte.<sup>14</sup>

This reflects the ambivalence of Hölderlin's political opinions, the "anti-revolutionary" longing for peace being conveyed simultaneously with his support of the French Revolution.<sup>15</sup> This ambivalence is a result of Hölderlin's perception of politics, which tended towards the spiritual as opposed to the concrete political. The role of the poet as he perceived it was to mediate between, and thus bring closer together, the two spheres of politics and poetry, defined as "ästhetische Politikkritik".<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Quote from Jochen Schmidt, in: Friedrich Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke und Briefe. Drei Bände.* Band I. Friedrich Hölderlin. Gedichte. Hrsg. v. Jochen Schmidt. Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, Frankfurt am Main 1992, p. 893f. Also referred to in Mark Ogden, *The problem of Christ in the work of Friedrich Hölderlin.* Published by the Modern Humanities Research Association for the Institute of Germanic Studies, (University of London), 1991, p. 131 and 153.

<sup>15</sup> See Rüdiger Görner, *Hölderlins Mitte. Zur Ästhetik eines Ideals.* iudicium Verlag, München 1993, p. 111.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 112.



*Friedensfeier* is a celebration of the newly-established peace, which Hölderlin regards as the culmination of the work of the “Geist”, the “Father of the gods”, who finally achieves his mission and reveals himself on earth, creating eternal harmony between himself, the gods and the people. Thus it represents the eschatological-chiliastic argument that time and history has come to an end.<sup>17</sup>

The peace is imaged as a “Festtag”, a celebratory meal at which all the gods or half-gods who have played a role in the historical process come together in harmony, thus reflecting Hölderlin’s belief that the “Father” carried out his work through the medium of his “sons”, which included the Ancient gods and Christ. The principal subject of the poem is the “Fürst des Fests”, the person who has brought this peace to the world. He is portrayed as an all-powerful being of immortal nature who, although familiar to the people, inspires awe in those who encounter him:

Und Freundesgestalt annimmst, du Allbekannter, doch  
Beugt fast die Knie das Hohe. Nichts vor dir,  
Nur eines weiß ich, Sterbliches bist du nicht .<sup>18</sup>

The identity of this “Fürst” is open to a number of interpretations. Indeed, it may be argued that Hölderlin was referring to Napoleon as the man who had restored peace to Europe following the French Revolution.<sup>19</sup> This theory is influenced by the actual period in which the poem was written, as well as references to the youthfulness of the “Fürst” - “O Jüngling!”<sup>20</sup> - and the line “Und als vom langen Heldenzuge müd”,<sup>21</sup> which has military connotations.

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<sup>17</sup> Jochen Schmidt, *Hölderlins geschichtsphilosophische Hymnen. “Friedensfeier”, “Der Einzige”, “Patmos”*. Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, Darmstadt 1990, p. 2.

<sup>18</sup> Friedrich Hölderlin, “Friedensfeier”, in: Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke und Briefe*, op.cit., p. 339 (338-343).

<sup>19</sup> See for example Karl Kerényi, “Der Dichter und sein Heros”, in: *Die Tat*. Zürich 27. November 1954 and Beda Allemann, “Die Napoleon-These”, in: *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*. Nr. 2820, 20. September 1959.

<sup>20</sup> Hölderlin, “Friedensfeier”, op.cit., p. 340.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 365.

If this theory is to be believed then the line “Da Herrschaft nirgend ist zu sehn bei Geistern und Menschen”<sup>22</sup> implies Hölderlin’s perception of the lack of political leadership in Germany at the beginning of the century, as highlighted by the arrival of Napoleon in France. However, commentators are generally in agreement that Hölderlin was referring to a higher, spiritual leader. This is reflected in allusions made throughout the poem to both pagan and biblical tradition, as well as in references made in previous poems to the anticipated revelation of the “Father” and his “sons”.<sup>23</sup>

Schmidt interprets the “Fürst des Fests” as the “oberste Gottheit”,<sup>24</sup> exposing what he terms the “Allheitsmotiv” which dominates the poem, with references to, for example, the “Allbekannter” and the “Allelebendigen”.<sup>25</sup> The act of taking on a “Freundesgestalt” therefore represents the revelation of God to the people.<sup>26</sup> The “Heldenzug durch die Geschichte” as referred to above would then suggest, metaphorically speaking, the work of this “Geist” through the “storms” of history<sup>27</sup> and the reference to “Jüngling” would represent the eternal youth of the gods.<sup>28</sup>

Emphasising the biblical influence, Schmidt believes the choice of the word “Fürst” to be a direct allusion to the Old Testament and the prophecy of the coming of the Messiah who will bring eternal peace to the world. Isaiah describes this promised leader as “Wunderbar, Rat, Kraft, Held, Ewigvater, Friedefürst”.<sup>29</sup> Likewise, Schmidt explains the earlier quoted line “Da Herrschaft nirgend ist zu sehn bei Geistern und Menschen”<sup>30</sup> as an allusion to chapter fifteen of Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians, in which it is prophesied that God will rule the world and thus replace all other forms of government and authority:

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 366.

<sup>23</sup> See for example Hölderlin, “Der Mutter Erde” and the commentary given by Ogden, op. cit., p. 144.

<sup>24</sup> Schmidt, *Hölderlins geschichtsphilosophische Hymnen*, op. cit., p. 17.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 20f.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 24.

<sup>29</sup> Jesaja 9, 6ff. Quote from Schmidt, *Hölderlins geschichtsphilosophische Hymnen*, op. cit., p. 17.

<sup>30</sup> Hölderlin, “Friedensfeier”, p. 366.

Darnach das Ende, wenn er das Reich Gott und dem Vater  
überantworten wird, wenn er aufheben wird alle Herrschaft und alle  
Obrigkeit und Gewalt.<sup>31</sup>

Thus one may speak of the theocratic “Konstituierung einer ausschließlichen, monarchischen Herrschaft des Vatergottes”.<sup>32</sup> However, Hölderlin takes this one step further, eliminating all forms of government or subordination. According to Schmidt, the absence of this refers to the final achievement of the work of God, at which point the sense of rule which divides has been replaced by peace and harmony amongst and between the people and the gods, that is by the “heilige Herrschaft der Liebe und Güte”.<sup>33</sup>

The role of Christ within the process of history and his presence at the “Gastmahl” of the gods is given particular importance in *Friedensfeier*. Indeed, other commentators, for example Mark Ogden in his work *The Problem of Christ in the Work of Friedrich Hölderlin*, argue that Christ is in fact himself the “Fürst des Fests”.<sup>34</sup> The importance of the role of Christ is emphasised by the following verse, which extends a particular invitation to Him:

Und manchen möcht ich laden, aber o du,  
Der freundlichest den Menschen zugetan,  
Dort unter syrischer Palme,  
Wo nahe lag die Stadt, am Brunnen gerne war;  
Das Kornfeld rauschte rings, still atmete die Kühlung

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<sup>31</sup> 1 Corinthians, 15, 24. Quote from Schmidt, *Hölderlins geschichtsphilosophische Hymnen*, op. cit., p. 22.

<sup>32</sup> Schmidt, *Hölderlins geschichtsphilosophische Hymnen*, op. cit., p. 22.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid. A similar notion was expressed in Hölderlin’s “Hyperion”. Schmidt refers in this context to the “Vorstellung vom Aufhören aller moralischen, geistigen und physischen Zwangs- und Herrschaftsverhältnisse”. (Schmidt, *Hölderlins geschichtsphilosophische Hymnen*, op. cit., p. 22). Such constraints are no longer necessary once eternal harmony has been achieved. Ogden points out that in this instance there cannot be a hierarchy between the “Father” and the “Son” as suggested in 1 Corinthians, 15, because Hölderlin was viewing the relationship in terms of revelatory action as opposed to ontology. In the poem it is Christ who represents the creation of the “heilige Herrschaft der Liebe” and thus the action of Father and Son in the process of history is one and the same. (Ogden, op. cit., p. 169).

<sup>34</sup> Ogden, op. cit., p. 155-170.

Vom Schatten des geweihten Gebirges,  
Und die lieben Freunde, das treue Gewölk,  
Umschatteten dich auch, damit der heiligkühne  
Durch Wildnis mild dein Strahl zu Menschen kam, o  
Jüngling!<sup>35</sup>

His predominant position amongst the other half-gods is reiterated by the following extract:

Die Seligen in jeglicher Weise  
Beisammen sind, und ihr Geliebtestes auch,  
An dem sie hängen, nicht fehlt; denn darum rief ich  
Zum Gastmahl, das bereitet ist,  
Dich, Unvergeßlicher, dich, zum Abend der Zeit,  
O Jüngling, dich zum Fürsten des Festes;<sup>36</sup>

Christ is perceived to be the mediator between not only the “Father” and the people, but also between the other gods, who are dependent on him - “ihr Geliebtestes auch, / An dem sie hängen”.<sup>37</sup>

Although it is not possible to enter into a detailed investigation of the actual identity of the “Fürst des Fests” within the framework of this study, it must be noted that the particular role of Christ cannot be denied. This is significant because the Christ mythology is reflected in later works concerning the meaning of leadership, becoming, through a gradual process of secularisation, linked to and in some instances superseded by the Napoleonic myth.

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<sup>35</sup> Hölderlin, “Friedensfeier”, op. cit., p. 340. Schmidt interprets this reference to the spring as an allusion to Joh. 4, 5ff. (Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke und Briefe*, op. cit., p. 900f).

<sup>36</sup> Hölderlin, “Friedensfeier”, op. cit., p. 342. The last line of this extract is the focal point of the argument as to whether the “Fürst” is the “Vater” - ‘zum’ therefore meaning ‘summon’ - or Christ - ‘zum’ meaning ‘proclaim’. (See Ogden, op. cit., p. 155, 159f).

<sup>37</sup> See Schmidt, in: Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke und Briefe*, op. cit., p. 928. This is reiterated in the written draft for the ninth verse: “Darum sei gegenwärtig, Jüngling. Keiner, wie du, gilt statt der übrigen alle.” (Ibid., p. 927). Ogden believes this suggests the necessity of Christ’s reconciliation with the other gods, which ends religious rivalry and leads to his own glorification. (Ogden, op. cit., p. 164f).

The importance of Christ is also reflected in Hölderlin's poem *Der Einzige*, which is an expression of the writer's belief in an almighty god, a "Father", who completes his work through his "sons", as outlined in *Friedensfeier*. In contrast to the accepted Christian belief, Hölderlin, in what appears to be a contradiction of the title, believes Christ to be the brother of the Ancient gods, particular reference being made here to Herakles and Dionysos. Indeed, Christ is seen to be the last descendent of the line. However, despite this polytheistic conviction, the poet still feels himself drawn towards the individual figure of Christ:

zu sehr,  
O Christus! häng ich an dir,  
Wiewohl Herakles' Bruder  
Und kühn bekenn ich, du  
Bist Bruder auch des Euers<sup>38</sup>

Hölderlin feels that he must seek out this last descendent of the Gods:

Noch einen such ich, den  
Ich liebe unter euch,  
Wo ihr den letzten eures Geschlechts,  
Des Hauses Kleinod mir  
Dem fremden Gaste verberget.

Mein Meister und Herr!  
O du, mein Lehrer!  
Was bist du ferne  
Geblieben?<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Friedrich Hölderlin, "Der Einzige". Erste Fassung, in: Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke und Briefe*, op. cit., p. 345 (343-346).

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 344f.

The poet makes the distinction here between the “weltlich” and the “geistig”, that is to say between the predominantly visible, sensual world of the Ancient gods and the spiritual world of the “hidden” Christ. All half-gods are caught between both spheres, yet Christ belongs to a greater extent to the sphere of the “Geist”:

Es hindert aber eine Scham  
Mich, dir zu vergleichen  
Die weltlichen Männer. Und freilich weiß  
Ich, der dich zeugte, dein Vater,  
Derselbe der,

Denn nimmer herrscht er allein.<sup>40</sup>

Schmidt interprets this as a mythical representation of the transition from the plastic world of the formative ancient gods, characterised by the worship of visible images, and the pneumatological Christian era, in which the spirit carries out its work through the written and spoken word. This transition was, according to Schmidt, brought about by the death of Christ, and reflects the development from a cyclical to an eschatological historical process, as illustrated by Hölderlin.<sup>41</sup> Thus Christ is “Der Einzige” as a result of his overriding tendency towards the spiritual.<sup>42</sup> The particular appeal which Christ holds for Hölderlin is therefore a result of the fact that the poet is in the same position: he feels himself drawn towards the “geistig”, but must remain within the realms of the “weltlich” in order to fulfil his mediatory role:

Die Dichter müssen auch  
Die geistigen weltlich sein.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 345.

<sup>41</sup> Schmidt, *Hölderlins geschichtsphilosophische Hymnen*, op. cit., p. 6ff and 130-137.

<sup>42</sup> Schmidt, in: Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke und Briefe*, op. cit., p. 936.

<sup>43</sup> Hölderlin, “Der Einzige”. Erste Fassung, op. cit., p. 346. Hölderlin’s perception of the role of the poet within this context is clearly expressed in the poem *Wie wenn an Feiertage...*, in which he states: “Doch uns gebührt es, unter Gottes Gewittern, / Ihr Dichter! mit entblößtem Haupte zu stehen, / Des Vaters Strahl, ihn selbst, mit eigener Hand / Zu fassen und dem Volk ins Lied / Gehüllt die himmlische Gabe zu reichen”. (Quote from Ogden, op. cit., p. 132).

It is this calling of the spiritual, represented through Christ, which leads Hölderlin to write:

Es hänget aber an einem  
Die Liebe.<sup>44</sup>

This notion of the individual leader, albeit a purely spiritual one, was to become increasingly important, in both a spiritual and a political sense, within the perception of leadership in the early nineteenth century.

Schmidt explains further how Hölderlin is dissatisfied with the outlined state of tension between the “weltlich” and the “geistig”, as it fails to provide him with the spiritual guidance - described here as “Maß” - which he is seeking:

Nie treff ich, wie ich wünsche,  
Das Maß.<sup>45</sup>

For Hölderlin “Maß” represents the ethical boundaries which determine or limit our actions. It consists of two aspects - one divine and one human. The human form is, in turn, divided into two spheres, one which corresponds to that of the gods, the other which is subjective and therefore different within each individual. According to Hölderlin the contrast, or tension, between the two is necessary in order to determine a true “Maß”, the former serving as a qualifier for the latter. Those who neglect the divine aspect, raising their own subjective desires to the absolute, are termed “maßlos”, as is exemplified in the second version of *Der Einzige*.<sup>46</sup>

Eigenwillig sonst, unmäßig  
Grenzlos, daß der Menschen Hand

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<sup>44</sup> Hölderlin, “Der Einzige”. Erste Fassung, op. cit., p. 346.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid. See Schmidt, in: Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke und Briefe*, op. cit., p. 951.

<sup>46</sup> For further details on the concept of “Maß” in the work of Hölderlin see Görner, *Hölderlins Mitte*, op. cit., p. 115-121.

Anficht das Lebende, mehr auch, als sich schicket  
Für einen Halbgott, Heiliggesetzes übergeht  
Der Entwurf.<sup>47</sup>

In this context therefore, the line “Nie treff ich, wie ich wünsche, / das Maß” refers to the lyrical ego’s inability to restrain its desires. It implies the poet’s quest for an ethical and or spiritual focus for his mind and actions, the provision of which he perceives to be lacking. The need is for a mediator between the extraordinary and for human reason incomprehensible “Maß” of the gods and the secular sphere of the humans. At the conclusion of the poem it is this mediator whom Hölderlin is still awaiting. He looks forward to an era when the two spheres are harmonised, as also described in *Friedensfeier*:

Ein Gott weiß aber,  
Wenn kommet, was ich wünsche, das Beste.<sup>48</sup>

It was this quest for spiritual leadership which marked the discussion of leadership as it developed in the early stages of the nineteenth century, the emphasis gradually shifting, as will be illustrated, from the purely, or at least predominantly, spiritual to the political.

The position and image of Napoleon in the work of Hölderlin must also be examined within this context. As mentioned above, some commentators were of the opinion that the “Fürst des Fests” in *Friedensfeier* represented Napoleon, though this standpoint has since largely been discredited.<sup>49</sup> Nevertheless, three draft poems may be analysed which undoubtedly refer to the then General Bonaparte.

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<sup>47</sup> Hölderlin, “Der Einzige”. Zweite Fassung, in: Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke und Briefe*, op. cit., p. 349 (347-350). For further analysis see Görner, *Hölderlins Mitte*, op. cit., p. 117f and Schmidt, in: Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke und Briefe*, op. cit., p. 951-969.

<sup>48</sup> Hölderlin, “Der Einzige”. Erste Fassung, op. cit., p. 346.

<sup>49</sup> See for example Paul Böckmann, “Hölderlins Friedensfeier”, in: *Hölderlin-Jahrbuch*. Band 9 (1955/56), p. 1-31. Also Friedrich Beissner, “Der Streit um Hölderlins Friedensfeier”, in: *Sinn und Form*, 7 (1955), p. 621-653 and Clemens Heselhaus, “Christus oder Napoleon-Hymne? Zum Streitgespräch um Hölderlins Friedensfeier”, in: *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 4. Juni 1955, p. 17.



The first of these drafts is entitled *Die Völker schwiegen, schlummerten ....*, and describes how fate sent the “Geist der Unruh”<sup>50</sup> - in the form of the French Revolution and the wars connected with it - to awaken the peoples of Europe from their “slumber”. Fate is portrayed as the higher spirit which is controlling the situation, paradoxically, “in wilder Ordnung”.<sup>51</sup> Within this apparent turmoil Napoleon, referred to here as “Manch großer Geist”, arises and takes control:

Und Heere tobten, wie die kochende See.  
Und wie ein Meergott, herrscht’ und waltete  
Manch großer Geist im kochenden Getümmel.<sup>52</sup>

The link made between fate and the arrival of Napoleon would suggest that Hölderlin judges the French General to be in some way associated with fate. The analogy drawn between him and a “Meergott” governing the “kochende See” serves to emphasise his power and indicates that he has proportions which extend beyond that of a mere mortal. Furthermore, the image could be viewed as reflecting the storm motif, used in *Friedensfeier* as a metaphor for the historical process.<sup>53</sup>

The final, incomplete verse makes a further allusion to the General and his return to Italy:

Und blinken goldne Früchte wieder dir  
Wie heitre holde Sterne, durch die kühle Nacht  
Der Pomeranzenwälder in Italien.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Hölderlin, “Die Völker schwiegen, schlummerten ....,” in: Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke und Briefe*, op. cit., p. 373.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> See Schmidt, in: Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke und Briefe*, op. cit., p. 898.

<sup>54</sup> Hölderlin, “Die Völker schwiegen, schlummerten ....,” op. cit. Schmidt refers to this concept of light and darkness in relation to Hölderlin’s early poems, which represent a cyclical understanding of the process of history. Thus, day and night represent positive and negative, or, to use the words of Schmidt, “erfüllten und unerfüllten” periods of history respectively. (Schmidt, *Hölderlins geschichtsphilosophische Hymnen*, op. cit., p. 2).

Schmidt identifies this as a reference to either the conclusion of the Peace of Campo Formio in October 1797 or the French occupation of Rome in February of the following year. Once again Napoleon is mystified, imaged as stars in the night.

It may also be argued that the lines:

Und jeder Wunsch und jede Menschenkraft  
Vertobt auf Einer da,<sup>55</sup>

are an initial indication of the role given to Napoleon the *individual* leader, a common phenomenon in the leadership debate, as explained above.

The second poem, an ode to Napoleon entitled *Buonaparte*, was written during a similar period and further contributes to the mystification of its subject. In the poem Napoleon appears as the heroic “Jüngling”<sup>56</sup> whose spirit is compared to the “Geist der Natur”.<sup>57</sup> However, the poem does not concentrate on Napoleon the great military general, but expresses a more abstract, spiritual concept.

The main focus of the ode is the relationship between the poet and the great politician. The traditional role of the poet, imaged here as a “heilige Gefäß”,<sup>58</sup> is, according to Hölderlin, to write about, or here “contain”, the spirit of the political hero, and thus to mediate between him and the people, in the same way as it is to mediate between the gods and the people. Yet in the case of Napoleon this is not possible, because his spirit is too great, it has, in the words of Görner, a “überpoetische Größe”<sup>59</sup>:

Aber der Geist dieses Jünglings  
Der schnelle, müßt er es nicht zersprengen

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<sup>55</sup> Hölderlin, “Die Völker schwiegen, schlummerten ....”, op. cit.

<sup>56</sup> Hölderlin, “Buonaparte”, in: Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke und Briefe*, op. cit., p. 374. Particular importance was attached to the youthfulness of Napoleon, especially by Goethe (See Part I, Chapter 2). It is interesting to note that Hölderlin used the same word to imply godliness and thus to describe Christ.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Görner, *Hölderlins Mitte*, op. cit., p. 112.

Wo es ihn fassen wollte, das Gefäß?<sup>60</sup>

The poet is small in comparison, unable to learn from Napoleon or to become one with him:

Der Dichter laß ihn unberührt wie den Geist der Natur,  
An solchem Stoffe wird zum Knaben der Meister

Er kann im Gedichte nicht leben und bleiben,  
Er lebt und bleibt in der Welt.<sup>61</sup>

Thus the omnipresent spirit of Napoleon is greater than the poet and cannot be contained or described in song.

Wülfing describes this as the “Unsagbarkeitstopos” common to the Napoleonic myth, as portrayed by contemporaneous German writers. He identifies the final two lines of the poem as a comparison between thought and action, which he defines as the “Wort-Tat-Stereotyp” - a notion which recurs throughout much of the work written by Germans during this period, particularly the adherents of Napoleon, who was portrayed as the epitome of “Tat”. Wülfing then extends this to a comparison between Germany and France, the nations of “Wort” and “Tat” respectively.<sup>62</sup>

However, the hymn *Dem Allbekanntem*, for which Hölderlin also considered the title *Buonaparte*, covers a similar theme, that is to say the relationship between the poet and the political hero, yet arrives at the opposite conclusion, which implies that Wülfing’s theory does not entirely explain the notions conveyed by the poet. Once again Napoleon is portrayed as “der Herrliche”, “der Genius”.<sup>63</sup> He is omnipresent,

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<sup>60</sup> Hölderlin, “Buonaparte”, op. cit.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Wülfing/Bruns/Parr, op.cit., p. 18-21.

<sup>63</sup> Hölderlin, “Dem Allbekanntem”, in: Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke und Briefe*, op. cit., p. 374.

known to all, as the title suggests, yet also, what appears to be a contradiction in terms, a “Fremdling”.<sup>64</sup>

Görner sees an explanation for Hölderlin’s apparent change of opinion between the writing of *Buonaparte* and *Dem Allbekanntem* in his perception of “der Gesang” as “das übergeordnet Freie”,<sup>65</sup> as the first verse of the poem suggests:

Frei, wie die Schwalben, ist der Gesang, sie fliegen und wandern  
Fröhlich von Land zu Land,<sup>66</sup>

“Gesang” therefore touches everybody, including Napoleon, and Hölderlin implies that the military leader tolerates such poetic praise, as this in turn enables him to remain “allbekannt”:

Dies neide mir keiner der andern, gleichst du dem Ernsten  
Oder gleichst du ihm nicht, laß jetzt in Ruhe mich sprechen  
Denn der Herrliche selbst er gönnet gerne mein Spiel mir.<sup>67</sup>

This extract illustrates the parallel which the poet now draws between himself and Napoleon, both of them being “Fremdlinge”. It is this shared experience which enables Hölderlin to understand the now mystified political genius and consequently to write, or ‘sing’, about him and to fulfil his mediatory role. In the words of Görner:

Während der Odenentwurf *Buonaparte* diese Möglichkeit leugnet, kann ihn der Hymnenentwurf postulieren, weil der Dichter durch sein Singen eine “neue Mythologie” schafft: Aus der konkreten zeitgeschichtlichen Gestalt Buonaparte wird der allbekannte Fremdling, ein mythenträchtiger Widerspruch in sich, der - poetisch

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Görner, *Hölderlins Mitte*, op. cit., p. 113.

<sup>66</sup> Hölderlin, “Dem Allbekanntem”, op. cit.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

gestaltet - alle beschäftigt und so einen gemeinsamen Mittelpunkt des allgemeinen Interesses herstellt.<sup>68</sup>

These fragmentary works therefore provide initial indications of the myths created around Napoleon. Being written before his seizure of power in France, they have a different dimension to many of the literary works which were to follow and which concentrated on Napoleon, Emperor of the French. However, certain elements were, as will be seen, reiterated by later writers, in particular the conviction that Napoleon possessed a spirit and a "Größe" beyond the mere mortal and that he was in some way linked to fate or a higher order which determined the course of events on earth.

Of particular relevance in this context is also the reference made in *Dem Allbekannten* to Napoleon the genius. Hölderlin's perception of genius was to a certain extent analogous with the accepted belief of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, which was centred around the theory that genii were close to God, if not gods themselves. This notion is reflected in the work of Goethe who, in *Von deutscher Baukunst*, stated:

Jemehr die Seele erhebt zu dem Gefühl der Verhältnisse, die allein schön und von Ewigkeit sind, deren Hauptakkorde man beweisen, deren Geheimnisse man nur fühlen kann, in denen sich allein das Leben des gottgleichen Genius in seligen Melodien herumwälzt; je mehr diese Schönheit in das Wesen eines Geistes eindringt, daß sie mit ihm entstanden zu sein scheint, daß ihm nichts genugtut als sie, daß er nichts aus sich wirkt als sie, desto glücklicher ist der Künstler, desto herrlicher ist er, desto tiefgebeugter stehen wir da und beten an den Gesalbten Gottes.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Görner, *Hölderlins Mitte*, op. cit., p. 114.

<sup>69</sup> Goethe, "Von deutscher Baukunst", in: Goethe, *Sämtliche Werke nach Epochen seines Schaffens*. Münchener Ausgabe. Hrsg. v. Karl Richter in Zusammenarbeit mit Herbert G. Göpfert, Norbert Miller und Gerhard Sauder. Carl Hanser Verlag, München 1985. Band 1.2, p. 421 (415-423). See also Schmidt, *Die Geschichte des Genie-Gedankens*, op.cit. Band 1. Von der Aufklärung bis zum Idealismus, p. 407.

In *Wandrer's Sturmlied* he reiterates the notion that the creative genius is "Göttergleich".<sup>70</sup> This is then further developed in his *Prometheus-Hymne*, in which the subject, commonly used as a representative of autonomous production and self-determination, himself becomes a substitute god.<sup>71</sup>

It is at this point that Hölderlin's theory deviates from that of his contemporaries. He did perceive the creative genius to be close to the gods, but rejected all forms of self-proclamation and secular autonomy. Genius was in his eyes anything which was close to the "göttlichen Ganzheit", and therefore able to mediate between the worlds of the divine and the human - the role of the poet. Included in this definition were, according to Schmidt, the half-gods such as Dionysos, Herakles and Christ, as well as Empedokles and Rousseau.

Schmidt makes no reference to Napoleon within this context, though other commentators, such as Salzberger and Wülfing, have included him within this group.<sup>72</sup> Hölderlin's naming of Napoleon as a genius, albeit in more of a political than a creative sense, is reinforced by the emphasis which he placed on the General's links with fate and the "Geist der Natur", which itself represented the divine "Ganzheit".

This proclamation has further consequences for the understanding of leadership, as it suggests genius to be a positive and desirable characteristic of a leader. The implied closeness to God could be interpreted as the mediation between the divine and the secular and thus the possibility of the sought after provision of "Maß".

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<sup>70</sup> Goethe, "Wandrer's Sturmlied", in: Goethe, MA, Band 1.1, p. 197f.

<sup>71</sup> Goethe, "Prometheus", in: Goethe, MA, Band 1.1, p. 669-680.

<sup>72</sup> L. S. Salzberger, *Hölderlin*. Studies in Modern European Literature and Thought. Bowes and Bowes, Cambridge 1952, p. 43. Wülfing singles out the analogy drawn between the figure of Napoleon and nature itself, which initially appears contradictory but which in fact, according to him, represents Hölderlin's conception of Napoleon as a "Halbgott", a cross between "das Menschliche" and "das Göttliche". He draws on the work of Jürgen Link in order to explain how for Hölderlin a "Halbgott" appeared at the threshold between an existing order and a new age, and thus incarnated that age. Napoleon then becomes an "exemplarischen Figur der Zeit", a "'Halbgott' der Moderne". (Wülfing/Bruns/Parr, op. cit., p. 20f).

However, according to Hölderlin, genius is “naturhaft”,<sup>73</sup> that is to say inherent in an individual, not acquired or developed, and therefore not to be changed. Genii are “maßlos”, as they are “ungelehrig”,<sup>74</sup> that is on a course predetermined by fate. They possess their own personal and subjective “Maß”, but - and this appears to contradict the poet’s aforementioned perception of genius - such moral limits are not restrained by a divine influence.<sup>75</sup>

This has particular implications for the sphere of political leadership, as it seems to suggest that the greater the leader, the wider and the more subjective the ethical boundaries of the individual. Unhindered by divine considerations, it is clear that this notion possesses an inherent risk of “Vermessenheit”. Furthermore, it could be argued that whatever action the genius produces may be condoned as, according to Hölderlin’s definition, it cannot be altered.

As will be shown throughout the subsequent chapters, this concept was gradually developed and radicalised by Napoleon’s supporters through until the early 1830s. For Hölderlin this notion does however remain tentative, and must be considered in conjunction with and qualified by the somewhat contradictory theory of a genius’ closeness to God. Of greatest importance remains his overriding and unsatisfied quest for spiritual guidance.

A further example of the essentially spiritual interpretation of leadership in relation to Napoleon is provided by Karoline von Günderrode. Herself a contemporary of Hölderlin, her impression of Napoleon was based on a mythical extension of the belief that he would bring freedom to the world. Her poem *Buonaparte in Egypten*, written

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<sup>73</sup> Schmidt, *Die Geschichte des Genie-Gedankens*, op. cit., Band I, p. 405.

<sup>74</sup> In the poem “Vulkan” Hölderlin writes: “...und wenn / Sie zürnten all’, die ungelehrigen / Geniuskräfte, doch liebt die Liebe”. (Quote from Görner, *Hölderlins Mitte*, op. cit., p. 116f).

<sup>75</sup> See Schmidt, *Die Geschichte des Genie-Gedankens*, op. cit., Band I, p. 406. Schmidt outlines how Hölderlin judged genius as being equivalent to fate and the demonic, thus pre-empting the term used by Goethe to describe a fateful spirit or figure, free from ethical or moral constraints, in particular Napoleon. (See Part I, Chapter 2).

in 1803, refers back to Napoleon's Egyptian campaign of 1798-1799, portraying the then General Bonaparte as an ancient hero and the "Säule der würdigeren Freiheit".<sup>76</sup>

Mythical imagery is used to elevate Napoleon beyond the status of a human being to that of a godly figure, his light bringing an end to centuries of darkness. By restoring freedom and happiness to the world through dangerous battle with those who have destroyed this freedom and blinded the people to its virtue, he is presented as the heroic figure who has returned Egypt to its former glory:

Aus dem Schoos der Nacht entwindet mühesam die Dämmerung sich  
Und der Dämmerung Gebilde löset einst des Tages Licht.  
Endlich flieheth die Nacht! und herrlicher Morgen  
Golden entsteigst du dem bläulichten Bette der Tiefe  
Und erleuchtest das dunkle Land wo der Vorzeit  
erster Funke geglüht,<sup>77</sup>

Recalling Hölderlin's references to the gods of Ancient Greece and Rome, Günderröde draws parallels between Napoleon and the Ancient gods of Egypt, a choice of imagery which emphasises the spiritual aspect of the leadership which she sought. As Hölderlin, according to Salzberger, believed Napoleon to be a descendant of the Ancient Greek and Roman gods, so Günderröde describes him as the "späte Enkel"<sup>78</sup> of the Ancient Egyptian Gods. Through her poem she therefore transposes her desire for one almighty leader, as expressed by Hölderlin, onto one specific individual, who then himself takes on the absolute, god-like properties for which she is searching.

The tendency to use religious imagery and terminology in order to describe Napoleon may be repeatedly observed in much of the work written in support of the French

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<sup>76</sup> Karoline von Günderröde, "Buonaparte in Egypten", in: Günderröde, *Sämtliche Werke und Ausgewählte Schriften*. Historisch-kritische Ausgabe. Hrsg. v. Walter Morgenthaler. Stoemfeld / Roter Stern, Basel / Frankfurt am Main 1990, Band I, p. 369f. Morgenthaler suggests that this poem may have been based on a poem by Friedrich Lehne entitled "Dem Consul Napoleon Buonaparte", a copy of which was found in Günderröde's 'Nachlaß'. (See Band III, p. 213f).

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., p. 369.



leader, as will also be illustrated later in part one. It implies an element of spiritual leadership, combined with the notion of immortality; a greatness beyond the realms of human beings; the ability to achieve the impossible.<sup>79</sup>

This said, Günderrode's praise of Napoleon stems from her faith in his ability to restore freedom and is consequently associated not only with the search for spiritual guidance, but also with a more political orientation, albeit on a fundamental, ideological level. In the following passage she expresses her hope that Napoleon will be successful in his mission, a statement which may be applied not only to Egypt, but also to Europe and, in particular, Germany:

Möge dem Helden das Werk gelingen Völker  
Zu beglücken, möge der schöne Morgen der Freiheit  
Sich entwinden der Dämmerung finstrem Schoose.  
Möge der späte Enkel sich freuen der labenden  
Der gereiften Frucht, die mit Todesgefahren  
In dem schrecklichen Kampf mit finsterem Wahn, der Menge  
Irrthum, der Großen Härte, des Volks Verblendung  
Blutige Thränen vergiesend die leidende Menschheit  
Zitternt in dieses Jahrhunderts Laufe gepflanzt.<sup>80</sup>

Birgit Weißenborn refers to what she believes to be a strict distinction made by Günderrode between the private and the contemporary political sphere, emphasising the restrictions placed on women in early nineteenth century society from which the

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid., p. 370.

<sup>79</sup> Bernhard Gajek cites this as a common trend throughout the writings of the period: "Seit Herder und Klopstock waren Bibel und Bibelton unter den Gebildeten geläufig: die Bibel war ein literarisches Kunstwerk geworden. Literarische und biblische Helden gingen gleichsam Hand in Hand". (Bernhard Gajek, "Bettine von Arnim und die bayerische Erweckungsbewegung", in: *Die Erfahrung anderer Länder. Beiträge eines Wiepersdorfer Kolloquiums zu Achim und Bettina von Arnim*. Hrsg. v. Heinz Härtl und Hartwig Schultz. Walter de Gruyter, Berlin/New York 1994, p. 260f [247-269]).

<sup>80</sup> Günderrode, "Buonaparte in Egypten", op.cit., p. 370.

poetess was unable to escape.<sup>81</sup> Günderrode's response to the changing political situation does indeed tend to be overlooked, not least because, as Christa Wolf points out, her correspondence contains only one reference to her apparent "republikanische Gesinnungen".<sup>82</sup>

Nevertheless, Günderrode had grown up during the French Revolution and continued to perceive France as the "Land der Freiheit",<sup>83</sup> in contrast with feudal Germany, in which the "alte Bande der Knechtschaft"<sup>84</sup> to which she refers were still a fundamental part of society. Despite the absence of any critical analysis of the contemporary situation, the above comments, combined with the eulogy to Napoleon, provide an indication of her political opinions, suggesting a more heightened awareness of "Zeitpolitik" than that for which she has been credited.

Günderrode's short life may indeed be described as a poetic quest for freedom, not only in immediate spatial terms, but also from the constraints of a patriarchal society. As a result the question may be raised as to whether by referring to Napoleon as the "Säule der würdigeren Freiheit" Günderrode perceived in him not only a liberator from a feudal and monarchic society, but perhaps also a symbol of female emancipation. Should this be the case, then the poem *Buonaparte in Egypten* could be interpreted as evidence of an early appeal for female emancipation, albeit in poetic form.<sup>85</sup>

This remains conjecture, though the following passage, taken from a letter from Günderrode to her friend 'Gunda' Brentano dated August 1801, does suggest that the

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<sup>81</sup> See "Ich sende Dir ein zärtliches Pfand". *Die Briefe der Karoline von Günderrode*. Hrsg. und mit einer Einleitung versehen von Birgit Weissenborn. Insel Verlag, Frankfurt am Main und Leipzig 1992, p. 16.

<sup>82</sup> See Karoline von Günderrode, *Der Schatten eines Traumes. Gedichte, Prosa, Briefe, Zeugnisse von Zeitgenossen*. Hrsg. und mit einem Essay von Christa Wolf. Sammlung Luchterhand, Darmstadt und Neuwied 1981, p. 17f.

<sup>83</sup> In a letter to Charlotte von Günderrode dated 4.6.1799 Karoline describes the border between France and Germany as the "Grenzen des Landes der Freiheit". See Weissenborn (Hrsg.), op.cit., p. 45.

<sup>84</sup> Günderrode, "Buonaparte in Egypten", op.cit., p. 369.

<sup>85</sup> The poem therefore provides a further perspective on Günderrode's distance from other female writers and poets of her era and their emancipatory appeals, as detailed by Görner in *Grenzgänger*, op.cit., p. 71-84.

heroic Emperor represented for Günderrode the realisation of her own “masculine” desires, her poem a means of achieving through him what she herself was, due to society’s restrictions, unable to do:

Schon oft hatte ich den unweiblichen Wunsch, mich in ein wildes Schlachtgetümmel zu werfen, zu sterben. Warum ward ich kein Mann! Ich habe keinen Sinn für weibliche Tugenden, für Weiberglückseligkeit. Nur das Wilde, Große, Glänzende gefällt mir.<sup>86</sup>

Despite such considerations, it nevertheless remains the case that Günderrode saw in Napoleon a spiritual, quasi-divine leader, who was also capable of realising political freedom. The increasing interrelationship between these two aspects, as also exemplified by Hölderlin, was to mark the subsequent debates on leadership.

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<sup>86</sup> Weißenborn (Hrsg.), op.cit., p. 79 (78f).

## *Chapter Two*

### *Politicised glorification of the demonic personality: Hegel and Goethe*

The trend towards an increasingly political element within the response to Napoleon, and as such within the contemporary leadership ideal, may be identified in the work of both Hegel and Goethe. Writing during the initial stages of the nineteenth century, both writers expressed a high degree of admiration for the French Emperor, and, despite differences of emphasis in their overall approach, a number of similarities may therefore be identified in their respective portrayals of him.

Hegel's response to Napoleon was marked by both support of his concrete policies and a belief in his divine personal qualities. Referred to by the writer Peter Hacks as a "bonapartist [...] ohne Einschränkung",<sup>87</sup> he was, for instance, in favour of the abolition of feudalism, the foundation of the Confederation of the Rhine and the introduction of the "Code Napoléon".<sup>88</sup> To him the French leader represented the necessary break between an existing and a new era in history, as had been introduced by the French Revolution.

In his earlier writings Hegel had expressed Germany's need for a strong individual leader, a saviour who, by means of a radical break with tradition and the establishment of a new order, would unite the individual principalities into one nation. In support of this conviction he drew parallels with the history of the Jews and the foundation of a religiously based nation under the leadership of Abraham:

Abraham [...] hatte schon in der Jugend mit seinem Vater ein Vaterland verlassen; nun riß er sich auch in den Ebenen Mesopotamiens vollends von seiner Familie los, um ein ganz selbstständiger, unabhängiger Mann, selbst Oberhaupt zu sein [...].

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<sup>87</sup> Peter Hacks, "Über eine Goethesche Auskunft zu Fragen der Theaterarchitektur", in: Hacks, *op.cit.*, p. 286 (282-305).

Der erste Akt, durch den Abraham zum Stammvater einer Nation wird, ist eine Trennung, welche die Bande des Zusammenlebens und der Liebe zerreit, das Ganze der Beziehungen, in denen er mit Menschen und Natur bisher gelebt hatte.<sup>89</sup>

Thus, for Hegel Napoleon's subsequent rise to power represented the potential salvation of the German nation. Unity was to be achieved not by a gradual process of national development, but rather by a radical break with tradition achieved through the definitive actions of the individual.

The parallel drawn between the leader of the Jews and Napoleon is reinforced by Hegel's belief that the French leader was driven by divine forces, being one of the so-called "weltgeschichtliche Persnlichkeiten" who embody the "Weltgeist". Having witnessed Napoleon on the eve of the battle of Jena he wrote:

Den Kaiser - diese Weltseele - sah ich durch die Stadt zum Rekognoszieren hinausreiten; - es ist in der Tat eine wunderbare Empfindung, ein solches Individuum zu sehen, das hier auf einem Punkt konzentriert, auf einem Pferde sitzend, ber die Welt bergreift und sie beherrscht.<sup>90</sup>

The mission of these individuals, according to Hegel, was to further the spirit in its quest for freedom and a true understanding of itself. Once this mission had been accomplished they would then cease to exist: "Ist der Zweck erreicht, so gleichen sie leeren Hlsen, die abfallen".<sup>91</sup> This theory provided a supernatural explanation of Napoleon's defeat at the hands of the coalition forces which freed the Emperor from any negative appraisal, thereby echoing the interpretation of genius put forward by

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<sup>88</sup> Georg Lukács, Nachwort, in: G. W. F. Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*. Mit einem Nachwort von Georg Lukács. Texte-Auswahl und Kommentar zur Rezeptionsgeschichte von Gerhard Ghler. Ullstein Verlag, Frankfurt am Main/Berlin/Wien 2. Auflage 1973, p. 453f.

<sup>89</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, "Der Geist des Judentums", in: Hegel, *Werke Bd. 1 (Frhe Schriften)*. Hrsg. v. Gerhard Ghler. Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt am Main 1986, p. 277.

<sup>90</sup> Quote from Lukács, op. cit., p. 454.

<sup>91</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, *Recht, Staat, Geschichte. Eine Auswahl aus seinen Werken*. Hrsg. und erlutert von Friedrich Blow. Alfred Krner Verlag, Stuttgart 1970, p. 426.

Hölderlin. It reflects a tendency which was to become a common feature of the Napoleonic myth.

Associated with this theory is the absolute right accorded to the world-historic figures to undertake whatever action is necessary in order to fulfil their divine mission: "Eine große Gestalt, die da einerschreitet, zertritt manche unschuldige Blume, muß auf ihrem Wege manches zertrümmern".<sup>92</sup> This liberation from accepted moral constraints was a notion developed by a number of writers throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century and was to mark the subsequent understanding of leadership. It is a phenomenon which may also be observed in Goethe's response to Napoleon, as revealed in his conversations with Eckermann which are to be examined later in this chapter. In a more radical sense this tendency may also be observed in the works of Kleist and Grabbe. It represents the legitimisation of actions in terms of their final result, but also implies a development towards the charismatic legitimisation of leadership based on the perceived qualities of the individual personality.

According to Hegel the "weltgeschichtliche Persönlichkeiten" or "Seelenführer"<sup>93</sup> are able to reveal to the people, due to their extraordinary powers of insight, their subconscious needs and desires. This concept therefore implies not simply the military and political government of a state and the rupture with an obsolete era, but also a form of spiritual guidance, albeit with the aim of achieving political or historic aims in the name of a higher order.

Hegel's response to Napoleon therefore unites the ability to provide both spiritual and political leadership in one individual, who is consequently attributed with divine qualities, thereby expanding upon the work of Hölderlin and Günderröde. In this respect a number of similarities may be identified with the "Goethesche Mythos",<sup>94</sup> a term used by Gonthier-Louis Fink in order to highlight the complex nature of Goethe's reception of the French leader.

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid., p. 432.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., p. 426.

Due to his reluctance to express opinions on current political affairs,<sup>95</sup> combined with the limited number of direct references made to Napoleon during his rule, it is generally held that Goethe's evaluation of the French Emperor was, in contrast to the Hegelian approach, dominated by the personality of the leader, his political standpoint remaining of, at most, secondary importance.<sup>96</sup> Goethe's "weltbürgerliche Stimmung"<sup>97</sup> did indeed stand in direct contrast to the drive towards the nation state, as he chose to focus on Germany's literary or artistic culture, which transcended national or political boundaries and compensated for the division of the German empire.<sup>98</sup>

This essentially apolitical interpretation is reinforced by those references made by Goethe to Napoleon in his conversations with Eckermann, which took place following Napoleon's death between 1823 and 1832. Although doubts concerning the validity of these texts remain, they nevertheless provide the most detailed account of Goethe's response to the Emperor. Described by Hacks as "eine einzige Huldigung an Napoleon",<sup>99</sup> they will, as such, constitute the key source of this part of the analysis.

Himself a declared Royalist, Goethe expressed traditional and Conservative opinions in support of feudal society, as demonstrated within the framework of the so-called "Gespräche".<sup>100</sup> However, his view of the "ungeheuerliche" Revolution<sup>101</sup> was not purely negative. According to Fink, Goethe judged it as both a utopian interruption in the continuity of history and a challenge to society and the individual.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Gonthier-Louis Fink, "Goethe und Napoleon", in: *Goethe Jahrbuch*, op. cit., p. 82 (81-101).

<sup>95</sup> "Sowie ein Dichter politisch wirken will, muß er sich einer Partei hingeben; und sowie er dieses tut, ist er als Poet verloren". (J. P. Eckermann, *Gespräche mit Goethe in den letzten Jahren seines Lebens. 1823-1832*. [2 Bände]. Tempel Verlag, Leipzig 1913. Band 1, p. 74).

<sup>96</sup> See for example, Ilse Peters, "Das Napoleonbild Goethes in seiner Spätzeit. (1815-1832)", in: *Goethe. Viermonatsschrift der Goethe-Gesellschaft. Jahresheft 9* (1944), p. 140-171.

<sup>97</sup> Grappin, op. cit., p. 73.

<sup>98</sup> Fink, op. cit., p. 92ff.

<sup>99</sup> See Hacks, "Über eine Goethesche Auskunft zu Fragen der Theaterarchitektur", op.cit., p. 301.

<sup>100</sup> See for example the following statement concerning the need to remain within the confines of one's social class and not to attempt to rule oneself: "Das Vernünftige ist immer, daß jeder sein Metier treibe, wozu er geboren ist und was er gelernt hat, und daß er den anderen nicht hindere, das Seinige zu tun. Der Schuster bleibe bei seinen Leisten, der Bauer hinter dem Pflug und der Fürst wisse zu regieren. Denn dies ist auch ein Metier, das gelernt sein will, und das sich niemand anmaßen soll, der es nicht versteht". (Eckermann, op.cit., B. 1, p. 90).

<sup>101</sup> Quote from Grappin, op. cit., p. 71.

<sup>102</sup> Fink, op. cit., p. 90.

Goethe's early comments on Napoleon, whom he believed to have inherited the Revolution, therefore reflect a corresponding ambivalence. In a letter to Schiller dated March 1802, Goethe refers to Napoleon as the lone hero who has arisen in order to control the Revolution: "Wir wollen erwarten, ob uns Bonapartes Persönlichkeit noch ferner mit dieser herrlichen und herrschenden Erscheinung erfreuen wird".<sup>103</sup> He perceived the French Emperor as both the man who had restored order to France and the "Geist einer Zeit, die die Dämonen der Zerstörung entfesselte".<sup>104</sup> Fink interprets this seemingly paradoxical approach as a reflection of Goethe's belief that Napoleon accorded, through the restoration of order, an element of freedom to the Revolution, of which it was previously devoid.<sup>105</sup>

Associated with this belief was the conviction that Napoleon would, having taken control of the French Revolution, ultimately bring peace to Europe. This sentiment is expressed in the poem *Ihro Majestät der Kaiserin von Frankreich*, in which Marie-Louise of Austria is described as the "holde Friedensbraut" and a "Vermittlerin nach Götterart", who has reconciled France and Austria through her marriage with Napoleon.<sup>106</sup> According to Goethe, as previously stated by Hölderlin and Günderrode, Napoleon's final goal is peace: "Der alles wollen kann, will auch den Frieden".<sup>107</sup>

In contrast to earlier works written in praise of Napoleon, Goethe did however acknowledge the negative aspects of the Emperor's "despotischer Herrschaft",<sup>108</sup> though he believed that this was necessary within the process towards peace, which was presented not as an immediate achievement, but a long-term goal.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Briefwechsel mit Schiller*. Hrsg. v. Ernst Beutler. Artemis Winkler, Zürich und Stuttgart 1964 (2. Auflage), p. 885. (Letter dating from 9th March 1802).

<sup>104</sup> Fink, op.cit., p. 91.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid. This is supported by amongst others Paul Müllensiefen, who argues that Napoleon provided the "göttlich polare Naturkraft" which enabled Goethe to understand the Revolution, which he had previously perceived as a one-sided force. (Paul Müllensiefen, "Die Französische Revolution und Napoleon in Goethes Weltanschauung", in: *Jahrbuch der Goethe-Gesellschaft*. 16 [1930], p. 91ff [73-108]).

<sup>106</sup> Goethe, "Ihro Majestät der Kaiserin von Frankreich", in: Goethe, MA, Band 9, p. 65f.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., p. 66.

<sup>108</sup> Eckermann, op. cit., B. 2, p. 211.



This may therefore be regarded as an extension of the popular attitude observed by Gentz in the early stages of Napoleon's rule, as referred to in the introduction to this section. It represents what Schmidt refers to as the "inhaltlich-ideelle Legitimation"<sup>110</sup> of political authority, the theory also evident in the work of Hegel that "the ends justifies the means", or in the words of Fink, the paradox "daß das Übel auch zum Guten führt".<sup>111</sup> Associated with this conviction was the popular dissatisfaction with contemporary dynastic leaders in Germany, Napoleon having exposed, in the words of Goethe, "die Unzulänglichkeit der übrigen Regenten".<sup>112</sup>

According to Hacks however, Goethe's essentially positive response to Napoleon reflects not merely the general desire for the restoration of order and peace in Europe, but also the advocacy of bonapartist ideology. In this context he has criticised the "Unterbewertung des deutschen Bonapartismus"<sup>113</sup> which he believes to have dominated academic discussion, with regard to both Hegel and, above all, Goethe. In particular in his essay *Über eine Goethesche Auskunft zu Fragen der Theaterarchitektur*, based on an analysis of Goethe's declaration in favour of a "vollkommenes Hoftheater", he argues that the poet did not merely admire Napoleon as a great individual, but that he was also in favour of both his political ideology and his leadership style.<sup>114</sup> He therefore interprets Goethe's reticence to give public comment on Napoleon as the result of his political opposition, and highlights a number of aspects of Goethe's work in support of this theory.

In contrast to Wilhelm Mommsen's statement that prior to his meeting with Napoleon Goethe remained at the very best sceptical towards the French leader,<sup>115</sup> Hacks highlights the early antagonism felt between Goethe and the so-called Romantics, whose movement he describes as "die in einer Stimmung versammelten Abneigungen

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<sup>109</sup> Goethe, "Ihro Majestät der Kaiserin von Frankreich", op. cit..

<sup>110</sup> Schmidt, *Die Geschichte des Genie-Gedankens*, op.cit., Band 1, p. 451 f.

<sup>111</sup> Fink, op. cit., p. 100.

<sup>112</sup> Quote from Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> Hacks, "Über eine Goethesche Auskunft zu Fragen der Theaterarchitektur", op.cit., p. 289.

<sup>114</sup> See Ibid., p. 286 f.

<sup>115</sup> Wilhelm Mommsen, *Die politischen Anschauungen Goethes*. Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, Stuttgart 1948, p. 129 ff.

gegen Napoleon".<sup>116</sup> Based on the theory that literature is "Fortsetzung der Politik mit anderen Mitteln", Hacks interprets Goethe's dislike of Kleist as the result of differences in their political opinions.<sup>117</sup> He also draws particular attention in this context to the argument which is reported to have taken place between Christiane von Goethe and Bettine von Arnim, as well as to the suspicion raised in Romantic circles that Goethe's *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* reflected bonapartist tendencies.<sup>118</sup>

A further indication of Goethe's early support of Napoleon may be identified in his review of Gottlieb Hiller's autobiography and anthology, published in 1805.<sup>119</sup> Hiller was a fervent admirer of the Prussian monarchy and Goethe's unpublished response to both his work and his character, interpreted by Hacks as an attack on "die demokratische Gefahr",<sup>120</sup> is unusually severe. In contrast, an earlier review of Gustav Schlabrendorf's *Napoleon Bonaparte und das französische Volk unter seinem Konsulate* (1804), in which Goethe refers to "dem außerordentlichen Manne, der, durch seine Taten, sein Glück, die Welt in Erstaunen und Verwirrung setzt", reveals admiration of Napoleon and comments upon the difficulty of remaining politically impartial when passing judgment on him.<sup>121</sup>

One of Goethe's most public declarations of his early support of Napoleon is his published translation of Johannes von Müller's 1807 speech *De la Gloire de Frédéric*: a eulogy to the 'grands hommes' of history which concludes with an implicit appeal

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<sup>116</sup> Hacks, "Über eine Goethesche Auskunft zu Fragen der Theaterarchitektur", op.cit., p. 291.

<sup>117</sup> Peter Hacks, "An Träger", in: Hacks, *Die Maßgaben der Kunst*, op.cit., p. 314 (306-317).

<sup>118</sup> In a letter to the then Bettine Brentano, Achim von Arnim wrote: "Ueber die Wahlverwandtschaften habe ich hier vieles herumgestritten, manche suchten darin Absichten zu Gunsten Napoleons". (Letter dated 26.2.1810, in: *Achim von Arnim und die ihm nahe standen*. Hrsg. v. Reinhold Steig und Hermann Grimm. 2. Band. Achim von Arnim und Bettine Brentano. Bearbeitet von Reinhold Steig. Verlag der J. G. Cotta'schen Buchhandlung, Stuttgart und Berlin 1913, p. 383. (See Peter Hacks, "Vorwort", in: Hacks, *Die Maßgaben der Kunst*, op.cit., p. 279 [277-281]).

<sup>119</sup> Gottlieb Hiller, *Gedichte und Selbstbiographie*. 1. Theil. Aueschen Hofbuchhandlung, Cöthen 1805. Goethe's review is to be found in: Goethe, MA, Band 6.2, p. 616-621.

<sup>120</sup> Peter Hacks, "Gottlieb Hiller", in: Hacks, *Die Maßgaben der Kunst*, op.cit., p. 421 (413-425).

<sup>121</sup> Goethe, "Napoleon Bonaparte und das französische Volk unter seinem Konsulate (Rez.)", in: Goethe, MA, Band 6.2, p. 564f.

for support of Napoleon, portrayed as Frederick the Great's successor.<sup>122</sup> Similarly, although at a later stage in his career, Goethe again demonstrated his view of Napoleon through the translation of Manzoni's poem "Il cinque Maggio" (1823), written in commemoration of Napoleon's death on St. Helena.<sup>123</sup>

In the light of such evidence it should therefore be concluded, with Hacks, that Goethe's political opinions were influential in his perception of Napoleon and as a result should not be overlooked. This said, the politically oriented legitimisation of Napoleon's actions evident in Goethe's work was combined with a charismatic justification based on the personal qualities of the leader, itself abstracted from any political point of view: "nicht der französische Kaiser oder der europäische Herrscher faszinierte ihn, sondern die dämonische Persönlichkeit".<sup>124</sup>

Goethe was fascinated by Napoleon's personal autonomy, a quality which was considered a fundamental characteristic of genius, and which found its political expression in the form of self-determination. Schmidt writes:

Goethe sieht Napoleon nicht als erratisches Phänomen, sondern als Verkörperung jener genialischen Autonomievorstellung, jener subjektiv-charismatischen Legitimation, die in der Geniezeit ihre ideologische Begründung [...] fand.<sup>125</sup>

Goethe's belief that the foundations for successful leadership are to be sought in personal greatness corresponds with this charismatic form of legitimisation.<sup>126</sup> His perception of Napoleon's "Größe" was based on the leader's decisiveness and his seemingly inexhaustible reserves of energy, which enabled him to single-mindedly achieve his goals:

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<sup>122</sup> Johannes von Müller, "De la Gloire de Frédéric", in: Müller, *Sämtliche Werke*. 40 Bände. Hrsg. v. Johann Georg Müller. J. G. Cotta'schen Buchhandlung, Stuttgart / Tübingen 1833. 25. Band, p. 274-285; Übersetzung von Goethe, "Friedrichs Ruhm", p. 286-299.

<sup>123</sup> Goethe, "Der fünfte Mai", in: Goethe, MA, Band 13.1, p. 66-69.

<sup>124</sup> Fink, op. cit., p.101.

<sup>125</sup> Schmidt, *Die Geschichte des Genie-Gedankens*, op. cit., Band 1, p. 451.

Napoleon war darin besonders groß, daß er zu jeder Stunde derselbige war. Vor einer Schlacht, während einer Schlacht, nach einem Siege, nach einer Niederlage, er stand immer auf festen Füßen, und war immer klar und entschieden, was zu tun sei. Er war immer in seinem Element und jedem Augenblick und jedem Zustande gewachsen.<sup>127</sup>

As in the work of Hölderlin, particular importance is accorded to Napoleon's physical strength,<sup>128</sup> and to the value of youth: "Ja, ja, mein Guter, man muß jung sein, um große Dinge zu tun".<sup>129</sup> Emphasis is therefore placed on individual talent as opposed to noble birth, thereby reflecting Goethe's support, despite his traditionally conservative opinions, of charismatic legitimisation. It is reinforced by praise of Napoleon's motto: "Dem Talent offene Bahn".<sup>130</sup>

Linked to youth, in the eyes of Goethe, is the productive aspect of a great leader or talented individual, Napoleon being classed as "einer der produktivsten Menschen [...], die je gelebt haben".<sup>131</sup> In order to achieve greatness in his particular field a person must produce something which is of lasting effect, action or productivity being valued over and above mere reflection:

Ja, ja, mein Guter, man braucht nicht bloß Gedichte und Schauspiele zu machen, um produktiv zu sein, es gibt auch eine Produktivität

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<sup>126</sup> See Eckermann., op.cit., B. 1, p. 353.

<sup>127</sup> Eckermann, op. cit., B. 1, p. 363. A similar opinion is expressed by Hegel: "Der Mensch, der etwas Tüchtiges hervorbringt, legt seine ganze Energie hinein; er hat nicht die Nüchternheit, dies oder das zu wollen; er zerstreut sich nicht in so und so viele Zwecke, sondern ist seinem wahrhaftigen großen Zwecke ganz ergeben". (Hegel, *Recht, Staat, Geschichte*, op. cit., p. 428).

<sup>128</sup> See Eckermann, op.cit., B. 2, p. 257.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., B. 2, p. 257f.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid., B. 2, p. 258. This therefore contradicts, or rather adapts, Goethe's earlier advocacy of a feudal basis for society, as revealed in the following statement, in which the impression left by Napoleon on Goethe's conception of leadership is clear: "Wäre ich ein Fürst, [...] so würde ich zu meinen ersten Stellen nie Leute nehmen, die bloß durch Geburt und Anziennität nach und nach heraufgekommen sind [...] Junge Männer wollte ich haben! - aber es müßten Kapazitäten sein mit Klarheit und Energie ausgerüstet und dabei vom besten Wollen und edelsten Charakter. - Da wäre es eine Lust, zu herrschen und sein Volk vorwärts zu bringen! - Aber wo ist ein Fürst, dem es so wohl würde und der so gut bedient wäre!" (Eckermann, op.cit., B. 2, p. 258).

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., B. 2, p. 255.

der Taten, und die in manchen Fällen noch um ein Bedeutendes höher steht.<sup>132</sup>

The emphasis on the “Produktivität der Taten”,<sup>133</sup> which recalls Hölderlin’s initial self-subordination to the military hero, constituted a fundamental theme of the “Geniezeit” and was to be developed throughout the course of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. It is further reflected in Goethe’s admiration of Napoleon’s military skill,<sup>134</sup> and the perception of a military career as a prerequisite for successful leadership:

Mit dem Säbel in der Faust, an der Spitze einer Armee mag man Befehle und Gesetze geben, und man kann sicher sein, daß man gehorcht werde; aber ohne dieses ist es ein mißliches Ding. Napoleon, ohne Soldat zu sein, hätte nie zur höchsten Gewalt emporsteigen können.<sup>135</sup>

The contrast drawn by Goethe between the two spheres of “Tat” and “Geist” is highlighted in his work *Pandora*, written in 1807 after the defeat of Prussia, in which the active and reflective characteristics of the brothers Prometheus and Epimetheus respectively are shown in opposition to each other, and in which allusions to Napoleon may be identified.<sup>136</sup> Fink believes this particular aspect to be the reason for Goethe’s fascination with Napoleon, claiming that he saw in the French leader the “Gegensatz zu sich selbst”.<sup>137</sup> This said, Goethe does, in a later conversation, draw parallels between Napoleon and Mozart, Byron and Raffael, thereby indicating that his interpretation of genius is not based purely on a particular form, but rather on the qualities displayed by the individual.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid., B. 2, p. 254.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid., B. 1, p. 348. This passage serves to refute Mommsen’s claim that Goethe never referred to Napoleon’s military talent. (Wilhelm Mommsen, op.cit., p. 161).

<sup>136</sup> See Fink, op. cit., p. 94f.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid., p. 95.

<sup>138</sup> Eckermann, op. cit., B. 2, p. 264.

In the drama Prometheus is portrayed as a despot who destroys everything in his path in order to achieve his own aims. Correspondingly, Goethe gave the following description of the philosophy which drove Napoleon's actions:

[...] was ihm in den Weg tritt, wird niedergemacht, aus dem Wege geräumt, und wenn es sein leiblicher Sohn wäre [...]. So liebt er alles, was ihm zu seinem Zwecke dienen kann, so sehr es auch von seiner individuellen Gemütsstimmung abweicht.<sup>139</sup>

Thus, what may be deemed by some to be negative aspects of Napoleon's personality were not denied, or were in fact praised as necessary leadership qualities, value being placed on the ability to separate oneself from one's goals.

Referring to Napoleon's extraordinary "Scharfblick" and "Menschenkenntnis",<sup>140</sup> Goethe echoed Hegel's work, crediting the Emperor of the French with unique talents of almost superhuman proportions. This belief in the leader's "Universalgenie"<sup>141</sup> reflects the traditional Napoleonic myth as it was to continue throughout this period and implies the elevation of the French leader to a mythological status, as previously evident in the work of Hölderlin and Günderröde.

However, rather than focusing on mythical qualities, Goethe emphasised the practical nature of Napoleon's power, which was based on his legendary, awe-inspiring reputation: "Hat doch Napoleon eines großen Namens wegen fast die halbe Welt in Stücke geschlagen!".<sup>142</sup> He believed Napoleon's success to be the result not simply of his innate talent, the "große Angeborene der Natur",<sup>143</sup> but of the conviction which he gave to others:

Allerdings [...] war seine Persönlichkeit eine überlegene. Die Hauptsache aber bestand darin, daß die Menschen gewiß waren,

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<sup>139</sup> Quote from Fink, op. cit., p. 95.

<sup>140</sup> Grappin, op. cit., p. 78.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> Eckermann, op. cit., B. 1, p. 357.

ihre Zwecke unter ihm zu erreichen. Deshalb fielen sie ihm zu, so wie sie es jedem tun, der ihnen eine ähnliche Gewißheit einflößt.<sup>144</sup>

This theory is further emphasised by an account of Napoleon's ability to withstand infection by the plague, which is seen to be the result not of a mystical force, but rather the power of the mind and the capacity to overcome fear.<sup>145</sup> Contrasting with the spiritual interpretation of leadership previously described, Goethe spoke of religion as a substitute for leaders who cannot rule on the basis of their personality alone.<sup>146</sup>

This said, he did believe that Napoleon was protected and assisted in his success by a "göttliche Erleuchtung".<sup>147</sup> In order to explain the Emperor's unique and seemingly incomprehensible talents Goethe used the concept of the demonic, "dasjenige, was durch Verstand und Vernunft nicht aufzulösen ist".<sup>148</sup> This notion, which links great individuals, in an echo of previous approaches, with the Ancient Gods,<sup>149</sup> forms the focal point of Goethe's idolisation of Napoleon and reveals a number of further parallels with the Hegelian approach.

According to this theory the fate of the genius is shaped by an irresistible demonic force. This conviction corresponds with the popular perception that Napoleon could not be defeated by temporal forces and led to Goethe's defence of the toleration and obedience of Napoleon: "gehorchet der Obrigkeit, denn sie ist Gottes Ordnung".<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> Ibid., B. 1, p. 391.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., B. 1, p. 357.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid., B. 1, p. 364.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid., B. 1, p. 353.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid., B. 2, p. 255.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid., B. 2, p. 34.

<sup>149</sup> See Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> Quote from Fink, op.cit., p. 93. Similarly fatalistic attitudes may be seen in the writings of other contemporaries of Goethe, some of whom originally attempted to defeat Napoleon, such as Andreas Hofer, leader of the Tirolean freedom-fighters. Despite the successful liberation of the Tirol in April 1809, Hofer and his army were defeated by French and Bavarian forces in November of the same year - an event which forced Hofer to capitulate and accept subjection to Napoleon. In an appeal addressed to them in 1809 he declared Napoleon's success to be the indomitable will of God, stating: "Brüder! gegen Napoleons unüberwindliche Macht können wir nicht Krieg führen [...] eine höhere Macht leitet Napoleons Schritte. Sieg und Staats-Umwälzungen gehen aus den unabänderlichen Flammen der göttlichen Vorsicht hervor. [...] Kein Vernünftiger wird wider den Strom zu schwimmen gedenken; wir wollen uns nun durch Ergebung in den göttlichen Willen des Himmels

Echoing Hegel's conception of the "weltgeschichtliche Persönlichkeit", he believed that Napoleon was finally defeated due to the fulfilment of his demonic task, which was to be continued by a future genius:

Jeder außerordentliche Mensch hat eine gewisse Sendung, die er zu vollführen berufen ist. Hat er sie vollbracht, so ist er auf Erden in dieser Gestalt nicht weiter vonnöten, und die Vorsehung verwendet ihn wieder zu etwas anderem. Da aber hienieden alles auf natürlichem Wege geschiet, so stellen ihm die Dämonen ein Bein nach dem andern, bis er zuletzt unterliegt.<sup>151</sup>

Furthermore, as a result of this belief the demonic personality is liberated from the confines of accepted morality, a tendency previously identified in the work of Hegel and also indicated by Hölderlin's interpretation of genius and the inherent danger of "Vermessenheit". An earlier reference made by Goethe in 1807 serves to further highlight this conviction: "Außerordentliche Menschen treten aus der Moralität heraus. Sie wirken zuletzt wie physische Ursachen, wie Feuer und Wasser".<sup>152</sup>

Goethe therefore refrains from passing any moral judgement on Napoleon's actions, although it is indicated during the "Gespräche" that he condoned the murder of the Duke of Enghien<sup>153</sup> and vindicated the execution of eight hundred Turkish prisoners.<sup>154</sup> This said, he does acknowledge, despite the leader's tragic fate during his exile on St. Helena,<sup>155</sup> the mild retribution which Napoleon received for the

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ferneren Schutzes, und durch brüderliche Liebe und geforderte Unterwerfung Napoleons Großmuth und seinen allerhöchsten Gnaden würdig machen". (Andreas Hofer, "Aufruf an die Tiroler", in: *Die Erhebung gegen Napoleon. 1806-1814/15*. Hrsg. v. Hans-Bernd Spies. Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, Darmstadt 1981, p. 157f). This passage further illustrates the concept of fate and the common belief that Napoleon was either the incarnation of God's will on Earth or himself a god. Such religious parallels reflect the desire for one absolute leader, as initially expressed by Hölderlin, though with much stronger political connotations.

<sup>151</sup> Eckermann, op. cit., B. 2, p. 264.

<sup>152</sup> Quote from Peter Berglar, *Goethe und Napoleon. Die Faszination des Geistes durch die Macht*. Eduard Roether Verlag, Darmstadt 1968, p. 19f.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid., B. 1, p. 260.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid., B. 1, p. 363.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid., B. 1, p. 412f.



destruction of the lives of millions of people, thereby echoing Hölderlin's implication that the greater the leader the wider the ethical constraints on his actions:

Und doch, wenn man bedenkt, daß ein solches Ende einen Mann traf, der das Leben und Glück von Millionen mit Füßen getreten hatte, so ist das Schicksal, das ihm widerfuhr, immer noch sehr milde; es ist eine Nemesis, die nicht umhin kann, in Erwägung der Größe des Helden, immer noch ein wenig galant zu sein.<sup>156</sup>

Thus, despite his fascination with Napoleon's demonic personality, Goethe does recognise both the popular tendency to defy morality in the name of greatness and the danger inherent in self-aggrandisement and the quest for absolute power: "Napoleon gibt uns ein Beispiel, wie gefährlich es sei, sich ins Absolute zu erheben und alles der Ausführung einer Idee zu opfern".<sup>157</sup> Nevertheless, the poetic quest for "der Einzige" as evident in the work of Hölderlin is continued, the individual leader being transposed onto the political sphere and perceived, as in the work of Hegel, as a contemporary saviour:

Was Tausende verwirrten, löst der *Eine*

Worüber trüb Jahrhunderte gesonnen,

*Er* übersiehts in hellstem Geisteslicht.

Das Kleinliche ist alles weggeronnen,

Nur Meer und Erde haben hier Gewicht,<sup>158</sup>

This process of secularisation was to become a marked characteristic of the intellectual response to Napoleon following his death, as revealed in the work of both Heine and Platen.

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<sup>156</sup> Ibid., B. 1, p. 413.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

<sup>158</sup> Goethe, "Ihro Majestät der Kaiserin von Frankreich", op. cit.

### *Chapter Three*

#### *Divine parody: secularised apotheosis of the "Taten-Genie", as portrayed by Heine and Platen*

Following the final defeat of Napoleon at Waterloo, the Vienna Congress was established in order to determine the political and constitutional situation of post-Napoleonic Europe. The result was, amongst other changes, the foundation of the "Deutsche Bund", which maintained the sovereignty of the individual princedoms. This may be seen as evidence of the reaction against the principles of the French Revolution and the centralism of the Napoleonic era. It also reflects a growing romanticism, which found its political expression in the form of a return to the traditional, largely feudal structures of pre-Napoleonic Germany.

It was this period of restoration and the ensuing dissatisfaction which resulted in the echo and expansion of the Napoleonic myth, as is particularly evident in the work of both Heinrich Heine and August von Platen, described by Jürgen Link as "Heines großer Antipode".<sup>159</sup> Despite the bitter mutual antagonism felt between the two poets, a number of similarities may nevertheless be identified in their response to Napoleon: the two outsiders in society both became ardent admirers of the Corsican who, notably from beyond the boundaries of established political and military circles, came to rule across Europe.<sup>160</sup> As a result of these similarities the work of the two poets may be considered in conjunction with one another.

Platen's view of Napoleon underwent a radical reassessment in the light of the Restoration. Although initially a vehement opponent of the "böse Drache", "Ungeheuer" and "Tyran"<sup>161</sup> and a supporter of the "Befreiungskriege",<sup>162</sup> he felt

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<sup>159</sup> Jürgen Link, Nachwort, in: August von Platen, *Werke in zwei Bänden*. Hrsg. v. Kurt Wölfel und Jürgen Link. Nach der Ausgabe letzter Hand und der historisch-kritischen Ausgabe mit Anmerkungen, Bibliographie und einem Nachwort hrsg. v. Jürgen Link. Winkler, München 1982. Band I: Lyrik, p. 980.

<sup>160</sup> See August von Platen, *Wer die Schönheit angeschaut mit Augen. Ein Lesebuch*. Hrsg. v. Rüdiger Görner. Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, München 1996, p. 275, 279.

<sup>161</sup> August von Platen, "An das Deutsche Volk", in: Platen, *Werke in zwei Bänden*, op.cit., Band I, p. 189-192.

increasingly betrayed by the post-Napoleonic status quo. He had hoped for the restoration of freedom within a united and constitutionally secured Germany, and felt that in particular Franz II and Metternich had failed to achieve this, leaving a desire for a future great leader, as epitomised by Napoleon.<sup>163</sup>

This poetic anticipation of the future hero is expressed in particular in the poem *Der künftige Held*, which, in both its desire for a new leader and the perceived role of the poet, echoes those sentiments expressed by Hölderlin in *Friedensfeier* and *Der Einzige*. Here Platen looks forward to a ‘real’, as opposed to mythical, figure who will provide the German people with a new perspective and awaken in them the desire to believe in heroes once again:

Rückwärts gewandt blickt oft in der Fabel Nacht  
Der Dichter, späht Heroen sich aus, und forscht  
Durch manches Zeitlaufs Tatenwirrwarr,  
Liederbegierigen Sinns, nach Helden:

Ich wähle den mir, welcher dereinst erscheint  
Und will vom Tod nicht wecken Gemoderte:  
Den Mann der Zukunft preisend, wandelt  
Vor dem Erwarteten mein Gesang her!<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>162</sup> See in particular “An das deutsche Volk”, “Bei der Nachricht von Bonapartes Einzug in Paris 1815” and “An die Kampfgenossen des großen Kriegs”, in: Platen, *Werke in zwei Bänden*, op. cit., Band I.

<sup>163</sup> See Platen, “Ode an Napoleon”, in: Platen, *Werke in zwei Bänden*, op. cit., Band I, p. 492-495. For further details on Platen’s advocacy of a federal constitution see the comments which he made in his diary on 7.2.1816. (In Görner [Hrsg.], August von Platen, *Wer die Schönheit angeschaut mit Augen*, op.cit., p. 221-224).

<sup>164</sup> Platen, “Der künftige Held”, in: Platen, *Werke in zwei Bänden*, op. cit., Band I, p. 487. Platen recalls the references made by Hölderlin to “der Gesang” in “Dem Allbekannten”, in which the poet uses song in order to praise the Emperor. (See Part I, Chapter 1). Further reference to the task assigned to the poet of praising and accompanying the hero is made by Platen in the poem “Ode an Napoleon”, as highlighted by Wülfing (Wülfing/Bruns/Parr, op. cit., p. 27): “Ihr kennt das alte, große Naturgesetz, / Das stets den Dichter neben den Helden stellt? / O wohl dem Dichter, wenn die Zeit ihm / Einen unsterblichen Helden vorführt!”. (Platen, “Ode an Napoleon”, op.cit.).

Revealing similar sentiments, Heine's response to Napoleon may also be seen to vary according to particular time periods, though it did not undergo such radical changes as that evident in Platen's work.

An analysis of the fluctuations in Heine's portrayal was first put forward by Paul Holzhausen, who divided Heine's writings on the Emperor into three chronological periods, namely unconditional admiration in the 1820s, followed by a period of doubt which reached its climax during the July Revolution of 1830 and subsequently a revival of the initial admiration as a result of the *coup d'état* of Napoleon III.<sup>165</sup> A similar, tripartite structure was later applied by, amongst others, Giorgio Tonelli and Volkmar Hansen, who both highlighted Heine's criticism of Napoleon's accumulation of essentially dynastic power from 1799 onwards.<sup>166</sup> The evolution of Heine's perception of Napoleon in relation to the French Revolution is therefore seen as the basis for changes in his overall image of the Emperor.

Indeed, Heine's work reveals, at least in political terms, a similarly complex response to Napoleon as that expressed by Goethe. His initial image of the French leader was that of the destroyer of feudalism, as was compatible with his liberal political opinions and his fervent support of the French Revolution. However, the gradual realisation that the French Emperor had not acted solely in the spirit of the Revolution did not fundamentally affect Heine's idolisation of Napoleon, whom he went on to regard as "the synthesis of the revolutionary and counter-revolutionary in exceptional greatness".<sup>167</sup> Heine, as previously Hegel and Goethe, believed Napoleon to be, above all, the herald of a new age who would restore order to Europe whilst breaking with the "verschollene Vergangenheit und ihre verblichene Pracht".<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> Paul Holzhausen, *Heinrich Heine und Napoleon*. Verlag von Moritz Diesterweg, Frankfurt am Main 1903.

<sup>166</sup> See Giorgio Tonelli, *Heines politische Philosophie (1830-1845)*. Georg Olms Verlag, Hildesheim (NY) 1975, p. 56f and Volkmar Hansen, "Johannes der Täufer. Heines bedingter Bonapartismus", in: *Der späte Heine. 1848-1856. Literatur - Politik - Religion*. Hrsg. v. Wilhelm Gössmann und Joseph A. Kruse. Hoffman und Campe. Heinrich Heine Verlag, Hamburg 1982, p. 74 (69-96).

<sup>167</sup> Jeffrey L. Sammons, *Heinrich Heine - A Modern Biography*. Cancarnet New Press, Manchester 1979, p. 33.

<sup>168</sup> Heinrich Heine, "Die Nordsee. Dritte Abteilung", in: Heine, *Sämtliche Schriften*. Hrsg. v. Klaus Briegleb. Carl Hanser Verlag, München 1976. Band 2, p. 237 (211-244).

Jeffrey Sammons summarises Heine's political convictions and his image of Napoleon as the desire to convey "a combined image of progress and power, an ineluctable force emanating from the French furnace of liberty", which he sought in "the autocratic, world-historical individual".<sup>169</sup> Indeed Heine, despite his liberal convictions, was to express support of what may be termed an authoritarian system of government, in which all power is centred in one individual. Praising Julius Caesar for having destroyed aristocratic privilege, he criticised the common presumption that democracy and monarchy are two opposing principles, stating that: "Die beste Demokratie [...] immer diejenige sein [wird], wo ein Einziger als Inkarnation des Volkswillens an der Spitze des Staates steht, wie Gott an der Spitze der Weltregierung".<sup>170</sup>

Walter Grab describes this ideal, based on the notion of a powerful charismatic individual who would express and promote the needs of the masses, as a combination of Bonapartism and Heine's interpretation of Hegel's notion of the world historical individual, as well as of the socially oriented, hierarchical doctrine of the Saint-Simonian movement.<sup>171</sup> As Edward Zlotkowski points out, Napoleon represents for Heine a means of ideological synthesis and a mythical projection of his own leadership ideal.<sup>172</sup> His admiration of the French Emperor reflects, above all, the previously identified desire felt in Germany for one almighty leader with outstanding personal qualities.

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<sup>169</sup> Sammons, op.cit., p. 34.

<sup>170</sup> Heinrich Heine, "Shakespeares Mädchen und Frauen", in: Heine, *Sämtliche Schriften*, op.cit., Band 4, p. 200f.

<sup>171</sup> Walter Grab, *Heinrich Heine als politischer Dichter*. Quelle und Meyer, Heidelberg 1982, p. 40. A number of similarities may indeed be identified between Hegel's description of the "welthistorische Persönlichkeit" and the importance which Heine attached to the historical force of the individual. For further details on the influence of Hegelian philosophy on Heine see Nigel Reeves, *Heinrich Heine: Poetry and Politics*. Libris, London 1994, p. 86-101. This aspect is also highlighted by Joachim Müller, "Heines Napoleondichtung", in: *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena*. Heft 2 (1972), p. 239f (235-243). For further details on the influence of Saint-Simonism on Heine's thought see E. M. Butler, *The Saint-Simonian Religion in Germany. A Study of the Young German Movement*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1926; also Reeves, op.cit., p. 76-86.

<sup>172</sup> Edward A. Zlotkowski, "Die Bedeutung Napoleons in Heines Reisebilder II", in: *Etudes Germaniques*. 35 (1980), p. 146ff (145-162).

As Johnston suggests, the apparent variations in Heine's writings on Napoleon are therefore merely a question of shifts in emphasis concerning the perception of the historical figure, which are themselves overshadowed by a constant underlying admiration of the mythical personality.<sup>173</sup> This focus on the individual enables Heine to unite his support of the Revolution with his so-called 'Heroenkult', history being separated from "das ebenso schauerliche, großartige Götterbild, das Phänomen der Größe an sich".<sup>174</sup> It is this focus which means that, despite fundamental differences in their political opinions, both Heine and Goethe, by concentrating, at least to a certain extent, on the *individual*, portrayed a similar image of the French leader.

Although references to both Napoleon, and later Bonapartism, may be identified in a number of Heine's writings through until the mid 1850s, his most detailed studies are to be found in the earlier works of the *Reisebilder II*, in particular *Die Nordsee III* (1826) and *Das Buch Le Grand* (1826), which expanded upon the earlier poem "Die Grenadiere", taken from the *Buch der Lieder*. These works are widely considered to be the most striking examples of the writer's admiration of Napoleon and, as such, shall constitute the principal focus of this section. The aim in this context is not to provide a philologically comprehensive system of references to Napoleon in Heine's work, but rather to further analyse those which may be regarded as detailed and exemplary reflections on the Emperor and, hence, leadership as a whole.

In *Das Buch Le Grand* criticism is directed at both pre-Napoleonic feudal society and the Restoration and is underlined through the interposition of the Napoleonic era. Throughout the book the French Emperor appears in conjunction with revolutionary principles, although Heine's aforementioned acknowledgement of the counter-

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<sup>173</sup> O. Johnston, *The Mythopoeic Process and Heine's Image of Napoleon*. University Microfilms International, Ann Arbor, Michigan USA 1969, p. 284-287. This is declared by Heine himself in *Reise von München nach Genua* (1828), in which he states: "Ich bitte Dich, lieber Leser, halte mich nicht für einen unbedingten bonapartisten; meine Huldigung gilt nicht den Handlungen, sondern nur dem Genius des Mannes". The poet's criticism of Napoleon's actions is based on his perceived abandonment of freedom "aus geheimer Vorliebe für Aristokratismus". (Heinrich Heine, "Reise von München nach Genua", in: Heine, *Sämtliche Schriften*, op.cit., Band 2, p. 374f [313-389]).

<sup>174</sup> Benno von Wiese, *Signaturen. Zu Heinrich Heine und seinem Werk*. Erich Schmidt Verlag, Berlin 1976, p. 215.

revolutionary aspects of his reign is apparent, Napoleon having controlled “das vielköpfige Ungeheuer der Anarchie”.<sup>175</sup>

Introduced by the phrase “Du sublime au ridicule il n’y a qu’un pas Madame!”<sup>176</sup> Heine contrasts Napoleon’s heroic actions with the almost ridiculously comical Restoration:

[...] nach dem Abgang der Helden kommen die Clowns und Graziosos mit ihren Narrenkolben und Pritschen, nach den blutigen Revolutionsscenen und Kaiseractionen kommen wieder herangewatschelt die dicken Bourbonen mit ihren alten abgestandenen Späßchen und zartlegitimen Bonmots [...]<sup>177</sup>

Here Heine, in an extension of Goethe’s praise of the “Taten-Genie”, contrasts action with reflection. This juxtaposition of the two spheres is also apparent in his ironic, patronising description of the Kurfürst Jan Wilhelm - “Er soll ein braver Herr gewesen sein, und sehr kunstliebend”.<sup>178</sup>

Heine’s image of Napoleon was the result of his “Sehnsucht nach einer [...] alle Tagtäglichkeit übersteigenden Größe”<sup>179</sup> and he bemoaned the fact that Germany had produced “keinen Goliath, keinen einzigen großen Mann”.<sup>180</sup> In a further example of the comparison drawn between the sphere of “Geist” and “Tat” he contrasts Germany’s fictional heroes with the “real” heroes of France, “die viel größere Thaten vollbracht, und viel größere Leiden gelitten, als wir in unseren Dachstübchen ersinnen können”.<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>175</sup> Heine, “Ideen. Das Buch Le Grand”, in: Heine, *Sämtliche Schriften*, op.cit., Band 2, p. 275 (245-308).

<sup>176</sup> Ibid., p. 282.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid., p. 262.

<sup>179</sup> Jochen Schmidt, *Die Geschichte des Genie-Gedankens*, op. cit., Band 2. Von der Romantik bis zum Ende des Dritten Reichs, p. 64.

<sup>180</sup> Heinrich Heine, “Zur Geschichte der Religion und Philosophie in Deutschland”, Vorrede zur zweiten Auflage, in: Heine, *Sämtliche Schriften*, op.cit., Band 3, p. 508 (505-641).

<sup>181</sup> Heine, “Die Nordsee III”, op. cit., p. 238.

This contrast is then extended to the two countries as a whole, the battle between France and Germany being portrayed as a war between the “Vernünftigen” and the “Narren” respectively:

Es ist vollkommen wahr, ich habe die heiligsten Bande zerrissen, von Gott- und Rechtswegen hätte ich unter den Narren leben und sterben müssen. Und ach! ich hätte es unter diesen Leuten so gut gehabt! [...] Sie würden mich [...] mitnehmen in ihre Teegesellschaften und Klubs [...] nun gar mein ausgezeichnet poetisches Talent würde mir gute Dienste leisten bey hohen Geburtstagen und Vermählungen, und es wär' gar nicht übel, wenn ich, in einem großen Nationalepos, all jene Helden besänge, wovon wir ganz bestimmt wissen, daß aus ihren verwesten Leichnamen Würmer gekrochen sind, die sich für ihre Nachkommen ausgeben.<sup>182</sup>

This passage may be interpreted as a direct attack on contemporary patriotic writers such as Kleist and the “christlich-deutsche Tischgesellschaft”, to be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter. Similarly, the ironic phrase “all jene Helden” implies the nationalistic glorification and mystification of, in particular, Prince Louis Ferdinand and Queen Luise of Prussia, as propagated by the German patriots.

Heine's criticism of pure reflection, which he judges to be part of the German national character, is reiterated in the following description of Napoleon's productivity, his thoughts being transformed into concrete action:

Die Stirne war nicht so klar, es nisteten darauf die Geister zukünftiger Schlachten, und es zuckte bisweilen über dieser Stirn, und das waren die schaffenden Gedanken, die großen Siebenmeilenstiefel-Gedanken, womit der Geist des Kaisers

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<sup>182</sup> Heine, “Das Buch Le Grand”, op.cit., p. 298f.



unsichtbar über die Welt hinschritt - und ich glaube, jeder dieser Gedanken hätte einem deutschen Schriftsteller, Zeit seines Lebens, vollauf Stoff zum Schreiben gegeben.<sup>183</sup>

As Nigel Reeves points out, this focus on action should not however be interpreted as a comprehensive rejection of the intellectual or spiritual sphere. Despite his fundamental belief that the development of abstract reflection had served to alienate the German people from nature, he nevertheless admired the intuitive thought which he saw epitomised in both Goethe and Napoleon.<sup>184</sup>

As previously identified in relation to Goethe's perception of the French leader, Heine was indeed fascinated by Napoleon's "intuitiven Totalität".<sup>185</sup> He saw in Napoleon the embodiment of the Kantian theory of intuitive as opposed to discursive reason and intellect, recognising in him the ability to immediately understand the world as a whole and to grasp its spirit:

[...] was wir durch langsames analytisches Nachdenken und lange Schlußfolgen erkennen, das hatte jener Geist im selben Momente angeschaut und tief begriffen.<sup>186</sup>

This passage was initially taken from an essay by Goethe, and a number of similarities between Heine's image of both Napoleon and Goethe may be identified, as highlighted by Reeves. To quote Zlotkowski: "Aus etwas anderer Sicht gesehen kann Napoleon sogar als Künstler angesehen werden - aber als Künstler der Realität selbst".<sup>187</sup> However Heine, at least at this stage, gradually distanced himself from the classical poet, focusing increasingly on the political hero and the historical as opposed to the artistic genius.<sup>188</sup> As such the development of his own work reflects the more general tendency within the wider leadership debate.

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<sup>183</sup> Ibid., p. 275.

<sup>184</sup> See Reeves, op.cit., p. 25-29.

<sup>185</sup> Schmidt, *Die Geschichte des Genie-Gedankens*, op. cit., Band 2, p. 75f.

<sup>186</sup> Heine, "Die Nordsee III", op. cit., p. 235.

<sup>187</sup> Zlotkowski, op.cit., p. 155.

<sup>188</sup> See Reeves, op.cit., p. 29-32.

Heine's reference to Napoleon as "der Mann der Idee, der ideegewordene Mensch",<sup>189</sup> taken from a letter to Varnhagen von Ense dated 1827, serves as an indication of his belief, shared by the Left Hegelians, that theory was the necessary precursor to practice, as detailed in *Zur Geschichte der Religion und Philosophie in Deutschland*. As such Napoleon was to serve as an example for future heroes who could transform the intellectual developments in Germany into political revolution, thereby shattering the Restoration.<sup>190</sup>

Associated with his belief in the power of the intuitive intellect was Heine's perception of Napoleon's "Kunst, die Massen zu begreifen und zu lenken",<sup>191</sup> a sentiment which recalls the Hegelian "Seelenführer". This therefore implies not merely the admiration of Napoleon's military skill, which remains a focal point of *Das Buch Le Grand*, but also a notion of leadership which encompasses a degree of spiritual guidance.

However, this form of guidance was not perceived within the realms of, but rather as a substitute for, traditional faith. Heine, like Goethe, declared religion, or at least Christianity, a "Vernunftsurrogat" for those who did not share his liberal opinions and praise of Napoleon.<sup>192</sup> *Das Buch le Grand* therefore draws parallels, by means of what Sammons terms "blasphemous parody",<sup>193</sup> between Christ and Napoleon, thus reflecting Heine's opposition to Christianity and the growing secularisation of the leadership discourse as it had developed since the work of Hölderlin and Günderröde.<sup>194</sup>

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<sup>189</sup> Quote from *Ibid.*, p. 96.

<sup>190</sup> See *Ibid.*, p. 98ff. See also Tonelli, *op. cit.*, p. 48f for details on Heine's views on the need for both 'men of ideas' and 'men of action', themselves being dependent upon each other.

<sup>191</sup> Heine, "Die Nordsee III", *op. cit.*, p. 235.

<sup>192</sup> See Heine, "Das Buch Le Grand", *op. cit.*, p. 298.

<sup>193</sup> Sammons, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

<sup>194</sup> Heine's admiration of Napoleon due to his introduction of civil liberties for the Jewish population should also be referred to in this context, providing further reasons for both his support of Napoleon and the use of such blasphemous imagery.

Chapter VIII of the book therefore parodies Napoleon's visit to Düsseldorf as Christ's journey to Jerusalem, his arrival introduced by the cry of "Hosiannah!".<sup>195</sup> Napoleon, who is referred to throughout as "Er", is accompanied by a golden star,<sup>196</sup> and across his face is written the biblical commandment: "Du sollst keine Götter haben außer mir".<sup>197</sup> This theme is continued after the death of Napoleon, the 'saviour' whose grave, in fantastic imagery, becomes the object of pilgrimages and whose life is chronicled in so-called 'gospels':

Sankt Helena ist das heilige Grabe, wohin die Völker des Orients und Okzidents wallfahrten in buntbewimpelten Schiffen, und ihr Herz stärken durch große Erinnerungen an die Thaten des weltlichen Heilands, der gelitten unter Hudson Lowe, wie es geschrieben steht in den Evangelien Las Cases, Omeara und Antomarchi.<sup>198</sup>

The religious imagery is furthered by the parallel which Heine draws, in an echo of traditional mythology, between Napoleon and the ancient gods.<sup>199</sup> Furthermore, Heine emphasises the power of the French leader over nature itself, which recognises his superior presence:

Und der Kaiser mit seinem Gefolge ritt mitten durch die Allee, die schauernden Bäume beugten sich vorwärts, wo er vorbeikam, die Sonnenstrahlen zitterten furchtsam neugierig durch das grüne Laub [...]<sup>200</sup>

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<sup>195</sup> Heine, "Das Buch Le Grand", op. cit., p. 274.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid., p. 275.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid., p. 276. The reference to Hudson Lowe, governor of St. Helena from 1816 onwards, indicates Heine's hatred of the English, whom he blamed for Napoleon's suffering during his exile, and thus his subsequent death. For further details see Heine, "Die Nordsee III", op. cit., p. 232f.

<sup>199</sup> See Heine, "Das Buch Le Grand", op. cit., p. 275.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid., p. 274.

The phrase “Er, dem die Erde zu eng war”<sup>201</sup> reinforces this image, and serves to explain Napoleon’s defeat as the result of supernatural forces. This quasi-divine portrayal is however not limited to a perceived superiority to the laws of nature, but also implies the right to disobey the laws of the state,<sup>202</sup> thereby echoing the accepted transcendence of moral values evident in the work of, in particular, Hegel and Goethe.

The use of religious imagery is also a marked feature of Platen’s portrayal of Napoleon, reflecting both the commonly used symbolism of divine mortality and the liberation from moral responsibility due to divine vindication in the name of peace. In a passage which recalls Heine’s reference to Napoleon’s “Siebenmeilenstiefel-Gedanken”, Platen suggests that the people of Europe considered the Emperor a tyrant simply because they were unable to grasp his intuitive and divine greatness:

Du warst Tyrann, du schienst es der Welt fürwahr!  
Sie mußte folgen jedem Gedankenblitz,  
Der aus der kühnen Jovisstirn dir  
Göttlich und waffengeziert hervorsprang.<sup>203</sup>

The fusion of God and Napoleon inferred above is reiterated in the following verse:

Regier in Frieden, rieten die Menschen dir,  
Ein Rat, wie wenn am Morgen des ersten Tags  
Das Nichts dem Schöpfer raten wollte:  
Schlaf und erschaffe die Welt doch ja nicht!<sup>204</sup>

Both Heine and Platen therefore contributed to the secularisation of the early nineteenth century understanding of leadership and the mythical nature of the idolisation of Napoleon, as previously identified in the work of Goethe. These

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<sup>201</sup> Ibid., p. 276. Goethe expresses a similar sentiment when explaining his theory on demonic individuals: “Auch der verstorbene Großherzog war eine dämonische Natur, voll unbegrenzter Tatkraft und Unruhe, so daß sein eigenes Reich ihm zu klein war, und das größte ihn zu klein gewesen wäre”. (Eckermann, op. cit., B. 2, p. 74).

<sup>202</sup> See Heine, “Das Buch Le Grand”, op. cit., p. 274.

<sup>203</sup> Platen, “Ode an Napoleon”, op. cit., p. 493.

elements which characterised the positive response to Napoleon were mirrored in the negative reactions of the German patriots, as indicated by Platen's early, pre-1816 poetry.<sup>205</sup>

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<sup>204</sup> Ibid, p. 492.

<sup>205</sup> See for example "An das deutsche Volk", "Bei der Nachricht von Bonapartes Einzug in Paris 1815", "An die Kampfgenossen des großen Kriegs" and "An Buonaparte", op.cit.

## *Chapter Four*

### *The Prussian answer to Napoleon*

#### *i) The negative Napoleonic myth, as seen through Kleist's polarised reaction*

As is evident in the work of both Heine and Platen, Napoleon's death led to a wave of literary interest, a trend boosted by dissatisfaction with the Restoration. However, particularly in the early part of the nineteenth century Goethe and Hegel, as admirers of Napoleon, found themselves in a minority. The hostile feeling began to take hold in 1806, the year which saw the occupation of Prussia by Napoleon's *Grande Armée*, the dissolution of the Romano-Germanic Empire and the crushing defeat of the Prussian forces at Jena and Auerstedt. Opposition to the Emperor of the French continued to increase with time, reaching its climax following the battle of Leipzig in October 1813. This negative reaction induced the growth of national patriotic feeling within the German principalities and led to a pan-European uprising.

An analysis of the arguments put forward by Napoleon's adversaries, in particular in intellectual circles, provides a further insight into the influence exercised by Napoleon on the interpretation of leadership in Germany, thereby revealing both parallels with and contradictions to the Napoleonic myth as hitherto described. Analysis will focus in this context on the work of the so-called German patriots, in particular Heinrich von Kleist and the "christlich-deutsche Tischgesellschaft", with attention being accorded to the alternative leaders or forms of leadership discussed during the Napoleonic era. The educational theory of self-leadership put forward by Fichte in his *Reden an die deutsche Nation* will also be considered in this respect.

The "christlich-deutsche Tischgesellschaft", which may be viewed as the focal point of opposition to Napoleon in this context, drew its members from various spheres of both intellectual and political life. Formed in 1811 by Achim von Arnim, it had at its height over eighty members, including representatives of the Prussian government,

certain members of the nobility, university professors and what Stefan Nienhaus refers to as “freischwebende Intellektuelle”,<sup>206</sup> such as Adam Müller and Clemens Brentano.

The negative response was based on opposition to both Napoleon’s policies and his autonomous and self-oriented style of leadership. The writer of an anonymous pamphlet dating from 1815 spoke critically of “sein völlig herzloser Charakter, und seine tiefe Verachtung der Menschen”, as well as of the fundamental principle underlying his actions: “der Zweck heiligt die Mittel”.<sup>207</sup> The central tenets of this response reflect a direct reversal of the arguments put forward by Napoleon’s adherents in both political and intellectual circles.

Associated with this phenomenon is the tendency to regard Napoleon himself as *the* enemy. Although opposition to France as a whole was common, all power was believed to be concentrated in the one individual, and it was on this concept that much of the political writings and propaganda of the time chose to concentrate. This is illustrated by a comment made by Queen Luise of Prussia in 1809, following Austria’s defeat of Napoleon at Aspern. In contrast to the general feeling of jubilation amongst the German patriots, she remained sceptical of Austria’s chances of victory against the power of Napoleon:

Eine Schlacht rettet die Welt noch nicht, und der größte Feind dieser tapferen österreichischen Soldaten ist nicht die Zahl der französischen Soldaten, sondern das ist das Genie Napoleons, das sich aus allem herauszieht, das furchtbar an Hilfsmitteln ist und groß an Kombinationen.<sup>208</sup>

This attitude may be attributed to the need to identify with one common enemy, though it also reflects the negative complement to the concept of individual and autonomous leadership put forward by Napoleon.

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<sup>206</sup> Stefan Nienhaus, “Vaterland und engeres Vaterland. Deutscher und preußischer Nationalismus in der Tischgesellschaft”, in: Härtl/Schultz (Hrsg.), op. cit., p. 128 (127-151).

<sup>207</sup> Anonyme Flugschrift, in: Spies (Hrsg.), op.cit., p. 439 (438-441).

This negative response may be observed in Varnhagen von Ense's ironic description of the Emperor of the French and the "lächelnde Salonbetriebsamkeit", "hoffmännische Spannung" and "weltmännische Nichtigkeit" of the "illegitimate" bonapartist court.<sup>209</sup> In this description of his meeting with Napoleon in 1810, Ense outlines the monstrous "Zusammenstellung von Lächeln und Ernst"<sup>210</sup> which characterises Napoleon's false attempts to gain the support of the masses, an aspect later to be highlighted by Grabbe. Napoleon's eyes are described as "dunkel", "tückisch", "verderblich",<sup>211</sup> yet he is unable to smile without becoming "grinsenhaft unbedeutend".<sup>212</sup>

Although portrayed in a negative sense, the representation of Napoleon continued to display increasingly mythical tendencies, the Emperor of the French being perceived as the personification of evil. This so-called 'negative Napoleonic myth' is particularly apparent in the work of Ernst Moritz Arndt who, in part two of *Geist der Zeit* (1809), notes an evil trend in Napoleon which develops as his position becomes increasingly secure:

Du bist ein tapferer und glücklicher Krieger, ein schlauer Überlister, ein großes Unsterbliches Ungeheur, das die Welt erschreckt: das gibt dir der Kleine und Große [...] Eine enge, treulose, geizige blutige Seele bist du, die der ganzen Welt nur einen Nacken wünscht, um sie so leicht, als deine Franzosen, zu bejochen [...] kein hohes Heldentum ist in dir.<sup>213</sup>

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<sup>208</sup> Quote from Jan von Flocken, *Luise. Eine Königin in Preußen. Biographie*. Neues Leben, Berlin 1989, p. 350f.

<sup>209</sup> Karl August Varnhagen von Ense, "Fragment über Bonaparte", in: Varnhagen von Ense, *Werke in fünf Bänden*. Hrsg. v. Konrad Feilchenfeldt. Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, Frankfurt am Main 1990. Band V, Biographien, Aufsätze, Skizzen, p. 635 (634-637).

<sup>210</sup> Ibid., p. 637.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid.

<sup>213</sup> Ernst Moritz Arndt, "Geist der Zeit Teil 2", in: Spies (Hrsg.), op. cit., p. 92f (79-115).



Many references to Napoleon were linked to irreligious, or more precisely anti-Christian images, Napoleon being portrayed as the devil incarnate. In November 1812 Arndt wrote the *Katechismus für den teutschen Kriegs-und Wehrmann*, in which the French leader is vehemently attacked, although his fascinating, if incomprehensible, appeal is not denied:

Und der Abgrund hat sich aufgetan, spricht der Herr, [...] Und es ist ein Ungeheuer geboren und ein blutbefleckter Greul aufgestanden. Und heißt sein Name Napoleon Bonaparte, ein Name des Jammers, ein Name des Wehs, [...] Und wenn Satan der Vater der Lüge heißt, so heißt Bonaparte Satans ältester Sohn. Doch haben viele ihn angebetet und zum Götzen ihrer Herzen und Gedanken gemacht und haben ihn genannt Heiland und Retter und den Mann, der da kömmt im Namen des Herrn, daß er die Welt erlöse.<sup>214</sup>

Ute Gerhard, in her essay on the political and social functions of nineteenth century mythology, refers to the adaptation of individuals or historical events to pre-established events or narratives as a typical feature of historical or political myths. Thus, the myth adopts the same structure as the original narrative on which it is based. These basic structures are, according to Gerhard, normally taken from either literary myth or mythical aspects of Christianity and the ancient world, as is apparent in the portrayal of the French Emperor as a devil-like monster and his success as God's punishment for the sins of the people. Arndt's catechism continues:

Und doch kenne ich ihn nicht, spricht Gott, und habe ihn verworfen und werde ihn verwerfen, und ist kein Heil und keine Rettung und Freiheit in ihm, und hat er kein Zeichen, daß man ihn nenne nach Gott. Sondern durch Lügen ist er gewaltig geworden, und durch

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<sup>214</sup> Quote from Ute Gerhard, "Politik als Dramenkonstellation - Soziale Perspektiven von Mythisierungen im 19. Jahrhundert", in: *Bewegung und Stillstand in Metaphern und Mythen: Fallstudien zum Verhältnis von elementarem Wissen und Literatur im 19. Jahrhundert*. Hrsg. v. Jürgen Link und Wulf Wülfing. Stuttgart 1984, p. 227 (226-232).

Mord und Verrat hat er seinen Stuhl gebaut. Und ist ein Zeichen der Zeit, wie sündlich die Menschen sind [...].<sup>215</sup>

In an attempt to establish the social function of the myth, based on the choice of original narrative, Gerhard analyses the use of Christian mythology prevalent in the attacks made on Napoleon during the Wars of Liberation, forwarding the theory that this represents a rejection of the rapid changes brought about by the Revolution and the Napoleonic era, Christianity being linked to established institutions and rituals:

Bei Arndt und Görres stehen diese Formen mythisierender Aussagen über Napoleon in Einklang mit der Ablehnung der neuen Dynamik in allen gesellschaftlichen Bereichen sowie mit dem Versuch einer Restabilisierung, wozu das Projekt gehört, die christliche Religion im Hinblick auf ihre Bedeutung für das gesellschaftliche Leben zu restaurieren.<sup>216</sup>

However, although Gerhard does acknowledge that this cannot be a fixed and all-encompassing theory, as Arndt, Görres and the other German patriots were indeed supportive of a degree of reform, she nevertheless offers no explanation for the use of Christian mythology by the adherents of Napoleon. It may however be concluded that the use of anti-Christian imagery represents the negative counterpart to the use of Christian mythology by Napoleon's supporters, and is thus a further example of the process of secularisation within the development of the leadership concept.

Kleist's *Katechismus der Deutschen* is a particularly striking example of the negative Napoleonic myth, reflecting the typical characteristics hitherto discussed. Written in 1809, shortly after Austria's declaration of war on France, and published in the magazine *Germania*, it represents the political opinions of Kleist and other contemporary German patriots and, thus, the principal elements of the opposition to Napoleon. From this the reader may identify the image of Napoleon as presented by

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<sup>215</sup> Quote from *Ibid.*

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 229.

his enemies, as well as the desired qualities of an alternative leader. Kleist's decision to convey his opinions through the medium of a catechism serves to add religious vigour to the points of view expressed and is, again, symptomatic of the secularisation of the leadership debate.

The work gives vent to fervently patriotic opinions and as such bears strong similarities with Kleist's *Die Hermannsschlacht* and *Prinz Friedrich von Homburg*, both plays having been written during this period as appeals to Austria and Prussia to unite in battle against Napoleonic France. In the catechism Kleist calls for the restoration of the German empire, with Franz I of Austria at its head.<sup>217</sup> He does however refrain from criticising directly those principalities who have chosen to ally with France, such as Saxony, as their misguided action, although it should not be obeyed, is judged to be the result of "schlechte und bestochene Ratgeber".<sup>218</sup>

The writer, despite his support of the monarchy, therefore appears to believe that the monarch loses his legitimacy when he betrays his fatherland. This indicates a degree of legitimisation based not merely on dynastic genealogy, but also on the specific political goals of the individual and their concurrence with the wishes of the people. This is reiterated in Kleist's criticism of Napoleon, who stands accused of the wilful and unjustified destruction of the German Empire and the suppression of its people.<sup>219</sup> The attacks on his character, and hence the French nation as a whole,<sup>220</sup> stem from this ideological opposition, though his actual constitutional legitimacy as Emperor of the French is not questioned. This argument is further supported by Kleist's praise of Napoleon's military talents, the admiration of which he believes to be justifiable following the leader's death.<sup>221</sup>

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<sup>217</sup> See Heinrich von Kleist, "Katechismus der Deutschen", in: Kleist, *Werke und Briefe in vier Bänden*. Hrsg. v. Siegfried Streller. Aufbau-Verlag, Berlin und Weimar 1978. Band 3, Erzählungen, Gedichte, Anekdoten und Schriften, p. 391 (389-400).

<sup>218</sup> Ibid., p. 397.

<sup>219</sup> See Ibid., p. 390f.

<sup>220</sup> See Ibid., p. 391. A similarly polarised response to the enemy is portrayed with regard to the Romans in *Die Hermannsschlacht*.

<sup>221</sup> See Ibid., p. 394. A similar opinion was held by Queen Luise, who wrote in her diary prior to meeting with Napoleon: "Seine Talente bewundere ich, aber seinen Charakter, der offenbar hinterlistig und falsch ist, kann ich nicht lieben". (Quote from Flocken, op.cit., p. 238).

The mythological portrayal of Napoleon detailed above is characteristic of Kleist's work, in which the French Emperor is described as an evil, destructive spirit:

Fr. Was hältst du von Napoleon, dem Korsen, dem berühmten Kaiser der Franzosen?

[...]

Antw. Für einen verabscheuungswürdigen Menschen; für den Anfang alles Bösen und das Ende alles Guten; für einen Sünder, den anzuklagen, die Sprache der Menschen nicht hinreicht, und den Engeln einst, am Jüngsten Tage, der Odem vergehen wird.<sup>222</sup>

Here Napoleon is presented as the herald of a new and evil age - a reversal of the opinions of Goethe, Hegel and Heine who saw in him the beginning of a long-awaited era of peace and freedom. The imagery of the devil is reiterated in the further description of the "Korsen Kaiser"<sup>223</sup> as "einen, der Hölle entstiegenen, Watermördergeist, der herumschleicht, in dem Tempel der Natur, und an allen Säulen rüttelt, auf welchen er gebaut ist".<sup>224</sup>

This polarisation of good and evil is apparent in a number of Kleist's works, as highlighted by Klaus Peter with particular reference to *Prinz Friedrich von Homburg*:

Die Revolution, deren Radikalität in der Romantik Wirklichkeit transzendiert, verleiht Kleists Kampf gegen die Franzosen Züge, die

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<sup>222</sup> Kleist, "Katechismus der Deutschen", op. cit., p. 393.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid., p. 391.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid., p. 394. This image is repeated in "Germanias Aufruf an ihre Kinder", in which the Germans are mobilised in order to defend the "temple" and the "holy" blood of their rulers, destroying Napoleon, the son of the devil: "Rettung von dem Joch der Knechte, / Das, aus Eisenerz geprägt, / Eines Höllensohnes Rechte / Über unsern Nacken legt. / Schutz den Tempeln vor Verheerung, / Unsrer Fürsten heil'gem Blut / Unterwerfung und Verehrung / Gift und Dolch der Afterbrut!" (Heinrich von Kleist, "Germanias Aufruf an ihre Kinder", Fassung in einer anderen Kleist-Handschrift, in: Kleist, *Werke und Briefe*, op. cit., Band 3, p. 320f (318-321)).

an Wahnsinn grenzen. Der Fanatismus des Alles oder Nichts erlaubt  
nur noch Liebe auf der einen Seite und Haß auf der anderen.<sup>225</sup>

Kleist appeals to the German people to take military action against Napoleon and the French,<sup>226</sup> as also indicated in the aforementioned political plays and the poems *Germania an ihre Kinder* and *Kriegslied der Deutschen*, in which he calls, in the same violent tone, for the destruction of the enemy.<sup>227</sup> The divine will of God is employed in order to justify this action:

Fr. [...] wenn alles unterginge, und kein Mensch, Weiber und Kinder  
miteingerechnet, am Leben bleibe, würdest du den Kampf noch  
billigen?

Antw. Allerdings, mein Vater.

Fr. Warum?

Antw. Weil es Gott lieb ist, wenn Menschen, ihrer Freiheit wegen,  
sterben.

Fr. Was aber ist ihm ein Greuel?

Antw. Wenn Sklaven leben.<sup>228</sup>

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<sup>225</sup> Klaus Peter, "Für ein anderes Preußen. Romantik und Politik in Kleists 'Prinz Friedrich von Homburg'", in: *Kleist Jahrbuch*. 1992, p. 124 (95-125).

<sup>226</sup> See Kleist, "Katechismus der Deutschen", op. cit., p. 397f.

<sup>227</sup> Particularly striking examples of this are the verses "So verlaßt, voran der Kaiser, / Eure Hütten, eure Häuser, / Schäumt ein uferloses Meer, / Über diese Franken Her! // Alle Plätze, Trift' und Stätten, / Färbt mit ihren Knochen weiß; / Welchen Rab und Fuchs verschmähten, / Gebet ihn den Fischen preis; / Dämmt den Rhein mit ihren Leichen, / Laßt, gestäubt von ihrem Bein, / Schäumend um die Pfalz ihn weichen, / Und ihn dann die Grenze sein". (Heinrich von Kleist, "Germania an ihre Kinder", in: Kleist, *Werke und Briefe*, op. cit., Band 3, p. 316f [315-319]). Likewise the following verse taken from "Kriegslied der Deutschen": "Nur der Franzmann zeigt sich noch / In dem deutschen Reiche; / Brüder, nehmt die Keule doch, / Daß er gleichfalls weiche". (Ibid. p. 322 [321f]).

<sup>228</sup> Kleist, "Katechismus der Deutschen", op. cit., p. 400.

This appeal to the conscience of the individual through the emphasis on Christian duty is reiterated in *Germanias Aufruf an ihre Kinder*:

Eine Lustjagd, wie wenn Schützen  
Auf die Spur dem Wolfe sitzen!  
Schalgt ihn tot! Das Weltgericht  
Fragt euch nach den Gründen nicht!<sup>229</sup>

In a radical development of the moral liberation of the heroic leader, as referred to by, in particular, Hegel and Goethe, Kleist appears to justify any form of action in the name of the defence of the German Empire, the actual ideological cause being strengthened by divine vindication. His extreme portrayal of Napoleon as the embodiment of evil therefore serves to condone any barbaric action taken against him, a tendency also evident in *Die Hermannsschlacht*, in which Hermann stands “jenseits jeder Grenze der Moral”.<sup>230</sup> It was this glorification of violence, combined with the advocacy of absolute self-sacrifice in the name of the fatherland, which led to the manipulation of the poet’s work by the National Socialist movement.

Continuing the theme of self-sacrifice, Kleist suggests that the Napoleonic evil was sent from God in order to awaken the German people from their slumber and to bring them to the realisation that money and possessions are of no value when compared to freedom and the fatherland. In an echo of the advocacy of the “Evangelium der Tat”,<sup>231</sup> identified as a tendency characteristic of the writings in favour of Napoleon, the author criticises the Germans for being too ‘intellectual’:

Antw. Der Verstand der Deutschen hast du mir gesagt, habe, durch  
scharfsinnigen Lehrer, einen Überreiz bekommen; sie reflektierten,  
wo sie empfinden oder handeln sollten, meinten, alles durch ihren

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<sup>229</sup> Kleist, “Germanias Aufruf an ihre Kinder”, op. cit., p. 320.

<sup>230</sup> Hans Joachim Kreuzer, “Die Utopie vom Vaterland. Kleists politische Dramen”, in: *Oxford German Studies*, 20/21 (1991-92), p. 76 (69-84).

<sup>231</sup> Müllensiefen, op.cit., p. 95.

Witz bewerkstelligen zu können, und gäben nichts mehr auf die alte geheimnisvolle Kraft der Herzen.<sup>232</sup>

This therefore confirms the popular perception of Napoleon as a “Taten-Genie”, implicitly indicating a central tenet of Kleist’s own leadership ideal.

As the supporters of Napoleon attributed their hero’s ultimate defeat to fate, so Kleist used this higher, divine will as a pre-emptive explanation for a potential French victory: “Weil Gott der oberste Herr der Heerscharen ist, und nicht der Kaiser”.<sup>233</sup> This argument is repeated in the poem *An den Erzherzog Karl*, in which the author accepts the unlikelihood of an Austrian victory, yet claims that it is nevertheless necessary to seek revenge, regardless of the lives which it may cost.<sup>234</sup> Günter Blöcker, in his biographical work *Heinrich von Kleist oder Das absolute Ich*, observes this trend, which reflects Kleist’s personal feelings and which is to be found throughout his work, in particular in *Die Hermannsschlacht*, in which the hero’s only wish is “im freien Tod über seine Feinde zu triumphieren”.<sup>235</sup>

Similarly, in the poem *An den König von Preußen* the King is declared a victor - despite his overwhelming defeat at the hands of the French - because he pleased the people.<sup>236</sup> This reinforces the theory that Kleist’s understanding of the legitimisation

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<sup>232</sup> Kleist, “Katechismus der Deutschen”, op. cit., p. 395. Interestingly, Kleist was himself criticised for this lack of action, as expressed in a poem written by Gerhart Hauptmann in 1913: “Von Geburt bin ich ein preußischer Kriegs-Aristokrat. / Unser König ist ein Kunktator, ich will die Tat. / Zwar schrieb ich ein Stück: die Hermannsschlacht. / Das war eine Tat: aber nur gedacht”. (Gerhart Hauptmann, “Festspiel in deutschen Reimen”, in: *Heinrich von Kleists Nachruhm. Eine Wirkungsgeschichte in Dokumenten*. Hrsg. v. Helmut Sembdner. Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, München 1977, p. 396 [396f]).

<sup>233</sup> Kleist, “Katechismus der Deutschen”, op. cit., p. 400.

<sup>234</sup> Particularly worthy of note are the last two verses: “Nicht der Sieg ist’s, den der Deutsche fordert / Hülflos wie er schon am Abgrund steht; / Wenn der Kampf nur, fackelgleich, entlodert, / Wert der Leiche, die zu Grabe geht. // Mag er dann in finstre Nacht auch sinken, / Von dem Gipfel, halb bereits erklimmt; / Herr! Die Träne wird noch Dank dir blinken, / Wenn dein Schwert dafür nur Rache nimmt”. (“An den Erzherzog Karl”, in: Kleist, *Werke und Briefe*, op. cit., Band 3, p. 323).

<sup>235</sup> Günter Blöcker, *Heinrich von Kleist oder Das absolute Ich*. Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, Frankfurt am Main 1977, p. 30.

<sup>236</sup> This poem was written in order to commemorate the return of the royal couple to Berlin in 1809, although this did not take place as planned: “Blick auf, o Herr! Du kehrst als Sieger wieder, / Wie hoch auch jener Cäsar triumphiert / Ihm ist die Schar der Götter zugefallen, / Jedoch den Menschen hast du wohlgefallen”. (“An den König von Preußen”, in: Kleist, *Werke und Briefe*, op. cit., Band 3, p. 324).

of authority placed particular emphasis on the wishes of the masses, as highlighted in *Prinz Friedrich von Homburg*, in which the law of the state is ultimately subordinated to the will of the representative leader.<sup>237</sup> Kleist was indeed opposed to a purely charismatic form of legitimisation, as he felt, as may be seen in his unfinished work *Robert Guiskard*, that this led to an excessive concentration on the individual, who would strive only for the fulfilment of his own personal goals.<sup>238</sup> In the words of Schmidt:

Das Charisma und der daraus resultierende politische Anspruch des genialen Individuums wird depotenziert, ja zurückgenommen zugunsten des "Volks" und seiner Lebensinteressen.<sup>239</sup>

Evidence suggests that Kleist was familiar with the plans for monarchic and political reform put forward by, in particular, Stein, his support of a reformed Prussian state being demonstrated through the dedication of *Prinz Friedrich von Homburg* to first Queen Luise and, following her death, Princess Marianne, one of Stein's strongest supporters.<sup>240</sup>

This said, despite its central position in Kleist's perception of Napoleon, his hatred of the French leader extended beyond a purely nationally oriented patriotism, restricted to the political situation of early nineteenth century Europe, to an outward expression of his own inner torment. Alfred Neumann, writing in the *Vossische Zeitung* in 1927, described him as a:

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<sup>237</sup> Kottwitz to the Kurfürst: "Herr, das Gesetz, das höchste, oberste, / Das wirken soll, in deiner Feldherrn Brust, / Das ist der Buchstab deines Willens nicht; / Das ist das Vaterland, das ist die Krone, / Das bist du selber, dessen Haupt sie trägt". Heinrich von Kleist, "Prinz Friedrich von Homburg", in: Kleist, *Werke und Briefe*, op.cit., Band 2, p. 428 (351-441).

<sup>238</sup> See Schmidt, *Die Geschichte des Genie-Gedankens*, op. cit., Band 1, p. 460-466.

<sup>239</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 466.

<sup>240</sup> See Kreuzer, op.cit., p. 72. For further details on Kleist's association with Stein, in particular with reference to *Die Hermannsschlacht*, see Richard Samuel, "Kleist's 'Hermannsschlacht' und der Freiherr vom Stein", in: *Jahrbuch der Deutschen Schillergesellschaft*. 5 (1961), p. 64-101.



[...] zeitloser Hass, Dämon des Hasses, nicht Napoleon hassend, sondern alles Widerwärtige der widerlichen Welt, alles Hassenswerte überhaupt.<sup>241</sup>

Blöcker argues that Kleist in fact possessed a very limited understanding of the concrete policies of the period, his convictions being “auf etwas durchaus Überpolitisches gerichtet, etwas Absolutes, Metaphysisches”.<sup>242</sup>

Nevertheless, Kleist’s catechism clearly illustrates above all the similarities between the attitudes and opinions of Napoleon’s adversaries and his supporters: the omnipresent longing for one almighty leader; the importance of action over thought; the secularisation of the leadership discourse; and the transcendence of accepted moral and ethical constraints.<sup>243</sup> Such parallels tend to be overlooked by academic analyses of the Napoleonic reception, which focus on the polarisation of the two political ‘camps’.

The German patriots therefore sought a strong leader of Napoleonic proportion to act as a counterbalance to Napoleon. Görres for example called for an imperial “Diktator”,<sup>244</sup> and Gentz advocated the formation of “gute Tyrannen” based on the Napoleonic image.<sup>245</sup> However, many of the contemporary dynastic rulers were criticised either for their inactivity in the face of danger, such as the King of Prussia, or, more strongly, for betraying Germany and joining the Confederation of the Rhine. Initial examples of this criticism are provided by Arndt, in particular in the first volume of *Geist der Zeit*, published in 1806, in which he refers to the “Schmutziger

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<sup>241</sup> Quote from Blöcker, op. cit., p. 438 (435-438).

<sup>242</sup> Ibid., p. 81.

<sup>243</sup> Kleist’s portrayal of Hermann, interpreted by Samuel as the embodiment of the Kleistian leadership ideal, (see Samuel, op.cit., p. 65) stands as further evidence of this tendency. Whilst in the play the Romans are seen to represent the French oppressors, they are nevertheless devoid of a great, Napoleonic leader, as possessed by the Germans under Hermann. The tyrannical Germanic hero in fact displays those very characteristics normally used by Kleist to describe Napoleon, a fact highlighted by Michelsen: Hermann possesses skill and bravery, but also the ability to deceive and betray even his own people and to act without any moral conscience. (Peter Michelsen, “>Wehe, mein Vaterland, Dir!<. Heinrich von Kleists ‘Die Hermannsschlacht’”, in: *Kleist Jahrbuch*. 1987, p. 115-136).

<sup>244</sup> Joseph Görres, “Auf Rath weyl, zur That eil!” (*Rheinische Merkur*, 30.3.1815), in: Spies (Hrsg.), op. cit., p. 405 (402-407).

Ländergeiz, feige Furcht der Gegenwart, unpatriotische Gleichgültigkeit” of the German princes.<sup>246</sup>

Kleist and the members of the “Tischgesellschaft” therefore aimed to encourage a collective national revolt, viewed as the only possible means of defeating the French leader. They detected the dichotomy which existed between the need and desire for leadership felt by the people, and the lack of it on behalf of the ruling classes. Their action may therefore be regarded as an attempt to bridge this gap by themselves fulfilling a temporary, substituting role.

Arnim had been a long-standing supporter of internal reform and held the opinion that, Napoleon being the product of the contemporary *Zeitgeist*, it was necessary to adopt the reformatory spirit of the Revolution in order to protect Germany.<sup>247</sup> He and his supporters were however not directly opposed to the constitutional leaders, with whom they hoped to co-operate, and should therefore not simply be considered a substitute for the existing leaders, but rather a complement to those within court and government circles who shared their views, an active opponent of those who did not. The “Tischgesellschaft”, as well as publications such as Kleist’s *Germania*, represent the interaction of the spheres of ‘poetry’ and ‘politics’, writers and intellectuals coming together with politicians in order to promote the leadership for the masses which they believed to be lacking.

This leadership may be viewed politically in terms of rallying the people to the patriotic cause, but it also possessed educational qualities, the poets wishing to enlighten the masses as to the need for national unity and identity. Achim von Arnim and Clemens Brentano sought to further the ‘German’ culture, promoting what Nienhaus describes as the “Idee eines dichterischen Beitrags zur Nationalerziehung

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<sup>245</sup> Quote from Golo Mann, *op. cit.*, p. 207.

<sup>246</sup> Quote from Nienhaus, *op. cit.*, p. 135.

<sup>247</sup> See Günter Oesterle, “‘Commentar dieser unbegreiflichen Zeit’. Achim von Arnims Beitrag zum komplexen Verhältnis Frankreich - Deutschland”, in: Härtl/Schultz (Hrsg.), *op. cit.*, p. 30 (25-38).

der Deutschen”, thus combating the division of the empire with the “Einheit der Kulturnation”.<sup>248</sup>

With this aim in mind Arnim planned to create a national institution similar to the *Académie Française*, bringing together educational establishments in the interests of the people. He hoped to complement his plans for the internal political reform of Germany with a revival of folk traditions and hence a general sense of cultural unity, the “Entdeckung des verschütteten, vergessenen Eigenen”.<sup>249</sup> This plan, referred to by Günter Oesterle as the “Doppeldeckermode”, saw, amongst other efforts, the publication of a collection of German folk songs, entitled *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*.

A particular and indeed more radical development of this form of intellectual leadership was the work of Johann Gottlieb Fichte. Through his highly influential *Reden an die Deutsche Nation* (1807/08) he appealed for a new educational programme which would foster national unity and hence be transformed into political practice. Fichte’s approach stands as an alternative to the understanding of leadership which dominated intellectual discussion in the early nineteenth century, being centred not on one leader figure, but rather on the formation of the nation through the self-leadership of the individual.

Fichte’s calls for a revolution of the existing approach to education were based on the belief that the creation of a new sense of patriotism was the only possible form of salvation for a Germany dominated by Napoleonic hegemony. Dismissing the “Künste der Verführung”<sup>250</sup> which had been used in order to rule the nation through social and political division, he sought instead a “deutsche Nationalerziehung”<sup>251</sup> which would transcend all existing class distinctions. The individual would therefore be encouraged to perceive himself as part of the nation, thereby feeling personally bound to Germany’s future: “Wir wollen durch die neue Erziehung die Deutschen zu einer

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<sup>248</sup> Nienhaus, op. cit., p. 140.

<sup>249</sup> Oesterle, op. cit., p. 34.

<sup>250</sup> Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Reden an die deutsche Nation*. Felix Meiner Verlag, Hamburg 1955, p.

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<sup>251</sup> Ibid.

Gesamtheit bilden, die in allen ihren einzelnen Gliedern getrieben und belebt sei durch dieselbe Eine Angelegenheit”.<sup>252</sup>

Although in his first speech Fichte refers only in veiled terms to the “Eine Angelegenheit” which is to constitute the focus of this revolutionary form of education, his later speeches provide a more detailed insight into the driving force behind this theory. The ninth speech in particular may be viewed as the key to an understanding of the new “Erziehungskunst”,<sup>253</sup> and will as such be considered in further detail.

The “Angelegenheit” to which Fichte refers may be understood as the German national interest, identified in terms not only of political and territorial independence from foreign control, but also with regard to a sense of love for the primordial fatherland, which must itself supersede all other concerns. Speaking after Prussia’s defeat at Jena and Auerstedt, Fichte appeals for the re-establishment of the “Nationalangelegenheit”<sup>254</sup> as the decisive factor in the politics of the Germanic states, to be achieved through a restoration of “deutsche Vaterlandsliebe”<sup>255</sup> across the entire nation and, consequently, of German independence.

Like Arnim and Brentano, Fichte believed that this sense of patriotism could be fostered through the education of the people:

[...] die Mehrheit der Bürger muß zu diesem vaterländischen Sinne erzogen werden, und, damit man der Mehrheit sicher sei, diese Erziehung muß an der Allheit versucht werden. Und so ist es denn zugleich unumwunden und klar, [...] daß es schlechthin nur die Erziehung, und kein anderes mögliches Mittel sei, das die deutsche Selbständigkeit zu retten vermöge [...].<sup>256</sup>

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<sup>252</sup> Ibid., p. 23.

<sup>253</sup> Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>254</sup> Ibid., p. 145.

<sup>255</sup> Ibid.

In contrast to the majority of intellectuals involved in the patriotic movement however, he hoped to achieve this not through direct appeals for national cultural unity and immediate military action, but rather through a fundamental reformation of the mind and spirit of the individual, “eine gänzliche Umfassung des Menschengeschlechts”.<sup>257</sup>

This goal was to be realised by focusing subsequent educational programmes on the “freie Geistestätigkeit”<sup>258</sup> of the individual, in the hope that this would strengthen the influence exercised by instilled spiritual and moral values over his or her life. Fichte’s programme, based on the fundamentals of Pestalozzi’s educational theory, sought to alter the manner in which a child thinks and perceives its surroundings by focusing not on the sensory world, as had been the case in the existing mode of education, but rather on the “Welt des Geistes”.<sup>259</sup> A child should, according to Fichte’s theory, be encouraged to develop its own intellectual faculties, thereby forming its own, individual “Ich”.<sup>260</sup>

Fichte then goes on to explain how this formation of the individual personality will in turn lead to the formation of the nation as a whole:

Jener zu erzeugende Geist führt die höhere Vaterlandsliebe, das Erfassen seines irdischen Lebens als eines ewigen, und des Vaterlandes, als des Trägers dieser Ewigkeit, und, falls er in den Deutschen aufgebauet wird, die Liebe für das deutsche Vaterland, als einen seiner notwendigen Bestandteile unmittelbar in sich selber; und aus dieser Liebe folgt der mutige Vaterlandsverteidiger, und der ruhige und rechtliche Bürger von selbst.<sup>261</sup>

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<sup>256</sup> Ibid.

<sup>257</sup> Ibid., p. 147.

<sup>258</sup> Ibid., p. 150.

<sup>259</sup> Ibid., p. 147.

<sup>260</sup> Ibid., p. 155.

<sup>261</sup> Ibid., p. 147.

A child would therefore grow up to perceive its own eternal life as part of the higher eternity inherent in the German fatherland, the love of which would lead him to act as a responsible citizen and, more importantly given the historical context in which the speeches were made, defend the nation against foreign attack. Furthermore, the child would also develop personally having been spiritually completed by his perception of himself as part of the greater whole:

[...] der ganze Mensch wird nach allen seinen Teilen vollendet, in sich selbst abgerundet, nach außen zu allen seinen Zwecken in Zeit und Ewigkeit mit vollkommener Tüchtigkeit ausgestattet. Mit unsrer Genesung für Nation und Vaterland hat die geistige Natur unsre vollkommene Heilung von allen Übeln, die uns drücken, unzertrennlich verknüpft.<sup>262</sup>

Fichte's response to Napoleonic domination was therefore a long-term approach centred on the personal development of the individual and, consequently, the nation as a whole. His understanding of leadership was not based on the ideal of one heroic 'great man' and hence a Germanic or Prussian counterbalance to Napoleon, but rather on the belief that the nation could be led through educated citizens, acting as one united 'Volk'. The fundamental element behind this new form of education was the spiritual and philosophical force of the intellect, a theory which stood in contrast to those efforts made by amongst others Arnim and Brentano, which were focused on a revival of national cultural tradition. His speeches, which exercised a considerable impact on the audience, demonstrate how the intellect may be used in order to foster both spiritual development and political action.

Despite differences between this approach and that of the "Tischgesellschaft" however, both forms of intellectual leadership were based on a common need to unite the German people against Napoleon, as is reflected most strongly in Fichte's final

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<sup>262</sup> Ibid., p. 148.

speech, in which he makes an emotional appeal to all sections of German society to commit themselves to his programme of action:

Endlich einmal höret, endlich einmal besinnt euch. [...] Ihr seid zusammenberufen, einen letzten und festen Entschluß zu fassen; keinesweges etwa zu einem Befehle, einem Auftrage, einer Anmutung, an andere, sondern zu einer Anmutung an euch selber. Eine Entschliebung sollt ihr fassen, die jedweder nur durch sich selbst und in seiner eignen Person ausführen kann. [...] es wird von euch gefordert ein solcher Entschluß, der zugleich unmittelbar Leben sei, und inwendige Tat, und der da ohne Wanken oder Erklärung fortdaure und fortwalte, bis er am Ziele sei.<sup>263</sup>

The above passage, taken from the fourteenth speech entitled “Der letzte Aufruf”, serves to highlight the contrast which Fichte establishes between authoritarian leadership of the masses and inner guidance of the individual. This latter form of education, which itself unites action and reflection, stands as an intellectual alternative to the ideal of the heroic leader figure which dominated contemporary debate.

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<sup>263</sup> Ibid., p. 229f.

## *ii) Reaction and reform: the myths of Prince Louis Ferdinand and Queen Luise of Prussia*

The patriotic defence of the Prussian throne remained a key element of the ideology of both the "Tischgesellschaft" and associated individuals such as Kleist. The monarchy was seen as a uniting force for the Germanic states, providing a counter-balance to the power of Napoleon and, under him, France. Dissatisfied with the hesitant policies of Friedrich Wilhelm III and his government,<sup>264</sup> their conviction found its expression in the glorification of Prince Louis Ferdinand and Queen Luise. The portrayal of these two figures gradually took on mythical proportions which echoed throughout the nineteenth and into the twentieth century, and the development of this myth therefore reflects the changing perceptions of leadership as they evolved over the period in question.

Prince Louis Ferdinand's personality and political opinions were characterised by a "Dualismus"<sup>265</sup> which formed the basis of his popularity. He was both a largely successful military theorist and leader, as well as a talented musician and composer<sup>266</sup> and an accepted member of intellectual Berlin society. Politically Louis Ferdinand was, to quote Kleßman, "ein Mensch zwischen zwei Zeitaltern"<sup>267</sup> who acknowledged the need for reform of feudal society and monarchical privilege, yet believed in the defence of the *Ancien régime* and the Prussian throne. Thus he shared similar opinions to Stein and Gentz, and sympathised with Queen Luise, believing war to be inevitable and attempting, albeit in vain, to bring about an Austro-Prussian coalition.

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<sup>264</sup> The King of Prussia pursued, supported by Haugwitz, a policy of neutrality towards Napoleon, hoping to act as mediator between France and Russia. Friedrich Wilhelm, who clearly stated his opposition to war - "Mehr als ein König ist untergegangen, weil er den Krieg liebte. Ich werde untergehen, weil ich den Frieden liebe" (Quote from Flocken, op. cit., p.135) - maintained this line until circumstances forced him to declare war on France in August 1806 and again, supported by a coalition, in 1813.

<sup>265</sup> Eckart Kleßman, *Prinz Louis Ferdinand von Preußen 1772-1806. Gestalt einer Zeitenwende*. Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, München 1972, p. 8.

<sup>266</sup> See for example the poem by Theodor Körner, "Bei der Musik des Prinzen Louis Ferdinand", in: *Ibid.*, p. 286. See pages 270f for a complete list of Louis Ferdinand's compositional works.

<sup>267</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.



In 1806, as war between Prussia and France was about to break out, Louis Ferdinand and Stein sent a memorandum, written by Johannes von Müller, to the King criticising his foreign policy and calling for the sacking of Graf von Haugwitz, then foreign minister, and the two advisors to the cabinet Beyme and Lombard, whom they accused of controlling the King and government policy and supporting Napoleon. The memorandum expressed the need for leadership and military action from the King, criticising “die unselige Schwachheit aller Fürsten” and “dieses an wirklich großen Männern karge Zeitalter”,<sup>268</sup> which Louis Ferdinand believed to be the root of Napoleon’s success. In an attack on the constitutional system and the absence of leadership in Germany he stated, in a letter addressed to Massenbach, “Wir haben keine Regierungsform, kein Gouvernement”.<sup>269</sup>

Gentz believed that Louis Ferdinand could fill this vacuum, perceiving in him all desirable leadership qualities:

Ihre Bestimmung ist groß und schön, der Himmel hat Ihnen alles gegeben, durchaus alles, um sie zu erfüllen: Genie, hohe Geburt, Unerschrockenheit, militärische und politische Talente, alle verführerischen Eigenschaften, alles was eine ungeheuere Popularität begründen kann und, was die Vollendung und der Gipfel von allem ist: eine erhabene, feurige Seele, die fähig ist, alles zu unternehmen und alles auszuführen.<sup>270</sup>

However, it must be noted that Louis Ferdinand, despite having apparently on one occasion spoken to Massenbach of his desire to become King of Prussia, never expressed any real intentions to take over the throne, although certain works published after his death suggested that he had been preparing to carry out a *coup*

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<sup>268</sup> Quote from Ibid., p. 210.

<sup>269</sup> Quote from Ibid.

<sup>270</sup> Quote from Ibid., p. 164.

*d'état* in the event of a Prussian victory over France, in which he would have been instrumental as a leading strategist.<sup>271</sup>

The hope which the patriots and reformers of the time saw embodied in the young military leader was however crushed when Louis Ferdinand was killed in battle against Napoleon at Saalfeld on 10. October 1806. However, instead of being held responsible for the defeat of Prussia, he became glorified as a "Siegesgott"<sup>272</sup> who chose to die in battle rather than to witness Prussia's defeat.<sup>273</sup> This representation was supported by, amongst others, Heinrich Steffens and Carl von Clausewitz, and propagated in the poems of, for example, Scherenberg, Fontane and Achim von Arnim, who wrote the following verses in his poem entitled *Prinz Ludwig Ferdinand*:

Betäubt der Trommel Schallen!  
Was du vorausgesagt,  
Die Guten werden fallen,  
Ihr Fall bleibt unbeklagt!

Ihr Fall wird nicht mehr nützen,  
Sie fallen nach der Zeit,  
Die Toren werden sitzen  
Mit klugem Spruch bereit

"Es sei! Doch nicht erblicken  
Will ich die Schmach der Welt,  
So nimm mein letzt' Entzücken,  
Ich sieg', ich fall' als Held!"<sup>274</sup>

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<sup>271</sup> Examples of this trend are Friedrich Buchholz, *Gallerie preußischer Charaktere* (1807); Wilhelm Hosaeus, *Prinz Louis Ferdinand. Vaterländisches Trauerspiel in fünf Aufzügen* (1865); Fritz von Unruh, *Louis Ferdinand Prinz von Preußen* (1913). See *Ibid.*, p. 248-258.

<sup>272</sup> Quote from Nienhaus, *op. cit.*, p. 137.

<sup>273</sup> In a letter addressed to Massenbach Louis Ferdinand stated: "Ich werde mein Blut für den König und für mein Vaterland vergießen, ohne jedoch einen Augenblick zu hoffen, es zu retten". (Quote from Kleßman, *op. cit.* p. 210).

<sup>274</sup> Achim von Arnim, "Prinz Ludwig Ferdinand", in: *Ibid.*, p. 280 (279ff).

Correspondingly, the theory applied to Napoleon by Hegel and Goethe that the French leader was defeated because he had achieved his divine mission, is adopted by the unknown writer of a poem entitled *Auf den Tod des Prinzen Ludwig Ferdinand von Preußen*, in which he addresses the prince as follows:

Ruhe sanft, du hast das Ziel erreicht,  
Das der Allmacht Hand dir aufgestellt  
Deine irdische Hülle hier erbleichet,  
Lebt dein Geist in einer bessern Welt [...]<sup>275</sup>

In accordance with the growing secularisation of the Napoleonic myth and the associated debate on the meaning of leadership, religious imagery constituted a common feature of the glorification of Louis Ferdinand. Julie Pelzer for example in her early poem *Prinz Ludewig von Preußen, Held und Menschenfreund* (1793) referred to him as “Menschen-Leben-Retter, Held und Christ”.<sup>276</sup> Continuing this theme, a number of comparisons were made between Louis Ferdinand and the ancient Gods, the prince being described as a synthesis of Mars, Adonis and Alkibiades<sup>277</sup> and “einen donnernden Jupiter”, “den furchtbaren Zeus” and “den preußischen Achilles”.<sup>278</sup> Kleßman describes the prince as an “Ersatzgott im patriotischen Himmel”,<sup>279</sup> an interpretation later to be applied by Schmidt to the work of, in particular, Grabbe, as will be detailed in the following chapter.

In the wave of poetic glorification which followed his death emphasis was placed both on Louis Ferdinand’s military and musical talent, as well as on his benevolent nature, as illustrated by Carl Friedrich Benkowitz, who through his poetry highlighted the importance of the personality of an individual within the leadership discourse:

Königlich war des Leibes Gestalt, noch schöner die Seele,

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<sup>275</sup> Ungenannter Verfasser, “Auf den Tod des Prinzen Ludwig Ferdinand von Preußen”, in: *Ibid.*, p. 284f.

<sup>276</sup> Julie Pelzer, “Prinz Ludewig von Preußen, Held und Menschenfreund”, in: *Ibid.*, p. 272f.

<sup>277</sup> Quote from *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>278</sup> Quote from *Ibid.*, p. 67.

<sup>279</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 258.

Liebend und hold sein Tun, und sanft die Rede des Mundes.  
Wohltun war sein heilig Geschäft, und Milde die Wonne  
Seines Herzens.<sup>280</sup>

During the Wars of Liberation however emphasis returned to a military and nationalist portrayal, as exemplified by Stägemann:

Teurer Geist, von deinem Sterne droben  
Dich hinab an irdisch Licht zu rufen.  
Und die Heldenantwort tönt hernieder,  
Und der graue Dom ertönt sie wieder:  
"Euch geleiten, junge Waffenbrüder,  
Euch geleiten werd' ich zu den Toden

Für des Vaterlandes werten Boden.  
Eure Fahne, wenn die Schlacht sich faltet,  
Euer Stern, wenn ihr Gewitter waltet,  
Werd' ich hell um eure Stirnen schweben,  
Euch zum Schilde vor der Ehre Wunden  
Werd' ich männlich eure Brust umgeben [...] <sup>281</sup>

This reflects the evolution of the leadership ideal according to political circumstances which was to continue throughout the nineteenth and during the early twentieth century. The nationalist theme began to dominate the second wave of literary works, prevalent during the Bismarckian era and reaching its culmination in the play *Prinz von Preußen*, written in 1934 by Hans Schwarz, in which the heroic prince becomes the embodiment of the National Socialist "Führer'-Topos".<sup>282</sup>

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<sup>280</sup> Carl Friedrich Benkowitz, ohne Titel, in: *Ibid.*, p. 281.

<sup>281</sup> Friedrich August von Stägemann, "Bei dem Leichenbegängnisse des Prinzen Ludwig Ferdinand von Preußen", in: *Ibid.*, p. 288 (287f).

<sup>282</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 258.

A similar evolutionary trend may be identified in the literary representation of Queen Luise, who also became the focus of mythical idolisation in Germany. In its initial stages this admiration stemmed from what Wülfing terms the “Verbürgerlichung”<sup>283</sup> of the royal family, a process begun when Friedrich Wilhelm and Luise ascended the throne in 1797. It was based on their portrayal as the ‘ideal’ family, possessing high moral and religious standards, with which the “große Familie des Volkes”<sup>284</sup> could identify.

Central to this concept was Novalis’ theoretical work entitled *Glauben und Liebe oder der König und die Königin*, which was published in the *Jahrbücher der Preußischen Monarchie unter der Regierung von Friedrich Wilhelm III* (1798), together with the collection of poems and aphorisms entitled *Blumen*. Although the work expresses general support of the monarchy, albeit combined with the need for democratic reform, Novalis focuses on the then reigning royal couple, the “himmlische Paar”, who are viewed as the embodiment of harmony, bringing hope to Prussia as the dove brought the olive branch to Noah.<sup>285</sup> This notion becomes particularly apparent in the poems “Es ist an der Zeit” and “Der König”, in which Novalis writes:

Nur wer mehr, als König schon ist, kann königlich herrschen,  
Also soll König sein, welcher die Herrlichste liebt.<sup>286</sup>

This marked emphasis on the royal couple as *joint* leaders is notable as an exception to the general notion of and search for an individual leading figure, “der Einzige”. It formed part of what Novalis hoped would encourage a return to traditional family values, as is emphasised in the following rhetorical question, which outlines the transformation of the monarchy into the idealised family: “Verwandelt sich nicht ein

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<sup>283</sup> Wulf Wülfing, “Die heilige Luise von Preußen. ‘Zur Mythisierung einer Figur der Geschichte in der deutschen Literatur des 19. Jahrhunderts.’”, in: Link/Wülfing (Hrsg.), op. cit., p. 236.

<sup>284</sup> Quote from Ibid.

<sup>285</sup> See Novalis, “Blumen”, in: Novalis, *Werke*. Hrsg. und kommentiert von Gerhard Schulz. C. H. Beck, München, o.J., p. 36.

<sup>286</sup> Novalis, “Der König”, in: Ibid., p. 35.

Hof in eine Familie, ein Thron in ein Heiligthum, eine königliche Vermählung in einen ewigen Herzensbund?“<sup>287</sup>

Here one is provided with an initial indication of the link made between Queen Luise and her family and Christian values, which was to become an important aspect of the “Luise-Mythos”. It is further highlighted in the poem “Der sterbende Genius”, in which Luise appears as the mediator between heaven and earth, thus echoing Hölderlin’s search for such a transcendental figure.<sup>288</sup> Parallels with Hölderlin are furthered when Novalis refers, in *Glauben und Liebe*, to the King and Queen as “Genien”, on whom the further existence of the modern world depends:

Wirken diese Genien nichts, so ist die vollkommene Auflösung der modernen Welt gewiß, und die himmlische Erscheinung ist nichts, als das Aufblitzen der verfliegenden Lebenskraft, die Sphärenmusik eines Sterbenden.<sup>289</sup>

Novalis’ application of his theological “Mittlertheorie” to contemporary political circumstances serves to emphasise the role of spiritual leadership which he attributed to the royal couple. This is further supported by both his use of religious imagery and the analogy drawn between entheism and pantheism and monarchy and democracy respectively.

In accordance with his aesthetic conception of the state, Novalis felt that the two constitutional forms should be fused together in a spiritually oriented “poetischen Staat”. According to this theory - which was rejected by Friedrich Wilhelm III as too demanding - the King’s power lay in the people’s willingness to accept him as an “Idealmenschen”, thus creating a “wahrhaft menschliche Regierungsform” which combined both monarchical and democratic elements: “Der ächte König wird

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<sup>287</sup> Novalis, “Glauben und Liebe oder Der König und die Königin”, in: Novalis, *Werke*, op.cit., p. 367 (353-374).

<sup>288</sup> Novalis, “Der sterbende Genius”, in: “Blumen”, op.cit., p. 35f.

<sup>289</sup> Novalis, “Glauben und Liebe oder Der König und die Königin”, op. cit., p. 361.

Republik, die ächte Republik König sein".<sup>290</sup> All people were considered equal in their ability to ascend the throne, and it was the King's role to educate them in order that they may achieve this. The King himself, described as the "Künstler der Künstler", would be kept informed on all aspects of and developments in the arts and sciences, thereby gaining an overview of society as a whole, with himself, and his wife, at the centre:

Der Regent führt ein unendlich mannigfaches Schauspiel auf, wo Bühne und Parterre, Schauspieler und Zuschauer eins sind, und er selbst Poet, Direktor und Held des Stücks zugleich ist.<sup>291</sup>

Despite this focus on the leading couple, Novalis does nevertheless place particular emphasis on the individual role of Queen Luise, whose function it is to uphold the morality of the court and to bring up her family, thus becoming the model wife and mother for the country as a whole:

Jede gebildete Frau und jede sorgfältige Mutter sollte das Bild der Königin, in ihrem oder ihrer Töchter Wohnzimmer haben. [...] Ähnlichkeit mit der Königin würde der Charakterzug der Neupreußischen Frauen, ihr Nationalzug (sic!).<sup>292</sup>

Luise's appeal was linked to the notion that she was "ein Mensch 'wie du und ich'".<sup>293</sup> Indeed, her ability to transcend class boundaries, becoming what Wülfing describes as an "alle gesellschaftlichen Bereiche erfassendes Sinngewebssystem",<sup>294</sup> was a fundamental aspect of her popularity, which - as was also apparent in the idolisation of Louis Ferdinand - points to the gradual adoption of elements of liberal ideology.

Novalis' image of the transformed monarchy, living in harmony with its subjects, is therefore to be viewed as an attempt to render obsolete the need for revolution as was

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<sup>290</sup> Ibid., p. 359.

<sup>291</sup> Ibid., p. 367.

<sup>292</sup> Ibid., p. 362.

<sup>293</sup> Wülfing, "Die heilige Luise von Preußen", op.cit., p. 243.

then taking place in neighbouring France.<sup>295</sup> Novalis believed that the court would represent the whole of society, and that the constant interweaving of the two aspects would lead to what he termed “ächter Patriotism”.<sup>296</sup> As she was the principal element of this utopian image of national harmony, he saw Luise as the key to eternal peace. Rejecting Kant’s rational approach and his support of republicanism, he sought peace in love and the uniting power of one almost divine monarch: “Wer den ewigen Frieden jetzt sehn und lieb gewinnen will, der reise nach Berlin und sehe die Königin”.<sup>297</sup>

The fact that Queen Luise provided hope for the nation was partially the result of the ability of the people to identify with her as a person. As circumstances changed it did however increasingly become linked to her political opinions and actions, as were highlighted by the “christlich-deutsche Tischgesellschaft”. The combination of the two elements became especially pertinent in the winter of 1806, when the royal family was forced to flee from Berlin to Memel following Prussia’s defeat at Jena and Auerstedt, at which point the Queen became the “personalisierten Bild der damals erlebbaren Geschichte”.<sup>298</sup> Wülfing refers to the “Orientierungsfunktion”<sup>299</sup> which she fulfilled at this stage in Prussian history, remaining what may be classed as a ‘constant’ in the tumultuous period. He identifies this as the turning point in the history of the myth of Luise, whose image was transformed from that of an ideal wife and mother to a “preußischer Jeanne d’Arc”.<sup>300</sup>

Luise recognised her husband’s short-comings in the field of leadership and encouraged him to take control. During the battles of Jena and Auerstedt she pleaded with him: “Ich darf Dich noch einmal bitten, nimm mehr Zutrauen zu Dir und führe

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<sup>294</sup> Ibid., p. 245.

<sup>295</sup> Novalis did not deny the need for revolution during certain periods in history, provided that this did not become a permanent situation, and that there remained a “Kern” which provided continuity, namely the monarchy. See Novalis, “Glauben und Liebe oder Der König und die Königin”, op. cit., p. 358f.

<sup>296</sup> Ibid., p. 363.

<sup>297</sup> Ibid., p. 368. This belief is also referred to in the poem “Das Ende des Haders”, in which Novalis writes: “Nur die Liebe besitzt den Talisman ewigen Friedens - / Da nur, wo sie erscheint, fließen die Massen in Eins”. (See Novalis, “Blumen”, op. cit., p. 35).

<sup>298</sup> Wülfing, “Die heilige Luise von Preußen”, op.cit., p. 245.

<sup>299</sup> Ibid.

<sup>300</sup> Ibid.



das Ganze, es geht bestimmt besser".<sup>301</sup> Indeed, she took on an extensive political role herself, sometimes acting in direct opposition to her husband. As did Louis Ferdinand, she encouraged internal reform, actively supporting, amongst others, Stein. She advocated military action as the only means of defeating Napoleon and constantly defended and promoted relations with Russia. Her most important political role came when she met Napoleon during the peace negotiations at Tilsit in 1807. This event was however not brought immediately to the attention of the German public, as it was not perceived as desirable on the part of the King that his wife was seen to be in control, or indeed to be negotiating with a leader who was at the time viewed as the arch enemy.<sup>302</sup>

However, the hope which she embodied was not to be fulfilled. Queen Luise died on 19th July 1810. Her early death - which released a wave of public ceremonies and mourning - left those who had hoped to find in her Germany's saviour with a deep sense of loss and despair. Many important figures of the time paid homage to her, including General Blücher, Varnhagen von Ense and vom Stein, who summarised the desperation which she left behind, particularly for her widower, and the disbelief that anyone could take her place: "Wer wird diese Wunden heilen, wer den durch das Schicksal verfolgten, tief bekummerten, nun ganz isoliert dastehenden König trösten, aufrichten?"<sup>303</sup> Similarly, Heinrich Steffens described his feeling after Luise's death "als wäre die letzte schwache Hoffnung mit dem Leben der angebeteten hohen Frau entwichen".<sup>304</sup> Thus her death served to consolidate the myth which had been created around her.

The legacy which Queen Luise left may be seen in the poems which were written about her by many German patriots of the time, including Clemens Brentano, Zacharias Werner, Friedrich de la Motte-Fouqué and Achim von Arnim.<sup>305</sup> The

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<sup>301</sup> Quote from Flocken, *op.cit.*, p. 183.

<sup>302</sup> See Wülfing, "Die heilige Luise von Preußen", *op.cit.*, p. 247.

<sup>303</sup> Quote from Flocken, *op. cit.*, p. 372.

<sup>304</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>305</sup> Brentano, "Kantate auf den Tod ihrer königlichen Majestät, Luise von Preußen"; Werner, "Werner's Klagen um seine Königin Luisa von Preußen"; Fouqué, "Gespräch über den 19ten Julius des Jahres 1810"; Arnim, "Nachtfeier nach der Einholung der hohen Leiche Ihrer Majestät der Königin." See Wülfing, "Die heilige Luise von Preußen", *op. cit.* for further details.

opinions of many were expressed by Kleist in the three versions of the poem which he dedicated to Queen Luise on her birthday in March 1810, entitled *An die Königin Luise von Preußen*. The poem illustrates the mythical themes and imagery used to portray the Queen, both before and after her death. Focusing on her political role Kleist praises the Queen and her actions at Tilsit:

Und die das Unglück, mit der Grazie Tritten.  
Auf jungen Schultern, herrlich jüngsthin trug  
Als einz'ge Siegerin vom Platz geschritten,  
Da jüngst des Himmels Zorn uns niederschlug.<sup>306</sup>

He felt that the people had not recognised the influence and power which their Queen possessed, in addition to her mildness and beauty: "Daß du so groß als schön warst, war uns fremd".<sup>307</sup> Wülfing speaks of a "Doppelung" of Luise's beauty and her youth,<sup>308</sup> the latter also being a key element in the admiration of both Louis Ferdinand and Napoleon.

The following lines of Kleist's poem refer to the visits which Luise made to the troops, though, in a wider context, they describe the sense of hope which she gave to her subjects, even in Prussia's darkest hour:

Wie von des Kriegs zerrißnen Schlachtenwagen  
Selbst oft die Scharr der Männer zu dir schritt,  
Wie, trotz der Wunde, die dein Herz durchschnitt,  
Du stets der Hoffnung Fahn uns vorgetragen.<sup>309</sup>

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<sup>306</sup> Heinrich von Kleist, "An die Königin Luise von Preussen", Erste Fassung, in: Kleist, *Werke und Briefe*, op. cit., Band 3, p. 328. Wülfing interprets the use of the word "einz'ge" as an attempt to distinguish the Queen's political role from that of her husband. This would however, at least to a certain extent, contrast with Kleist's poem *An den König von Preußen*, in which the monarch is described as a "Sieger", despite having been defeated by Napoleon. (See Kleist, *Werke und Briefe*, op. cit., Band 3, p. 324).

<sup>307</sup> Kleist, "An die Königin Luise von Preussen", Zweite Fassung, in: Kleist, *Werke und Briefe*, op. cit., Band 3, p. 329.

<sup>308</sup> Wülfing, "Die heilige Luise von Preußen", op. cit., p. 243.

<sup>309</sup> Kleist, "An die Königin Luise von Preussen", Dritte Fassung, in: Kleist, *Werke und Briefe*, op. cit., Band 3, p. 330.

Using a similar image to that evoked by both Hölderlin and Günderröde to describe Napoleon, Kleist portrays Luise as the sun which breaks through the clouds, bringing light after darkness:

Dir, die der hohen Himmels-sonne gleich,  
In voller Pracht nur strahlt und Herrlichkeit,  
Wenn sie durch finstre Wetterwolken bricht.<sup>310</sup>

Religious imagery, as mentioned above, constitutes a key element of the description of Luise. Kleist for example describes how a heavenly cherub places a crown on her "heil'ge Schwesterstirne",<sup>311</sup> and Wülfing interprets the lines:

So zieht ein Cherub, mit gespreizten Flügeln,  
Zur Nachtzeit durch die Luft, und, auf den Rücken  
Geworfen, staunen ihn, von Glanz geblendet,  
Der Welt betroffene Geschlechter an [...] <sup>312</sup>

as a direct allusion to specific passages of the Bible, in which the glory of God and his angels appear as a blinding light on Earth.<sup>313</sup> Likewise, the anthem of the "Tischgesellschaft", written in 1811, included the following verse dedicated to their 'immortal' Queen:

Unsres Volkes treue Herzen  
Bindet eine Geisterhand,  
Und wir fühlen Sie in Schmerzen,

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<sup>310</sup> Kleist, "An die Königin Luise von Preussen", Zweite Fassung, op.cit. Wülfing suggests that the use of such "Lichtmetaphorik" is intended to create a sense of distance. (Wülfing, "Die heilige Luise von Preußen", op. cit., p. 263.) In the case of Kleist's poem this would imply a conscious distinction made between the 'goodness' of Queen Luise and the Napoleonic 'evil' or, after her death, between heaven and earth.

<sup>311</sup> Kleist, "An die Königin Luise von Preussen", Erste Fassung, op. cit., p. 328.

<sup>312</sup> Kleist, "An die Königin Luise von Preussen", Zweite Fassung, op.cit. See Wülfing, "Die heilige Luise von Preußen", op. cit., p. 251.

<sup>313</sup> Wülfing, "Die heilige Luise von Preußen", op. cit., p. 251. Particular reference is made to Exodus 3, 6; 33 17-20; Ezechiel 10, 4; and Matthew 28, 2-4.

Sie, die uns von Gott gesandt,  
Daß sich Glaub' und Liebe verkünde,  
Ewig lebt die Königin!<sup>314</sup>

Once again the religious imagery serves to elevate the heroine beyond the level of a mortal being. Nienhaus refers to the patriot's image of her as an "Art protestantischer Marienfigur".<sup>315</sup> This was later emphasised by a reference in an encyclopaedia to Luise's universal intuitiveness and understanding, which echoed similar descriptions of Napoleon: "Früh schon war sie gewöhnt, alles Sichtbare, Irdische, an ein Unsichtbares, Höheres, und das Endliche an das Unendliche zu knüpfen".<sup>316</sup>

Luise was perceived as a representative of both Prussia and a united Germany, and served as a symbolic figurehead during the Wars of Liberation. One of the most striking examples of this is the poem *An die Königin Luise*, written by Theodor Körner:

Und soll Dein Bild auf unseren Fahnen schweben,  
Und soll uns leuchten durch die Nacht zum Sieg.  
Luise sei der Schutzgeist deutscher Sache,  
Luise sei das Lösungswort zur Rache!

...Und mögen tausend Flammenblitze regnen,  
Und mögen tausend tode uns umdräun:  
Ein Blick auf Deine Fahne wird uns segnen;  
Wir stehen fest, wir müssen Sieger sein!<sup>317</sup>

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<sup>314</sup> Quote from Nienhaus, op. cit., p. 136.

<sup>315</sup> Ibid. Wülfing also believes that the change of spelling of Luise's name in the poem "Werner's Klagen um seine Königin Luisa von Preußen" was intended to link Luise to the Virgin Mary (Maria), reinforced by the lines: "Luisa, Du, die Reine, / Wie mehr wie Du woh! Keine / Der Himmelsköniginnen / An Huld und Qualen gleich"; (Wülfing, "Die heilige Luise von Preußen", op. cit., p. 258f). Furthermore, he identifies the references to Luise's "Einzug in Berlin" as an intended parallel to Christ's entry into Jerusalem, (Wülfing, "Die heilige Luise von Preußen", op. cit., p. 252), as was also used in Heine's *Das Buch Le Grand*. (See Part I, Chapter 3).

<sup>316</sup> *Neues Rheinisches Conversations-Lexikon* (1834). Quote from Wülfing, "Die heilige Luise von Preußen", op. cit., p. 268.

<sup>317</sup> Quote from Flocken, op. cit., p. 378.

As was also characteristic of the myth surrounding Louis Ferdinand, the emphasis on particular leadership qualities in the portrayal of Luise changed over time. During the Franco-Prussian war importance was placed on her national patriotism and, when Prussia triumphed in 1871, Luise finally gained her victory over Napoleon, her son Wilhelm having defeated Napoleon's nephew and become Emperor of Germany. Wülfing explains how the myth of Luise thus became synonymous with the "Gründungsmythos des deutschen Reiches",<sup>318</sup> her image being used in the early twentieth century by, for example, the 'Deutschnationale Volkspartei' in its election campaign.<sup>319</sup>

The myths surrounding both Prince Louis Ferdinand and Queen Luise therefore further reveal the similarities between the Napoleonic ideal and the qualities sought in an alternative leader. They indicate that the concept of leadership in early nineteenth century Germany was not restricted to political and military authority, but incorporated in addition the need for a national figurehead able to provide moral and spiritual guidance, as also reflected in the Napoleonic myth. The fundamental distinction between the two ideals lay in the nationality of the desired figure and, in particular in the case of Kleist, the focus on the wishes of the masses as a form of legitimisation.

Of particular interest within this context is the attention given around the beginning of the nineteenth century by contemporary writers to the female leader figure in general. To be noted are the two plays by Schiller, *Maria Stuart* (1801) and *Die Jungfrau von Orléans* (1802), which both portray strong female protagonists in a role of political and, in the case of Johanna military, leadership, thus moving away from the role attributed to a Queen by Novalis.<sup>320</sup>

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<sup>318</sup> Wülfing, "Die heilige Luise von Preußen", op. cit., p. 270.

<sup>319</sup> See Flocken, op. cit., p. 379.

<sup>320</sup> Interestingly, during the latter years of her reign Luise, now seen as "die preußische Jeanne d'Arc", lists *Maria Stuart* and *Die Jungfrau von Orléans* as her favourite plays, although her husband did his best to discourage her from such pursuits. (See Heinz Ohff, *Ein Stern in Wetterwolken. Königin Luise von Preußen*. R. Piper, München 1989, p. 214).

Three years after the premiere of *Die Jungfrau von Orléans*, another female leader was presented through German culture, this time by Beethoven in his opera *Fidelio*, first performed in 1805. The initial performance met with little success, mainly due to the fact that Vienna was at the time occupied by French forces, though the opera was then revised and successfully reperformed in 1814, during the Wars of Liberation. The heroine Leonore, whose character stems from a figure of French revolutionary history, secures the liberation of prisoners under despotic rule. She is a strong and courageous figure, who draws her strength from her love for her husband, Florestan, as well as for freedom and justice.

All three leading figures - Maria, Johanna and Leonore - are the objects of a mythical admiration which is portrayed through religious imagery. The "heilige" Maria becomes a "schön verklärter Engel"<sup>321</sup> at the time of her execution, and Johanna, inspired by the Virgin Mary, is the embodiment of truth, innocence, loyalty and purity. Similarly, Florestan, close to death, believes he is seeing an angel when Leonore appears before him.<sup>322</sup> Parallels with the apotheosis of Queen Luise are clear. Furthermore, the language which is used to describe these characters by their enemies is also similar to that used in propaganda against Luise by Napoleon. Thus, for example, Maria is described as "Helena" and "die listige Armida".<sup>323</sup>

This therefore suggests that the female leader was an important element in the initial stages of the nineteenth century, both in fact and fiction. Although no direct links may be established between the various figures, analogies in the imagery used to describe them may nevertheless be identified, indicating a widespread trend in the interpretation of the role of the female leader. Considering the increased acceptance of female intellectuals in Germany during this period, combined with the general emancipatory elements brought about in this field by the French Revolution, it may be argued that this perception of the female political leader is a reflection of wider social

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<sup>321</sup> Friedrich Schiller, "Maria Stuart", in: Schiller, *Sämtliche Werke in zehn Bänden*. Berliner Ausgabe. Hrsg. v. Hans-Günther Thalheim und einem Kollektiv von Mitarbeitern. Aufbau Verlag, Berlin und Weimar 1. Auflage 1984, Band 4, p. 408.

<sup>322</sup> Ludwig van Beethoven, *Fidelio. Oper in zwei Aufzügen*. Philipp Reclam jun., Stuttgart 1978, p. 35.

trends. This said, such tendencies were later to be reversed, the latter part of the century witnessing a return to the traditional notion of women's role in society, as reflected in the subsequent development of the "Luisen-Mythos".<sup>324</sup> This phenomenon should therefore not be viewed in isolation or from a purely 'female' perspective, but should rather be integrated as a valuable element within the wider debate on leadership during this period.

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<sup>323</sup> Schiller, "Maria Stuart", op.cit., p. 358.

<sup>324</sup> See Part II, Chapter 2ii.

## *Chapter Five*

### *Grabbe and the decontextualisation of political authority*

The parallels in the so-called 'positive' and 'negative' responses to Napoleon become particularly apparent in the literature of the late 1820s and early 1830s, when political opinion played an increasingly subordinate role to the admiration of the 'great man' in the light of the Restoration.

This phenomenon is reflected in Wilhelm Hauff's novella *Das Bild des Kaisers* (1827), which considers not only the Prussian, but also the southern German perspective on the Napoleonic era. Through his work Hauff provides an insight into the range of opinions on this matter, themselves dependent on the age, geographical location, political standpoint and personal experience of a number of protagonists. However, this range of opinions is ultimately transcended by general agreement on the greatness of Napoleon's individual personality.

Echoing the prediction made by Kleist in *Katechismus der Deutschen*, Hauff therefore confirms the similarities in the Germanic leadership ideal, and highlights the gradual convergence of these similarities over time:

“Wir sind noch nicht seine Nachwelt”, bemerkte Robert Willi. “Erst wenn alle Parteien, die persönliches Interesse aussprachen, von der Erde verschwunden sind, dann erst wird man mit klarem Auge richten.”<sup>325</sup>

In a further reflection of the convergence of opposing opinions, the work of Hauff's contemporary Grabbe, although representative of a different literary style, also shared thematic similarities with that of, at least to some extent, Hegel and Goethe and, in particular, Heine and Kleist. His reception of the French leader represents the

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<sup>325</sup> Wilhelm Hauff, “Das Bild des Kaisers”, in: Hauff, *Sämtliche Werke in drei Bänden*. Textredaktion und Anmerkungen von Sibylle von Steinsdorf. Mit einem Nachwort und Zeittafel von Helmut Koopman. Winkler Verlag, München 1970. 2. Band - Märchen, Novellen, p. 714.



culmination, both thematically and chronologically, of the various tendencies identified to date as characteristic of the intellectual debate on leadership.

Like the work of his contemporary Heine, Grabbe's writings are representative of the "Genie- und Heroenkult"<sup>326</sup> which found its source in the political dissatisfaction of the Restoration. Indeed, Grabbe was himself to refer, not without criticism, to the "Napoleono-Manie"<sup>327</sup> which characterised Germany during this period, of which his play *Napoleon oder die hundert Tage* (1831) provides, contrary to the belief of Wülfing, the most striking example.<sup>328</sup>

The drama presents a fictional account of Napoleon's return from exile to France and the one hundred days of power which he enjoyed prior to his ultimate defeat at Waterloo. It illustrates Grabbe's strong opposition to the Restoration and his idolisation of Napoleon, thus sharing many similarities with the work of Heine, as well as that of Goethe. However, fundamental differences between the work of these writers may be identified, which provide an indication of the development of the understanding of leadership as propagated in Germany, through until the 1830s.

In accordance with the traditional myth, Napoleon is portrayed as a military genius who, in an echo of the qualities attributed to him by Goethe, remains calm and focused in all circumstances.<sup>329</sup> He is credited with an iron will and the ability to achieve his goals, regardless of the consequences. This ruthless single-mindedness and the use of others for his own aims echoes Goethe's acknowledgement and toleration of the negative aspects of Napoleon's rule. *Napoleon oder die hundert Tage* does however reveal a barbaric glorification of violence and war which, although absent in

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<sup>326</sup> Schmidt, *Die Geschichte des Genie-Gedankens*, op. cit., Band 2, p. 71.

<sup>327</sup> Taken from a letter to his publisher Georg Ferdinand Kettmeil, dated 2.12.1827. Quote from Hans-Georg Werner, "Christian Dietrich Grabbe: *Napoleon oder die Hundert Tage*. Ein Drama in fünf Aufzügen", in: *Werkinterpretationen zur deutschen Literatur*. Unter Leitung von Horst Hartmann. Volkseigener Verlag, Berlin 1986, p. 109 (107-122).

<sup>328</sup> Wülfing: "Grabbes Drama, das 1831 im Druck erscheint und erst 1868 uraufgeführt wird, kann hier vernachlässigt werden, weil es den Korse fernab aller Mythisierungen zeigt". (Wülfing/Bruns/Parr, op. cit., p. 42).

<sup>329</sup> Christian Dietrich Grabbe, "Napoleon oder die hundert Tage", in: Grabbe, *Werke*. Hrsg. v. Roy C. Cowen. Carl Hanser Verlag, München 1977. Zweiter Band - Dramen II, Gedichte, Prosa, p. 118, IV/6 (7 - 161).

the work of Goethe and Heine, echoes the ideal portrayed by Kleist in, amongst other works, *Katechismus der Deutschen*.

Continuing the recurrent admiration of the "Taten-Genie", Grabbe, through the voice of Napoleon, describes the Emperor of the French as "ein anderer Prometheus"<sup>330</sup> and criticises the Restoration with the words: "Statt an Thaten zehrt man jetzt an Erinnerungen!".<sup>331</sup> In contrast, a volunteer soldier and 'intellectual' from Berlin is mocked and shown to be afraid when faced with a true battle situation.<sup>332</sup> The superior value accorded to "Tat" is reiterated by a later reference to the "ewigen Geistesschlaf"<sup>333</sup> which Napoleon prophesies for Restoration Germany at the close of the play, thereby conveying the writer's own perception of contemporary society.

Grabbe's idolisation of the "Erderschütterer"<sup>334</sup> possesses mythical dimensions concurrent with the work of his intellectual contemporaries and predecessors. Reference is made to Napoleon's "Größe"<sup>335</sup> and his "Allmacht",<sup>336</sup> his power to single-handedly determine the fate of Europe.<sup>337</sup> Grabbe uses the imagery of nature to convey Napoleon's own belief in his indomitable and almost supernatural force, which may be defeated only by fate itself:

Napoleon. Napoleon aber kann nicht flüchten, kann sich nicht verstecken. Ist er nicht vernichtet, oder nicht behütet wie Feuer, so stürzt Europa zürnend oder liebend ihm nach.<sup>338</sup>

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<sup>330</sup> Ibid., p. 38, I/4.

<sup>331</sup> Ibid., p. 37, I/4. The importance of the ability to take action and implement decisions is stressed during a conversation between Hortense and Napoleon, in which Hortense praises Bertrand: "Hortense. Wenn der Mann all das behält und expediert, was du ihm eben und jede Stunde aufträgst, so ist er ein Genie, fast größer als du selbst! Napoleon. Käm' es auf das bloße Talent, und nicht auf die Thatkraft, durch welche es in Bewegung gesetzt wird, so wäre Berthier statt meiner Kaiser der Franzosen." (Ibid., p. 97, IV/3).

<sup>332</sup> Ibid., IV/4.

<sup>333</sup> Ibid., p. 159, V/7.

<sup>334</sup> Ibid., p. 38, I/4.

<sup>335</sup> Ibid., p. 15, I/1.

<sup>336</sup> Ibid., p. 30, I/3.

<sup>337</sup> See for example Ibid., p. 38, I/4.; Ibid., p. 84, III/3.

<sup>338</sup> Ibid., p. 95, IV/2.

He also employs a degree of religious imagery when describing the popular perception of Napoleon, described by an officer of the *Grande Armée* as “ein Gott”.<sup>339</sup> However, Napoleon’s success is attributed to his own genius as opposed to any higher or divine will. This reflects a continuation of the opinions expressed by Goethe and Heine, reflecting Schmidt’s observation that for Grabbe Napoleon represented a substitute for God:

Grabbe radikalisiert [...] eine schon längst sich anbahnende Entwicklung. Denn nicht umsonst kommt das Genie als Inbegriff der großen schöpferischen Individualität im 18. Jahrhundert zu Ehren, gerade in dem Moment, in dem sich die religiösen Verankerungen lösen. Der Geniekult hat in vielerlei Hinsicht die Funktion eines Gottes-Ersatzes.<sup>340</sup>

This is further reflected during a conversation between the Duchess of Angouleme and the French King, in which the Duchess attempts to justify her Christian faith: “Wo es an Menschen fehlt, da erscheint er!”<sup>341</sup> However, as the conversation continues the King’s description of the “gewaltige Walten der Vorsehung”<sup>342</sup> gradually reveals itself, in an echo of Hegelian theory, to be Napoleon himself: “Und mit seinem ruhmestrunkenen, nie gesättigten Auge sah Er in ihnen [his troops] nur die Zeichen seiner Allmacht”.<sup>343</sup> In the light of this the statement made by the Duchess “Oheim, ich lernt’ ihn kennen, dort in dem Tempel, Tempel, ja des Abgrundes der Revolution”<sup>344</sup> becomes ambiguous, and could mean not simply that God came to her in her hour of need, but that Napoleon, a substitute god, rose up and tamed the Revolution, thereby rescuing the people.

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<sup>339</sup> Ibid., p. 43, 1/4.

<sup>340</sup> Schmidt, *Die Geschichte des Genie-Gedankens*, op. cit., Band 2, p. 73. A. J. P. Taylor expressed a similar point of view, attributing the readiness of the people to accept Napoleon as their saviour as the result of a loss of faith in religion: “Traditional ideas and institutions had lost their force. Losing faith in God, men sought a human saviour. The first of these human gods was Napoleon, and the condition of his fame was the confident readiness to believe the impossible”. (A. J. P. Taylor, *Europe: Grandeur and Decline*. Penguin, England 1967 [1950], p. 14).

<sup>341</sup> Grabbe, “Napoleon oder die hundert Tage”, op.cit., p. 29, 1/3.

<sup>342</sup> Ibid., p. 30, 1/3.

<sup>343</sup> Ibid.

<sup>344</sup> Ibid., p. 29, 1/3.

Schmidt refers to this personal legitimisation as “genialischer Immoralismus”,<sup>345</sup> the notion that an individual’s characteristics themselves justify their actions. These could then be used to vindicate any form of authoritarian or dictatorial behaviour: “Ideologisierung des Genie-Denkens im Sinne eines Freibriefs für autoritäre Willkür und phantastische Ich-Sucht”.<sup>346</sup> With specific reference to Grabbe, Schmidt outlines the complete negation of a higher political, or indeed spiritual, ideology:

Nicht mehr die Autorität eines Gedankens, einer Idee, einer wie auch immer beschaffenen überpersönlichen Verpflichtung kennt er, sondern nur noch die Autorität des großen Individuums *an sich*. Er huldigt einer blindwütig autoritären Ideologie.<sup>347</sup>

As such Grabbe decontextualises the justification given for violent and immoral action by Kleist, namely the defeat of the enemy in the name of freedom and the fatherland.

Grabbe was opposed to feudalism and regarded Napoleon as the “Sohn der Revolution”,<sup>348</sup> the achievements of which had been shattered by the Restoration. Consequently the Bourbons are portrayed in the play as weak and unfit to govern, dynastic legitimisation being rejected in favour of the legitimacy of the sword: “Schlachtenblut, nicht Weiberblut macht adlig”.<sup>349</sup> This conviction is further emphasised by the contrast, also evident in *Das Buch Le Grand*, between the royal family and Napoleon.

Grabbe was however conscious of the self-oriented nature of the Napoleonic regime, in which political ideologies remained of at most secondary importance to the personal success of the leader himself, as ironically revealed by the general Cambronne:

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<sup>345</sup> Schmidt, *Die Geschichte des Genie-Gedankens*, op. cit., Band 1, p. 319.

<sup>346</sup> Ibid.

<sup>347</sup> Ibid., Band 2, p. 73.

<sup>348</sup> Grabbe, “Napoleon oder die hundert Tage”, op.cit., p. 44, I/4.

Cambronne. [...] "Liberal"? "Zeitgeist" - Die elende Kanonade von "Valmy" und das jämmerliche Tirailleurgefecht von "Jemappes"? - Wissen Sie, wo wir stehen? Unter den Waffen der *Grande Armée*. Da gibt es keinen anderen Liberalismus als Ihm zu gehorchen, keinen anderen Geist als den Seinigen, keine anderen Gefechte als die à la Cairo, Austerlitz, Jena und der Moskwa.<sup>350</sup>

The only true and legitimate cause therefore appears to be, in the eyes of Grabbe, the European hegemony of the one autocratic leader:

Napoleon. Gleichgewicht! Als ob man Völker abwägen und zählen könnte! Die Erde ist am glücklichsten, wenn das größte Volk das herrschendste ist, stark genug überall sich und seine Gesetze zu erhalten, und wer ist größer, als meine Franzosen? - Congreß zu Wien! Da streiten sie sich um den Mantel des Herrn, den sie hier am Kreuze wähen - mein Polen, mein Sachsen wird zertheilt, - Niemand wird von dem halben Bissen satt, ja, er wird Gift im Munde - Aber der Herr erstand! -- Europa, der kindisch gewordene Greis bedarf der Zuchtruhe, und was meinen Sie, St. P-le, wer könnte sie besser schwingen als Ich?<sup>351</sup>

Grabbe's work therefore constitutes the culmination of the growing tendency towards political decontextualisation, which may be understood in this context as the legitimisation of authority not through the political goals or values of an individual, but through the personal qualities and leadership style of the leader himself. Indeed, the works of Goethe and Heine may be regarded as a precursor to this purely personal legitimisation of leadership. Parallels may also be drawn with the Hegelian accordance of an absolute right to the world-historic individuals, although this notion was based on the powers of insight revealed to them by the 'Weltgeist', as opposed to their own personal qualities. It was this focus on the charismatic "Führer", leading to the

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<sup>349</sup> Ibid., p. 21, I/1.

<sup>350</sup> Ibid., p. 116f, IV/6.

submission of the masses to the “Willens-Absolutismus”<sup>352</sup> of the individual, which led the National Socialists to use and manipulate Grabbe’s work in order to glorify their own leader, portraying the writer as an early advocate of the “Führerprinzip” and opponent of the mediocrity of bourgeois society.<sup>353</sup>

Associated with this perception is Grabbe’s portrayal of the relationship between the heroic individual and the masses, which has been the subject of much academic discussion, particularly during the post-war period.<sup>354</sup> In his historical plays Grabbe tends to focus solely on the figure of the exceptional individual, thereby reducing the masses simply to a vehicle to aid the heroic leaders in the realisation of their aims. The sole influence of the people is to exaggerate the greatness of the individual hero through their own mediocrity, as is also the role of the *Grande Armée*.<sup>355</sup> According to Grabbe, Napoleon was prepared to present himself as the people’s saviour, whilst in reality treating the masses with condescension.<sup>356</sup>

Throughout the play the crowds in Paris are portrayed as fickle and easy to manipulate, devoid of political opinions, but prepared to support whoever is in command or able to use them to his advantage. This is effectively illustrated with great irony in Act III, Scene 1, in which a tailor incites a riot simply by staring at the pavement. Any display of emotion is therefore dismissed as mere “augenblickliche Aufwallung”.<sup>357</sup>

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<sup>351</sup> Ibid., p. 41, I/4.

<sup>352</sup> Herbert Kaiser, “Hundert Tage Napoleon oder Das goldene Zeitalter der Willensherrschaft. Zu Grabbes ‘Napoleon oder die Hundert Tage’”, in: *Geschichte als Schauspiel*. Hrsg. v. Walter Hinck. Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt am Main 1981, p. 202 (197-209).

<sup>353</sup> See Schmidt, *Die Geschichte des Genie-Gedankens*, op. cit., Band 2, p. 68f. The interpretation of Grabbe’s work as an ideological forerunner to National Socialist ideology is supported by, amongst others, Herbert Kaiser and Klaus Lindemann and Rainer Zons, who view Grabbe’s leadership ideal as a precursor to that advocated by, in particular, Nietzsche. (See Kaiser, op.cit. and Klaus Lindemann/Rainer Zons, “La marmotte - Über Grabbes ‘Napoleon oder die Hundert Tage’”, in: *Grabbes Gegenentwürfe. Neue Deutungen seiner Dramen*. Zum 150 Todesjahr Christian Dietrich Grabbes. Hrsg. v. Winfried Freund. Wilhelm Fink Verlag, München 1986, p. 59-81).

<sup>354</sup> See Heidemarie Oehm, “Geschichte und Individualität in Grabbes Drama ‘Napoleon oder die Hundert Tage’”, in: *Wirkendes Wort. Deutsche Sprache und Literatur in Forschung und Lehre*. 42 (1992), p. 43 (43-55).

<sup>355</sup> See Grabbe, “Napoleon oder die Hundert Tage”, op.cit., p. 41, I/4.

<sup>356</sup> See Ibid., p. 92f, IV/1.

<sup>357</sup> Ibid., p. 21, I/1.

David Horton does however point out the need to distinguish between the civilian masses and the role of the army in this context, as the *Grande Armée* is idealised by Grabbe as a united and heroic force.<sup>358</sup> This said, the soldiers still display blind obedience to their leader, reflecting not the development of their own political opinions, but rather allegiance to an individual, the battleground serving, in a glorification of war, “als utopischer Ort der heroischen oder patriotischen Erhöhung des Menschen”.<sup>359</sup>

However, despite Grabbe’s political trivialisation of the masses, they also represent a strong historical force and serve to exaggerate the greatness of Napoleon, who in fact appears the product of the relative weakness of his contemporaries, as suggested by Gentz at the beginning of the century. When told by Bertrand to leave his exile and return to seize power in France, Napoleon himself replies: “Ist die Canaille es werth? Ist sie nicht zu klein, um Größe zu fassen? Weil sie so niedrig war, ward ich so riesenhaft”.<sup>360</sup>

This therefore modifies the allusions made throughout the play to Napoleon’s “Größe”, particularly when combined with the leader’s tendency to raise himself to a legendary status and consequently to blame the people for his own failure: “Wie undankbar die Welt, das elende, schlechte Scheusal!”.<sup>361</sup> The responsibility for the Wars of Liberation is therefore laid at the feet of either fate or the Congress of Vienna, thus removing any degree of blame from Napoleon himself. This evokes the Hegelian theory, supported by Goethe, that Napoleon’s actions were part of a mission over which he had no control:

Napoleon. Ist’s nun meine Schuld, daß ich mit einem  
unermeßlichen, weit und weiter sich ausdehnenden Flammendiadem,

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<sup>358</sup> David Horton, “‘Die Menge ist eine Bestie’: The Role of the Masses in Grabbe’s Dramas”, in: *German Life and Letters. A Quarterly Review*. Vol. 35 (1981-82), p. 14-27. See also Oehm, op.cit., p. 50.

<sup>359</sup> Manfred Schneider, *Destruktion und Utopische Gemeinschaft. Zur Thematik und Dramaturgie des Heroischen im Werke Christian Dietrich Grabbes*. Athenäum Verlag, Frankfurt am Main 1973, p. 292.

<sup>360</sup> Grabbe, “Napoleon oder die hundert Tage”, op.cit., p. 38, I/4.

<sup>361</sup> Ibid., p. 37f, I/4.

wie dieses, meine Stirn schmücken muß? Oder ist es das trübselige Fünkchen, die elende Ächtungsacte von Wien, welche diesen Weltbrand veranlaßt?<sup>362</sup>

The author therefore, despite his apotheosis of the French leader and the apparent absence of any moral judgement, does, like Goethe, highlight the dangers of self-aggrandisement and the limitations of the power of the individual. Speaking of his desire to establish a new era, Grabbe's Napoleon himself acknowledges such limitations: "Ich hielt mich zu stark, und hoffte sie selbst schaffen zu können".<sup>363</sup>

Indeed, the failure of the individual in the face of history is viewed by many commentators as the central issue of *Napoleon oder die hundert Tage*.<sup>364</sup> Grabbe had himself described Napoleon as "nur das Fähnlein an der Maste [der Revolution]",<sup>365</sup> and his extreme glorification of the heroism of the French leader serves to further highlight his relative weakness when compared to the power of history and ideas.

It is as a result of this failure of the essentially anachronistic individual, himself overcome by the Zeitgeist, that Görner warns against the tendency to draw parallels between Grabbe's interpretation of leadership and the National Socialist "Führerprinzip".<sup>366</sup> This is confirmed by Grabbe's own doubts concerning the future of the era of heroism, as expressed in an 1830 review of the correspondence between Schiller and Goethe:

Mit Napoleons Ende ward es mit der Welt, als wäre sie ein auserlesenes Buch, und wir ständen, aus ihr hinausgeworfen, als die Leser davor, und repetierten und überlegten das Geschehene.<sup>367</sup>

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<sup>362</sup> Ibid., p. 122, IV/6.

<sup>363</sup> Ibid., p. 38, I/4.

<sup>364</sup> See for example Werner, op.cit., Schneider, op.cit. and Oehm op.cit.

<sup>365</sup> Quote from Werner, op.cit., p. 109.

<sup>366</sup> See Görner, *Grenzgänger*, op.cit., p. 143-155.

<sup>367</sup> Quote from Ibid., p. 154.



As such, parallels may be drawn with the work of Grabbe's friend and contemporary Immermann, whose satirical epic *Tulifantchen* (1830) constitutes both a parody of the heroic epic and a satire of contemporary society in its various manifestations.<sup>368</sup> Like Grabbe, Immermann questions the influence of the great personality in relation to the powerful forces of history,<sup>369</sup> and his miniature hero is representative of the author's perception of the "Mittelmäßigkeit und Flachheit"<sup>370</sup> of contemporary Germany. In this respect Immermann also echoes the opinions of Heine, who himself critically reviewed his friend's work prior to its publication.<sup>371</sup> Describing his work as "Epos und Parodie des Epos zu gleicher Zeit",<sup>372</sup> Immermann considered *Tulifantchen* to be the only possible epic form in the "Zeit der Kleinen".<sup>373</sup>

Despite such criticism, the need for a great leader to fill the vacuum created by the Restoration is highlighted by Immermann and indeed remains a focal point of Grabbe's play, a tyrannical embodiment of the Hegelian "Weltgeist" being preferable to the mediocrity of the contemporary era. The following statement made by Napoleon at the end of the play, following his defeat at Waterloo, summarises this conviction, revealing the fundamental elements of Grabbe's leadership ideal and his opposition to diplomacy and intellectualism in favour of military glory:

Napoleon. Da stürzen die feindlichen Truppen siegjubelnd heran,  
wähnen die Tyrannei vertrieben, den ewigen Frieden erobert, die  
goldne Zeit rückgeführt zu haben - Die Armen! Statt eines großen  
Tyrannen, wie sie mich zu nennen belieben, werden sie bald  
Tausend kleine besitzen - statt ihnen ewigen Frieden zu geben, wird  
man sie in einen ewigen Geistesschlaf einzulullen versuchen, - statt  
der goldnen Zeit, wird eine sehr irdene, zerbröckliche kommen, voll

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<sup>368</sup> For further details on the satirical aspects of the work see Peter Hasubeck, *Karl Lebrecht Immermann. Ein Dichter zwischen Romantik und Realismus*. Böhlau Verlag, Köln 1996, p. 82-99.

<sup>369</sup> See *Ibid.*, p. 97.

<sup>370</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>371</sup> See *Ibid.*, p. 83ff.

<sup>372</sup> Quote from *Ibid.*, p. 94.

<sup>373</sup> Karl Immermann, "Tulifantchen in drei Gesängen", in: Immermann, *Werke in Fünf Bänden*. Hrsg. v. Benno von Wiese. Unter Mitarbeit von H. Asbeck *et al.* Athenäum Verlag, Frankfurt am Main 1971. Band 1, p. 422 (409-506).

Halbheit, albernen Lugs und Tandes, - von gewaltigen Schlachttaten und Heroen wird man freilich nichts hören, desto mehr aber von diplomatischen Assembleen, Konvenienzbesuchen hoher Häupter, von Komödianten, Geigenspielern und Opernhuren - bis der Weltgeist ersteht, an die Schleusern rührt, hinter denen die Wogen der Revolution und meines Kaisertums lauern, und sie von ihnen aufbrechen läßt, daß die Lücke gefüllt werde, welche nach meinem Austritt zurückbleibt.<sup>374</sup>

Through the portrayal of Napoleon as a powerful leader and quasi-religious redeemer, combined with the glorification of violence, the decontextualisation of political authority and the longing for a future hero, the work of Grabbe represents the radical culmination of a trend within the understanding of leadership which had gradually been developing amongst both Napoleon's adherents and his enemies.

Grabbe does indeed question the ultimate power of the individual, and his apparent greatness is clearly made relative by the weakness of others. As a result *Napoleon oder die hundert Tage* may, as Görner suggests, be interpreted not as an ideological precursor to fascism, but rather as a warning of the dangers of "Maßlosigkeit" and a quest for the ethical and moral boundaries within which a genius may operate,<sup>375</sup> as initially sought by Hölderlin and also referred to by Immermann in *Tulifantchen*. However, Grabbe's Napoleon remains "die Inkarnation des Genie-Gedankens"<sup>376</sup> as it

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<sup>374</sup> Grabbe, "Napoleon oder die hundert Tage", op.cit., p. 159, V/7. This argument is supported by the following conversation which takes place between Fouché and Carnot, following the news that Napoleon has returned to France:

"Fouché. Die Bourbons müssen fort mit ihrer alten Zeit, - sie haben bewiesen, daß sie nichts Neues lernen können, und - erschrik nicht, Republicaner - Bonaparte muß zurück.

Carnot. Bonaparte? Weißt du, was du sagst? Der vertilgte die Freiheit mehr als alle Tyrannen von Valois und Bourbon. [...]

Fouché. Gewiß. Aber wir bedürfen irgend eines neuen Menschen an der Spitze, und können Napoleon nicht übergeh'n". (Ibid., p. 64, II/5).

This passage refers to the need felt for a new leader to replace the Bourbons and further illustrates the importance of the individual personality of the leader above and beyond specific policies - here the restriction of freedom - which he introduced. It may however also be interpreted as Grabbe's comment on the need for a new leader of Napoleonic proportions to take over and crush the Restoration in 1830s Germany.

<sup>375</sup> Görner, *Grenzgänger*, op. cit., p. 143-155.

<sup>376</sup> Oehm, op.cit., p. 45.

was understood in early nineteenth century Germany, an interpretation which was to continue to be of influence in the forthcoming period.

## *Part II: Emancipation from the myth*

### *Introduction: A new era - The mid to late nineteenth century.*

The poetic quest for leadership which dominated the work of Hölderlin and Günderröde at the beginning of the nineteenth century was therefore gradually subsumed by the common desire, awakened by Napoleon, for a great military and political leader. However, the actual political ideology which had previously served as the legitimisation of authority in the post revolutionary era was replaced by a charismatic justification based on the personal qualities of the perceived genius.

Consequently, the continued need for spiritual guidance led, in a period characterised by a loss of faith in traditional religion, to the secularisation of the meaning of leadership, according to which those qualities initially sought in a divine mediator were ascribed to the political leader. The Hölderlinian interpretation of genius, in which the individual personality is driven by fate and consequently in danger of transgressing the moral and ethical code prescribed by the divinity, was therefore expanded upon, leading to the liberation of the political leader from all moral constraints, as expressed in its most extreme form in the work of both Grabbe and Kleist.

Three main elements may therefore be identified within the discussion on leadership during this period: political and military authority; spiritual guidance; and intellectual leadership, as provided in particular by the "christlich-deutsche Tischgesellschaft". The latter element was however driven by essentially political motives, and "Geist" itself was frequently contrasted with "Tat", perceived as a fundamental characteristic of genius and hence leadership as a whole. It was the notion of a political figure which dominated discussion and formed the basis of the leadership myth, although the ideology itself was, as explained, largely decontextualised.

Both the positive and the negative response to the French leader therefore produced a mythical discourse centred on the Napoleonic ideal. Despite an apparent dichotomy

between the two responses, analysis reveals that each group sought similar leadership qualities, the parallels becoming increasingly apparent following Napoleon's death and the dynastic Restoration in Germany. By the 1830s dissatisfaction with contemporary rulers had largely transcended political differences, leaving the common desire for one almighty and charismatic leader, able to break with the political status quo and unite Germany, thereby realising the myth which had existed since the turn of the century.

A similar situation was identifiable in neighbouring France, where a mythical cult had been propagated, particularly after Napoleon's death, to which many of the country's contemporary writers contributed, amongst them Béranger, Victor Hugo, Balzac and, notably in his novels *La Chartreuse de Parme* and *Le Rouge et le Noir* as well as in his biographical work *La Vie de Napoléon*, Stendhal.<sup>1</sup> This phenomenon, as was the case in Germany, reflected dissatisfaction with the leadership provided by the restoration of the Bourbons.

The French therefore sought an individual who would break away from this era, for whom Napoleon formed the model, as indicated by Goethe who, in 1831, predicted that France would not rest until another hero ruled over them:

Das Beispiel von Napoleon hat besonders in den jungen Leuten in Frankreich, die unter jenem Helden heraufwuchsen, den Egoismus aufgeregt, und sie werden nicht eher ruhen, als bis wieder ein großer Despot unter ihnen aufsteht.<sup>2</sup>

This desire was fulfilled by the rise to the head of the nation of Napoleon's nephew Louis Napoleon Bonaparte, elected President of France in 1848 and named Emperor in the year following his *coup d'état* of 1851. Louis owed much of his success to the Napoleonic myth, as referred to by Marx, who believed that the election of the man

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<sup>1</sup> For further details and analysis of the reaction of the French writers to Napoleon see Geyl, op.cit., p. 19-33. This subject is also examined by Reinhold R. Grimm, "Der Napoleon-Mythos in der französischen Romantik", in: *Napoleon kam nicht nur bis Waterloo. Die Spur des gestürzten Giganten in Literatur und Sprache, Kunst und Karikatur*. Hrsg. v. Heide N. Rohloff. Haag und Herchen Verlag, Frankfurt am Main 1992, p. 146-162.

<sup>2</sup> Eckermann, op. cit., B. 2, p. 50.

whom he deemed to be a mere "Karikatur"<sup>3</sup> of the first Emperor would prove to be the downfall of the myth: "Aber wenn der Kaisermantel endlich auf die Schultern des Louis Bonaparte fällt, wird das eiserne Standbild Napoleons von der Höhe der Vendômesäule herabstürzen".<sup>4</sup> However, although the people of France were able to realise - and if Marx is to be believed, ultimately shatter - the Napoleonic myth in the form of his nephew, this was not possible in Germany, where the desire for such a leader remained strong.

The second part of this study will trace the progression of the leadership debate and its constituent elements from its position in 1830s Germany throughout the latter part of the nineteenth century. This period witnessed, in addition to the rise to power of Napoleon III in France, the Revolution of 1848, which itself raised important constitutional issues and consequently provided an additional stimulus to the ongoing debate. This section will be divided into four chapters, which will examine predominantly the work of Wagner, Carlyle, Bismarck and Burckhardt and Nietzsche respectively. Each figure made a fundamental contribution to both the political and intellectual discussion of leadership and influenced both contemporary and future perceptions of the concept.

The British intellectual Thomas Carlyle is of particular importance within this context due to his close links with German thought and the influential effect which the publication of his lectures *On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History* (1840) exercised in Germany. Carlyle's work provided a fresh impetus to the discussion on leadership in Restoration Germany, in many ways serving as both a summary and a further development of the leadership ideal as it had progressed in the wake of the Napoleon phenomenon.

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<sup>3</sup> Karl Marx, "Der 18. Brumaire des Louis Bonaparte", in: *Marx / Engels Gesamtausgabe*. Hrsg. v. Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus beim Zentralkomitee der Kommunistischen Partei der Sowjetunion und v. Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus beim Zentralkomitee der Sozialistischen Einheitspartei Deutschlands. Dietz Verlag, Berlin 1985. Erste Abteilung. Werke. Artikel. Entwürfe. Band II. Juli 1851-Dez. 1852, p. 96 (96-189).

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 189.

Carlyle's perception of the ideal leader for contemporary Germany and Europe was the so-called "Iron Chancellor". An examination of the Bismarckian regime is therefore fundamental to this part of the analysis, enabling the identification of links between intellectual theory and political reality. Furthermore, Bismarck, as previously Napoleon I, was highly influential in shaping both the political and intellectual culture of the epoch in question, and thus directly influenced the future course of the reflection on leadership.

Positive and negative responses may be observed with regard to the "System Bismarck", spanning both the political and the intellectual spectrum. At the centre of the intellectual reception was the work of Burckhardt and Nietzsche, who both, although in different ways, critically analysed the understanding of greatness epitomised by the Bismarckian regime. Through the emphasis which they placed on the philosophical guidance of autonomous individuals, removed from the sphere of "Zeitpolitik", they added a further dimension to the late nineteenth century debate.

A further prominent critic of Bismarck became Richard Wagner, whose concept of leadership evolved over the period in question, undergoing a fundamental shift of emphasis. His work therefore forms a link between the early nineteenth century discussion and its subsequent development in the light of changing political circumstances, and will consequently be the first focus of examination.

## *Chapter One*

### *Continuity and Change: Wagner's revival of the Spiritual through the Aesthetic*

The operatic and theoretical work of Richard Wagner constitutes an important development in the leadership debate of the mid to late nineteenth century. It provides a clear link with the traditional "Heroen-Kult" arising from the reaction to Napoleon, revealing similarities with both the positive and negative elements of this phenomenon and thus acting as a synthesis of the hitherto formed mosaic. However, Wagner was able to break with the mythical aspect of this theory of leadership and to add a new conceptual dimension through the importance placed on the role of the aesthetic and the progressive return to the quest for spiritual guidance, albeit within a temporal context. A comparison of one of his earliest compositions, *Rienzi*, with the final "Musikdrama" *Parsifal*, reveals the elements of continuity and change inherent in Wagner's interpretation of leadership. These two operas shall be examined as they are most directly concerned with the concept and reflect, due to the time period in which they were written, Wagner's changing perception of it.

Wagner's early 'grand opéra' *Rienzi*, completed in 1840 and first performed in 1842, draws largely from the novel by Bulwer-Lytton concerning the fourteenth century Italian political figure Cola di Rienzo, whose revolt against the aristocracy accorded him self-declared power over the newly established democracy in Rome, before involvement in political intrigue and consequent loss of popular support led to his assassination. In his opera Wagner highlights the need for and rise of the charismatic leader, whilst also focusing on the weaknesses and inherent dangers of the personal legitimisation of authority.

As stated above, a number of parallels may be drawn between Wagner's understanding of leadership as presented in *Rienzi* and the notion which had evolved during the Napoleonic era. Although Wagner makes no direct reference within the opera to Napoleon I, and indeed later came to criticise the former Emperor as an



example of the contemporary individualisation of politics,<sup>5</sup> he nevertheless shares the need expressed by both supporters and opponents of Napoleon for a new leader figure, capable of mobilising the people and breaking with the Reformation.

Rienzi is the embodiment of the archetypal charismatic figure who revolts against the aristocracy and the Church in the name of the people, thus rejecting dynastic and institutionalised authority in favour of personal legitimisation. Breaking with the apparent tyranny of traditional sources of leadership, he unites the 'fatherland', declaring himself "Volkstribun" and granting some democratic power to the people. By retaining an autonomous position above and beyond the legislative running of day-to-day politics he is able to present himself as a figurehead whilst avoiding the inevitable difficulties associated with government.

Like Grabbe, Wagner portrays the people as fickle and easy to manipulate, a vehicle for the individual, as is demonstrated by the ability of Orsini and Baroncelli to incite mass revolt against Rienzi. Indeed, at the close of the opera it is intimated that Baroncelli may adopt the role of popular leader following Rienzi's death. Without such a leader the people fall prey to chaos and resignation, aware that action must be taken but unable to realise this insight, as observed by Colonna:

Der Pöbel, pah!

Rienzi ist's, der ihn zu Rittern macht; -

Nimm ihm Rienzi, und er ist, was er war.<sup>6</sup>

However, rather than trivialising their position, Wagner nevertheless emphasises the force of the masses within the revolutionary political arena, demonstrating that ultimately it is they, as opposed to divine intervention or the natural elements, who determine the fate of the 'hero'; without popular support Rienzi is doomed to failure.

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<sup>5</sup> See Richard Wagner, "Flüchtige Aufzeichnung einzelner Gedanken zu einem größeren Aufsätze: Das Künstlertum der Zukunft", (1849), in: Richard Wagner, *Dichtungen und Schriften. Jubiläumsausgabe in zehn Bänden*. Hrsg. v. Dieter Borchmeyer. Insel Verlag, Frankfurt am Main 1983. Band 5, Frühe Prosa und Revolutionstraktate, p. 259 (242-261).

<sup>6</sup> Richard Wagner, "Rienzi der letzte der Tribunen", in: Richard Wagner, *Dichtungen und Schriften*, op. cit., Band 1, Frühe Opern, p. 162 (145-195).

In this respect Wagner displays a more rational approach to charismatic leadership than his predecessors, even anticipating Max Weber in his analysis of the phenomenon.<sup>7</sup> This is further demonstrated by Wagner's decision to highlight the weaknesses of personal legitimisation, in particular the tendency of the individual, once in possession of power, to overestimate his own greatness: Rienzi initially rejects sovereign rights in favour of democracy, yet comes to view the success of the system as entirely dependent upon his own person. This self-aggrandisement, stressed as a particular danger by Goethe and Grabbe and later to be highlighted by Nietzsche, is reinforced by Rienzi's attempts, having united Italy, to add the Germanic principalities to his realm, thus inciting the wrath of the German Kaiser and the papacy.

A further weakness of charismatic leadership is highlighted through the involvement of the once autonomous leader in day-to-day politics and particularist issues: by granting mercy to Colonna and Orsini, Rienzi disobeys the law which he created in the name of the people. As Wagner demonstrates, this arises inevitably out of the post-revolutionary need for stability and institutionalisation, and is also the result of the intervention of personal matters, in this instance Orsini's love for Irene, in state politics.

This said, Wagner's reservations concerning the durability of charismatic authority do not constitute a dismissal of the "Heroen-Kult" of the early nineteenth century. Despite a more rational approach to the phenomenon, he nevertheless retains a strong element of secularised apotheosis within the portrayal of the leader figure, as is exemplified in the emotional appeal made by Rienzi, God's "Streiter",<sup>8</sup> to his divine "Herr und Vater".<sup>9</sup> Udo Bermbach highlights the revolutionary leader's belief in his God-given mission, which forms the basis of both his own convictions and his popular

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<sup>7</sup> See Weber, "Politik als Beruf" op. cit., and Weber's further discussion of "charismatische Herrschaft" as referred to in the introduction to this study. See also Udo Bermbach, *Der Wahn des Gesamtkunstwerks. Richard Wagners politisch-ästhetische Utopie*. Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, Frankfurt am Main 1994, p. 44ff.

<sup>8</sup> Richard Wagner, "Rienzi der letzte der Tribunen", op. cit., p. 176.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 189f.

support, reaching a climax in the aforementioned scene: "Die Revolution inszeniert ihre personale Apotheose, der charismatische Führer sakralisiert sich selbst".<sup>10</sup>

Despite his limitations and failings Rienzi continues to be portrayed in a heroic light, defending the interests of Rome and its people whilst being defeated by treason. Although the continued success of such a figure is questioned, Wagner nevertheless makes clear that he is necessary in order to mobilise the masses and hence effectuate social and political change; once he has been defeated tyranny returns to Rome, as predicted by Grabbe with regard to the overthrow of Napoleon.

The widespread popularity of *Rienzi* and associated literature<sup>11</sup> demonstrates, the musical appeal of the 'grand opéra' aside, the general mood of the time, which was pervaded by a longing for a heroic leader and the belief in 'great men'. Indeed, Thomas Mann was later to describe the nineteenth century, of which for him Wagner constituted the epitome, as "ein Wald von großen Männern".<sup>12</sup> The opera was later to be criticised, not least as a result of its association with Hitler and its reputed influence over his power related aspirations,<sup>13</sup> and is frequently dismissed as "the last of what have been widely and rightly agreed to be his juvenilia".<sup>14</sup> Wagner himself was one of the first to critically assess his early work, although this was carried out from a largely dramatological perspective as opposed to a subject oriented one.<sup>15</sup>

Despite such criticism it remains the case that *Rienzi* highlights two particular aspects of Wagner's understanding of leadership which were to continue to form a fundamental element of his later interpretations of this concept. Firstly, the

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<sup>10</sup> Bermbach, op. cit., p. 44.

<sup>11</sup> See John Deathridge, *Wagner's 'Rienzi'. A reappraisal based on a study of the sketches and drafts*. Clarendon Press, Oxford 1977, p. 21f.

<sup>12</sup> Thomas Mann, "Leiden und Größe Richard Wagners" (April 1933), in: Thomas Mann, *Wagner und unsere Zeit. Aufsätze, Betrachtungen, Briefe*. Hrsg. v. Erika Mann. Mit einem Geleitwort von Willi Schuh. Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, Frankfurt am Main 1983, p. 64 [63-121]).

<sup>13</sup> For further details on Hitler's praise of *Rienzi* see Deathridge, op.cit., p. 1-12.

<sup>14</sup> Michael Tanner, *Wagner*. Harper Collins Publishers, London 1996, p. 34.

<sup>15</sup> In "Eine Mitteilung an meine Freunde" (1851) Wagner explains his enthusiasm for the figure of Rienzi, whilst acknowledging that such material was not suitable for the later development of his dramatic works. (Richard Wagner, "Eine Mitteilung an meine Freunde" (1851), in: Richard Wagner, *Dichtungen und Schriften*, op. cit., Band 6. Reformschriften, 1849-1852, p. 228-231; 292ff [199-325]). See also Deathridge, op. cit., p. 3-6.

protagonist's revolt against the aristocracy and the corrupt power of the Church represents the composer's lack of faith in the ability of these two groups to provide the level of leadership which he perceived to be necessary. This is later reinforced in his revolutionary tracts, which link the composer with the revolutionary movements and ideals of the Vormärz period, reflecting his opposition to the aristocratic societal structure and the hypocrisy of the Church.<sup>16</sup>

Secondly, in conjunction with this rejection of institutionalised authority, the opera demonstrates Wagner's ideal of a great, quasi-divine, charismatic leader, whose role it is to mobilise the people and stimulate change. The combination of the above aspects may be observed in the tract entitled *Die Revolution* (1849), in which Wagner proclaims the coming of the goddess of revolution, the phenomenon itself being personified as a divine leader in the style of Rienzi.<sup>17</sup>

The importance of the individual figure who is both able to capture and dependent upon the power of the masses represents a duality in Wagner's understanding of leadership which is reiterated throughout his works, albeit in different forms. This suggests that Wagner has in many ways continued the leadership ideal formed in the course of the early nineteenth century, creating a synthesis of the different aspects which arose from it, that is to say the heroic ideal advocated by the supporters of Napoleon, combined with the need to consult and represent the masses, as emphasised by Napoleon's opponents, in particular Kleist. However, by failing to refer specifically to Napoleon, Wagner has transferred the leadership discussion onto a different plane, removing it from the mythical and historically oriented, almost resigned debate of the early nineteenth century and presenting the ideal as a realisable possibility, albeit with rational limitations.

The duality referred to above is demonstrated through Wagner's calls for a "Volkskönig", an idealised notion which merged dynastic legitimisation with the overthrow of the ruling aristocracy and democratic representation of the people. This

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<sup>16</sup> See in particular Richard Wagner, *Dichtungen und Schriften*, Band 5, op. cit., p. 211-311.

ideal, which enabled the synthesis of Wagner's political and social convictions with his belief in the need for and power of the individual leader figure, recalls amongst others Novalis' idealised conception of the monarchy, as well as Bettina von Arnim's more practical and politically oriented advocacy of the "Volkskönig".<sup>18</sup> Such notions were associated with contemporary left-wing thought, as seen in Karl Rosenkranz's notion of the "demokratische Monarchie", which in turn was linked to the "sozialen Königtum" advocated by, amongst others, Franz von Baader, Lorenz von Stein and Ferdinand Lasalle, developing into the charismatic leadership cult centred around the Rohmer brothers.<sup>19</sup>

The European dimension of this contemporary phenomenon is reflected in the successful stylisation of Louis Philippe as "le roi du peuple". His proclamation as "roi des Français" issued from the 1830 July Revolution, which temporarily strengthened liberal forces in neighbouring Germany, leading to heightened demands for constitutional reform. This echo effect was repeated in 1848 as a result of the February Revolution in France, although it was this uprising which ended the so-called July Monarchy.

Louis Philippe represented a compromise between republican and royalist forces, and in this respect parallels may be drawn between "le roi du juste milieu" and the German "Volkskönig" ideal. This is particularly true in the case of Bettina von Arnim who, supported by amongst others Theodor von Schön, Varnhagen von Ense, Nees von Esenbeck and Johann Jacoby, advocated a constitutional monarchy in the form of Friedrich Wilhelm IV. The romantic notion of harmony and direct co-operation between the King and the people was thus combined with plans for concrete political reform.<sup>20</sup> A clear distinction must however be made between the essentially plutocratic and bourgeois reign of Louis Philippe, which saw the repression of all

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<sup>17</sup> Richard Wagner, "Die Revolution" (1849), in: Richard Wagner, *Dichtungen und Schriften*, Band 5, op.cit., p. 234-241.

<sup>18</sup> See Hartwig Schultz, "Berliner und Wiepersdorfer Romantik", in: Härtl/Schultz (Hrsg.), op. cit., p. 20f (1-23).

<sup>19</sup> See Heinz Gollwitzer, "Der Cäsarismus Napoleons III. im Widerhall der öffentlichen Meinung Deutschlands", in: *Historische Zeitschrift*, Band 173 (1952), p. 23-75.

<sup>20</sup> See Ursula Püschel, "Die September-Briefe an Friedrich Wilhelm IV", in: Härtl/Schultz (Hrsg.), op. cit., p. 313-353.

opposition movements, and the utopian ideal advocated by, in particular, Wagner, in which an autonomous king unites the people in a meta-political community.

Wagner's "Volkskönig" ideal, introduced in the revolutionary tract *Wie verhalten sich republikanische Bestrebungen dem Königtum gegenüber?* (1848) and outlined in further detail in the essay *Über Staat und Religion* (1864), clearly shares a number of common elements with that of the charismatic figure epitomised by Rienzi and advocated by the early nineteenth century representatives of the "Heroen-Kult". The institutionalisation of the leader within the framework of a hereditary monarchy provides stability, the absence of which had proved dangerous in *Rienzi*, whilst the autonomous position prevents any involvement in day-to-day politics. Yet this dynastic structure is combined with the unconditional support of the people, which stems not from enforced obedience to the sovereign, but rather from his own power and charisma. This recalls both the personal legitimisation of power supported by Grabbe and the combined basis of the authority of Napoleon I as self-declared, hereditary Emperor.

An element of the politically oriented external "Heerführer und Eroberer"<sup>21</sup> remains within the traditional tasks of the sovereign, yet the "Volkskönig", in an echo of the "Luisen-Mythos", is able to see beyond such patriotic aims, his priorities being to represent and unite his subjects, assuring love, justice and mercy. This is enabled by his insight into the "wesentlichsten Grundphänomene alles Daseins",<sup>22</sup> which forms the basis of his "fast übermenschliche Stellung"<sup>23</sup> and hence his powerful appeal. Recalling the mediatory role attributed to the leader by, amongst others, Hölderlin and Heine, the Wagnerian king is able to convey this knowledge to the people, thus making it possible for them to see beyond the egotistical satisfaction of immediate needs towards the good of the community and "das Reinmenschliche" in humanity.

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<sup>21</sup> Richard Wagner, "Über Staat und Religion" (1864), in: Richard Wagner, *Dichtungen und Schriften*, op. cit., Band 8, Musikästhetik - Reformschriften (1854-1869), p. 235 (217-246).

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 244.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 243.

The transcendental qualities attributed to the King grant him a quasi-divine status which echoes the trend towards the secularisation of the leader in the early nineteenth century, as detailed in the preceding section. However, it also reflects the growing spiritual role of the Wagnerian leader, which was to become increasingly predominant as his work developed. Yet despite this shift towards the spiritual the apotheosised “große, wahrhaft edle Geist”,<sup>24</sup> in possession of psychological strength and insight beyond that of the ‘ordinary’ individual, clearly demonstrates that Wagner has not as a result abandoned the notion of the ‘great man’ initially portrayed in *Rienzi*.

The movement towards a more idealised, spiritual interpretation of the role of the leader is further evidenced by Wagner’s gradual abandonment of attempts at direct political intervention in favour of an increasingly indirect, aesthetic approach. Following the failure of the 1848/49 revolution Wagner’s understanding of the political became increasingly idealised and removed from contemporary pragmatic politics. In the so-called “Reformschriften”, in particular *Eine Mitteilung an meine Freunde* (1851), he denies any involvement in “Zeitpolitik”, criticising the political parties and arguing that he supported social revolution only where he felt that this would further his own aesthetic ideals.<sup>25</sup> This is further discussed in *Deutsche Kunst und deutsche Politik* (1867), in which the German ‘Geist’ is presented as of superior importance to political or national prestige, the role of the ‘Fürsten’ being to recognise this fact and consciously foster the cultural development which they had previously strangled.<sup>26</sup>

The predominance of the cultural and aesthetic within Wagner’s ‘Weltanschauung’ is reflected in an unpublished fragment, in which the composer draws a parallel between Berlioz’ control over the orchestra and Napoleon’s military command.<sup>27</sup> This may be considered an early example of Wagner’s perception of the artist as leader, being equal or superior to the politician or military general, as is supported by a quotation

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 244.

<sup>25</sup> Richard Wagner, “Eine Mitteilung an meine Freunde”, op. cit., p. 286ff.

<sup>26</sup> Richard Wagner, “Deutsche Kunst und deutsche Politik” (1867), in: Richard Wagner, *Dichtungen und Schriften*, Band 8, op. cit., p. 247-352.

<sup>27</sup> See Jacques Barzun, *Darwin, Marx, Wagner. Critique of a Heritage*. Doubleday Anchor Books, New York 1958 (1941), p. 267.

selected by Thomas Mann, in which Wagner reveals his opposition to the type of leadership hitherto advocated in the wake of the Napoleonic reception, which lacks any cultural or spiritual foundation:

Häßlich, kleine, gewaltsame Naturen, unersättlich - weil sie so gar nichts in sich haben und deshalb immer nur von außen in sich hineinfressen müssen. Gehe man mir mit diesen großen Männern! Da lobe ich mir Schopenhauers Wort: Nicht der Welteroberer, sondern der Weltüberwinder ist der Bewunderung wert! Gott soll mir diese 'gewaltigen' Naturen, diese Napoleone usw. vom Halse halten.<sup>28</sup>

This opposition to the 'great men', as understood within the political and military sphere, is demonstrated in Wagner's changing attitude towards Bismarck, whom the composer came to criticise due to the lack of culture or aesthetic focus within the newly formed German Reich, thus highlighting the fundamental differences between the attitudes and ideals of the two contemporary icons.<sup>29</sup>

The value placed by Wagner on the aesthetic over and above the political is further emphasised by the "Volkskönig", who through his stabilising effect enables the "freieren Entwicklung der geistigen Anlagen"<sup>30</sup> of the people, and for whom art represents the delusion necessary for coping with an insight into the fundamental forces and drives of life itself. For him art has become the "freundlichen Lebensheiland, der zwar nicht wirklich und völlig aus dem Leben hinausführt, dafür aber innerhalb des Lebens über dieses erhebt und es selbst uns als ein Spiel erscheinen läßt".<sup>31</sup>

This statement reveals the leadership role attributed by Wagner to art or, more specifically, a synthesis of the various art forms. In the early essays *Die Kunst und die*

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<sup>28</sup> Quote from Thomas Mann, "Leiden und Größe Richard Wagners", op. cit., p. 111f.

<sup>29</sup> See Part II, Chapter 2ii for further details on the relationship between the two figures.

<sup>30</sup> Richard Wagner, "Über Staat und Religion", op. cit., p. 223.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 245.



*Revolution* (1849) and *Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft* (1849), as well as in the notes made for *Das Künstlertum der Zukunft* (1848), Wagner outlined his belief in the importance of art as a revolutionary force, the basic tenets of which he was to retain and expand upon throughout the rest of his writings. Art was to combine with social revolution in order to bring about both a reassessment of the purpose of the arts in modern society and, as a consequence, social and political change. Through a renewal of the role of the theatre in Greek antiquity it would be possible to regenerate a sense of community lost through a long process of individualisation.

Art therefore fulfils a leadership role in the sense that it unites the people, transcending egotistical self-interest, utilitarianism, nationality and Christianity. As such it shares in those tasks attributed to the "Volkskönig". By portraying and interpreting life and creating a sense of "Gemeinsamkeit", art stimulates a process of self-awareness, enabling the people to acknowledge their true purpose and realise their creative potential. This is to be achieved through a reform of the theatre which would be emancipated from financial constraints and free to fulfil its aesthetic and social mission. As such art, through its institutions, would act as "Vorläufer und Muster"<sup>32</sup> for the organisation of society as a whole.

The role attributed to the arts by Wagner reflects the spiritual leadership of the individual, combined with the creation of political unity which stems from this individual revelation. Although in many ways art took over from politics as a means of achieving particular goals, Wagner nevertheless retained many of his social and political ideals of the early period. This is clearly demonstrated by Bermbach, who points out that whilst Wagner rejected the contemporary interpretation of politics he nevertheless maintained an understanding of the concept which stemmed from the Greek *Polis*, based on the need to unite and build a community. The fundamental political goal may therefore be seen to remain the same throughout the progression of Wagner's work.

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<sup>32</sup> Richard Wagner, "Die Kunst und die Revolution" (1849), in: Richard Wagner, *Dichtungen und Schriften*, Band 5, op. cit., p. 309 (273-311).

However, the means of achieving this goal shifts from direct political intervention to spiritual guidance through the aesthetic. By focusing on the transcendental forces of art and its ability to penetrate and convey the basic forces of life and humanity Wagner indicates the direction of his thought, developing out of the initial portrait of the quasi-divine political leader Rienzi. By redeeming the people from Christianity and the Church art itself is sanctified:

An die Stelle der christlichen Religion, die historisch abgewirtschaftet hat [...], tritt nun das Kunstwerk, in den Jahren des *Parsifal* die Kunstreligion oder besser: die Kunst als Religion.<sup>33</sup>

Wagner's interpretation of leadership, or more precisely the intellectual sources of leadership, has evidently undergone a shift in emphasis. However, the duality which marked the predominantly political interpretation of the *Rienzi* period, that is the combination of the power of the people with that of a specific individual, is nevertheless retained when applied to the aesthetic. Hence, Wagner focuses on the value of the community and the need for a "*Genossenschaft aller Künstler*",<sup>34</sup> reflecting the synthesis of the various art forms: "Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft ist ein gemeinsames, und nur aus einem gemeinsamen Verlangen kann es hervorgehen".<sup>35</sup> However, he does not negate the value of the individual within this community, to whom he later attributes the task of consciously striving towards the realisation of the future work of art.<sup>36</sup>

The individual therefore acts as a creative impulse within the community as a whole, his stimulatory ideas temporarily elevating him to the role of "künstlerischen Gesetzgeber".<sup>37</sup> The "Diktatur des dichterischen Darstellers"<sup>38</sup> does however cease as soon as the ideals of the individual are adopted by the community. Reflecting his

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<sup>33</sup> Bermbach, op. cit., p. 119; see also p. 312-317.

<sup>34</sup> Richard Wagner, "Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft", in: Richard Wagner, *Dichtungen und Schriften*, Band 6, op. cit., p. 140 (9-157).

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> See Richard Wagner, "Eine Mitteilung an meine Freunde", op. cit., p. 209f.

<sup>37</sup> Richard Wagner, "Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft", op. cit., p. 145.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

desire for art to become a social “Vorläufer und Muster”,<sup>39</sup> Wagner’s ideal is centred around the hope that this flexible and fluid structure of the artistic community may be expanded to embrace society as a whole.

As Bermbach points out, this ideal stands in stark contrast to a hierarchical social order based on enforced obedience, as would comply with Wagner’s criticism of feudal society.<sup>40</sup> However, it does not exclude the possibility of the short term success of a charismatic individual in the style of Rienzi, who is able to mobilise the people, capturing their united force until the goal is achieved and the “*Macht der Individualität*”<sup>41</sup> reappears in the form of another leader figure.

The power of the individual within Wagner’s understanding of revolution, be it artistic or social, is admittedly always dependent upon the co-operation of the people which it represents. Indeed, there are occasions when Wagner appears to reject the need for any form of individual leadership whatsoever, as all change is deemed the product of the shared needs of the community: “... *dem* (das Volk) sind nur wenige Worte zu sagen, und selbst der Zuruf: ‘Tu wie du mußt!’ ist ihm überflüssig, weil es von selbst tut, wie es muß”.<sup>42</sup>

Associated with this conviction is Wagner’s criticism of the self-proclaimed intellectual leaders, who claim to reveal the needs of the people and to predict the outcome of revolutionary activity:

Ihr irrt nun also, wenn ihr die revolutionäre Kraft in Bewußtsein sucht, - und demnach durch die Intelligenz wirken wollt: eure Intelligenz ist falsch und unwillkürlich - solange sie nicht die Wahrnehmung des bereits zur sinnlichen Erscheinung Gereiften ist.

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<sup>39</sup> Richard Wagner, “Die Kunst und die Revolution”, op. cit., p. 309.

<sup>40</sup> Bermbach, op. cit., p. 250f.

<sup>41</sup> Richard Wagner, “Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft”, op. cit., p. 143.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 21. See also Wagner, “Flüchtige Aufzeichnung einzelner Gedanken zu einem größeren Aufsatz: Das Künstlertum der Zukunft”, op. cit., p. 244ff. Parallels may be drawn here with Bettina von Arnim’s conception of the people as a “Gesamt-Individuum”. (See Heinz Härtl, “Übereuropäisches bei Arnim und Bettina”, in: Härtl/Schultz (Hrsg.), op. cit., p. 223 (215-230).

Nicht ihr, sondern das Volk, - das - unbewußt - deshalb aber eben aus Naturtrieb handelt, - wird das Neue zustande bringen;<sup>43</sup>

Wagner does however go on to acknowledge the need for somebody to render the people conscious of their needs and so realise their potential - a task attributed to the poet:

Was daher das Volk, die Natur durch sich selbst produziert, kann erst dem Dichter Stoff werden, durch ihn aber gelangt das Unbewußte in dem Volksprodukte zum Bewußtsein, und er ist es, der dem Volke dies Bewußtsein mitteilt.<sup>44</sup>

Bermbach interprets these two statements as a radical reassessment of the role of the intellectual made within the same text. However, it is necessary here to distinguish between two different understandings of intellectual leadership in the Wagnerian discourse, namely that provided by the "Volksbelehrer"<sup>45</sup> and passive "Bücherwurm",<sup>46</sup> which Wagner appears to associate largely with the political theorists, particularly of the Communist movement, and that provided by the more aesthetically oriented artists and poets. Wagner's reiteration of his critical appeal to "ihr Intelligenten" in the later essay *Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft* would support this point.<sup>47</sup> The individual artist is therefore allocated the politico-spiritual task of interpreter, mediator, mobiliser and "intervenierende Führer", thus reflecting the perception of this role amongst left-wing revolutionary circles, in particular that of the Saint-Simonians.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Richard Wagner, "Flüchtige Aufzeichnung einzelner Gedanken zu einem größeren Aufsatz: Das Künstlertum der Zukunft", op. cit., p. 244.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p. 248.

<sup>45</sup> Richard Wagner, "Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft", op. cit., p. 19.

<sup>46</sup> Richard Wagner, "Gruss aus Sachsen an die Wiener" (Mai 1848), in: Richard Wagner, *Dichtungen und Schriften*. Band 5, op. cit., p. 264 (263-266).

<sup>47</sup> Richard Wagner, "Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft", op. cit., p. 20f.

<sup>48</sup> For further details see Manfred Kreckel, *Richard Wagner und die französische Frühsozialisten. Die Bedeutung der Kunst und des Künstlers für eine neue Gesellschaft*. Peter Lang, Frankfurt am Main 1986. See also Bermbach, op. cit., p. 59f; 97f; and Deathridge, op. cit., p. 25-28.

It is clear from Wagner's writings that he applied this understanding of the role of the individual artist to his own self-perception. His early revolutionary tracts contain emotional appeals to both the aristocracy and the people, as well as concrete constitutional recommendations and attempts at direct political intervention,<sup>49</sup> and later publications imply his personal mission to ensure the realisation of his aesthetic ideal within society. Indeed, Andrea Mork refers in this context to the composer's "Selbststilisierung zum Vollstrecker des Volkswillens".<sup>50</sup> The self-created leadership task becomes particularly evident in the autobiographical *Mitteilung an meine Freunde*. Here Wagner creates the impression of a select group of people gathered around an individual guiding figure, who addresses only those capable of truly understanding him and sharing in his aims. The origins of the personal cult centred around Bayreuth, of which Wagner was to become the "colossal, wicked and rather mystical object of devotion",<sup>51</sup> are clear.

Wagner did repudiate the traditional notion of genius as "oberflächlich und nichtssagend",<sup>52</sup> although this was based on his aforementioned dual notion of leadership and the importance of the community, as opposed to a dismissal of the talents of the individual. Indeed, prior to the realisation of the future ideal of the "Genie der Gemeinsamkeit", the work of the individual genius is deemed indispensable. Speaking of the "Wiedervereinigung der Künste" he writes:

Diese Wiedervereinigung kann, dem ganzen Zustande unsrer jetzigen sozialen Bildung gemäß, nur in dem einzelnen, einer ihm inwohnenden ungewöhnlichen Fähigkeit gemäß, vollbracht werden: wir leben daher in der Zeit des vereinzelt Genies, der reichen, entschädigenden Individualität einzelner.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> See for example Richard Wagner, "Ein Brief an Professor Franz Wigard, Mitglied der deutschen Nationalverein in Frankfurt" (Mai 1848), in: Richard Wagner, *Dichtungen und Schriften*. Band 5, op. cit., p. 262f.

<sup>50</sup> Andrea Mork, *Richard Wagner als politischer Schriftsteller. Weltanschauung und Wirkungsgeschichte*. Campus Verlag, Frankfurt am Main/New York 1990, p. 57.

<sup>51</sup> Lucy Beckett, "Wagner and his Critics", in: *The Wagner Companion*. Edited by Peter Burbridge and Richard Sutton. Faber and Faber, London and Boston 1979, p. 367 (365-388).

<sup>52</sup> Richard Wagner, "Eine Mitteilung an meine Freunde", op. cit., p. 218.

<sup>53</sup> Richard Wagner, "Flüchtige Aufzeichnung einzelner Gedanken zu einem größeren Aufsatz: Das Künstlertum der Zukunft", op. cit., p. 252f.

The fact that Wagner had not abandoned the traditional belief in the artistic genius is later reiterated in *Deutsche Kunst und deutsche Politik*, in which he describes the mystical laws of nature according to which the genius is born.<sup>54</sup>

Although a biographical analysis of the artist does not fall within the scope of this study, it is nevertheless to be noted that this self-perception as artistic genius and instigator of social change concurs with descriptions of Wagner's personal characteristics. Martin Gregor-Dellin describes him as a "Diktator", "Dompteur", "Tatmensch" and "Alleinherrscher",<sup>55</sup> and the majority of Wagner's acquaintances, most notably Nietzsche, testify to a loss of self-identity effected by his charismatic power.<sup>56</sup> Similarly, Jacques Barzun describes Wagner's adolescent "urge to be the leader of great masses of performing men and women",<sup>57</sup> and Thomas Mann, despite dismissing the possibility of aspirations to greatness and 'Volksherrschaft' on Wagner's part,<sup>58</sup> refers to his "Selbstverherrlichung" and "mystagogische Selbstinszenierung".<sup>59</sup>

It may therefore be concluded that Wagner's interpretation of leadership is a synthesis of the early nineteenth century notion of the heroic genius, combined with a recognition of the decisive powers of the masses and the force of the community in all spheres of life and society.<sup>60</sup> Although Wagner recognised the dangers implicit in

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<sup>54</sup> Richard Wagner, "Deutsche Kunst und deutsche Politik", op. cit., p. 259f.

<sup>55</sup> Martin Gregor-Dellin, *Richard Wagner. Sein Leben. Sein Werk. Sein Jahrhundert*. R. Piper and Co. Verlag, München 1980, p. 713.

<sup>56</sup> See Peter Burbridge, "Richard Wagner: Man and Artist", in: *The Wagner Companion*, op. cit., p. 17f (15-33).

<sup>57</sup> Barzun, op. cit., p. 267.

<sup>58</sup> Thomas Mann, "Leiden und Größe Richard Wagners", op. cit., p. 111.

<sup>59</sup> Thomas Mann, "Brief an Emil Preetorius" (6.12.1849), in: Thomas Mann, *Wagner und unsere Zeit*, op. cit., p. 167 (167f).

<sup>60</sup> Curt von Westernhagen refers to this "cooperation between the principle of individuality and the principle of community" in connection with Constantin Frantz' perception of federalism, as supported, despite initial disagreement, by Wagner. (Curt von Westernhagen, "Wagner as a Writer", in: *The Wagner Companion*, op. cit., p. 358 [341-364]. See also Constantin Frantz, *Briefe*. Hrsg. v. Udo Sautzer und Hans Elmar Onnau. Franz Steiner Verlag, Wiesbaden 1974, for further details on the changing relationship between Frantz and Wagner). The politico-aesthetic aspect of federalism, involving the harmonic cohesion of individual member-states and institutions, is suggested by Görner as a possible reason for the ideology's intellectual appeal in the mid nineteenth century. (See Rüdiger Görner, "Constantin Frantz and the German Federalist Tradition", in: *The Federal Idea*.)

charismatic legitimisation he nevertheless retained many of its fundamental elements within his leadership ideal, the notion of the great man and genius being later reflected in his conception of the artist, seen in particular through his own self-image.

The role attributed to both art and the artist was that of a unifying leader, capable of providing spiritual guidance through its transcendental insight into the basic forces of life and humanity, thus reflecting the shift towards an increasingly spiritual interpretation of leadership. Wagner's final opera *Parsifal*, first performed in 1882, represents in many ways the completion of this transition. A "profound drama of spiritual awakening and fulfilment",<sup>61</sup> it contrasts with the early work *Rienzi*, demonstrating Wagner's focus on the purely spiritual leader, removed from all political or military considerations.<sup>62</sup>

The omnipresent quest for redemption felt within the community of knights and demonstrated in particular through Amfortas, Titurel and Kundry reflects the need for

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*Vol. 1. The History of Federalism from the Enlightenment to 1945.* Ed. by Andrea Bosco, London/New York 1991, p. 87).

<sup>61</sup> Tanner, op. cit., p. 199. The extent to which *Parsifal* may be viewed as a 'Christian' opera, a to quote Nietzsche "Apostasie und Umkehr zu christlich-krankhaften und obskurantischen Idealen" (Friedrich Nietzsche, "Zur Genealogie der Moral", in: Nietzsche, *Werke*. Hrsg. v. Karl Schlechta. Ullstein, Frankfurt am Main / Berlin / Wien 1969/79, Band III, p. 287 [3]), has proven the subject of much debate. However, a detailed discussion of this matter does not fall within the parameters of this study. It suffices to say that Wagner draws on a combination of Christian, pagan and hellenic sources in order to create a symbolic and ritualised framework within which to portray the spiritual needs of the community. (See Dieter Borchmeyer, *Das Theater Richard Wagners. Idee-Dichtung-Wirkung*. Phillip Reclam jun., Stuttgart 1982, p. 287-301). Highlighting the multi-faceted, symbolic nature of the work, James Mark describes Wagner's aim as "to show the highest purpose of art as giving expression to the religious instincts of mankind", (James Mark, "Wagner, 'Parsifal' and the Christian Faith", in: *Wagner*. Vol. 9, No. 3, July 1988, p. 99 [99-106]), thus reflecting the composer's own declared conviction that "da, wo die Religion künstlich wird, der Kunst es vorbehalten sei, den Kern der Religion zu retten". (Richard Wagner, "Religion und Kunst", in: Richard Wagner, *Dichtungen und Schriften*, op. cit., Band 10, Bayreuth. Späte weltanschauliche Schriften, p. 117 [117-163]). The interconnection between the aesthetic and the spiritual is summarised by Borchmeyer, who describes *Parsifal* as both "religiöse Kunst und Kunstreligion". (Borchmeyer, op. cit., p. 301).

<sup>62</sup> The so-called 'Parsifal-Streit' concerning the possible association of Wagner's *Parsifal* with aspects of National Socialist ideology, in particular anti-semitism, will not be further examined within the framework of this study. For further details on this discussion see Richard Wagner, *Parsifal. Texte, Materialien, Kommentare*. Hrsg. v. Attila Csampari und Dietmar Holland. Rowohlt, o.J.

“der Ersehnte”,<sup>63</sup> the pure and heroic individual, thus recalling the quest for spiritual guidance encapsulated in Hölderlin’s search for “der Einzige”. The “mut- und führerlose Ritterschaft”<sup>64</sup> described by Gurnemanz requires a leader who will, through his act of redemption, enable them to again receive the grail, thus restoring life and hope to the community.

The coming of this redeemer is portrayed through Parsifal, who is able to heal Amfortas’ eternal wound, freeing him from his suffering by taking over as protector of the grail. Titurel is likewise revived and Kundry finds herself freed from the curse under which she had been placed. Hence by recognising and subsequently fulfilling his divine mission Parsifal is able himself to find redemption.

The contrast with the heroic protagonist of the *Rienzi* period is clear. The task of the new leader is to spiritually regenerate the community by providing absolution from sin. The “Reiner, - / mitleidvoll Duldender, / heiltatvoll wissender”<sup>65</sup> is no longer the military and political figure of the earlier opera, as is demonstrated in act one. Here Parsifal achieves his first insight into good and evil, being castigated and deprived of his bow and arrow for having unwittingly shot the swan of hope which flew overhead. This is later symbolically reiterated when the redeemer returns to the community of knights and is ordered to remove his armour. At the close of the opera a dove hovers over Parsifal as the knights worship him in glorious apotheosis.

Dieter Borchmeyer describes in this context “die Läuterung der physischen zur spirituellen Kraft, die Wandlung vom antik-germanischen Heros zum christlich-mitleidenden Antihelden” which Parsifal undergoes in the course of his development.<sup>66</sup> Similarly Michael Tanner challenges the popular interpretation of Wagner’s heroic ideal, demonstrating that it is to be understood within individual and spiritual terms.

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<sup>63</sup> Richard Wagner, “Parzival, I. Prosaentwurf” (1865), in: Richard Wagner, *Dichtungen und Schriften*, op. cit., Band 4, Frühe Opern. Tristan und Isolde; Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg; Parsifal, p. 336 (332-353).

<sup>64</sup> Richard Wagner, “Parsifal, Ein Bühnenweihfestspiel” (1877), in: Richard Wagner, *Dichtungen und Schriften*, Band 4, op. cit., p. 324 (281-331).

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., p. 326.

<sup>66</sup> Borchmeyer, op. cit., p. 293.



The difference between the traditional understanding of the heroic and Wagner's view is summarised by Roger Scruton:

Heroes of the old type are larger-than-life versions of humanity, who live, love and suffer more completely than the rest of us, and who illustrate the possibilities to which man, with divine assistance, may aspire. Wagner's heroes, Tanner suggests, belong to a new type. They exist in a state of exalted solitude, the result of some primeval mistake; but they long either to redeem or to be redeemed, through an act of loving sacrifice.<sup>67</sup>

Nevertheless, despite the final spiritualisation of Wagner's leadership ideal, reflected in the shift from the search for the "Welteroberer" to that of the "Weltüberwinder", the aforementioned underlying notion of the apotheosised, charismatic figure, "der Eine",<sup>68</sup> is retained.

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<sup>67</sup> Roger Scruton, "Pilgrims on the way to extinction. Wagner redeemed: Heroism, self-sacrifice and the case against Nietzsche", in: *Times Literary Supplement*, 7.3.1997, p. 18 (18f).

<sup>68</sup> Richard Wagner, "Parsifal, Ein Bühnenweihfestspiel", op. cit., p. 284.

## Chapter Two

### *Radicalisation and Realisation: Carlyle, Bismarck and the power ideal*

#### *i) From divine mediator to political tyrant: The Carlylean Hero*

Written during the same period as Wagner's *Rienzi*, Thomas Carlyle's series of lectures entitled *On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History* was published in 1840 and found a largely favourable reception in both Britain and Germany.<sup>69</sup> Although the series may be viewed as the most detailed expression of Carlyle's 'Heroenkult', it must be considered against the background of both his previous and subsequent publications, the lectures constituting a median point within a gradual progression of his understanding of this concept. Resulting from a romanticised admiration of 'great men', with an emphasis on literary figures, it developed into support of extreme political authoritarianism, thus raising important questions concerning the parallelism of and conflict between intellectual and political leadership. This question had initially been approached in the early part of the century by the "christlich-deutsche Tischgesellschaft" and recurred, as demonstrated, in the work of Wagner.

This progression, combined with increasingly vehement racism, meant that much of the Carlyle criticism of the early and mid twentieth century, particularly during the post-war period, was centred around the writer's possible links with fascism, for which ideological purpose his works had earlier been employed.<sup>70</sup> More recent

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<sup>69</sup> For a detailed discussion of the reception of Carlyle's lectures on heroes in Great Britain see the introduction to Thomas Carlyle, *On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History*. The Norman and Charlotte Strouse Edition of the Writings of Thomas Carlyle. Notes and Introduction by Michael K. Goldberg. Text Established by Michael K. Goldberg, Joel J. Brattin and Mark Engel. University of California Press, Berkeley / Los Angeles / Oxford 1993. Carlyle's thought may be identified in the writings of a number of German intellectuals and politicians of that period, as will be demonstrated, and was to enjoy a later popular revival in the early twentieth century.

<sup>70</sup> Examples of this are the translations of Carlyle's works published under the title Thomas Carlyle, *Heldentum und Macht. Schriften für die Gegenwart*. Hrsg. v. Michael Freund. Alfred Kröner Verlag, Leipzig. o.J. and K. H. Bachmann, *Die Geschichtsauffassung Thomas Carlyles und sein Gemeinschaftsgedanke im Lichte der geistigen und politischen Entwicklung Englands*. Untersuchungen des Englischen Seminars Göttingen. Nr. 1. 1938.

attempts have however been made to distinguish Carlylean ideology from this later phenomenon.<sup>71</sup>

Carlyle is of particular importance within the field of the German understanding of leadership due to his close links with the German Romantic and Idealist writers and philosophers, who influenced his thought to varying degrees,<sup>72</sup> as well as his praise of the German nation, or more specifically the Prussian state and its rulers. It is notable that, whilst admiration for 'great men' had become an important element within Victorian Romantic thinking, as observed in the works of such writers as Byron, Hume and Shelley, it was the British intellectual with the closest links with *German* thought who was to develop and expand upon the so-called 'Genie- und Heroenkult' as it had progressed in that country. Of particular importance within this context is the tendency towards extreme individualisation and personalisation of leadership, combined with liberation from moral constraints. A number of parallels with the German writers and intellectuals referred to in part one are therefore apparent.

The works of Carlyle, in particular his theory of the hero, form the subject of numerous analyses and may be approached from a variety of angles. For the purposes of this study it will be necessary to focus on the definition, role and form of the hero and its development through the course of his writing.

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<sup>71</sup> See for example Chris R. Vanden Bossche, *Carlyle and the Search for Authority*. Ohio State University Press, Columbus 1991. Also Philip Rosenberg, *The Seventh Hero. Carlyle and the Theory of Radical Activism*. Harvard Uni. Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts 1974. Further, Thomas Fasbender, *Thomas Carlyle. Idealistische Geschichtssicht und visionäres Heldenideal*. Königshausen und Neumann, Würzburg 1989.

<sup>72</sup> The extent of this influence remains the subject of debate, although it may be stated that, on a philosophical level, Carlyle combined elements of the thought of various German writers with elements of Pantheism and his pre-conceived Calvinism. For a more detailed discussion of this issue see, for instance, C. F. Harrold, *Carlyle and German Thought: 1819-1834*. Oxford University Press, 1934; Bentley, op.cit.; and Fasbender, op. cit., p. 42-55. A combination of German idealism and a pantheistic outlook which reflected the genius concept of the eighteenth century was also adopted by Emerson, a friend of Carlyle's, who was part of the New England "Transcendental Club". Emerson also emphasised the important position of a great leader, who would stand above the masses whilst representing the spirit of the time, notably choosing Goethe and Napoleon as examples of his "Representative Men". (See *The Collected Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Vol. IV. Representative Men: Seven Lectures*. General Editor D. E. Wilson, Textual Editor D. E. Wilson, Historical Introduction and Notes by W. E. Williams. The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts 1987).

The absence of hero-worship in an era of "Sceptical Dilettantism"<sup>73</sup> - characterised by the progression of a rationalist and mechanistic world-view in mid-nineteenth century European society - is judged to be the root of contemporary socio-economic problems, to which the solution remains the revival of such phenomena: the rise of new 'great men' and a society willing to worship them, the creation of which Carlyle views as his prophetic task. His so-called hero-cult is therefore a reactionary tendency resulting from dissatisfaction with the present era, as is made clear throughout the course of his publications, in particular through his criticism of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as periods particularly damaging towards hero-worship. Carlyle's opinion therefore reflects the Europe-wide "antizivilatorische Affekt"<sup>74</sup> expressed by, amongst others, Heine and Grabbe, as well as French writers such as Balzac and Stendhal.

It may first be noted that in using the words "hero" and "great man" Carlyle implies "not adventurers and exploiters but leaders and benefactors of the race".<sup>75</sup> His theory of the hero is based on the belief in the divinity of nature, and consequently of man, the most "superior" forms of which are to be particularly revered, hero-worship thus constituting the "primary [...] the ultimate and final creed of mankind".<sup>76</sup> The hero represents a means of transcendence capable of enabling society to recapture its lost belief in the divine. In an echo of the Fichtean conception of the scholar and his ability to convey "die göttliche Idee der Welt",<sup>77</sup> the Carlylean hero is perceived to be a prophet and revealer of "the Secret of this Universe"<sup>78</sup>:

The Hero is he who lives in the inward sphere of things, in the True, Divine and Eternal, which exists always, unseen to most, under the Temporary, Trivial: his being is in that, he declares that abroad, by

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<sup>73</sup> Thomas Carlyle, "On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History", in: *The Works of Thomas Carlyle in Thirty Volumes*. Chapman and Hall Limited, London 1897. Vol. V, p. 84.

<sup>74</sup> Schmidt, *Die Geschichte des Genie-Gedankens*, op. cit., Band 2, p. 70.

<sup>75</sup> Harrold, op. cit., p. 182f.

<sup>76</sup> Thomas Carlyle, "Sir Walter Scott" (1838), in: *The Works of Thomas Carlyle in Thirty Volumes*, op. cit. "Critical and Miscellaneous Essays Vol. IV", p. 24 (22-87).

<sup>77</sup> Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Über den Gelehrten* (1805). Aufbau-Verlag, Berlin 1956, p. 100.

<sup>78</sup> Carlyle, "On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History", op. cit., p. 155.

act or speech as it may be, in declaring himself abroad. His life [...] is a piece of the everlasting heart of Nature herself.<sup>79</sup>

This notion of the hero as mediator between the temporal and the divine, which itself recalls the work of Hölderlin, is viewed by some as a substitute for the strict Calvinist faith of Carlyle's childhood - thus reflecting the loss of faith experienced in the Victorian era - or as a synthesis between traditional Calvinism and the philosophies of the German idealists. This is reflected in the use of religious imagery in the descriptions of Carlyle's heroes.<sup>80</sup> As such it shares parallels with the gradual process of secularisation of the hero, as witnessed in the progression of the leadership concept in early nineteenth century Germany and subsequently in Wagner's sanctification of both art and the artist. However, it could equally be argued, with Karina Momm, that Carlyle is attempting to combat this secularisation, or loss of the divine, by emphasising the transcendental qualities of the hero.<sup>81</sup> Any conclusion on this matter is dependent upon the theological interpretation of Carlyle's thought.<sup>82</sup>

Central to Carlyle's concept of the heroic is his definition of history as "that divine Book of Revelations",<sup>83</sup> the "inspired Texts"<sup>84</sup> of which - in a reflection of the Hegelian notion of the "Weltgeist" and its manifestation in "weltgeschichtliche Persönlichkeiten" - are the great men:

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> The hero as poet is for instance exemplified by the "Saints of Poetry" Dante and Shakespeare, the latter being "a blessed heaven-sent Bringer of Light". Carlyle also refers to the men of letters as belonging to the "Priesthood of the Writers of Books" and the heroic King as a "missionary of Order".

<sup>81</sup> Karina Momm, *Der Begriff des Helden in Thomas Carlyles "On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History"*. Diss., Albert-Ludwigs Universität zu Freiburg i. Br., 1986, p. 109.

<sup>82</sup> The details of Carlyle's theological standpoint form the basis of an intellectual discussion which lies beyond the scope of this analysis. It centres around the question as to whether the writer maintained the fundamentals of his Calvinist faith, clothing them in the ideas of German Romanticism, as claimed by C. F. Harrold, or whether he in fact had closer connections with the atheism of the Marxists, a conclusion drawn by Eloise M. Behnken (*Thomas Carlyle. "Calvinist without the Theology"*. University of Missouri Press, Columbia and London 1978). Philip Rosenberg defines Carlyle's theology as redundant, or at best desired but not fulfilled, and associates him with the pantheistic and humanistic movements common to German philosophy and theology of the time. Eric Bentley argues that Carlyle gradually rejected religion and Christianity altogether, replacing the former by the historical process, with the hero becoming a substitute for Christ and the lectures on heroes thus representing a conflict between the Christian and the secular.

<sup>83</sup> Carlyle, "Sator Resartus", in: *The Works of Thomas Carlyle in Thirty Volumes*, op. cit. Vol. I, p. 142.

[...] Universal History [...] is at bottom the History of Great Men who have worked here. They are the leaders of men, these great ones; the modellers, patterns, and in a wide sense creators, of whatsoever the general mass of men contrive to do or to attain.<sup>85</sup>

Such an individual is a “world-voice”,<sup>86</sup> an embodiment of the spirit of the time, who does not determine history alone, but rather accelerates what has already been determined, uttering, through his clear insight, the unspoken thoughts and desires of the people.<sup>87</sup> Thomas Fasbender explains how Carlyle’s theory of the hero is a synthesis of the concrete individual and the omnipotent spirit which extends beyond this. The hero is therefore able to act autonomously within the sphere of the “Erscheinungswelt”, though he remains a medium through which the spiritual truth is revealed.<sup>88</sup>

Thus, the so-called great men provide the people with explanations as to the universe and their position within it; their role - which recalls the task attributed by Hölderlin to the genius - is that of a divinely-inspired mediator between God and humanity. Combined with this spiritual “life-guidance” - which appears linked to Hegel’s notion of the “Seelenführer” - is a second element of the role of such a leader, that is the political government of a state.

This dual nature of Carlylean leadership, reflected also in Wagner’s “Volkskönig” ideal, is highlighted in the essay *Chartism* (1839), in which the writer outlines the two groups which have failed to provide leadership for the people as, firstly, the existing Aristocracy - which in his opinion needs to be replaced by a new ruling class stemming from the industrial bourgeoisie - and secondly, the Church, which must

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Thomas Carlyle, “On Heroes, Hero-Worship and The Heroic in History”, op. cit., p. 1.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., p. 101.

<sup>87</sup> For further details see Rosenberg, op. cit., p. 188-193. Parallels to the perception of Napoleon I in this context by, amongst others, Hegel, are clearly apparent.

<sup>88</sup> Fasbender, op. cit.

ensure the fulfilment of its role as teacher of the people. The absence of leadership from these quarters is summarised as follows:

A Do-nothing Guidance; and it is a Do-something World! Would to God our Ducal *Duces* would become Leaders indeed; our Aristocracies and Priesthoods discover in some suitable degree what the world expected of them [...]<sup>89</sup>

However, in a reflection of the ideas of the German writers studied within this context, Carlyle, whilst maintaining this dual notion of leadership through whole sections of society, also transposes both aspects onto great individuals. Thus, the hero provides both spiritual and political leadership, the latter being, at least at this stage of his writing, dependent upon the former.

Continuing the parallels with German thought, the fundamental characteristics of such individuals reflect the commonly-accepted qualities of a genius as perceived in the early nineteenth century, highlighted and developed by the Napoleonic reception: sincerity; insight; creative action; the ability to conceive things in their totality; self-sacrifice to one particular goal; the "talent of silence"; the desire for order.<sup>90</sup> These qualities being consistent in all eras, the great men, who all stem from the same source, simply adopt a different shape according to historical or contemporary constraints, and as such may take the form of Divinity, Prophet, Poet, Priest, Man of Letters or King.

The series of lectures reflects a gradual progression away from the perception of the great man as a god or a direct messenger from him, which according to Carlyle implies that the popular perception of God is rising, though the lectures nevertheless demonstrate a gradual shift of emphasis in the nature of the great men analysed, from religion through literature to politics, from thoughts and words to practical action, as

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<sup>89</sup> Carlyle, "Chartism", in: *The Works of Thomas Carlyle in 30 Volumes*, op. cit., Vol. IV, "Critical and Miscellaneous Essays IV", p. 186.

an answer to society's problems. The only hero whom he deems suitable for the present day is the man of letters, who in fact remains a "Half-Hero", and, ultimately, the king.

Carlyle does praise the revelatory power of literature, and indeed its political force. He advocates the organisation of literature for this purpose, citing France and Prussia as examples of a nation or state in which the development of a "Literary Class"<sup>91</sup> has been positively encouraged. He does question the success of placing a man of letters at the head of a nation, though nevertheless stresses the need for intellect in a governor. The emphasis does however lie with the practical, which gives an indication of what is to follow in his later publications, and is qualified by the failure of the eighteenth century men of letters, constrained by the scepticism of their era. This reflects Carlyle's loss of faith in the ability of literature to provide the desired transcendental authority, at least in the present era, and may be observed throughout the progression of his work, in particular in *The History of Frederick the Great* (1858-1865), to be analysed in greater detail at the close of this chapter.

The "Hero as King" - the summary of all other categories of great men - therefore becomes representative of the type of leader to be sought in the nineteenth century. Carlyle's focus on the "charismatische Führernaturen"<sup>92</sup> of Cromwell and Napoleon rejects dynastic legitimisation, defining the King as simply an "Able-Man" whose role it is: "to *command* over us, to furnish us with constant practical teaching, to tell us for the day and hour what we are to *do*".<sup>93</sup> Maintaining the aforementioned dual nature of leadership, this role does also contain a spiritual element, although the point of emphasis remains clear: "The true King, as guide of the practical, has ever something of the Pontiff in him, - guide of the spiritual, from which all practice has its rise".<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Harrold draws a series of parallels between the characteristics of a great man as defined by Fichte and the opinions of Carlyle. (See Harrold, op. cit., p. 186-191). This comparison could be extended to cover the majority of early nineteenth century German intellectuals, as detailed in part one.

<sup>91</sup> Carlyle, "On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History", op. cit., p. 168.

<sup>92</sup> Lothar Kettenacker, "Thomas Carlyle", in: *Pipers Handbuch der politischen Ideen*, op. cit., p. 292.

<sup>93</sup> Carlyle, "On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History", op. cit., p. 196.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 199.



The king therefore represents both religious and political authority and thus, as Chris Vanden Bossche suggests, the theocratic idyll, or a return to the hero as divinity.<sup>95</sup> As the king, or ruler, is a sincere and divine embodiment of the spirit of the time, he possesses unquestionable morality and a divine right to rule, commanding obedience on the part of the masses. Although this obedience still appears to be a question of sub-conscious compulsion from below, as was the case in the man of letters and his predecessors,<sup>96</sup> Carlyle appears to be moving towards the justification of authority imposed from above, an initial indication of which he had given in *Chartism*:

Surely of all 'rights of man', this right of the ignorant man to be guided by the wiser, to be, gently or forcibly, held in the true course by him, is the indisputablest.<sup>97</sup>

This divine right of the most 'able-man' to govern a country, and if necessary to use force in order to do so, leads on to the radical praise of what Alan Shelston terms "brutalistic authoritarianism"<sup>98</sup> in Carlyle's later publications, such as his essay in support of the Paraguayan dictator *Dr. Francia* (1843), as well as in *Occasional Discourse on the Nigger Question* (1849), the controversial *Latter-Day Pamphlets* (1850), and *Shooting Niagara and After* (1867).

By maintaining the links which these "kings" share with God, Carlyle succeeds in removing the need or indeed the possibility of challenging their position. Thus Dr. Francia is "a man sent by heaven"<sup>99</sup> and Carlyle speaks of "men not needing 'election' to command, but eternally elected for it by the Maker himself".<sup>100</sup> Similarly, Friedrich

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<sup>95</sup> Vanden Bossche, *op. cit.*, p. 100f.

<sup>96</sup> "And yet our heroic Men of Letters do teach, govern, are kings, priests, or what you like to call them; intrinsically there is no preventing it by any means whatever. The world *has* to obey him who thinks and sees in the world." (Carlyle, "On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History", *op. cit.*, p. 193).

<sup>97</sup> Carlyle, "Chartism", *op. cit.*, p. 157.

<sup>98</sup> Thomas Carlyle, *Selected Writings*. Edited with an Introduction by Alan Shelston. Penguin Books, Great Britain 1971, p. 24.

<sup>99</sup> Carlyle, "Dr. Francia" (1843), in: Carlyle, "Critical and Miscellaneous Essays IV", *op. cit.*, p. 310.

<sup>100</sup> Carlyle, "The Present Time", in: *The Works of Thomas Carlyle in 30 Volumes*, *op. cit.*, Vol. XX, "Latter-Day Pamphlets", p. 32.

Wilhelm I, “the great Drill-sergeant of the Prussian nation”,<sup>101</sup> is given justification of his arbitrary use of force by the “Eternal Heavens”,<sup>102</sup> accompanied by the statement that “no Nation that has not first been governed by so-called ‘Tyrants,’ [...] can ever come to much in this world”.<sup>103</sup> The reader observes what Eloise Behnken terms a “reversal of the issue of power and wisdom”,<sup>104</sup> exemplified by such statements as “He is a good man that can command and obey; he that cannot is a bad”.<sup>105</sup> To quote Behnken further: “The Hero starts out as an agent of a higher power; he ends almost completely identical with that higher power”.<sup>106</sup>

Within this context Carlyle appears to have adopted the personal legitimisation of power as supported by Grabbe in the early 1830s, which was itself the culmination of a process brought about by the rise of Napoleon and the Napoleonic myth. For Grabbe Napoleon represented an “Ersatzgott”, his position being legitimised by his personal qualities and military skill, and in many ways this same attitude is reflected in Carlyle’s judgement of individuals such as Dr. Francia and Friedrich Wilhelm I. Carlyle’s recommendation of force, whilst surpassing Grabbe in terms of brutality, recalls the “genialischer Immoralismus”<sup>107</sup> supported by Grabbe, in the name of “die Autorität des großen Individuums an sich”.<sup>108</sup> Associated with this is the decontextualisation of political authority, which reached its climax under Grabbe, who favoured the supremacy of the great personality over and above any political ideology. Carlyle appears to be echoing such notions by focusing not on the specific policies of those singled out as “Able-Men”, but rather on their ability to enforce order.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Carlyle, “History of Friedrich II. of Prussia called Frederick the Great”. In eight volumes. Vol. 1., p. 345, in: *The Works of Thomas Carlyle in 30 Volumes*, op. cit.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 341.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 346. This recalls the belief held by, amongst others, Goethe that despotism is a prerequisite for the restoration of order. (See Part I, Chapter 2).

<sup>104</sup> Behnken, op. cit., p. 74.

<sup>105</sup> Carlyle, “The New Downing Street”, in: Carlyle, “Latter-day Pamphlets”, op. cit., p. 167.

<sup>106</sup> Behnken, op. cit., p. 75.

<sup>107</sup> Schmidt, *Die Geschichte des Genie-Gedankens*, op. cit., Band 1, p. 319.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, Band 2, p. 73.

<sup>109</sup> Fasbender argues that in order to fully understand Carlyle’s theory it is necessary to separate the sphere of fact from that of appearance and rational explanation. As for Carlyle concrete existence was a “genuine outburst of Nature” it remained free from normative interpretations, transcending traditional moral values, which were confined to the realms of aesthetics. He does not however

A further parallel with Grabbe is highlighted by Carlyle's attitude towards the masses. Whilst stressing - through reference to Novalis - the divinity of every human being,<sup>110</sup> Carlyle nevertheless tends to display an increasingly negative attitude towards the people, which to a certain extent is an inherent product of the elevation of individuals to the status of heroes, as is evident even in the early essay on Schiller of 1831:

Great men are the Fire-pillars in this dark pilgrimage of mankind; they stand as heavenly Signs, everliving witnesses of what has been, prophetic tokens of what may still be, the revealed, embodied Possibilities of human nature; which greatness he who has never seen or rationally conceived of and with his whole heart passionately loved and revered is himself forever doomed to be little.<sup>111</sup>

The factor which raises the masses up to a "higher" status is, consequently, the ability to worship and hence obey he who is greater than themselves. This distinction between the hero and the hero-worshipper recalls Grabbe's belief that the masses serve only as vehicles for the advancement of the great men, highlighting the leader's apparent greatness through their own mediocrity.

By applying his theory to society, Carlyle was able to defend its hierarchical - though not traditionally feudal - nature, which reflects a "graduated worship of heroes".<sup>112</sup> Rule and obedience are therefore deemed a "sacred right and duty",<sup>113</sup> and democracy is doomed to failure. Throughout his work the writer consistently rejects democracy

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account for the tendency apparent in Carlyle's later publications to remove the emphasis on the divine, stressing instead the powerful, pragmatic statesman.

<sup>110</sup> "There is but one Temple in the Universe," says the devout Novalis, "and that is the Body of Man. Nothing is holier than that high form. Bending before men is a reverence done to this Revelation in the flesh. We touch Heaven when we lay our hand on a human body!" (Carlyle, "On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History", op. cit., p. 10).

<sup>111</sup> Carlyle, "Schiller" (1831), in: *The Works of Thomas Carlyle in 30 Volumes*, op. cit. Vol. XXVII, "Critical and Miscellaneous Essays II", p. 166f (165-215).

<sup>112</sup> Carlyle, "On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History", op. cit., p. 12.

<sup>113</sup> Carlyle, "Chartism", op. cit., p. 158.

on the basis that one great and divinely inspired man is in a better position to govern than “a level immensity of foolish small men”.<sup>114</sup>

This notion is explained in *Chartism*, in which Carlyle’s concern for social welfare is combined, somewhat paradoxically, with a rejection of democracy and the support of a strongly hierarchical society. He attempts to reconcile these two aspects of his thought by defining the true, albeit in some instances sub-conscious, need of “that great dumb toiling class”<sup>115</sup> as being not financial reward, but rather the aforementioned right to be governed and guided by the ‘wiser’ sections of society. Thus, calls for democracy represent merely a refusal to accept the current rulers, who have failed to govern them, and constitute in reality:

Bellowings, *inarticulate* cries as of a dumb creature in rage and pain; to the ear of wisdom they are *inarticulate* prayers: “Guide me, govern me! I am mad and miserable, and cannot guide myself!”<sup>116</sup>

The radicalisation of this theory, again an extension of Grabbe’s belief in the ease with which it is possible to manipulate the masses, is made clear in *Past and Present* (1848):

Every stupid, every cowardly and foolish man is but a less palpable madman: his true liberty were that a wiser man, that any and every wiser man, could, by brass collars, or in whatever milder or sharper way, lay hold of him when he was wrong and compel him to go a little righter.<sup>117</sup>

This passage illustrates Carlyle’s entirely subjective and polarised attitude towards right and wrong. By removing the emphasis on one ‘divine’ individual and placing it on “any and every wiser man” he clearly relegates the importance of transcendental

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<sup>114</sup> Carlyle, “On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History”, op. cit., p. 202.

<sup>115</sup> Carlyle, “Chartism”, op. cit., p. 121.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 157.

authority. It also raises doubts over Fasbender's argument that the people worship their hero as a result of their independent vision and judgement, a "Verpflichtung jener transzendenten Wahrheit gegenüber".<sup>118</sup>

Of particular note in the work of Carlyle is his admiration for the Germanic nations, especially Prussia, as is highlighted by the praise of Friederich Wilhelm and Frederick the Great, as well as their ancestors of the Hohenzollern dynasty. *The History of Frederick the Great* is particularly important as an example, and indeed the climax, of Carlyle's struggle with the relationship and conflict between intellectual and political leadership. This is achieved through contrasts between the 'political' and 'literary' great men of the epoch. Hence, Friedrich Wilhelm I is portrayed as a practical genius, a "dumb poet"<sup>119</sup> whose poetic ideal is the perfection of the Prussian army, and who, despite his lack of "tongue-learning",<sup>120</sup> is ultimately judged superior to his literary counterpart Samuel Johnson.

Similarly, the reader observes the ongoing battle between Frederick the Great and his "spiritual complement"<sup>121</sup> Voltaire. This relationship between "the sage Plato [...] and his Tyrant Dionysius"<sup>122</sup> represents in turn a battle within the King himself, whose dual nature - his tendency towards philosophy and the arts, combined with military skill - is highlighted by Carlyle. Indeed, the following passage, taken from the biography, clearly illustrates where the writer's sympathies lie:

[...] much splendour of what we could call a golden or soft nature [...]; and also, what we like almost better in him, something of a steel-bright or stellar splendour [...] which is a fine addition to the

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<sup>117</sup> Carlyle, "Past and Present" (1848), in: *The Works of Thomas Carlyle in 30 Volumes*, op. cit. Vol. XX, p. 263f.

<sup>118</sup> Fasbender, op. cit., p. 174.

<sup>119</sup> Carlyle, "History of Friedrich II. of Prussia called Frederick the Great", op. cit., Vol. II., p. 46.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., Vol. I., p. 342.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., Vol. III., p. 177.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., p. 193.

softer element, and will keep it and its philanthropies and magnanimities well under rule.<sup>123</sup>

Voltaire, who is continuously criticised and brought into disrepute, admires Frederick, “that terrible practical Doer”,<sup>124</sup> whilst Frederick’s literary “muses”<sup>125</sup> remain within the sphere of the practical and real and are dismissed as mere amusement. Frederick is therefore forced, firstly through obedience to his strict father and secondly due to the break-down of his relationship with Voltaire, to abandon all aspirations of becoming a “spiritual Charlemagne”<sup>126</sup> and to concentrate instead on the military aspect of his reign, Carlyle having dismissed the ten years of peace from 1746 to 1756 as worthy of little attention.

An interesting element within this conflict is Carlyle’s own position, which characterises that of many of the writers studied, in particular Heine, Grabbe and Kleist, as whilst rejecting literature in favour of political action, he continues to write in the hope of bringing about this heroism. He therefore remains, as Philip Rosenberg points out, “on the borderline that separates thought from action”.<sup>127</sup> Whilst stressing Carlyle’s notion of the primacy of action over rational reflection, Fasbender argues that it is necessary to recognise that he in fact differentiates between two types of “idea” or theory, that is the view of the world as abstract and systematic or as concrete and divine. Taking the latter view, his *theory* of action is in fact an act in itself, as it is a revelation which may express itself either through thought or deed, that is through literature or politics:

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<sup>123</sup> Ibid., p. 306. This factor is accorded particular attention by Görner, who details Carlyle’s awareness of the creative element of Frederick the Great and his rule, whilst highlighting the author’s tendency to contrast the two spheres. (See Rüdiger Görner, “Die deutschen Leiden des Thomas Carlyle”, in: Görner, *Streifzüge durch die englische Literatur*. Insel Verlag, Frankfurt am Main / Leipzig 1998, p. 114-126). Parallels may also be drawn here with the “Dualismus” of Prince Louis Ferdinand, as highlighted in Part one, Chapter 4ii.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., Vol. V., p. 272.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., p. 204.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., Vol. III., p. 307f.

<sup>127</sup> Rosenberg, op. cit., p. vii.

In der im handelnden Individuum stattfindenden lebendigen Entäußerung als der überzeitlichen, unmittelbaren und unvorgänglichen Konkretion eines transzendenten Willens fallen Theorie und Praxis in eins.<sup>128</sup>

This does however presuppose Carlyle's faith in transcendental authority even during the latter stages of his work, and does not fully explain his apparent abandonment of literature.

A similar argument is put forward by Momm, who warns against the tendency to divide Carlyle's heroes into two different types, namely the 'man of action' and the intellectual genius, as the "heroic pattern" is common to all.<sup>129</sup> She does however highlight Carlyle's "Anti-Intellektualismus"<sup>130</sup> and his preference for the "effiziente, dynamische Helden" and the "Betonung des aktiven Durchsetzungsvermögens",<sup>131</sup> evident particularly in his later work.

If one follows the progression of Carlyle's thought to its ultimate conclusion, it therefore appears that intellectual leadership remains a means of inspiring active political leadership, as also represented by the "christlich-deutsche Tischgesellschaft", rather than a form of guidance in its own right.

Although Carlyle does present Frederick as a "questionable hero"<sup>132</sup> and "the last of the Kings",<sup>133</sup> he nevertheless appears as an example of "the *first* of our coming Kings",<sup>134</sup> the leadership ideal to be sought in the future, in an age reawakened to hero-worship and able to end the anarchy which the writer perceived in his era.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> Fasbender, op. cit., p. 93.

<sup>129</sup> Momm, op.cit., p. 65.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid., p. 131.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., p. 31f.

<sup>132</sup> Carlyle, "History of Friedrich II. of Prussia called Frederick the Great", op. cit., Vol. I., p. 6.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> Quote from Bentley, op. cit., p. 49.

<sup>135</sup> Carlyle does make the following statement: "My hopes of presenting, in this Last of the Kings, an exemplar to my contemporaries, I confess, are not high", although given the context this may be interpreted as criticism of the present era and its failure to recognize greatness, rather than of the hero himself.

This is judged to be particularly important as Carlyle presents Frederick not as a transcendental mediator between the divine and the temporal, but rather as a pragmatic military ruler who recognises facts and acts accordingly.<sup>136</sup> This is illustrated by his claims on Silesia, which Carlyle believes need no higher justification, putting the following words into the King's mouth:

Just rights? What are rights, never so just, which you cannot make valid? [...] If you have rights and can assert them into facts, do it; that is worth doing!<sup>137</sup>

Such praise of the pragmatic statesman is subsequently reflected in Carlyle's admiration of Bismarck, whom he perceived to be continuing the work of his Prussian ancestors and the only contemporary hero. Bismarck - whose reciprocal admiration of the English intellectual is recorded<sup>138</sup> - was supported by Carlyle in his claims on Alsace-Lorraine and his drive towards German unity. The writer believed him to be the object of misconceptions in an England which compared him to Napoleon - notably one of Carlyle's former, albeit restricted heroes - when in reality he was "of ideas quite superior to Napoleonic".<sup>139</sup>

The emphasis of Carlyle's thought has therefore clearly changed over time, experiencing what may be viewed as a reversal of the evolution of Wagner's

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<sup>136</sup> This aspect is highlighted by a number of Carlyle commentators including Bentley, Behnken and Vanden Bossche, who refers to a shift from the ideal hero to the real leader. As Behnken points out, Frederick is not portrayed as a divinely-inspired mediator between the temporal and the spiritual, but rather as a mere pragmatic mortal. Bentley stresses in this context the statement taken from "The History of Frederick the Great": "We must renounce ideals. We must sadly take up with the mournfullest barren realities." (Quote from Bentley, p. 58) However, this should not be taken as a complete indication of Carlyle's beliefs, as, placed within its context, it refers more specifically to ideals within the realms of historical writing.

<sup>137</sup> Carlyle, "History of Friedrich II. of Prussia called Frederick the Great", op. cit., Vol. III., p. 406.

<sup>138</sup> In 1874 for example, Bismarck awarded Carlyle the order of merit for his works, and on Carlyle's eightieth birthday the Prussian Chancellor praised him for introducing the English to Schiller. Eva Maria Baum, writing notably in 1936, states that Bismarck was particularly impressed by the English writer's ability, "mit Ehrfurcht und Liebe die großen Persönlichkeiten in den Mittelpunkt des Geschehens zu rücken". (E. M. Baum, *Bismarcks Urteil über England und die Engländer*. Münchener Historische Abhandlungen. Allgemeine und politische Geschichte. Hrsg. v. H. Günter/A. O. Meyer und K. A. v. Müller. 11. Heft. C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, München 1936, p. 7).

<sup>139</sup> Carlyle, "Latter Stage of the French-German War, 1870-71", in: *The Works of Thomas Carlyle in 30 Volumes*, op. cit. Vol. XXVII, "Critical and Miscellaneous Essays V", p. 59 (49-59).



interpretation of leadership. In its initial stages it reflects a loss of religious faith and the quest for spiritual guidance and mediatory transcendence through the heroic individual. This then led to the synthesis of the spiritual and the political leader, a process brought about in Germany largely by the Napoleonic reception. As such Carlyle's work may be seen as a summary of German thought in this field, an observation further emphasised by the reactionary nature of his writing. The shift from compulsive reverence to enforced obedience also recalls the progression from Hegel's professed absolute right of the world-historic individual to Grabbe's analysis of ruthless force and his decontextualised, purely charismatic notion of political legitimisation.

Despite this shift, brought about largely by contemporaneous political events, notably the revolution of 1848 and the rise of democracy, there nevertheless remains an underlying message throughout Carlyle's work, that is the need and desire for a leader, whichever form he should take. The heroic leader constitutes the answer to all problems faced by society, and will restore sincerity, unity, order and a belief in the divine to an era dominated by mechanism, the force of money and impending anarchy. In *Heroes and Hero-Worship* he wrote:

[...] I liken common languid times [...] to dry dead fuel, waiting for the lightning out of Heaven that shall kindle it. The great man with his free force direct out of God's own hand, is the lightning. His word is the wise healing word which all can believe in.<sup>140</sup>

What he referred to in *Signs of the Times* (1829) as a "new and brighter spiritual era",<sup>141</sup> reflecting a renewed belief in the Divine and the attainment of "a higher, heavenly freedom",<sup>142</sup> has become the search for an Able-Man, ultimately a pragmatic and autocratic statesman, who is "the healing which a sick world is everywhere, in these ages, seeking after!"<sup>143</sup> His view of Bismarck is to be seen in this light:

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<sup>140</sup> Carlyle, "On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History", op. cit., p. 13.

<sup>141</sup> Carlyle, "Signs of the Times", in: Carlyle, "Critical and Miscellaneous Essays II", op.cit., p. 81.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., p. 82.

<sup>143</sup> Carlyle, "On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History", op. cit., p. 199.

In the hands of Bismarck, the chiefest statesman of the age,  
Germany's progress is as certain as the rising of tomorrow's sun.  
Nothing is to be feared.<sup>144</sup>

The power ideal which dominated the leadership theory of the late Carlyle was indeed  
to find its subsequent realisation in the Bismarckian era.

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<sup>144</sup> Quote from Bentley, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

*ii) From theory to practice: Bismarck as Napoleon's successor*

The "Sehnsucht nach dem 'großen Mann'"<sup>145</sup> which had dominated intellectual thought in Restoration Germany had been given a fresh impetus by both Wagner and Carlyle, who both looked forward to a future hero rather than continuing to mystically glorify Napoleon. This did however remain within the theoretical sphere, until political circumstances widened its support and led, ultimately, to the realisation of the mythical leader which had existed since the beginning of the century.

The desire for a new leader was strengthened during the mid nineteenth century by changing domestic and external political circumstances. The dissatisfaction which marked the "Vormärz" period culminated in the revolution of 1848, which effectively forced a reconsideration of the traditional understanding of political leadership. This dissatisfaction was exacerbated by the failure of the revolution in the face of the counterrevolution, led by Friedrich Wilhelm IV and his Ministerpräsident Otto von Manteuffel. The "Neue Ära" introduced by the then Prince Regent Wilhelm did reflect a more liberal bias, although this was in effect only a temporary tendency.

Such dissatisfaction with contemporary rulers increased following the rise to power in France of Napoleon III, which, echoing the situation under Napoleon I, strengthened the desire amongst neighbouring Germans to realise the long-held leadership myth. The reception of Napoleon III in Germany, as detailed by Heinz Gollwitzer, was largely positive, covering the breadth of the political spectrum. A small bonapartist group still remained which stemmed from supporters of Napoleon I, and Heine, whilst distancing himself from the bonapartist party, transferred his admiration of Napoleon I to his nephew, the charismatic leader thereby again transcending political boundaries.<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> Ernst Engelberg, *Bismarck. Urpreuße und Reichsgründer*. Siedler Verlag, Berlin 1985, p. 484.

<sup>146</sup> See Heinrich Heine, "Waterloo-Fragment", in: Heine, *Sämtliche Schriften*, op.cit., Band 6, p. 502-513. (Prior to the writing of the "Waterloo-Fragment" Heine had expressed a fluctuating response to Napoleon III and Bonapartism, as well as to the French King Louis Philippe. For further details see Reeves, op.cit., p. 102f and Hansen, op.cit., p. 79-92).

Such praise was however not restricted to the adherents of the former French Emperor. On a wider scale admiration for the strong leadership evident in France dominated contemporary discussion. Even after the rise of nationalist sentiment in 1870 admiration of Louis Napoleon's governmental style continued, being then separated from the individual and linked, more frequently, to the more general concept of Caesarism. Dissenting voices were to be heard, particularly amongst the humanistically oriented intellectuals such as Karl Christian Planck, who felt that bonapartist France lacked the "moralisch-intellektuelle Stärke" characteristic of Germany.<sup>147</sup> Such critics were however strongly outnumbered.

Many Conservatives saw in Napoleon III's authoritarian methods an opportunity for the restoration of their waning power, particular examples being Otto von Manteuffel - who was later to recommend the execution of a *coup d'état* by Bismarck - and the publicist Constantin Frantz. Sent by Manteuffel to France in order to observe the political situation, Frantz praised Louis Napoleon and his use of authority and force in order to establish order. His anonymously published essay *Louis Napoleon* (1852) provides evidence of the continuation of the traditional Napoleonic myth, Napoleon I being described as a "neue Herkules, [...] der die grübelnde Welt dem Prinzip der Aktivität und Personalität zurückgegeben hat".<sup>148</sup> In a passage which recalls the decontextualisation of political authority advocated by Grabbe and Carlyle, Frantz writes:

Dieser Mann regiert, nicht in Kraft der Legitimität oder sonst einer moralischen Idee, sondern im Namen einer physischen

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<sup>147</sup> Karl Christian Planck, "Deutschland und Frankreich. In der Stunde des Nationalkampfes 1870", (ungedruckt) in: Planck, *Deutsche Geschichte und deutscher Beruf. Aufsätze und Reden. Zur Erinnerung an die 25. Wiederkehr seines Todestags, 7. Juni 1880.* Hrsg. und eingeleitet von R. Planck. J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), Tübingen 1905, p. 140-144. Despite such criticism, which was strengthened during the Franco-Prussian war, Planck nevertheless admired Napoleon III for his ability to capture the modern *Zeitgeist*, which he felt ought also to be adopted in Germany. (See Karl Christian Planck, "Deutschland und der Napoleonismus" [1860, ungedruckt], in: Planck, *Deutsche Zukunft. Ausgewählte politische Schriften.* Hrsg. und eingeleitet von Mathilde Planck. Drei Masken Verlag, München 1922, p. 3-65).

<sup>148</sup> Constantin Frantz, *Louis Napoléon. Masse oder Volk.* Hrsg. v. Günter Maschke. Karolinger Verlag, Wien und Leipzig 1990, p. 63.

Notwendigkeit, da er auf der Majorität ruht und die Notwendigkeit vorliegt, daß sich die Minorität unterwerfen muß.<sup>149</sup>

The popular need for a plebiscitary dictatorship is therefore legitimised through the charismatic personality, who commands the subordination of the masses, themselves incapable of self-government. The common ethical will necessary to fully legitimise a constitution is consequently to be achieved through the mutual abandonment of the individual "Eigenwille" in the name of the nation as a whole.<sup>150</sup>

It is this theory which then serves as a basis for Frantz' justification of Napoleon III's actions, both dynastic restoration and parliamentarianism having been dismissed as potential constitutional forms for post-revolutionary France and Germany. Through parallels drawn between the two neighbouring countries throughout the text, Frantz therefore implies that the implementation of charismatic leadership, if necessary by force, is the only true solution to Germany's constitutional crisis.<sup>151</sup>

Many Liberals within the German political scene, such as Julius Fröbel and Heinrich Blankenburg, were also able to justify Napoleon III and his "autokratisch-liberales" regime as necessary for the maintenance of order in France, and gave veiled indications as to the possible benefits of applying this system to Germany. Politician and financier Ludwig Bamberger also gave particular praise to the great individual personality of Napoleon III, which he deemed underestimated but central to the French regime.<sup>152</sup>

Support of Bonapartism or Caesarism was also evident in the left-wing of the political spectrum. Gollwitzer highlights in this respect the "charismatischen Führerkult" of the so-called 'Rohmerkreis', which was linked to a pragmatic political ethos and hailed as its heroes Caesar and Napoleon I, Napoleon III being neglected for nationalist

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<sup>149</sup> Ibid., p. 61.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid., p. 76f.

<sup>151</sup> In two letters to Bismarck dated 1858 Frantz did indeed recommend the implementation of a *coup d'état*, though the Chancellor warned Manteuffel of Frantz' "bonapartistischen Fantastereien". (Constantin Frantz, *Briefe*, op.cit., p. 25-29). Frantz was however to reject these opinions, becoming an active opponent of Bismarck and advocate of federalism, as referred to in Part II, Chapter 1.

reasons. Reflecting contemporary popular feeling and the demands for a counterbalance to Napoleon III, Friedrich Rohmer became the mystified “künftigen deutschen Cäsar”.<sup>153</sup>

This more generalised call for a powerful leader reflects, firstly, the nationalist desire to reject Napoleon III whilst supporting his leadership strategy, as was the case regarding the negative response to Napoleon I. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, it shows that this leadership ideal was not merely a German phenomenon, but one which was common to contemporary Europe as a whole and could be observed in the technique of such leaders as Disraeli and Fürst Schwarzenberg of Austria, as both Gollwitzer and Michael Stürmer point out.<sup>154</sup> It stemmed not from Bonapartism alone but from a wider trend towards a renewed Caesarism, defined at that time as “the interplay of social upheaval, crisis feeling, and autorité héroïque”.<sup>155</sup> This trend was linked to the move towards a “Philosophie der Tat” and hence to “Realpolitik”, reflecting changes in the political ideology of mid nineteenth century Germany and a more practical and pragmatic approach to the associated concept of leadership.

This is also evident in the positive response from within Germany to the successful leader of the Italian nationalist movement Camillo Cavour, whose actions, particularly following the Italian war of 1859, contributed to the revival of nationalist feeling. The move towards German unification had been halted by the division between the “Deutschen Nationalverein”, supporting a so-called “kleindeutsche Lösung” under Prussian leadership, and the “Deutschen Reformverein”, advocating a more federalised “Großdeutschland”, and ‘Cavourism’ therefore became a model solution to this political stagnation in Germany.

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<sup>152</sup> See Gollwitzer, *op.cit.*, p. 44-67.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 59f.

<sup>154</sup> See *Ibid.*, p. 66f; also Michael Stürmer, “Bismarck in Perspective”, in: *Central European History*. Vol. 4 (1971), p. 329 (291-331).

<sup>155</sup> Michael Stürmer, “Caesar’s Laurel Crown - the Case for a Comparative Concept.” Reply to Allan Mitchell, in: *The Journal of Modern History*. Vol. 49 (June 1977), p. 204 (203-207). (Allan Mitchell, “Bonapartism as a Model for Bismarckian Politics”, in: *The Journal of Modern History*. Vol. 49 [June 1977], p. 181-199).

In more immediate terms, the constitutional crisis of 1862 regarding the Prussian government's plans for army reform led to political deadlock between the chambers and the threat of abdication on the part of the King. It was felt that a strong individual was required in order to solve the crisis, though the parliamentary political parties were subject to a number of internal divisions and were not able to put forward any such representative. This situation provided the opportunity for the rise of Bismarck, who, in the wake of Napoleon III, was able to take advantage of the popular mood of the time, as well as immediate political events, thereby becoming the realisation of Carlyle's heroic ideal.

The Bismarckian concept of leadership, which is the focus of this chapter, is to be considered in terms of system and, more importantly, style. A detailed examination of Bismarck's actual policies is not the aim of this analysis.<sup>156</sup> His leadership has been and remains the subject of much discussion, which, although varied on finer points, tends to reflect a consensus regarding general characteristics. It must however be noted that the image of Bismarck varies considerably over time, reflecting changing political circumstances; thus the vast majority of pre-war literature formed part of the "Bismarck-Kult"<sup>157</sup> and became increasingly influenced by nationalist and subsequently national-socialist tendencies, whereas post-war academic discussion saw detailed analysis of the possible links between Bismarck and Hitler and thus the influence of the individual on the course of history.<sup>158</sup>

Bismarck's memoirs, *Gedanken und Erinnerungen*, provide a source of information on his leadership which, although highly subjective and of questionable accuracy, nevertheless gives an indication of his opinions on this matter, both through the

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<sup>156</sup> For further details see, for example, Engelberg, *Bismarck. Urpreuße und Reichsgründer*, op. cit.; Lothar Gall, *Bismarck. Der Weisse Revolutionär*. Propyläen Verlag, Frankfurt am Main / Berlin / Wien 1980; Michael Stürmer, *Bismarck. Die Grenzen der Politik*. Piper Verlag, München 1987.

<sup>157</sup> For further details see, for example, Wülfing/Bruns/Parr, op. cit.; Rolf Parr, "2 Seelen wohnen, ach! in meiner Brust". *Strukturen und Funktionen der Mythisierung Bismarcks. 1860-1918*. Wilhelm Fink Verlag, München 1994; *Bismarck und der deutschen Nationalmythos*. Hrsg. v. Lothar Machtan. Edition Temmen, Bremen 1994.

<sup>158</sup> For a more detailed description of the progression of the image of Bismarck see Stürmer, "Bismarck in Perspective", op.cit.; *Das Bismarck Problem in der Geschichtsschreibung nach 1945*. Hrsg. v. Lothar Gall. Verlag Kiepenheuer und Witsch, Köln / Berlin 1971, p. 9-24.

presentation of his political actions, as well as by means of theoretical reflection. Bismarck's idealised self-portrayal may also be seen to reflect how he viewed contemporary attitudes towards leadership. It is for these reasons that the memoirs, together with the recorded *Gespräche*, will serve as the principal source of reference in this chapter.

The Prussian constitution of the latter half of the nineteenth century was based on a traditional monarchy, combined with a two-tier parliamentary system. The King retained powers over foreign policy and the armed forces, as well as the right to convene and absolve parliament. Agreement between the monarch and the two chambers was necessary for all legislative decisions, and the Ministerpräsident, the position held by Bismarck from 1862 to 1890, was directly responsible to the King and occupied a priority position over the rest of the cabinet ministers.

Owing to the political crisis of 1862, Bismarck was able to negotiate the circumstances under which he came to power largely on his own terms. Stressing the necessity of a "Periode der Diktatur"<sup>159</sup> in order to restore order and the position of the King, he was granted permission to govern against a parliamentary majority and without an agreed budget. This condition was supported by the so-called "Lückentheorie", according to which in the case of an unresolved disagreement between the three constitutional powers the government could rule alone. To this end Bismarck continually stressed the subordinate position of the parliament to the monarch and his government, emphasising his individual authority within this power structure.

The constitution of the North German Federation of 1867, heavily influenced by Bismarck, secured power for Prussia, the Ministerpräsident being the only 'Bundesminister'. He was required to countersign all legislative changes and retained a high degree of political independence over both the Bundesstag and the

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<sup>159</sup> Otto von Bismarck, *Gedanken und Erinnerungen*. Mit einer Einleitung von Hermann Proebst. München, Wilhelm Goldmann Verlag. 3 Bände in einem Ungekürzten Ausgabe. o. J., p. 205.



Bundespräsidium. It was this constitution which, in its fundamental elements, became the Reichsverfassung in 1871, thus further securing Bismarck's powerful position.

Of arguably greater importance within this context than the legal position of the Ministerpräsident is Bismarck's personal interpretation of this role. In his memoirs he voices approval of the Prussian constitution, stressing the importance of individual political responsibility and the "dangers" of majority decision-making. Parliament and the press are required in order to prevent "undesirable" influences over the monarch, although constant control of them remains equally necessary.<sup>160</sup> Indeed, the extent to which public criticism ought to be heeded remains arbitrary, and Bismarck, praising the attitude of Wilhelm I on this matter, emphasises the need for a monarch to allow his ministers to oppose majority decisions and court influences where necessary.<sup>161</sup>

This defence of an independent and powerful leading minister is further emphasised by Bismarck's attitude towards the parliamentary political parties, which, despite his own pragmatism, he criticises for failing to possess specific programmes, being distinguished merely by power-seeking individuals and their supporters:

In unsern Fraktionen ist der eigentliche Kristallisationspunkt nicht ein Programm, sondern eine Person, ein parlamentarischer Kondottiere. Auch die Entschlüsse entspringen nicht aus den Ansichten der Mitglieder, sondern aus dem Willen des Führers

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<sup>160</sup> Throughout his memoirs Bismarck criticises the court and, in particular, Queen Augusta, for attempting to influence Wilhelm I, in direct opposition to the Chancellor's wishes. (See Bismarck, *Gedanken und Erinnerungen*, op. cit.).

<sup>161</sup> See *Ibid.*, p. 321f. Whilst maintaining his self-representation as a faithful servant of the King, Bismarck cultivates throughout both his memoirs and the recorded conversations the impression of control over his "master", providing numerous examples of his ability to persuade the King to accept his point of view, and using Wilhelm I's refusal to allow him to resign in order to stress his own indispensability. Indeed, the degree to which he was granted personal autonomy serves as the basis for his value judgement of the monarchs under whom he served. Thus, he claims to have refused to take office under Friedrich Wilhelm IV as this would not have allowed him sufficient political independence, whereas Wilhelm I is praised for granting this. Conversely, Wilhelm II's desire to act alone is presented as the basis for the rift between the two men. (For further detailed descriptions of the relationship between King and first minister as seen by Bismarck see p. 487ff and 595f).

beziehungsweise eines hervorragenden Redners, was in der Regel zusammenfällt.<sup>162</sup>

Echoing Carlylean theory, he attacks social democracy as both contradictory to reality and dangerous, as the existence of one common public opinion is not possible and, furthermore, the people are sufficiently "stumpf und unentwickelt"<sup>163</sup> to be fooled by the rhetoric of individuals. The rule of a charismatic leader combined with the increased power of the lower classes - rendering them desirous of further power and material possessions - will, according to Bismarck, result in disorder and, ultimately, absolutism and dictatorship, in order to satisfy the albeit at times sub-conscious need of the people for order:

[...] so wird der geschichtliche Kreislauf immer in verhältnismäßig kurzer Zeit zur Diktatur, zur Gewaltherrschaft, zum Absolutismus zurückführen, weil auch die Massen schließlich dem Ordnungsbedürfnis unterliegen, und wenn sie es a priori nicht erkennen, so sehen sie es infolge mannigfaltiger Argumente ad hominem schließlich immer wieder ein und erkaufen die Ordnung von Diktatur und Cäsarismus durch bereitwilliges Aufopfern auch des berechtigten und festzuhaltenden Maßes von Freiheit, welches europäische staatliche Gesellschaften vertragen, ohne zu erkranken.<sup>164</sup>

Thus, by declaring social democracy the root of dictatorship, Bismarck justifies his own authoritarian rule as a means of maintaining freedom for the people, whom he is protecting from the influence of self-seeking and illegitimate leaders. He therefore presents himself as both separate from and superior to the political parties, a

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<sup>162</sup> Ibid., p. 392.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid., p. 321.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid.

“Verfassungsfaktor *sui generis*”,<sup>165</sup> prepared to deal with whoever would ultimately contribute to the attainment of his goals.<sup>166</sup>

Echoing the Napoleon phenomenon, the key characteristics of Bismarck’s rule may therefore be defined as autonomy and the importance of the individual personality, his self-portrayal, as well as the reception of him, reflecting the received leadership ideal of early to mid nineteenth century thought. Recalling the work of writers such as Goethe, Heine and Grabbe, he presents himself as a practical and decisive “Mann der Tat”, who is able to quickly formulate an overview of complex political circumstances and is prepared to take whatever action is necessary in order to achieve his aims. This pragmatic approach is exemplified by his justification of the implementation of universal suffrage in order to secure Germany’s independence:

In einem Kampfe derart, wenn er auf Leben und Tod geht, sieht man die Waffen, zu denen man greift, und die Werthe, die man durch ihre Benutzung zerstört, nicht an; der einzige Rathgeber ist zunächst der Erfolg des Kampfes, die Rettung der Unabhängigkeit nach Außen, die Liquidation und Aufbesserung der dadurch angerichteten Schaden hat nach dem Frieden stattzufinden.<sup>167</sup>

The Chancellor’s self-professed authority over both the legislative and executive powers is stressed throughout his memoirs and conversations, in which he complains heavily of any limitations on his own political and military autonomy. Moritz Busch records the following comment made during the peace negotiations at Versailles, in which Bismarck contrasts his position with the absolute autonomy enjoyed by

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<sup>165</sup> Michael Stürmer, “Eine schwierige Vaterfigur. Politik im Angesicht der Vergeblichkeit”, in: *Die Zeit*, Nr. 42, 10.10.1980, p. 35.

<sup>166</sup> The Chancellor’s doctor, Eduard Cohen, records a conversation with him on this matter: “Er, Bismarck, könne mit den jetzt verwickelten Parteien nichts anfangen. Die einzige Partei, die eine Majortität bilden könne, sei das Zentrum, und mit dem wolle er nichts zu tun haben. Alle übrigen seien unzuverlässig und zweifelhaft. Seine Partei bestände nur aus dem König und ihm”. (Otto von Bismarck, *Gespräche*. Hrsg. v. Willy Andreas unter Mitwirkung von K. F. Reinking. Carl Schünemann Verlag, Bremen 1964. Band II. Von der Reichsgründung bis zur Entlassung, p. 335).

<sup>167</sup> Bismarck, *Gedanken und Erinnerungen*, op. cit., p. 319f.

Frederick the Great and Napoleon, itself a reflection of his own perception of his status:

Ach, ich dachte eben wieder einmal, was ich oft schon gedacht habe, wenn ich nur einmal fünf Minuten die Gewalt hätte, zu sagen: So wird es und so nicht. - Daß man sich nicht mit Warum und Darum abzuquälen, zu beweisen und zu betteln hätte bei den einfachsten Dingen. - Das ging doch viel rascher bei Leuten wie Friedrich dem Großen, die selber Militärs waren und zugleich was vom Gange der Verwaltung verstanden und ihre eigenen Minister waren. Auch mit Napoleon. Aber hier, dieses ewige Reden- und Bettelmüssen.<sup>168</sup>

Further parallels with the Napoleonic myth are revealed in Bismarck's self-identification with the state - "Moi, je suis l'Etat"<sup>169</sup> - and consequent belief in his own indispensability. This was underlined by the constant threat of resignation, which has led commentators to accuse him of carrying out a "verschleierten politischen Staatsreich".<sup>170</sup> Stürmer refers in this context to the personalised myth upon which his authority was based: "Solange er die Macht in Händen hatte, gründete er sie auf den eigenen Mythos".<sup>171</sup> It was this "persönliche Führung", combined with his success as a parliamentary speaker, which has led many commentators to draw parallels with the archetypal charismatic leader, as defined by, in particular, Jacob Burckhardt and Max Weber.<sup>172</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> Bismarck, *Gespräche*, op. cit., Band I. Bis zur Reichsgründung, p. 338.

<sup>169</sup> Quote from Lothar Gall, "Der Staatsmann, die Redekunst und die Macht", in: *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, Nr. 91, 18.4.1981.

<sup>170</sup> Engelberg, *Bismarck. Urpreuße und Reichsgründer*, op. cit., p. 514.

<sup>171</sup> Michael Stürmer, "Die grollende Legende im Sachsenwald", in: *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 6.10.1977, Nr. 232, p. 11.

<sup>172</sup> See for instance Stürmer, *Bismarck. Die Grenzen der Politik*, op. cit., p. 20, 92f and Stürmer, "Die grollende Legende im Sachsenwald", op. cit. Bismarck was strongly opposed to "die Demagogie der Redner und der Presse", (Bismarck, *Gedanken und Erinnerungen*, op.cit., p. 276), which he identified with liberal and social democratic movements, and therefore did not wish to be considered merely a charismatic orator: "... ich bin Minister, Diplomat und Staatsmann und würde mich für gekränkt halten, wenn man mich einen Redner nennte". (Quote from Gall, "Der Staatsmann, die Redekunst und die Macht", op.cit.).

A further reflection of Bismarck's realisation of the received interpretation of leadership, summarised in the work of Carlyle, is the importance which he placed on the military. It was this aspect, combined with a genuine concern for the interests of one's subjects, which he, as previously Goethe, believed to be the most necessary element of any leader, as successfully demonstrated, in his eyes, by Frederick the Great:

Friedliebende, zivilistische Volksbeglückung wirkt auf die christlichen Nationen Europas in der Regel nicht so werbend, so begeisternd wie die Bereitwilligkeit, Blut und Vermögen der Untertanen auf dem Schlachtfelde siegreich zu verwenden.<sup>173</sup>

This is further supported by his advocacy of the use of "Zwang und Furcht" as a means of maintaining order,<sup>174</sup> the army being used in order to support the failing monarchy, and his famous call for "Eisen und Blut".<sup>175</sup>

As a result of such autocratic characteristics a number of Bismarck's contemporaries, of both Liberal and Conservative conviction, accused the Chancellor of displaying a bonapartist style of leadership. Baron von Roggenbach for instance spoke of his "herrschsüchtigen Charakter" and the "demagogischer Mittel" which he employed and the historian Heinrich Gelzer complained of the "napoleonischer Geist und cavoursche Nachahmung" evident in the Bismarckian leadership.<sup>176</sup> Such accusations increased as time progressed, particularly in the late 1870s and the 1880s, following the decisive anti-liberal shift in domestic policies. In 1881 Gustav Freytag warned:

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<sup>173</sup> Bismarck, *Gedanken und Erinnerungen*, op. cit., p. 591.

<sup>174</sup> "Die hiesige Bevölkerung wäre ein politischer Vulkan, wenn sich Revolutionen mit dem Munde machen ließen; so lange es aber Blut und Knochen kosten kann, wird sie jedem gehorchen, der den Mut hat zu befehlen und eventuell den Degen zu ziehen.... Gewiß ist, daß hier, solange Gott nicht eine ganz neue Generation schafft, für lange Zeit nur Zwang und Furcht die Ordnung erhalten; sehr wenige Bajonette reichen hin, um die Furcht zu erwecken, fielen die aber fort, so zweifle ich allerdings nicht, daß es ungesäumt losgehen würde." (Quote from Stürmer, *Bismarck. Die Grenzen der Politik*, op. cit., p. 46).

<sup>175</sup> Quote from *Ibid.*, p. 57.

<sup>176</sup> Quote from Michael Stürmer, "Bismarck - Mythos und Historie", in: *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*. No. B 3/71, Jan. 16. 1971, p. 13 (3-21).

Seele und Leben einer Nation dürfen nicht lange von dem Gemüt und Gewissen eines einzelnen abhängen und in ihrem wichtigsten Inhalt durch die Selbstherrlichkeit *eines* Mannes geleitet werden.<sup>177</sup>

Such concerns were however combined with praise of the ideal of strong leadership, thus reflecting the acceptance of what may be deemed negative characteristics in order to achieve order, as was evident in the reception of Napoleon I. General von Schweinitz, for example, was to criticise Bismarck's "vollständige Alleinherrschaft" whilst acknowledging his "dämonische Überlegenheit".<sup>178</sup> This tendency is particularly evident in the writings of Fontane who, despite later criticism, was prepared to tolerate Bismarck's style of leadership due to the greatness which he had restored to Germany, his actions legitimised through his own personal genius:

Der Kanzler ist ein Despot; aber er darf es sein, er *muß* es sein. Wär' er es nicht, wär er ein parlamentarisches Ideal, das sich durch das Dümme was es gibt, durch Majoritäten, bestimmen ließe, so hätten wir überhaupt noch keinen Kanzler und am wenigsten ein Deutsches Reich.<sup>179</sup>

The question of possible similarities or influences between Napoleon III and Bismarck has been the subject of political and academic discussion since the Bismarckian era - in particular during the post-war period - the development of which is summarised in both Stürmer's essay "Bismarck in Perspective" (1971) and "Bonapartism as a Model for Bismarckian Politics" by Allan Mitchell (1977).

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<sup>177</sup> Quote from *Ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>178</sup> Quote from *Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>179</sup> Theodor Fontane, Brief an Philipp zu Eulenburg, 12.3.1881, in: Fontane, *Werke, Schriften und Briefe*. Abteilung IV. Hrsg. v. Walter Keitel und Helmuth Nürnberger. Carl Hanser Verlag, München 1976, Briefe, III Band, p. 124 (123ff). In a previous letter dated June 1879 Fontane refers to Carlylean theory in order to support this argument. (See *Ibid.*, p. 24ff). Fontane became increasingly critical of Bismarck in the latter stages of his rule and in particular following his dismissal, as conveyed in the portrayal of Bismarckian society presented in *Effi Briest* (1895). For further details concerning Fontane's opinion on Bismarck see Hans Schumann, *Der Schwefelgelbe. Fontane und Bismarck*. Manesse Bücherei, Zürich 1989 and Gordon A. Craig, *Über Fontane*. Aus dem Amerikanischen von Jürgen Baron von Koskull. Verlag C. H. Beck, München 1997.

The emphasis of the debate has shifted over time from general references to Napoleon III's leadership style and regime towards a more detailed examination of his specific policies, leading to the creation of a bonapartist model, firstly by Gustav Rein (1957), later adapted by Hans-Ulrich Wehler (1969) and subsequently rejected and reformulated by Mitchell.<sup>180</sup> However, as Mitchell himself points out, it remains doubtful as to whether any accurate and detailed model of Bonapartism as a point of reference and comparison can be established, taking into consideration the political and socio-economic differences between France and Germany. This said, whilst bearing in mind Mitchell's criticism that any model based merely on style or technique is necessarily of an overly general nature, with insufficient emphasis placed on actual policies, it nevertheless remains a valid criterion for a comparison of the leadership of the two figures within the objectives of this study.

It must also be noted that the discussion is clouded by the use of a range of terminology in order to refer to similar characteristics. The reader therefore observes the use of Bonapartism, Caesarism, Imperialism and simply Dictatorship as descriptions of both Napoleon III's and Bismarck's leadership, as well as combinations of the above, leading to such terms as "bonapartistische Diktatur" and "preussisch-deutschen Bonapartismus",<sup>181</sup> the latter of which appears most accurate in reflecting the similarities between the two systems, whilst highlighting their historical and national specificities.

A central point of the comparison between the two figures remains the exchange of letters between the legitimist Conservative Ludwig Gerlach and Bismarck, highlighted in *Gedanken und Erinnerungen*, in which Bismarck defends the pursuit of political links with France, the bonapartist system being justified in order to restore national stability:

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<sup>180</sup> See Mitchell, op.cit.

<sup>181</sup> See Ernst Engelberg, "Zur Entstehung und historischen Stellung des Preussisch-Deutschen Bonapartismus", in: *Beiträge zum neuen Geschichtsbild. Zum 60. Geburtstag von Alfred Meusel*. Hrsg. v. Fritz Klein und Joachim Streisand. Rütten und Loening, Berlin 1956, p. 236-251.

Die jetzige Regierungsform ist für Frankreich nichts Willkürliches, was Louis Napoléon einrichten oder ändern könnte; sie war für ihn ein Gegebenes und ist wahrscheinlich die einzige Methode, nach der Frankreich auf lange Zeit hin regiert werden kann; [...] L. Napoléon hat die revolutionären Zustände des Landes nicht geschaffen, die Herrschaft auch nicht in Auflehnung gegen eine rechtmäßig bestehende Autorität gewonnen, sondern sie als herrenloses Gut aus dem Strudel der Anarchie herausgefischt. Wenn er sie jetzt niederlegen wollte, so würde er Europa in Verlegenheit setzen, und man würde ihn ziemlich einstimmig bitten zu bleiben.<sup>182</sup>

This statement recalls his own emphasis on the need for a "Periode der Diktatur" and is supported by praise of the individual character of Louis Napoleon<sup>183</sup> and the belief that France does not constitute a threat to Germany.<sup>184</sup> The implementation of an essentially dictatorial regime is cited as necessary for both France and Germany, and stands as a third ideology between both republicanism and absolutism, both critically rejected by Bismarck, as previously by Frantz.

Viewed in conjunction with Bismarck's autonomous and personally oriented regime, as well as his manipulation of universal suffrage as a political tool, such evidence therefore suggests that the Chancellor was positively influenced by the success of Louis Napoleon. He does however claim to have advised the "Abenteurer auf dem Thron"<sup>185</sup> on constitutional matters,<sup>186</sup> and portrays himself as having learned from the

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<sup>182</sup> Bismarck, *Gedanken und Erinnerungen*, op. cit., p. 145 (129-146). This justification of Napoleon III's regime evokes parallels with Goethe's acceptance of the 'negative' aspect of the rule of Napoleon I, as well as Carlyle's belief that: "no Nation that has not first been governed by so-called 'Tyrants,' [...] can ever come to much in this world". (Carlyle, "History of Friedrich II. of Prussia called Frederick the Great", op.cit. Vol. 1., p. 346).

<sup>183</sup> See Bismarck, *Gedanken und Erinnerungen*, op. cit., p. 128f.

<sup>184</sup> "Der Bonapartismus unterscheidet sich dadurch von der Republik, daß er nicht das Bedürfnis hat, seine Regierungsgrundsätze gewaltsam zu propagieren. Selbst der erste Napoleon hat den Ländern, die nicht direkt oder indirekt zu Fkr. geschlagen wurden, seine Regierungsform nicht aufgedrängt; man ahmte sie im Wetteifer freiwillig nach". (Ibid., p. 144).

<sup>185</sup> Bismarck, *Gespräche*, op. cit., Band I, p. 209.

<sup>186</sup> "Ich erinnere mich, daß, wie ich im Jahre 1856 in Paris war, da ließ mich der Kaiser Napoleon zu mir rufen und legte mir die Frage vor, ob er absolut oder konstitutionell regieren sollte. Ich sagte: "Solange Eure Majestät die Garde haben, können Sie sich den Luxus dieses Experiments ja erlauben, aber wenn einmal die Flut kommt, dann ist es doch ganz gut, wenn ein Damm da ist, der zwischen



mistakes of both Napoleon I and III. These 'mistakes' are however notably based not on the fundamentals of the constitutional regime and the more general style of leadership, but rather on the danger of self-aggrandisement through the continued expansion of authority.<sup>187</sup>

Although obvious differences between Bonapartism and Bismarckism remain, general similarities in style may be observed. Gollwitzer emphasises the parallels in terms of personality and statecraft, in particular a policy of risk, manipulation of universal suffrage, lack of respect for legitimacy and the combination of conservatism and revolution.<sup>188</sup> This argument is supported by Stürmer, who also highlights the manipulation of the press and public opinion and the omnipresent threat of a *coup d'état*.<sup>189</sup> Such parallels are confirmed by Manfred Wüstemeyer's more recent analysis of Bonapartism, in which he emphasises the dependence of the system on an individual personality:

Er bleibt an die historische Ausnahmesituation gebunden, schlägt als System kaum Wurzeln in seiner temporären Anhängerschaft und steht und fällt mit dem nicht übertragbaren Nimbus der ihn repräsentierenden Persönlichkeit.<sup>190</sup>

Despite such similarities Napoleon III should however not be viewed as the sole cause of the growing demands for Caesarism in Germany, described by Theodor Mommsen as "ein akutes Fieber, das seinen Lauf haben muß",<sup>191</sup> but rather the catalyst for an

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Ihnen und dem Volke steht." (Bismarck, *Gespräche*, op. cit., Band III. Von der Entlassung bis zum Tode, p. 207).

<sup>187</sup> See *Ibid.*, p. 95f.

<sup>188</sup> Gollwitzer, op.cit., p. 65f. The coexistence or rather amalgamation and consequent negation of two political ideologies, that is Conservatism and social democracy, was highlighted by Bismarck's contemporary Hermann Wagener, who defined Bonapartism as "gleichzeitig die Negation des Alten und die Negation des Neuen". (Quote from Engelberg, "Zur Entstehung und historischen Stellung des Preußisch-Deutschen Bonapartismus", op. cit., p. 241). Engelberg perceives a number of similarities between the two leaders as seen from the Marxist perspective of class politics.

<sup>189</sup> See Stürmer, "Bismarck - Mythos und Historie", op. cit., p. 16.

<sup>190</sup> Manfred Wüstemeyer, *Zum politischen System des Bonapartismus im Zweiten Empire*. Dissertationen zur neueren Geschichte. Böhlau Verlag, Köln / Wien 1986, p. 382.

<sup>191</sup> *Theodor Mommsen. Otto Jahn. Briefwechsel. 1842-1868*. Hrsg. v. Lothar Wickert. Vittorio Klostermann, Frankfurt am Main 1962, p. 327 (14.1.1865). Despite his growing criticism of Bismarck, Mommsen did, at least to a certain extent, admire Napoleon III. In 1863, following a

exacerbation or revival of an existing feeling, both in intellectual and popular circles, which stemmed from the Napoleonic myth and had been strengthened by domestic political circumstances.

To this extent the positive reaction in Germany to the 'Iron Chancellor' - exaggerated after his dismissal and death - echoes the Napoleonic reception of the early nineteenth century. However, whereas the failure to produce a counterbalance to Napoleon I had led to the mystification of the meaning of leadership, the *coup d'état* carried out by Napoleon III was echoed by the rise to power of Bismarck. It may therefore be concluded that the Chancellor represents the 'delayed' counterbalance to Napoleon I, achieved in the era of his successor. He is the practical realisation of the theoretical or mythical leader, the same ideal qualities being possessed, although removed from the sphere of fantasy.

This renewed practical emphasis meant that Bismarck, at least during his period of office, was largely separated from the element of spiritual guidance and secularised apotheosis which characterised the mythical leader to that date. The dominance of this practical aspect reflects contemporary tendencies in political thought and is, as referred to in the preceding section, indicated in the later works of Carlyle.

This phenomenon is reinforced by the evolution of the "Luisen-Mythos", which in the latter part of the century witnessed a shift away from the concept of Luise the immortal goddess, emphasising instead the temporal nature of her power, as put forward by Treitschke: "Auch diese hohe Gestalt stieg nicht wie Pallas gepanzert, fertig aus dem Haupte des Gottes empor, auch sie ist gewachsen in schweren Tagen".<sup>192</sup> Similarly, emphasis on Prince Louis Ferdinand's "Dualismus" gave way to

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meeting with the Emperor, he wrote to his wife: "Sonabend war ich bei dem Kaiser und ich muß sagen, daß er mir durchaus den Eindruck eines bedeutenden Mannes gemacht hat, wie man ihn unserer Nation wohl wünschen möchte! [...] Ich gestehe, ich bin mit einem Gefühl von Neid weggegangen, daß das Schicksal uns nicht einmal einen solchen grand criminel zuwirft: Was könnte der machen mit einer gesunden Nation wie die unsrige ist!" (Quote from Gollwitzer, op.cit., p. 60). He did however stress the need for freedom within such a powerful regime and was opposed to the dictatorial aspect of Bonapartism.

<sup>192</sup> Quote from Wülfing, "Die heilige Luise von Preußen", op. cit., p. 272. This coincided with a reiteration of Luise's qualities as wife and mother and hence a return to the pre-1806 perception of the role of a female leader, as propagated by Novalis. (See Ibid., p. 273ff).

the dominance of a military and nationalist portrayal.<sup>193</sup> This tendency reflects the progression of Carlyle's thought from the perception of literature as a form of intellectual guidance in its own right to political government by a pragmatic statesman, and is hence a further development of the "Produktivität der Taten" which had been a particular focus of the earlier reaction to Napoleon I.

Bismarck himself had contributed to the development of a political culture centred on "Realpolitik" and the dominance of political and military action. Despite his calls for the enlargement of the "Volk der Denker" as a counterbalance to the growing autocracy of the Prussian government,<sup>194</sup> literature and culture remained for him a private concern, removed from the political sphere, and he distanced himself from developments in contemporary philosophy: "Er [Schopenhauer] hat von mir keinen Gebrauch gemacht, und ich von ihm auch nicht".<sup>195</sup>

It was this absence of cultural or spiritual guidance which led to criticism of both the bonapartist and subsequently the Bismarckian regime from a number of contemporary writers and intellectuals. Theodor Mundt for example described Napoleon III's regime as "ein militär-polizeilicher Mechanismus, ohne jeden Hintergrund freier Seelen- und Geisteskräfte",<sup>196</sup> and Karl Christian Planck had, as early as 1860, warned of the potential "geistiger Nachlaß und sittliche Erschlaffung" which would stem from the regime in France.<sup>197</sup> Similarly Frantz, having revised his earlier support of bonapartist leadership, came to criticise Bismarck's autocracy and lack of moral and ethical standards:

Er ist ein reiner Gewaltmensch, der seine Gedanken nur auf  
äußerliche Combinationen und materielle Wachdrucksmittel richtet.

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<sup>193</sup> See for example the poem "Prinz Louis Ferdinand" by Johannes Jacobi and "Held und Helden" by Louis Ferdinand's grandson Ernst von Wildenbruch, in: Kleßman, op. cit., p. 298ff.

<sup>194</sup> Bismarck, *Gespräche*, op. cit., Band III, p. 94. (Gespräch mit dem Redakteur Anton Memminger [Neue Bayrische Landeszeitung], 16.8.1890).

<sup>195</sup> Bismarck, *Gespräche*, op. cit., Band I, p. 406. (Gespräch mit Julius von Eckardt und Anderen Tischgästen, 31.3.1884).

<sup>196</sup> Theodor Mundt, *Paris und Louis Napoleon. Neue Skizzen aus dem französischen Kaiserreich*. 2 Bände. Verlag von Otto Tanke, Berlin 1858. Band I, p. 147.

<sup>197</sup> Planck, "Deutschland und der Napoleonismus", op.cit., p. 53.

Im übrigen hat er nur über einen sehr geringen Ideenvorrath zu verfügen, und das ganze Kunstgebiet möchte ihm wohl "Wurst" sein [...].<sup>198</sup>

Of particular note in this context is Wagner's changing attitude towards Bismarck, which itself reflects the aforementioned shift in emphasis of his own interpretation of leadership. The relationship between the two contemporary icons is detailed by Hannu Salmi and Dieter Borchmeyer, who demonstrate the fundamental differences between their attitudes and ideals.<sup>199</sup> A degree of co-operation between the two men appeared to reflect a common goal, following Wagner's initial criticism of the "ehrgeiziger Junker".<sup>200</sup> However, both men were operating, as Wagner came to recognise, within separate spheres.

Wagner sought in the Prussian Ministerpräsident "einen Kanzler [...] für das Kunstwerk der Zukunft",<sup>201</sup> but abandoned these illusions when Bismarck's refusal of financial support proved that cultural unity was not to be achieved as a parallel to national unity within the political field. Similarly Bismarck, who had attempted to employ Wagner as a means of securing Bavaria's support for Prussia in the war against Austria, was quick to abandon this co-operation once his immediate aims had been realised. This abandonment led Wagner to radical attacks on the Chancellor, whom he criticised for a lack of ideological and cultural interest, his policies having created a "kulturelles Vakuum"<sup>202</sup> in Germany. To quote Salmi and Borchmeyer: "Wo das geistige Deutschland begann, hörte das politische auf".<sup>203</sup>

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<sup>198</sup> Letter to H. v. Wolzogen dated 10.5.1887, in: Frantz, *Briefe*, op.cit., p. 139. Such criticism also forms the basis of Constantin Frantz, *Die preußische Intelligenz und ihre Grenzen*. Druck und Verlag des Literarischen Instituts von Dr. M. Huttler, München 1874 and Constantin Frantz, *Die Quelle alles Uebels. Betrachtungen über die preußische Verfassungskrisis*. Cotta, Stuttgart 1863.

<sup>199</sup> See Hannu Salmi and Dieter Borchmeyer, "Heimlichkeiten, Mißverstehen, Haß. Mehr Soll als Haben: Bismarck, Wagner und die deutsche Einheit", in: *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, Bilder und Zeiten, Nr. 186, 12.8.1995, p. B1f.

<sup>200</sup> Quote from *Ibid.*, p. B1.

<sup>201</sup> Quote from *Ibid.*

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*, p. B2.

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.* This fact was recognized by Thomas Mann in "Leiden und Größe Richard Wagners", in which he states: "Wagner war Politiker genug, seine Sache mit der des Bismarck'schen Reiches zu verbinden: er sah einen Erfolg ohnegleichen, er schloß den seinen daran, und die europäische Hegemonie seiner Kunst ist das kulturelle Zubehör zur politischen Hegemonie Bismarcks geworden. Der große Staatsmann, mit dessen Werk er das seine vermählte, verstand von diesem überhaupt

The dichotomy between political and spiritual leadership had therefore reached its culmination in the work of Carlyle and its practical realisation in the Bismarckian regime. Although a number of intellectuals were prepared to accept this situation in order to fulfil their desire for a strong leader and consequently a powerful German Empire, the ideological reaction against the phenomenon from certain circles led to a reassessment of the leadership ideal, as is particularly evident in the work of Burckhardt and Nietzsche.

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nichts, hat sich nie auch nur darum gekümmert und hielt Wagner für einen verdrehten Kerl".  
(Thomas Mann, "Leiden und Größe Richard Wagners", op. cit., p. 116 [63-121]).

### *Chapter Three*

#### *Redefining the leader: Burckhardt, Nietzsche and the philosophical alternative*

The main thrust of the intellectual response to Bismarck in the mid to late nineteenth century was provided by Burckhardt and, in particular, Nietzsche, who together dismissed the false iconolatry of the Reichskanzler. Whilst echoing the contemporary belief in society's need for 'great men', Burckhardt was to attempt a redefinition of greatness which moved away from the notion of power towards an aesthetic and philosophical interpretation of leadership.

Similarly Nietzsche, whose publications and intellectual development coincide with the progression of Bismarck's political career, was to adopt and expand upon this approach. References throughout his work provide a fragmentary commentary on leadership which may be viewed as a reaction to the practical, pragmatic and politically oriented leadership culture which dominated that era, seeking instead a redefinition of greatness and the position of the individual within modern society. His work constitutes a key development of the theoretical notion of leadership, progressing from and breaking with the Carlylean and subsequently Wagnerian hero-worship, and evolving towards a new leadership ideal centred on the self-transcendence of the individual and re-emphasising the need for spiritual and philosophical guidance.

The lecture entitled *Die historische Größe*, presented by Burckhardt on a number of occasions between 1868 and 1873 and posthumously published as part of *Weltgeschichtliche Betrachtungen* in 1905, stands on the threshold between late nineteenth and early twentieth century thought. The arguments put forward in the lecture constitute a key link between the power ideal advocated by Carlyle and Bismarck and the shift towards a philosophical alternative, as was later to be further developed by Burckhardt's colleague Nietzsche. Furthermore, in attempting a predominantly analytical examination of "Größe", Burckhardt also represents the gradual trend towards an increasingly rational approach which was to reach its culmination in the work of Max Weber, thus contrasting sharply with the romanticism of the preceding period. Being the most detailed account of Burckhardt's approach to

greatness, as well as a reflection on contemporary leadership, it shall form the main focus of this analysis.

Echoing both popular contemporary feeling and the early to mid nineteenth century "Heroen-Kult", Burckhardt stresses the indispensability of 'great men' as a means of combating the growing phenomenon of "allgemeine Verflachung".<sup>204</sup> His rejection of the historical forces of social change in favour of a vision of the 'great man' who destroys the old and heralds the new recalls Carlyle's lecture *On Heroes and Hero Worship*. Like Carlyle, Burckhardt questions the ability of the present time to recognise its potential 'saviour', yet his faith in the continuity of greatness throughout history and the spontaneous and heroic coming of "der Rechte" remains unshattered, and is indeed a source of hope within an otherwise pessimistic outlook:

Denn die großen Männer sind zu unserem Leben notwendig, damit die weltgeschichtliche Bewegung sich periodisch und ruckweise frei mache von bloßen abgestorbenen Lebensformen und von reflektierendem Geschwätz. Und für den denkenden Menschen ist gegenüber der ganzen bisher abgelaufenen Weltgeschichte das Offenhalten des Geistes für jede Größe eine der wenigen sicheren Bedingungen des höheren geistigen Glückes.<sup>205</sup>

Despite the acknowledged mystery surrounding the notion of greatness and its subsequent resistance to scientific analysis, Burckhardt nevertheless attempts to define a number of different fields in which greatness may occur, namely philosophy, poetry, the arts, mythical national heroes and historical figures. Here again he echoes Carlyle's interpretation of the various forms of heroism. Concurring with traditional perceptions, both writers perceive in Napoleon I a particular example of greatness within the historical and political sphere.

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<sup>204</sup> Jacob Burckhardt, "Das Individuum und das Allgemeine. (Die historische Größe)", in: Burckhardt, *Weltgeschichtliche Betrachtungen*. Mit Nachwort hrsg. v. Rudolf Marx. Kröners Taschenausgabe Band 55, Alfred Kröner Verlag, Leipzig o.J., p. 248 (207-248).

<sup>205</sup> Ibid.

For Burckhardt, as for Carlyle, Napoleon was able to capture within himself “die Koinzidenz des Allgemeinen und des Besonderen, des Verharrenden und der Bewegung”,<sup>206</sup> this symbiosis being the characteristic of a truly historical figure. Despite fundamental opposition to the Hegelian approach to the historical process in favour of a random and chaotic interpretation, Burckhardt’s ‘great man’ nevertheless shares a number of parallels with Hegel’s “welthistorische Persönlichkeit”.<sup>207</sup> Both figures straddle the threshold between obsolete systems and future possibilities, the will of the individual coinciding with the overarching divine will or *Zeitgeist* in order to revolutionise and regenerate a particular aspect of life and society. In both cases this coincidence of the temporal and the spiritual, the individual and the communal, inherently inspires obedience.

The emphasis in Burckhardt’s work clearly lies with the individual personality, which he perceives to be the dominant factor within the public estimation of a historical figure, over and above specific action or capability. Indeed, the characteristics of the Burckhardtian ‘great man’ reflect the traditional qualities of genius referred to in the early to mid nineteenth century, established with particular reference to and largely as a result of Napoleon; namely extraordinary intellectual capacity combined with a strong “Machtsinn”, an unshakeable belief in one’s personal mission and, above all, “Seelenstärke”.<sup>208</sup>

These parallels with the “Heroen-Kult”, in particular the emphasis placed on personality over action, would suggest an affinity with the trend towards decontextualisation and the unconditional admiration of the individual which had culminated in the work of, in particular, Grabbe and the late Carlyle. However, Burckhardt is to be clearly distinguished from this approach.

Firstly, he does indeed advocate an admiration of ‘Größe’, as reflected in his own focus on the ‘great men’ of antiquity and the Renaissance. However, he does not

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<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 229.

<sup>207</sup> For further details on Burckhardt’s criticism of the Hegelian philosophy of history and the similarities and differences in their respective approaches see Karl Löwith, *Jacob Burckhardt. Der Mensch inmitten der Geschichte*. Vita Nova Verlag, Luzern 1936, p. 98-133.



adopt the irrational apotheosis displayed by Carlyle, but rather aims to provide an objective explanation of the preceding leadership debate. Rather than evaluating the personal qualities and actions of Napoleon for example, Burckhardt attempts to analyse the reasons for the Napoleonic myth within the framework of the wider psychological desire of both individuals and peoples for subservience, as well as the perceived need to explain one's own weaknesses through the greatness of others. Considering Napoleon's transition from revolutionary general to head of state, Burckhardt therefore explains the process whereby fear is transformed, through the psychological need for justification, into admiration and fantasy, resulting in unlimited political power and support of the military hero.

In the essay *Entwicklung des Individuums* Burckhardt identifies a growing public interest in and admiration of particular individuals as the outer aspect of the formation of individuality in society as a whole, complementary to the inner personal and intellectual development of the individual. However, the dangers of this public hero-worship and the unrestrained desire for fame are not overlooked, the "kolossalsten Ehrgeiz und Durst nach Größe" in fact endangering the development of such individuals.<sup>209</sup>

Furthermore, for Burckhardt the historical figure is, contradictory to the popular estimations which he attempts to account for, weak and overestimated. Political and military leadership ultimately fail due to their dependency upon power and egotism and the requisite "Dispensation von dem gewöhnlichen Sittengesetz";<sup>210</sup> politics precluding the quality of "Seelengröße" which is deemed a fundamental aspect of true greatness.<sup>211</sup> The order of rank in which he places the various forms of greatness is

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<sup>208</sup> Burckhardt, "Die historische Größe", op.cit., p. 232-235.

<sup>209</sup> Jacob Burckhardt, "Entwicklung des Individuums", in: Burckhardt, *Bilder des Ewigen. Ein kulturgeschichtliches Lesebuch*. Hrsg. v. Hanno Helbing. Manesse Verlag, Zürich 1997, p. 354 (335-370).

<sup>210</sup> Burckhardt, "Die historische Größe", op.cit., p. 242.

<sup>211</sup> Löwith highlights this emphasis on "Seelengröße" as opposed to particular military or political action as a fundamental difference between the Burckhardtian and the Hegelian approach to historical greatness. He contrasts Hegel's tendency to liberate the "weltgeschichtliche Persönlichkeit" from individual responsibility with Burckhardt's criticism of this approach, based on what he deems to be a retrospective appraisal of actions according to the success of their results. (Löwith, *Jacob Burckhardt*, op.cit., p. 110f, 114).

therefore in fact a direct reversal of Carlyle's emphasis on the "hero as king" over and above the poet or man of letters.

Burckhardt's admiration of 'great men' therefore focuses instead on the "freie Persönlichkeit" or *l'uomo universale*. In this context he details the effect of a political regime on the spiritual development of a nation and its people. The extremes of tyranny and an unstable republic are both believed to exercise a positive influence over the acquisition of individuality. This does not however occur as a result of direct involvement in the state, but rather in the wake of a mass withdrawal into the apolitical in the face of growing political impotency, thus fostering the capacity for independent thought and the development of other aspects of the private sphere.<sup>212</sup> Consequently the ancient philosophers, in their independence from political, social, religious or material constraints, were free to expand and develop their own thought within an atmosphere of variety and receptiveness.<sup>213</sup>

This conviction is reflected in Burckhardt's own separation from party politics and his doubts concerning the increasing power of mass democracy and the drive towards material satisfaction.<sup>214</sup> Despite a predominantly conservative approach, his opposition to democracy did not, like that of Carlyle, lie in an aristocratic rejection of the masses *per se*, but was rather, as Joachim C. Fest points out, rooted in a fear that the growing dependence of the people on the state would lead to the destruction of "Geist".<sup>215</sup> His primary concern lay not with political ideology or functionality, but rather the existential threat which it posed for "die freie Persönlichkeit".

Contradicting popular conceptions Burckhardt therefore locates what he believes to be the contemporary misinterpretation of greatness within the success of Napoleon III

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<sup>212</sup> See Burckhardt, "Entwicklung des Individuums", op.cit., p. 337ff.

<sup>213</sup> See Jacob Burckhardt, "Die freie Persönlichkeit", in: Burckhardt, *Bilder des Ewigen*, op.cit., p. 219-267.

<sup>214</sup> For further details on Burckhardt's "Flucht aus dem Geschehen der Zeit zur Geschichte" see Löwith, *Jacob Burckhardt*, op.cit., p. 152-159. Löwith does however highlight Burckhardt's use of history as a means of analysing contemporary politics, a fact supported by his correspondence which reveals a continued interest in and critical analysis of current affairs.

<sup>215</sup> Joachim C. Fest, "Das tragische Schauspiel der Geschichte. Über Jacob Burckhardt und den ewigen Anachronismus des unabhängigen Denkens", in: *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, Nummer 62, 14.3.1987, Bilder und Zeiten.

and Bismarck. Society, reflecting its own loss of values in this respect, has accepted the mere “Abenteurer und Phantasten”<sup>216</sup> in an attempt to fulfil the longing for greatness which has endured and developed since the rise of Napoleon I, furthered by dissatisfaction with the Restoration: “In frischer Erinnerung steht auch noch, wie man sich 1848 nach einem großen Mann sehnte, und womit man dann in der Folge vorlieb nahm”.<sup>217</sup> Whereas for Carlyle Bismarck represented the *regeneration* of greatness, the German Chancellor epitomised in Burckhardt’s eyes the *degeneration* of the concept to the power ideal.<sup>218</sup>

It is this insight into “Größe” which lies at the root of Burckhardt’s desire for an analysis and subsequent redefinition of the concept, as is detailed more specifically in *Die historische Größe*. Having determined the limitations of political leadership, particularly in the modern state, Burckhardt turned to the realms of philosophy, poetry and the arts in an attempt to restore an appreciation of greatness and an element of spiritual guidance to modern society.

Particular emphasis is therefore placed in *Die historische Größe* on the role of art, described as “Erleichterer des Lebens”,<sup>219</sup> enabling an insight into “eine zweite, höhere Erdenwelt”.<sup>220</sup> Despite Burckhardt’s continued criticism of Wagner’s work and its mass appeal as representative of “einer plebejischen Dekadenzkunst”,<sup>221</sup> the

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<sup>216</sup> Burckhardt, “Die historische Größe”, op.cit., p. 248.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid.

<sup>218</sup> In his correspondence, in particular with Friedrich von Preen, Burckhardt describes the “Vergewaltigung” of German culture, carried out in the Bismarckian era in the face of the growing “Macht und Geldtaumel”. (An Preen, 3.7.1870, in: Jacob Burckhardt, *Briefe. Vollständige und kritische Ausgabe*. Mit Benutzung des handschriftlichen Nachlasses bearbeitet von Max Burckhardt. Schwabe und Co. AG, Basel 1994. Band. V., p. 97 [95-100]). In a letter written shortly after the dismissal of the “großen Mann” Burckhardt reiterates his opposition both to Bismarck’s policies and to him as an individual, although he does acknowledge his success in uniting an otherwise volatile state, being himself “Anhalt und Standarte jenes Mysteriums *Autorität*”. (An Preen, 25.9.1890, in: Burckhardt, *Briefe*, op.cit., Band IX, p. 268f [266-270]).

<sup>219</sup> Quote from Fest, “Das tragische Schauspiel der Geschichte”, op.cit.

<sup>220</sup> Burckhardt, “Die historische Größe”, op. cit., p. 219.

<sup>221</sup> Fest, “Das tragische Schauspiel der Geschichte”, op.cit. Burckhardt’s correspondence reveals strong opposition to both the “Wagnersches LyrumLarum” (an Robert Groening, 29.7.1875, in: Burckhardt, *Briefe*, op.cit., Band VI, p. 50 [46-50]), and the widespread popularity which the composer enjoys. In a letter to Preen he describes Wagner as “ein rücksichtsloser und kühner Mensch, der dem Augenblick meisterlich am Schopfe faßt”, referring to those who admire him as “Narren”. He perceives both Wagner and Bismarck as representatives of the contemporary

accordance of such transcendental qualities to the arts echoes in many ways the Wagnerian aesthetic ideal. However, for Burckhardt, as was later the case for Nietzsche, art was assessed according to its aesthetic value alone. It was able to interpret and convey “das Mysterium der Schönheit”,<sup>222</sup> yet it did not, like the Wagnerian “Gesamtkunstwerk”, fulfil a political or social task.

According to Burckhardt the most superior and indeed the only true form of greatness was therefore to be found within the realms of philosophy:

Mit den großen *Philosophen* erst beginnt das Gebiet der eigentlichen Größe, der Einzigkeit und Unersetzlichkeit, der abnormen Kraft und der Beziehung auf das Allgemeine.<sup>223</sup>

Providing, in an echo of the early Carlyle, “die Lösung des großen Lebensrätsels”,<sup>224</sup> philosophical discourse and insight was able to both further the inner process of individualisation and exercise a lasting effect on the culture and life of a nation. The ancient philosophers, by challenging existing beliefs and continually questioning the fundamentals of a person’s ‘Weltanschauung’, therefore acted as spiritual leaders, actively encouraging the further development of each independent individual. It is this process which Burckhardt, by way of contrast and juxtaposition, presents as an antidote to the predominance of the political and military within the nineteenth century power ideal.

This emphasis on the mentally autonomous individual and the fostering of spiritual and philosophical as opposed to power political leadership is closely associated with the Nietzschean approach, the young philosopher having been strongly influenced by the work of his colleague at Basle.<sup>225</sup> Before further developing this philosophy

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destruction of German culture: “Entsinnen wir uns doch ein wenig ob Bismarck nicht auch ein Narr hieß”. (An Preen, Sylvester 1872, in: Burckhardt, *Briefe*, op.cit., Band VI, p. 183 [181-184]).

<sup>222</sup> Burckhardt, “Die historische Größe”, op. cit., p. 219.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid., p. 217.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid.

<sup>225</sup> See the letter written from Nietzsche to Carl von Gersdorff dated 7.11.1870, in which Nietzsche refers to his attendance of Burckhardt’s lectures. (See Friedrich Nietzsche, “Briefe [1861-1889]”, in: Nietzsche, *Werke*, op.cit., Band IV, p. 621 [620ff]). For further details on the personal relationship

however, Nietzsche's thought was to undergo a number of fundamental transitions, in the process of which he initially embraced and subsequently rejected the interpretations of leadership previously outlined in this section.

The development of Nietzsche's contribution to the intellectual debate on leadership may be divided into three main stages: firstly, admiration of the predominantly military and political leader, as seen in the form of Napoleon III and Bismarck; secondly, a rejection of contemporary political leaders and a general withdrawal from the overtly political, combined with an appeal for what may be termed cultural or intellectual guidance, in particular through Schopenhauer and Wagner; thirdly, an abandonment of these former icons and a shift towards a more internalised, predominantly philosophical form of leadership. This reaches its climax in *Also Sprach Zarathustra* in the form of the "Übermensch", a reflection of man who has, ultimately, become his own leader. This stage does also involve a reintegration of certain elements of the initial period outlined, gradually taking on a more pronounced political aspect. Although these divisions are not clearly distinct and do indeed overlap, they follow in broad terms a chronological structure and will hence be treated as such for the purpose of this analysis.

Nietzsche's early writings reflect an admiration of the tragic heroes of ancient Greece, focusing on the need for struggle and conflict in the name of culture. This admiration finds its contemporary reflection in the writings of the young Nietzsche in praise of the military and political leader, which may be particularly observed in his 1862 essay entitled "Napoleon III als Praesident". In this essay the French Emperor is praised as a "Herrscher-genie", his *coup d'état* legitimised by the failure of the opposition and his own success, itself dependent on the wishes of the people. Here Nietzsche, in an echo of the preceding Napoleonic myth, acknowledges that the genius may appear to contradict accepted moral and legal principles with his own "Geniegrundsätze". He does however state that this apparent contradiction does not reflect the transcendence of morality *per se*, but rather reflects the higher intellectual development of the

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between Burckhardt and Nietzsche and a comparison of their historical and philosophical approaches see Löwith, *Jacob Burckhardt*, op.cit., p. 11-61.

genius, which concurs with the wishes of the people, but which they themselves are unable to fully comprehend.<sup>226</sup>

As such Nietzsche shares the contemporary common support for Napoleon III and the associated desire for a “germanische Cäsar”, as highlighted in the preceding chapter. His early essay reflects the “Kult des großen Einzelnen” and a complementary notion of aristocracy which was to mark Nietzsche’s work in a variety of forms throughout the course of his intellectual development.<sup>227</sup> No further mention is however made of Napoleon III in later works, suggesting both Nietzsche’s subsequent repudiation of contemporary politics and his realisation of Napoleon III’s perceived inadequacy when compared with Napoleon I.

A further example of the admiration of the political leader and the subsequent rejection of this may be seen in Nietzsche’s comments on Bismarck. During the Austro-German war of 1866 he expressed support for the Prussian premier and his pursuit of German unification, his focus on the leading individual providing a means by which to comprehend the rapid development on the European political stage. Reflecting his Machiavellian influences, Nietzsche praises Bismarck’s “Mut und rücksichtslose Konsequenz”, believing the justification for his actions to lie in their successful outcome.<sup>228</sup> His admiration for Bismarck is demonstrated by the following comment written in a letter to his colleague Carl von Gersdorff, dated February 1868:

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<sup>226</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, “Napoleon III als Praesident”, in: Friedrich Nietzsche, *Werke und Briefe*. Hrsg. v. Hans Joachim Mette. H-K Gesamtausgabe. C. H. Beck’sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, München 1933. Band 2. Jugendschriften, p. 23 (23-28).

<sup>227</sup> Hans Kluge highlights the significance of the theme of the “großen Einzelnen” in the writings of the young Nietzsche in his dissertation *Die Bildungsidee in den Schriften des jungen Nietzsche* (Frankfurt 1955), although, reflecting the general tendency of post-war Nietzsche studies, he chooses to focus on the metaphysical aspect of the artistic and philosophical genius. More recently, Ottmann has focused on the political implications of the essay “Napoleon III als Präsident”, highlighting in this context Nietzsche’s abandonment of received moral values as the basis of a legitimisation of political rule and his belief in the “Kult des großen Einzelnen” and an aristocratic order for society. (Henning Ottmann, *Philosophie und Politik bei Nietzsche*. de Gruyter, Berlin / New York 1987., p. 11ff).

<sup>228</sup> See Nietzsche, “Briefe [1861-1889]”, op.cit., p. 556ff and p. 559-563.

Unmäßiges Vergnügen bereitet mir Bismarck. Ich lese seine Reden, als ob ich starken Wein trinke: ich halte die Zunge an, daß sie nicht zu schnell trinkt und daß ich den Genuß recht lange habe.<sup>229</sup>

Again at this stage in his work Nietzsche, like Burckhardt, echoes, at his own surprise and recognition, the general mood of the mid to late nineteenth century and the belief that, at least to a certain extent, the sought after “großen Einzelnen” has been found. His legitimisation, as was the case in the positive Napoleonic reception, is sought in both the results of his actions and the charismatic force of the individual.<sup>230</sup> Both Napoleon III and Bismarck constitute the embodiment of leadership through power.

Within this context Nietzsche appears to have certain opinions in common with Carlyle and the early work of Frantz. Other possible similarities with the theoretical notion of leadership as put forward by the Victorian intellectual may be identified in *Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen*. This is suggested largely by the contrast which Nietzsche establishes between the great individual and the masses, the “niedersten Lehm- und Tonschichten der Gesellschaft”<sup>231</sup> - a leitmotif throughout his work - and the emphasis placed on the notion of “Tat” over and above contemplation. Like Carlyle, Nietzsche rejects the interpretation of history as the result of social movements, together with the then popular dismissal of the need for geni, and supports an anti-democratic and aristocratically oriented political approach.

Further similarities with the traditional nineteenth century interpretation of greatness are suggested by a passage which echoes in particular the arguments put forward by Grabbe in *Napoleon oder die hundert Tage*, in which society’s goal is defined as the creation of great men, and the masses appear as vehicles for their advancement.<sup>232</sup> Also recalling Heine’s notion of a “mystische Gemeinschaft”,<sup>233</sup> Nietzsche declares

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<sup>229</sup> Ibid., p. 584 (581-584).

<sup>230</sup> Ottmann describes Nietzsches “Bewunderung für die Person Bismarcks, bei gleichzeitiger Verdammung seiner Politik”. (Ottmann, op. cit., p. 16).

<sup>231</sup> Nietzsche, “Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen II. Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben”, in: Nietzsche, *Werke*, op.cit., Band I, p. 272.

<sup>232</sup> Ibid., p. 272f.

<sup>233</sup> See Heine, *Die Nordsee III*, op. cit., p. 234: “... in einer mystischen Gemeinschaft, leben die großen Männer aller Zeiten, über die Jahrtausende hinweg nicken sie einander zu, und sehen sich an

that great men exist independently of history, which serves as a mediator between them:

Es wird die Zeit sein, [...] in der man überhaupt nicht mehr die Massen betrachtet, sondern wieder die einzelnen, die eine Art von Brücke über den wüsten Strom des Werdens bilden.; [...] sie leben als die Genialen-Republik, von der einmal Schopenhauer erzählt; ein Riese ruft dem andern durch die öden Zwischenräume der Zeiten zu, und ungestört durch mutwilliges lärmendes Gezwerge, welches unter ihnen wegstiehlt, setzt sich das hohe Geistergespräch fort. Die Aufgabe der Geschichte ist es, zwischen ihnen die Mittlerin zu sein und so immer wieder zur Erzeugung des Großen Anlaß zu geben und Kräfte zu verleihen. Nein, das *Ziel der Menschheit* kann nicht am Ende liegen, sondern nur *in ihren höchsten Exemplaren*.<sup>234</sup>

This notion of the mediator had been referred to earlier in relation to the work of Hölderlin, in which the poet, not history, appeared as the transcendental link between the divine and the secular, the hero and the people. A similar, albeit increasingly secularised role was attributed to the poet and writer by Heine, as evidenced in *Die Nordsee III*. Nietzsche in turn, emphasising at this stage the “überzeitliche” nature of great men, appeals to history to mediate between them and the people by demonstrating past achievements and hence inspiring future greatness. Through his insight Nietzsche himself, like his predecessors, fulfils the mediatory task.

There are however a number of crucial differences between the Carlylean and the Nietzschean approach to leadership, which form the basis of Nietzsche’s abandonment of his intellectual inheritance in this respect. The Carlylean hero, as demonstrated, becomes increasingly located within the political sphere, Carlyle having largely abandoned literature as a means of transcendental authority, whereas Nietzsche, like Burckhardt, himself abandons the “furor politicus”, turning towards the “furor

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bedeutungsvoll, und ihre Blicke begegnen sich auf den Gräbern untergegangener Geschlechter, die sich zwischen sie gedrängt hatten, und sie verstehen sich und haben sich lieb”.



philosophicus” and the artistic - seen here in the reference to Schopenhauer’s “Genialen-Republik”.

Hence, although the belief in the importance of the “großer Mann” remains, the understanding of this is perceived fundamentally differently by the two writers concerned. For Carlyle greatness implies a historical and or political force, the embodiment of the will of the masses, whereas for Nietzsche it comes to mean self-overcoming in a more individual and abstract philosophical sense. Furthermore, whereas Carlyle sought the public subservience of the masses to the great individual as a necessary complement to strong leadership, often in an enforced, institutional sense, Nietzsche, whilst retaining the notion of an aristocratic elite in some form, appealed to the individual, to every “freie Persönlichkeit”, to challenge society and its moral values, and to acknowledge and justify his own individual existence. Nietzsche was to dismiss Carlyle throughout his work as an “abgeschmackte Wirrkopf”,<sup>235</sup> an atheist in need of faith.<sup>236</sup>

Such differences are highlighted in *Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen*, the four part publication of which in many ways marks the beginning of the second period in Nietzsche’s development. Part one, *David Strauss* (1873), written after the Franco-

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<sup>234</sup> Nietzsche, “Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen II”, op. cit., p. 270.

<sup>235</sup> Nietzsche, “Jenseits von Gut und Böse”, *Werke*, op.cit., Band III, p. 164. (252).

<sup>236</sup> Bentley focuses on these aspects when comparing the two figures and their understanding of the heroic. Differences in the quality of critical analysis aside, he identifies similarities in terms of psychological, biographical and religious background, as well as highlighting parallels in their philosophical approach: the shared theory of “Heroic Vitalism” rests on an anti-democratic belief in “Aristocratic Radicalism” based on the division of men into masters and slaves, exaltation of the power ideal and hero-worship of great men. According to Bentley, Nietzsche expanded upon Carlyle’s own interpretation. This comparison does however fail to identify more fundamental differences.

Firstly, the Carlylean power ideal and the Nietzschean “Wille zur Macht” are equated, whilst the cultural and aesthetic elements within Nietzsche’s concept are overlooked, despite Bentley’s well-founded emphasis of the duality in Nietzsche’s philosophy, uniting, in simple terms, “Caesare Borgia and Buddha”. Furthermore, although Bentley refers to the contrast between the ruthless suppression of the masses by the Carlylean dictator and Nietzsche’s willingness “to grant a docile happiness to the masses”, he does not develop this to its ultimate conclusion by seeing within it a fundamental distinction between the two approaches. Bentley subordinates this difference to the overarching power ideal, without indicating that Nietzsche sought not to dominate but to withdraw from the “rabble”.

Secondly, in stressing the shared “supreme value of the hero”, Bentley fails to point out the redefinition of the heroic which has occurred, as epitomised in the responses of the two intellectuals to

Prussian war and the foundation of the German Reich, characterises Nietzsche's abandonment of his admiration of Bismarck - notably for Carlyle the source of European salvation - which is to continue throughout his work.

The fundamental element of Nietzsche's criticism of the German Chancellor is that he is held responsible for the destruction of German culture, the "*Exstirpation des deutschen Geistes zugunsten des 'deutschen Reiches'*".<sup>237</sup> He is the "Bildungsphilister" *par excellence*, representing the dominant militarisation, political pragmatism and cultural decay of the new era. Nietzsche's criticism, echoing that of both Wagner and Burckhardt, is reiterated throughout his work, for example in *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* (1886), in which the policy of "Blut und Eisen" is described as a "gefährlicher Heilskunst" attempting to compensate for Germany's lack of true culture.<sup>238</sup> In a highly ironic passage in *Götzen-Dämmerung* (1889) Bismarck is presented as "the new German philosopher":

Die Deutschen - man hieß sie einst das Volk der Denker: denken sie heute überhaupt noch? Die Deutschen langweilen sich jetzt am Geiste, die Deutschen mißtrauen jetzt dem Geiste, die Politik verschlingt allen Ernst für wirklich geistige Dinge - "Deutschland, Deutschland über alles", ich fürchte, das war das Ende der deutschen Philosophie. ... "Gibt es deutsche Philosophen? gibt es deutsche Dichter? gibt es *gute* deutsche Bücher?" - fragt man mich im Ausland. Ich erröte; aber mit der Tapferkeit, die mir auch in verzweifelten Fällen zu eigen ist, antworte ich: "Ja, *Bismarck!*"<sup>239</sup>

Through this sarcastic statement is revealed the philosopher's recognition of the contemporary emphasis on political and military leadership and the subsequent, in his eyes, misinterpretation of the notion of heroism. Power becomes both meaningless

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Bismarck. What is presented by Bentley as a continuation is therefore in fact a caesura. (Bentley, op. cit., p. 159-168).

<sup>237</sup> Nietzsche, "Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen I. David Strauss", in: Nietzsche, *Werke*, op. cit., Band I, p. 137. In an echo of the opinions expressed by Goethe during the rule of Napoleon I, Nietzsche stresses the importance of cultural unity over and above political unity.

<sup>238</sup> Nietzsche, "Jenseits von Gut und Böse", op. cit., p. 168 (254).

and dangerous if it does not include a higher, cultural and aesthetic component.<sup>240</sup> Nietzsche, like Burckhardt before him, reacts by turning towards the philosophical or cultural figure, who will lead the Germans towards a revival of “die echte, ursprüngliche deutsche Kultur”.<sup>241</sup> This then is the goal of the great man, “*die Erzeugung des Philosophen, des Künstlers und des Heiligen in uns und außer uns zu fördern*”.<sup>242</sup> The desired leader represents the trinity of philosopher, artist and saint, any overtly political aspect having been essentially abandoned.

Thus Nietzsche has, at least to a certain extent, rejected the spirit of the time with which he may earlier have been identified, and has evolved a new notion of leadership as a counterbalance to Bismarck and the nationalistic power ideal that he represents. It may be argued that this shift constitutes not so much a break with his earlier ideology as simply a progressive development of his thought, if one accepts that whilst focusing on contemporary politics Nietzsche’s main interest consistently lay in the implementation of the political in service of the cultural. Henning Ottmann for instance describes the young Nietzsche as merely an “ästhetisierende Zuschauer” of the political stage.<sup>243</sup> Nietzsche’s predominant interest in and concern for the development of what he deemed a true or higher culture cannot be denied. However his, albeit secondary, interest in contemporary politics and the virtues of the military and political leader was not to be abandoned, or at least neglected, until the early 1870s and should not be overlooked.

The prevailing mood throughout Nietzsche’s work is, like Carlyle’s, one of a dominant sense of longing, the quest for “sittliche Erzieher”, “die Ärzte der modernen Menschheit”.<sup>244</sup> The shift in emphasis from political power to cultural guidance as a solution to the crisis of modernity is embodied in Nietzsche’s idolisation of

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<sup>239</sup> Nietzsche, “Götzen-Dämmerung”, in: Nietzsche, *Werke*, op.cit., Band III, p. 429 (1).

<sup>240</sup> See Rüdiger Görner, “Nietzsche und der Wille zur Macht”, in: *Die Neue Gesellschaft. Frankfurter Hefte*. Nr. 10 / Oktober 1994, p. 942-946.

<sup>241</sup> Nietzsche, “Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen I”, op. cit., p. 144.

<sup>242</sup> Nietzsche, “Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen III. Schopenhauer als Erzieher”, in: Nietzsche, *Werke*, op. cit., Band I, p. 326.

<sup>243</sup> Ottmann, op. cit., p. 17.

<sup>244</sup> Nietzsche, “Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen III”, op. cit., p. 294.

Schopenhauer and Wagner, the latter having been indicated in the earlier publication *Die Geburt der Tragödie* (1872). Schopenhauer is described as:

[...] der Führer [...], welcher aus der Höhe des skeptischen Unmuts oder der kritisierenden Entsagung hinauf zur Höhe der tragischen Betrachtung leitet [...]<sup>245</sup>

Similarly, Wagner is presented in pseudo-religious terms as the “Lichtbringer”<sup>246</sup> who preaches to his followers:

Wagt es zu eurem Heil und laß einmal das trüb erleuchtete Stück Natur und Leben, welches ihr allein zu kennen scheint; ich führe euch in ein Reich, das ebenfalls wirklich ist [...].<sup>247</sup>

The leader has become a transcendental figure who will guide the way towards a new culture, a new form of art and a new approach to life, providing a metaphysical and aesthetic justification of existence in the light of the secularisation of the nineteenth century. The ‘great man’ provides both philosophical and cultural leadership, combined with an element of spiritual guidance, therefore succeeding where Bismarck had failed. He leads by example, placing the emphasis on guiding rather than commanding, although ultimately - and this is an anticipation of the “Übermensch” - the individual is responsible for his own development.

However, despite the change which has occurred in Nietzsche’s thought, similarities with the traditional notion of genius still remain. Wagner for example is described as the “*Vereinfacher der Welt*”<sup>248</sup> someone who sees the world within its entirety, thus providing clear parallels with the portrayal of Napoleon I in the works of, in particular, Heine. The apotheosised individual in many ways furthers the secularisation process identified in part one, and the Wagner cult may be viewed as

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<sup>245</sup> Ibid., p. 303.

<sup>246</sup> Nietzsche, “Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen IV. Wagner in Bayreuth”, in: Nietzsche, *Werke*, op. cit., Band I, p. 395.

<sup>247</sup> Ibid.

the romantic and irrational culmination of the associated “Heroen-Kult” of that era. Furthermore, Nietzsche is still, like the early nineteenth century admirers of Napoleon, acting out of dissatisfaction with the era in which he lives.

The development of Nietzsche’s attitude towards Wagner is of particular importance within the leadership context, as it highlights both the idolisation and the subsequent condemnation of individualised hero-worship in its most extreme form. Having come to perceive in Wagner not the embodiment of genius and society’s redeemer, but rather, like Burckhardt, that of the decadence and decay of modern society, Nietzsche broke away from his former idol. His faith in the salutatory, redemptive power of leadership through art was shattered by the realisation that contemporary, Wagnerian art was itself an integral manifestation of the decadence which he was seeking to overcome, within both himself and society.

Furthermore, Wagner epitomised what Nietzsche perceived to be the nineteenth century misunderstanding of greatness, to which he had succumbed. In his eyes Wagner’s work and self-image were based not on outstanding philosophical insight or aesthetic values, but rather a false and seductive large-scale appeal to the lowest common denominator, a criticism which Thomas Mann alluded to when describing the “aristokratisch-demokratische, artistisch-bürgerliche Optik”<sup>249</sup> of Wagner’s compositions. In an ironic portrayal of the personification of Wagner’s success Nietzsche writes:

Wozu also Schönheit? Warum nicht lieber das Grosse, das Erhabne,  
das Gigantische, das, was die Massen bewegt? - Und nochmals: es  
ist leichter, gigantisch zu sein als schön, wir wissen das [...]<sup>250</sup>

It was this insight into the misinterpretation of greatness and the subsequent redemption from his “Erlöser” which was to mark much of Nietzsche’s work,

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<sup>248</sup> Ibid., p. 381.

<sup>249</sup> Thomas Mann, “Aus ‘Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen’” (1918), in: Thomas Mann, *Wagner und unsere Zeit*, op.cit., p. 41 (31-46).

<sup>250</sup> Nietzsche, “Der Fall Wagner”, in: Nietzsche, *Werke*, op.cit., Band III, p. 360.

particularly with regard to the question of “Größe”, thus freeing the way for his own philosophy. Indeed, the breakdown of his relationship with Wagner, the “Magnetiseur und Affresko-Maler”,<sup>251</sup> appears as the basis of and catalyst for Nietzsche’s wider rejection of romanticised hero-worship and the traditional notion of the “große Mann”.

This becomes particularly apparent in *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches*, which contains a number of, albeit concealed, references to Wagner, as for example in the aphorism entitled “Gefahr und Gewinn im Kultus des Genius”,<sup>252</sup> and is further developed in *Morgenröte*, most explicitly in “Die unbedingten Huldigungen”.<sup>253</sup> In the extended aphorism “Der Heroen-Kultus und seine Fanatiker”<sup>254</sup> Nietzsche argues that hero-worship leads ultimately to the self-sacrifice and self-effacement of the hero-worshipper and the subconscious compulsion within the ‘hero’ to prove himself unworthy of such idolisation, an argument referred to on a more personal level in *Ecce Homo* (first published in 1908), in which he describes the need for a “Rückkehr zu mir”<sup>255</sup> felt after his visit to Bayreuth. This sacrifice of the individual effected by Wagner is reiterated in *Nietzsche contra Wagner* (1889), in which it is written: “In Bayreuth ist man nur als Masse ehrlich, als Einzelner lügt man, belügt man sich”.<sup>256</sup> Links may also be established here with Nietzsche’s more general plea made during this period for the reassertion of the autonomous individual and the notion of the “Einzelner” as leader over *himself*.

The redemption from the idolisation of Wagner, as well as from the more general need for hero-worship, coincides notably with the declaration made initially in *Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft* that “Gott ist tot”, thus suggesting that Nietzsche is implying here, consciously or otherwise, not simply the non-existence of a metaphysical God, but also that of his former “Ersatzgott” Wagner, to whom he also attributed metaphysical qualities.

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<sup>251</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 364.

<sup>252</sup> Nietzsche, “Menschliches, Allzumenschliches”, in: Nietzsche, *Werke*, op. cit., Band I, p. 555ff (164).

<sup>253</sup> Nietzsche, “Morgenröte”, in: Nietzsche, *Werke*, op. cit., Band II, p. 125ff (167).

<sup>254</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 188f (298).

<sup>255</sup> Nietzsche, “Ecce Homo”, in: Nietzsche, *Werke*, op. cit., Band III, p. 567.

The 'death' of Wagner is, as it were, portrayed in particular in the final part of *Also Sprach Zarathustra*, in which the once "Zauberer und Beglückter unter den Sterblichen"<sup>257</sup> has become simply "der Zauberer", an evil sorcerer. He is no longer a genius, but a "Krankheit", the representative of the masses in a decadent modernity. The "*Vereinfacher der Welt*"<sup>258</sup> is now perceived as the instigator of chaos, his art the encapsulation of falsehood and decay. The former idol is demystified and destroyed, the traditional leader revealed as a "*Verführer*", a *misleader* and seducer.

Nietzsche's changing response to Wagner therefore indicates in specific terms the more general process of the abandonment of hero-worship as it had developed up to and including the Wagnerian interpretation, as well as the Burckhardian redefinition of greatness, which may be traced throughout his work and which constitutes a key development in the debate on leadership in the late nineteenth century.

Although by the writing of *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches* (1878) Nietzsche had rejected his former idol, having already given veiled indications of this in *Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen IV*, the notion of the cultural leader is to a certain extent continued through "Der Dichter als Wegzeiger für die Zukunft".<sup>259</sup> Here, greatness is again defined as the ability to provide direction and guidance, remaining removed from the political or economic sphere, and being located within the realms of the spiritual and the aesthetic. Similarly to Wagner, the now more generally termed poet is to become the "Lehrer der Erwachsenen",<sup>260</sup> leading the way towards a "neue Kunst", which will create a beautiful, mild and balanced "Menschenbilde", uniting "Geist und Seele" within the abstraction and decay of the modern world. Nietzsche was to retain a belief in the importance of art, whilst rejecting its metaphysical properties.

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<sup>256</sup> Nietzsche, "Nietzsche contra Wagner", in: Nietzsche, *Werke*, op. cit., Band III, p. 488.

<sup>257</sup> Nietzsche, "Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen IV", op. cit., p. 402.

<sup>258</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 381.

<sup>259</sup> Nietzsche, "Menschliches, Allzumenschliches", op. cit., p. 776f (99).

<sup>260</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 803 (172).

A similar approach may be identified in the changing response to Schopenhauer, as whilst renouncing Schopenhauerian philosophy, Nietzsche did preserve throughout his work a fundamental conviction of the necessity of philosophical leadership through inspiration to individual reflection. Richard Schacht describes how first Wagner and then Schopenhauer fulfilled the function of “educator” for Nietzsche, this role being understood “more as a stimulus than as a leader to be followed or a paradigm to be imitated”; the focus being placed not on the inculcation of specific facts or values, but rather on the development of one’s own approach to life through emulation. He believes that it was Nietzsche’s relationship with Schopenhauer which led to his preoccupation with the need for “sittliche Erzieher” for humanity, people with the ability to “liberate, stimulate and inspire”, all in the service of a higher culture and form of humanity.<sup>261</sup>

By maintaining certain elements of this period whilst rejecting the two great idols of it, *Menschliches*, *Allzumenschliches* may be seen as the representation of the shift between and interlinkage of the second and third stages in the development of Nietzsche’s understanding of leadership. This intermediate stage sees as indicated the retention of an elite order of creative spirits, whilst removing this notion from either specific individuals or the political sphere, thus creating a more independent, abstract form of leadership ideal. Emphasis is placed on the “Freigeist”, the individual spirit who, emancipated from politics, art, religion and metaphysics, creates his own values, living within a sphere of inner freedom, thus recalling and expanding upon Burckhardt’s “freie Persönlichkeit”.<sup>262</sup> This internalised notion of the autonomous individual, which had indeed marked the preceding interpretation of genius in Germany, albeit within a more outward and concrete sense, was to mark Nietzsche’s subsequent development within this context.<sup>263</sup>

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<sup>261</sup> Richard Schacht, “Zarathustra / Zarathustra as Educator”, in: *Nietzsche: A Critical Reader*. Edited by Peter R. Sedgwick. Blackwell, Oxford 1995, p. 225f (222-249).

<sup>262</sup> For further details of this period see Ottmann, op. cit., p. 121-232.

<sup>263</sup> See Schmidt, *Die Geschichte des Genie-Gedankens*, op. cit., Band 2, for an analysis of this progression from autonomy as a principal characteristic of the artistic genius to its personal and political adaptation in the work of Heine and Grabbe, later to be expanded upon by Nietzsche in the form of the “Übermensch”.



The third stage then progresses through *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches, Morgenröte* (1881) and *Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft* (1882), reaching its climax in *Also Sprach Zarathustra* (1883-1892). It encompasses the rejection of the traditional notion of genius and the creation of a new *type* of leader, the “Übermensch” - a utopia which may be viewed as the ultimate, radicalised and de-personalised example of the existing “Heroen-Kult”. The rejection of the masses, the “Herde” or “Pöbel”, is further developed, the “Übermensch” finding his counterpart in the “letzter Mensch”, the latter epitomising the individual whose thoughts and actions are constrained by society’s accepted values.

In an attack on the traditional, secularised understanding of the concept of genius, Nietzsche, as highlighted by his response to Wagner, now denies all possible links between the “Genie” and any divine or supernatural forces,<sup>264</sup> calling instead for a redefinition of “Größe”. The romantic “Heroen-Kult” of the nineteenth century is henceforth dismissed as an outdated echo of the “Götter-Fürsten-Verehrung” of feudal society, which, in a passage that contradicts Nietzsche’s more general contempt for the masses, furthers the under-valuation of certain sections of society:

Überall, wo man sich bestrebt, einzelne Menschen in das Übermenschliche hinaufzuheben, entsteht auch die Neigung, ganze Schichten des Volkes sich roher und niedriger vorzustellen, als sie wirklich sind.<sup>265</sup>

This reappraisal of greatness and refutation of hero-worship, at least in its traditional sense, reaches its climax in *Also Sprach Zarathustra*. Here, the ‘great men’, parodies of Schopenhauer and Wagner amongst them, appear in reality as merely the “Aufführer und Schauspieler großer Sachen”,<sup>266</sup> being themselves synonymous with the “Fliegen des Marktes”<sup>267</sup> whom they lead. Even the supposed “höhere Menschen” are proven inadequate, retaining the need to idolise their redeemer:

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<sup>264</sup> Nietzsche, “Menschliches, Allzumenschliches”, op. cit., p. 556 (164).

<sup>265</sup> Ibid., p. 676 (461).

<sup>266</sup> Nietzsche, “Also Sprach Zarathustra”, in: Nietzsche, *Werke*, op. cit., Band II, p. 590.

<sup>267</sup> Ibid.

Niemals noch gab es einen Übermensch. Nackt sah ich beide, den größten und den kleinsten Menschen: - Allzuähnlich sind sie noch einander. Wahrlich, auch den Größten fand ich - allzumenschlich! -

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Although the sense of longing and the quest for “den Befehlenden”<sup>269</sup> which has underscored Nietzsche’s work from the beginning continues, it is concluded that this is to be found in the progression towards and realisation of the “Übermensch”, the individual who has overcome himself, learned to create his own values and achieved the ultimate redemption from his redeemer. At this point man has become, in short, his own leader.<sup>270</sup>

*Also Sprach Zarathustra* itself incorporates what may be defined as two levels of leadership, one being a necessary precursor of the other. In the first instance Zarathustra appears as the prophet of the “Übermensch”, the non-metaphysical redeemer who will lead the “Auserwähltesten”<sup>271</sup> on to a higher state of personal consciousness and what Hollingdale terms “individual self-transcendence”.<sup>272</sup> As did Schopenhauer and Wagner before, Zarathustra leads by example, not actively commanding or preaching, but attracting others by his own “Heiterkeit”:

Die stillsten Worte sind es, welche den Sturm bringen. Gedanken,  
die mit Taubenfüßen kommen, lenken die Welt. O Zarathustra, du

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<sup>268</sup> Ibid., p. 625.

<sup>269</sup> Ibid., p. 732.

<sup>270</sup> This climax of Nietzsche’s understanding of leadership had been anticipated in the preceding texts. In *Morgenröte* greatness is defined as: “... das Schauspiel jener Kraft, welche ein Genie *nicht auf Werke, sondern auf sich als Werk, verwendet, das heißt auf seine eignen Bändigung, auf Reinigung seiner Phantasie, auf Ordnung und Auswahl im Zuströmen von Aufgaben und Einfällen*”. (Nietzsche, “Morgenröte”, op. cit., p. 269 [548]). Further, in *Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft* the declaration that God is dead is accompanied by the need for heroic individuals who will seek self-discovery and recognition.

<sup>271</sup> Nietzsche, “Ecce Homo”, op. cit., p. 513.

<sup>272</sup> R. J. Hollingdale, *Nietzsche*. Routledge and Kegan Paul, London and Boston 1973, p. 95.

sollst gehen als ein Schatten dessen, was kommen muß: so wirst du befehlen und befehlend vorangehen.<sup>273</sup>

As Nietzsche however points out in *Ecce Homo*, he is not to be viewed as a “Weiser”, “Heiliger” or “Welt-Erlöser”,<sup>274</sup> rather he represents the embodiment of a future possibility, a goal to be striven for. As was initially suggested in *Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen*, it is necessary for Zarathustra to abandon his ‘disciples’ so that they may overcome both him and themselves, thus creating their own tables of values and their own individual philosophy. To lead in Nietzschean terms is therefore precisely what is traditionally understood to be its antonym: to withdraw.

As such, the prophet then ‘leads’ the way towards the second level, that is that of the individual leader, the ‘disciple’ who has found his own ‘way’. This therefore again produces the diametric opposite of the hitherto perceived notion of leadership: the individual who ruled over the masses, has become the individual who rules over himself. The leader is therefore no longer a specific individual, but rather an idealised type.

*Also Sprach Zarathustra* thus provides a key insight into Nietzsche’s understanding of leadership. The book clearly illustrates the need for some form of guidance, in particular through references to the “Gesindel”, in which there is a total absence of any form of independent ruling hierarchy:

“Ich diene, du dienst, wir dienen” - so betet hier auch die Heuchelei der Herrschenden - und wehe, wenn der erste Herr *nur* der erste Diener ist!<sup>275</sup>

In order to become the true leader who is lacking in contemporary society it is necessary to experience what Zarathustra has experienced, that is to undergo a period of solitude and suffering and to adopt his philosophy, by rejecting what has previously

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<sup>273</sup> Nietzsche, “Also Sprach Zarathustra”, op. cit., p. 675.

<sup>274</sup> Nietzsche, “Ecce Homo”, op. cit., p. 513.

been accepted as truth and morality, creating one's own law-tables and striving towards an ever higher goal of humanity, the self-overcoming of mankind. This becomes particularly apparent in the parable "Von den berühmten Weisen", which explains how by embracing 'Zarathustrianism' the contemporary philosophers may cease to be mere servants of the people and learn instead to command. Similarly, speaking of one of his "children" in "Von der Seligkeit wider Willen", Zarathustra proclaims:

Erkannt und geprüft soll er werden, daran, ob er meiner Art und Abkunft ist - ob er eines langen Willens Herr sei, schweigsam, auch wenn er redet, und nachgebend also, daß er im Geben *nimmt*:-  
- daß er einst mein Gefährte werde und ein Mitschaffender und Mitfeiernder Zarathustras -: ein solcher, der mir meinen Willen auf meine Tafeln schreibt: zu aller Dinge vollerer Vollendung.  
Und um seinetwillen und seinesgleichen muß ich selber mich vollenden: darum weiche ich jetzt meinem Glücke aus und biete mich allem Unglücke an - zu *meiner* letzten Prüfung und Erkenntnis.<sup>276</sup>

This understanding of the need for solitude, individual autonomy and self-overcoming in order to achieve true greatness, which contrasts starkly with the Wagnerian mass appeal, is reiterated in, for example, *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*:

[...] und der Philosoph wird etwas von seinem eignen Ideal verraten, wenn er aufstellt: "der soll der Größte sein, der der Einsamste sein kann, der Verborgenste, der Abweichendste, der Mensch jenseits von Gut und Böse, der Herr seiner Tugenden, der Überreiche des Willens,"<sup>277</sup>

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<sup>275</sup> Nietzsche, "Also Sprach Zarathustra", op. cit., p. 693.

<sup>276</sup> Ibid., p. 686.

<sup>277</sup> Nietzsche, "Jenseits von Gut und Böse", op. cit., p. 124 (212).

Schacht views the book *Zarathustra* as opposed to its eponymous character as the true “Erzieher” at this stage of Nietzsche’s development, fulfilling the role which Wagner had failed to carry out and which he had once found realised in Schopenhauer, that is the aesthetic educator of humanity. He argues that the transformation which Zarathustra undergoes throughout the course of the book is intended as a stimulus to aid the reader in attaining a point in their own consciousness which enables them to continue alone, no longer being focused on the realisation of the “Übermensch”, which remains merely an educational device.<sup>278</sup>

Whether it be the book or its character which constitutes the ‘educational device’, they both remain the mouthpiece for their creator, the true self-styled leader. Having observed the absence of leadership in contemporary society and the failings of those who proclaim themselves leaders, Nietzsche is, through the medium of Zarathustra, attempting to create a type of ‘school’ for future leaders. Candidates must all have passed through his philosophy in order to fulfil the task which lies ahead of them, that is the provision of leadership in a society which faces a crisis of authority within an impending nihilism.<sup>279</sup>

This therefore raises the question of what *type* of education or leadership Nietzsche sought to stimulate or provide. Schacht, by focusing on the notion of the “aesthetic educator”, would clearly argue in favour of a largely spiritual or intellectual phenomenon, and this is indeed undoubtedly predominant in Nietzsche’s work, in so far as the transformation which Zarathustra undergoes, and which he hopes to bring about in others, is a highly individual and personal one, achieved through silent example. In “Die Begrüßung” the king, speaking for all the “höhere Menschen” gathered in Zarathustra’s cave, summarises the longing for “ein Befehlender, ein Siegreicher”, clearly intended in a spiritual sense:

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<sup>278</sup> Schacht, op. cit.

<sup>279</sup> Despite the fundamental distinctions between the two approaches, a degree of similarity may be observed in this context between the concept outlined above and the Wagnerian advocacy of an elite group who truly understand and support his own philosophy. (See Wagner, “Mitteilung an meine Freunde”, op.cit.).

Deines Baumes hier, o Zarathustra, erlabt sich auch der Düstere, der Mißratene, an deinem Anblicke wird auch der Unstete sicher und hielt sein Herz.

Und wahrlich, zu deinem Berge und Baume richten sich heute viele Augen; eine große Sehnsucht hat sich aufgemacht, und manche lernten fragen: wer ist Zarathustra?<sup>280</sup>

This is a view to which Leslie Paul Thiele subscribes in his theory of “heroic individualism”, which sees an internalisation and spiritualisation of the political, leaving Nietzsche an apolitical thinker. He argues that Nietzsche was proclaiming neither a political leader nor, other than within a very limited sense, a spiritual paradigm, as this would have contradicted his own “radical individualism”.<sup>281</sup>

Such theories suggest that Zarathustra is to be viewed only as the provider of spiritual, philosophical and cultural guidance, a notion reinforced by Zarathustra’s frequent attacks on the state. In *Also Sprach Zarathustra*, as in preceding texts, the ‘new idol’ is criticised as the representative of the “Viel-zu-Vielen”,<sup>282</sup> as becomes particularly apparent in the parables “Vom neuen Götzen” and “Von den Fliegen des Marktes”. The state, the “kälteste aller kalten Ungeheuer”,<sup>283</sup> brings about the death of the “Volk” and must, like the “Letzter Mensch” which it represents, be overcome in order to enable the creation of the “Übermensch”. In the latter of the two parables cited Nietzsche, through Zarathustra, criticises contemporary rulers:

Und den Herrschenden wandt ich den Rücken, als ich sah, was sie jetzt Herrschen nennen: Schachern und Markten um Macht - mit dem Gesindel!<sup>284</sup>

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<sup>280</sup> Nietzsche, “Also Sprach Zarathustra”, op. cit., p. 791.

<sup>281</sup> Leslie Paul Thiele, *Friedrich Nietzsche and the Politics of the Soul. A Study of Heroic Individualism*. Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey 1990.

<sup>282</sup> Nietzsche, “Also Sprach Zarathustra”, op. cit., p. 584.

<sup>283</sup> Ibid., p. 587.

<sup>284</sup> Ibid., p. 629.

This corresponds with Nietzsche's explanation that the "Übermensch" is not to be understood as a ruler over the "Letzter Mensch" in any authoritarian or enforced hierarchical sense, but rather as the inhabitant of a separate sphere of existence.<sup>285</sup>

However, other aspects of *Also Sprach Zarathustra* imply a more multi-faceted leadership ideal, which is then developed in Nietzsche's later writings. The "rabble" which the leaders are described as part of is defined as the "Macht- und Schreib- und Lust-Gesindel",<sup>286</sup> therefore implying a rejection of all aspects of contemporary society, not merely the political, as implied in more detailed terms in this and other sections of the book.<sup>287</sup> However, as Zarathustra's abandonment of contemporary philosophers does not imply the abandonment of philosophy, so too does his rejection of the modern European state not imply the rejection of politics *per se* and a withdrawal into the apolitical.

Criticism of *contemporary* politics and the *modern* state suggests by its very presence a political element, albeit far removed from our current understanding of political and social structures. This is supported by amongst others Laurence Lampert, who provides a detailed analysis of *Also Sprach Zarathustra* in which the political sphere is accorded a high degree of importance, albeit with politics being understood in a wide sense as the educational function attributed to Zarathustra, whose goal is the creation of a new spiritual and philosophical nobility of leaders and teachers.<sup>288</sup> If the political connotations of Zarathustra's teachings are accepted as such, then it may be concluded that Zarathustra, and hence Nietzsche himself, represents the synthesis of the number of interpretations of leadership previously encountered - that is, a spiritual, cultural and political leader.

This is reinforced by the increasingly politically oriented statements made in the later publications and fragments written after *Also Sprach Zarathustra*. Despite attacks on

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<sup>285</sup> See Ernst Nolte, *Nietzsche und der Nietzscheanismus*. Propyläen, Frankfurt am Main / Berlin 1990, p. 189.

<sup>286</sup> Nietzsche, "Also Sprach Zarathustra", op. cit., p. 629.

<sup>287</sup> See in particular the parables entitled "Von den Priestern", "Von den berühmten Weisen", "Von den Gelehrten" and "Von den Dichtern" in *Ibid*.

the state, Nietzsche does consistently endorse the need for a hierarchical society, which finds its ultimate expression in the subordination of the people to their government. He notably shares a number of opinions in common with Bismarck,<sup>289</sup> and the following passage recalls Carlyle's opposition to democracy in favour of autocracy:

Für die Fälle aber, wo man der Führer und Leithammel nicht entraten zu können glaubt, macht man heute Versuche über Versuche, durch Zusammen-Addieren kluger Herdenmenschen die Befehlshaber zu ersetzen: dieses Ursprungs sind zum Beispiel alle repräsentativen Verfassungen.<sup>290</sup>

Nietzsche's contempt for the masses continues, albeit in a non-traditional, philosophical sense, and clear support is given to political and, perhaps more importantly, military rulers:

Welche Wohltat, welche Erlösung von einem unerträglich werdenden Druck trotz alldem das Erscheinen eines unbedingt Befehlenden für diese Herdentier-Europäer ist, dafür gab die Wirkung, welche das Erscheinen Napoleons machte, das letzte große Zeugnis [...] <sup>291</sup>

This is further supported by references made, in particular in *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, to Alcibiades, Caesar and Frederick the Great as successful charismatic leaders, "jene zum Siege und zur Verführung vorherbestimmten Rätselmenschen".<sup>292</sup> The

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<sup>288</sup> Laurence Lampert, *Nietzsche's Teaching. An Interpretation of Also Sprach Zarathustra*. Yale University Press, New Haven and London 1986.

<sup>289</sup> See for example "Neuer und alter Begriff der Regierung", in: "Menschliches, Allzumenschliches", op. cit., p. 670f (450).

<sup>290</sup> Nietzsche, "Jenseits von Gut und Böse", op. cit., p. 102 (199).

<sup>291</sup> Ibid.

<sup>292</sup> Ibid., p. 102 (200). It should however be noted that Nietzsche employs here the term "Verführung" later to be applied in a negative context to Wagner. Furthermore, the only Prussian monarch to escape Nietzsche's criticism was notably the liberal reformer Friedrich III. (See Görner, "Nietzsche und der Wille zur Macht", op. cit., p. 944).



climax of this aspect is reached in Nietzsche's appeals for the "Herren der Erde"<sup>293</sup> and the triumph of the "Übermensch" over the "Viel-zu-Vielen", be this through spiritual warfare or direct military combat. A new class of "philosophische Befehlshaber" is predicted for the future, as the means to realise this goal.<sup>294</sup>

A number of recent studies have begun to re-examine the political significance of Nietzsche's work following the predominantly apolitical interpretations of the immediate post-war period. Commentators remain divided as to the degree of direct political implications to be accorded to Nietzsche's often seemingly contradictory statements, and, in the absence of a clearly defined political ideology or programme, the question remains open to interpretation. The majority of analyses do however tend to focus on a combination of spiritual ideals and politico-philosophical declarations.

Karl Löwith for example interprets Nietzsche's notion of "große Politik" as a fundamental tenet of his post-nihilistic philosophy, based on world domination by a unified Europe and the authoritarian rule of a military caste.<sup>295</sup> This standpoint is largely shared by Keith Ansell-Pearson, who, concurring with Ottmann's dual interpretation of the "Herren der Erde" as Nietzsche's "philosophische Gewaltmenschen und Künstler-Tyrannen",<sup>296</sup> locates the philosopher's vision of a new humanity within a "supramoral leadership of artist-tyrants".<sup>297</sup> This synthesis of philosophical legislation and political power may be seen to be realised in the form of a quasi-Platonic three-tier caste system, as suggested in *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*.<sup>298</sup>

On a more fundamental, less structured level, Daniel Conway's recent interpretation of the political in Nietzsche centres around the search for the enhancement of

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<sup>293</sup> Nietzsche, "Aus dem Nachlaß der Achtzigerjahre", in: Nietzsche, Werke, op. cit., Band IV, p. 24.

<sup>294</sup> Nietzsche, "Jenseits von Gut und Böse", op. cit., p. 107f (203); 122f (211).

<sup>295</sup> Karl Löwith, "Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900)", in: Löwith, *Nietzsche*. J. B. Metzlersche Verlagsbuchhandlung, Stuttgart 1987, p. 396-414.

<sup>296</sup> Quote from Ottmann, op. cit., p. 276.

<sup>297</sup> Keith Ansell-Pearson, *An Introduction to Nietzsche as Political Thinker. The perfect nihilist*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1994.

<sup>298</sup> See Nietzsche, "Jenseits von Gut und Böse", op. cit., p. 67f (61). This argument is supported by amongst others Raymond Polin, "Nietzsche und der Staat oder Die Politik eines Einsamen", in: *Nietzsche. Werk und Wirkungen*. Hrsg. v. Hans Steffen. Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, Göttingen 1974, p. 27-44.

humankind, to be achieved through the cultivation of exemplary human beings who, following a shift from the macropolitical to the micropolitical sphere, are to be viewed not as rulers but as legislators who through example encourage the outward realisation of their inward self-perfection.<sup>299</sup>

A detailed investigation of Nietzschean politics does not fall within the framework of this analysis.<sup>300</sup> However, what may be concluded here is that the matter cannot be polarised into two separate and mutually exclusive extremes. By concurrently declaring himself “der letzte *antipolitische* Deutsche”<sup>301</sup> and the instigator of “*große Politik*”,<sup>302</sup> Nietzsche redefines politics, removing it from the realms of ‘Tagespolitik’ and the nation state, as embodied in Bismarck, and taking it onto a higher level, in which the aim of politics is to bring about the creation of the “Übermensch” and as such a new philosophical elite:

Der Begriff Politik ist dann gänzlich in einen Geisterkrieg aufgegangen, alle Machtgebilde der alten Gesellschaft sind in die Luft gesprengt - sie ruhen allesamt auf der Lüge: es wird Kriege geben, wie es noch keine auf Erden gegeben hat.<sup>303</sup>

As the traditional view of the ‘great man’ is revealed as false and recreated in the form of the “Übermensch”, so too the traditional understanding of politics is dismissed as synonymous with the “Herde” and a new definition is formed which complements the desired philosophically based aristocracy.

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<sup>299</sup> Daniel W. Conway, *Nietzsche and the political*. Routledge, London and New York 1997.

<sup>300</sup> For further, recent discussion of the political aspects of Nietzsche’s work see, for example, Ofelia Schutte, *Beyond Nihilism. Nietzsche Without Masks*. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London 1984; Peter Bergmann, *Nietzsche. The last antipolitical German*. Indiana University Press, Bloomington 1987; Mark Warren, *Nietzsche and Political Thought*. MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts 1988; Bruce Detwiler, *Nietzsche and the Politics of Aristocratic Radicalism*. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1990; Tracy B. Strong, “Nietzsche’s political misappropriation”, in: *The Cambridge Companion to Nietzsche*. Edited by Bernd Magnus and Kathleen M. Higgins. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge/New York/Melbourne 1996.

<sup>301</sup> Nietzsche, “*Ecce Homo*”, op. cit., p. 519.

<sup>302</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 599.

<sup>303</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 598f.

The ambiguous and dual nature of Nietzsche's leadership ideal is illustrated by his response to Napoleon I. Whilst quickly abandoning his admiration of Louis Napoleon, Napoleon I was to remain a focus of Nietzsche's writing throughout his intellectual development. He represented for Nietzsche, as for the majority of writers in the nineteenth century, the embodiment of genius - the "Synthesis von *Unmensch* und *Übermensch*"<sup>304</sup> who strove for power at all costs, created his own "Privatmoral"<sup>305</sup> and had a delirious and ultimately fatal belief in his own greatness. He broke away from the mediocrity of the eighteenth century and the French Revolution, rising up against the "Herde" and confirming the belief in "die Selbstherrlichkeit des einzelnen".<sup>306</sup>

Writing within this context Nietzsche again represents much of the spirit of the time and the contemporary notion of the heroic genius. Similar characteristics are used to describe Napoleon as had featured in early nineteenth century writing by intellectuals such as Goethe, Heine and Grabbe, as well as in Burckhardt's analysis, with particular emphasis being placed on the "Produktivität der Taten"<sup>307</sup> and the unifying notions of "Einheit" and "Ganzheit". Yves Guéneau draws particular parallels with Goethe's assessment of the leader, as portrayed in the conversations with Eckermann in which he abstains from any moral judgement:

Goethe considère Napoléon dans l'optique sans doute la plus nietzschéenne possible avant Nietzsche, c'est-à-dire avec une absence totale de sentimentalité - [...] - et en s'abstenant de toute considération moralisante quant aux aspects du personnage qui auraient pu lui sembler monstrueux.<sup>308</sup>

Furthermore, like his intellectual predecessors, Nietzsche was reacting against the "moderne Verwissenschaftlichung", "nivellierende Massengesellschaft" and

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<sup>304</sup> Nietzsche, "Zur Genealogie der Moral", op. cit., p. 243 (16).

<sup>305</sup> Nietzsche, "Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft", in: Nietzsche, *Werke*, op. cit., Band II, p. 331 (23).

<sup>306</sup> Nietzsche, "Aus dem Nachlaß der Achtzigerjahre", op. cit., p. 12.

<sup>307</sup> Quote from Nietzsche, "Die Geburt der Tragödie", in: Nietzsche, *Werke*, op. cit. Band I, p. 100.

<sup>308</sup> Yves Guéneau, "<Ensemble Realissimum> ou Nietzsche Admirateur de Napoléon", in: *Recherches Germaniques*. 7 (1997), p. 130 (128-150).

“metaphysische Entwurzelung”<sup>309</sup> of mid to late nineteenth century Germany, the genius being by definition “unzeitgemäß”.

However, Nietzsche does not altogether fall victim to the romantic, polarised “Heroen-Kult” of his predecessors, but rather comes to hold Napoleon responsible for having introduced this anti-enlightenment phenomenon into the nineteenth century.<sup>310</sup> His assessment of the former French Emperor remains ambivalent throughout, with references being made to his corruption and ultimate downfall, and his inability to prove himself entirely removed from the “Pöbel oder Halbpöbel”.<sup>311</sup> Schmidt describes Nietzsche’s attitude as a combination of “Faszination und Desillusionierung”, and considers it the result of a process of “permanente Selbstaufhebung”, in which the “Freigeist” by definition recognises no other figure as great.<sup>312</sup>

Nietzsche’s criticism of Napoleon I appears to come to the fore where he views his ‘hero’ in association with contemporary politics, that is to say in the sense that whilst having attempted to achieve the laudable goal of uniting Europe he concurrently instigated the negative phenomenon of nationalism.<sup>313</sup> A similar argument may be applied to the issue of hero-worship, Napoleon having been worthy of admiration and emulation, without this becoming a non-questioning, historically oriented idolisation or developing in order to embrace contemporary ‘grosse Männer’, who in fact remain ‘letzte Menschen’ in comparison. Having however acted as the catalyst for this development, he is to be criticised for it.

Nietzsche’s admiration for the political and military aspect of Napoleon’s leadership cannot be denied, as emphasised by Löwith.<sup>314</sup> The embodiment of both internal and external “Herrschaft”, he provided the people of Europe with the command which was absent, introducing the “*klassische Zeitalter des Kriegs*” which would sweep

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<sup>309</sup> Jochen Schmidt, *Die Geschichte des Genie-Gedankens*, op. cit., Band 2, p. 129.

<sup>310</sup> Nietzsche, “Morgenröte”, op. cit., p. 188f (298).

<sup>311</sup> Nietzsche, “Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft”, op. cit., p. 439 (282).

<sup>312</sup> Schmidt, *Die Geschichte des Genie-Gedankens*, op. cit., Band 2, p. 167. The same interpretation is provided as one of the reasons behind Nietzsche’s abandonment of Wagner.

<sup>313</sup> Nietzsche, “Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft”, op. cit., p. 509f (362).

over the continent in the forthcoming century.<sup>315</sup> This emphasis on the political and military is supported by references made, often in conjunction with Napoleon, to Caesare Borgia, as detailed by Bruce Detwiler.<sup>316</sup> The distinction between Napoleon and contemporary rulers such as Napoleon III or Bismarck is, according to Nietzsche, to be found in their personal autonomy, the self-declaration of a ruler who does not claim to act in the name of any higher authority.<sup>317</sup>

This aspect, which would suggest Nietzsche's ideal to be that of the 'charismatische Führer' of early to mid nineteenth century discourse, later to be sought in early twentieth century Germany, is however to be viewed in conjunction with the internalised, philosophical aspect, without which the power-political leader remains part of the 'rabble'. Conway for example believes that although the outward form of the hero may vary, the fundamental factor common to all is not political power or physical strength, but rather the contribution made towards the "enhancement of humankind".<sup>318</sup> Returning to the synthesis of politics and art, Ottmann describes the Nietzschean Napoleon as a "Künstler der Macht" who was to be combined with Goethe in order to create a true, balanced and culturally stimulating ideal.<sup>319</sup> Confirmation of this duality, philosophical and consequently political leadership

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<sup>314</sup> Löwith, "Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900)", op. cit., p. 402.

<sup>315</sup> Nietzsche, "Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft", op. cit., p. 509f (362).

<sup>316</sup> Whilst acknowledging Nehamas' study revealing the predominance of references in Nietzsche's work to literary and artistic personalities, Detwiler argues that the allusions to political and military figures cannot be overlooked, thus highlighting the underlying political current of Nietzsche's work.

<sup>317</sup> Nietzsche, "Jenseits von Gut und Böse", op. cit., p. 101 (199). Nolte selects a quotation from "Der Antichrist" in order to support his belief that Nietzsche's opposition to Bismarck lay not so much in the statesman's apparent harmful effect on German culture, as in his Christianity and his overly pacifistic and democratic policies: "Ein junger Fürst, an der Spitze seiner Regimenter, prachtvoll als der Ausdruck der Selbstsucht und Selbstüberhebung seines Volkes - aber, *ohne* jede Scham, sich als Christen bekennend ... was für eine Mißgeburt von Falschheit muß der moderne Mensch sein, daß er sich trotzdem nicht schämt, Christ noch zu heißen! --". (Quote from Nolte, op. cit., p. 121; see also p. 173ff). This opposition to Christianity could however also be used in order to support the above argument that contemporary commanders are lacking the personal autonomy required of the truly 'great man', as evidenced by Napoleon.

<sup>318</sup> Conway, op. cit. According to Conway Nietzsche's former heroes of a "healthy age", amongst them Napoleon, were commanders and conquerors of the political realm, and it is indeed this superior type of charismatic, messianic individual which Nietzsche perceives as the future macropolitical leaders of post nihilistic Europe. However, believing the Nietzschean hero to be an Emersonian representative of his own epoch, he judges literary, artistic and philosophical figures as the restricted micropolitical heroes of decadence. He thus recalls the Carlylean notion of greatness, in which the "hero as man of letters" appears only as a poor substitute for the "hero as king".

<sup>319</sup> Ottman, op. cit., p. 272-275.

combined within one exemplary individual, is again to be found in *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*.<sup>320</sup>

Nietzsche's comments on Napoleon are significant as they demonstrate the philosopher's links with the preceding and contemporary "Heroen-Kult", as well as an attempt to break away from it. Notably, his more marked criticism of Napoleon and the emphasis on the psychological aspects of his individual personality is to be found in the publications of the pre-Zarathustran period following the abandonment of Wagner, thus reflecting the more rational approach to hero-worship, whereas the more politically charged statements become increasingly frequent in the post-Zarathustran writings. Nietzsche, like Burckhardt, reassesses the notion of genius and greatness, stressing the overarching importance of philosophy within the essentially outwardly political leader, whilst maintaining praise of the very individual who remains representative of the ideal which he is in many ways trying to destroy.

This discussion points above all to the fact that the type of leadership which Nietzsche advocated, and himself sought to provide, was a synthesis of the various forms of leadership hitherto discussed, being predominantly philosophical and spiritual, but containing a political element which, present in the work of the young Nietzsche, was to become increasingly influential in the period directly before his breakdown.<sup>321</sup> The various different aspects included within Nietzsche's leadership ideal are particularly important within the sense that he redefined what had traditionally been understood under these terms, his writings bearing witness to an iconoclastic rejection of all previously accepted forms of leadership.

A product of his era, Nietzsche initially supported the traditional, increasingly politicised "Heroen-Kult" of the mid nineteenth century, sharing in the admiration of the pragmatic leader embodied in Napoleon III and Bismarck. This understanding of

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<sup>320</sup> Nietzsche, "Jenseits von Gut und Böse", op. cit., p. 122f (211); 173 (257).

<sup>321</sup> This practical development in Nietzsche's later works is highlighted in particular by Nolte, who describes the philosopher's increasingly radical political statements and his self-image as leader of the "Partei des Lebens". (See Nolte, op. cit., p. 71-83; 189-196.) Görner points out that for Nietzsche this represented his final desperate attempt to overcome the threat which growing nationalism posed for Europe. (Görner, "Nietzsche und der Wille zur Macht", op. cit., p. 943.)

leadership had evolved from Grabbe's decontextualisation of political authority and its legitimisation through power and personal charisma, and was also to be found in the Wagnerian *Rienzi* of the late 1830s. However, like Wagner, Nietzsche came to focus increasingly on the notion of cultural guidance, a belief in the power of art replacing the abandoned conviction that political unity would foster cultural development.

However, this faith in leadership through art was also to fall victim to the destructive forces of the nineteenth century "Bildstürmer". Nietzsche subsequently rejected all forms of romantic hero-worship and the metaphysical force of art, turning instead towards the philosopher as the figure who would lead Germany and Europe out of its impending nihilism.

Having witnessed the failure of his former idols Bismarck and Wagner, Nietzsche's own philosophy, and therefore himself as a figure, was to become the core of the new leading elite, demanding suffering, solitude and the emancipation from received values.<sup>322</sup> Although this philosophy did arguably maintain a political element, the spiritual aspect was, in contrast to Grabbe's ideal, to remain the necessary legitimisation of authority and its central focus and goal. Leadership through thought had successively subsumed and replaced that of both power and art.

Nietzsche's work therefore represents a radical caesura with the nineteenth century understanding of leadership, taking the concept onto a separate, elevated sphere of interpretation. Nevertheless, elements of the "Heroen-Kult" do remain, in particular the omnipresent quest for individual greatness - the focus simply having shifted from a number of specific individuals to a non-existent, utopian type of individual - and the belief in an aristocratic elite. As such his contribution to the theory of leadership was, in a variety of forms, to become a decisive force in early twentieth century thought,

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<sup>322</sup> See Görner, "Nietzsche und der Wille zur Macht", op. cit., p. 945.

the desire for a synthesis of the various types of leadership within elite individuals essentially pre-empting future intellectual debate.



### *Part III: The Search for a Synthesis*

#### *Introduction: The intellectual debate on leadership in the early twentieth century*

As identified in the preceding section, the latter part of the nineteenth century witnessed a divergent response to the leadership debate in Germany. The Napoleonic myth had been largely overcome through Bismarck, who fulfilled the long-held desire for a national leader. The 'System Bismarck' was based on the Chancellor's political autonomy and pragmatism, combined with the self-propagated image of a strong and uniting personality. As such the 'Iron Chancellor' became the practical realisation of the power ideal which had gradually developed during and in the wake of the Napoleonic era, finding its ultimate intellectual expression in the later writings of Thomas Carlyle. The popularity of Bismarck, which was itself to attain mythical proportions, further promoted the ideal of the 'great man', the Chancellor's political opponents, in an echo of earlier opposition to Napoleon I, largely supporting the ideal if not the individual and his policies.

The intellectual response to Bismarck was however divided, reactions from in particular Wagner, Burckhardt and Nietzsche reflecting alternative ideals which were themselves to exercise a powerful influence over intellectual and political discussion in the early twentieth century. Wagner, abandoning initial hopes for the promotion of national culture as a parallel to political unity, became increasingly focused on the power of the aesthetic as a regenerative force which would in turn influence political and social structures. The shift of emphasis from the early opera *Rienzi* to the spiritual leader portrayed in *Parsifal* clearly demonstrates his growing alienation from the Bismarckian ideal.

Abandoning in turn both the contemporary political and aesthetic interpretation of leadership, Nietzsche, influenced by Burckhardt, turned towards a philosophical alternative. His iconoclastic rejection of the nineteenth century 'Heroen-Kult' in favour of individual self-leadership through the acceptance of Nietzschean philosophy was later to become highly influential within intellectual circles, with particular

emphasis being placed on the elitist aspect of this aristocratic ideal. His understanding of leadership did arguably contain a political element, although this was subordinate to philosophical guidance and was based on a fundamental redefinition of politics which rejected the modern state.

As the nineteenth century drew to a close the debate on leadership was therefore dominated by three main elements - the political, the spiritual-aesthetic and the philosophical. Although these elements were not necessarily mutually exclusive, clear distinctions between them, as well as personal hostility amongst their principal advocates, meant that the three ideals appeared irreconcilable, thus echoing the fragmentary spirit of *fin-de-siècle* Germany.

Analysis within this section will therefore concentrate on the progression of this debate at the beginning of the twentieth century. It remains to be established to what extent existing interpretations were built upon, and how the various elements identified above were to be developed. Of particular interest in this context is the reception of the Nietzschean ideal, which presented the potential opportunity to overcome the fragmentation and dissent through synthesis and intellectual reconciliation.

Politically, the turn of the century witnessed the establishment of the 'persönliches Regiment' of Kaiser Wilhelm II, following the dismissal of Bismarck as Reichskanzler in 1890. Although in actual terms the political autonomy and authority of the Kaiser became increasingly restricted after 1900, the self-styled image of the all-powerful leader continued to be presented both at home and abroad. It was not until Germany's defeat in the First World War that Wilhelm II was forced to abdicate, paving the way for the establishment of the Weimar Republic. It is this period, from the dismissal of Bismarck to the ultimate collapse of the Weimar Republic at the beginning of the 1930s, which shall constitute the time framework for this section. As such it is hoped that a picture of the understanding of intellectual leadership prior to Hitler's 'Machtergreifung' may be established.

The intellectual response to the Wilhelminian regime may be traced through the writings of Harry Graf Kessler, whose partially unpublished diaries chronicle the period from 1881 to 1937. In addition, an analysis of the publications of the Stefan George-Kreis provides a detailed reflection of the intellectual discussion of leadership at the beginning of the twentieth century, George himself being stylised as an elitist, spiritual leader figure. Despite fundamental differences between the approaches of Kessler and George, a close reading of their work reveals a number of key similarities regarding the type of leadership which they advocated and the existing theories upon which their interpretations were based. A range of hitherto unpublished material will be examined in order to provide a more detailed insight into their respective approaches.

Of particular importance within the context of Stefan George is the work of Max Kommerell, a member of the 'Kreis' from the early 1920s until 1930, at which point personal convictions incompatible with those of George led him to break away from the circle. Kommerell's book *Der Dichter als Führer in der deutschen Klassik*, published under the auspices of the George-Kreis in 1928, shall constitute a key source for this investigation, reflecting the intellectual climax of the leadership debate before 1933. Analysis will be combined with an examination of the author's unpublished notes and correspondence, dating largely from this period, which are themselves essential to a thorough understanding of his work.

Discussion shall focus on the extent to which Kommerell's publication constitutes a distillation of George's understanding of leadership, and how the concepts expressed in the book were influenced by preceding interpretations. In so doing it is hoped to identify the main focus of Kommerell's approach and hence to determine whether or not it is possible to view *Der Dichter als Führer* as a spiritual alternative to the rise of National Socialism.

In order to answer such questions it is however necessary to first return to the 'persönliches Regiment' of Wilhelm II, which constituted the dominant political force at the turn of the century. An overview of this era will provide the contextual background for the subsequent discussion. As previously identified in relation to

Napoleon I and Bismarck, the reception of and reaction to the contemporary leader shaped and therefore reflects the development of the leadership ideal during the period in question. A brief examination of the leadership style and public image of the Kaiser must therefore precede any further analysis.

## Chapter One

### *Wilhelm II: "die persönlichste Persönlichkeit"*

Wilhelm II's goal of political autonomy, itself the root of conflict between himself and Bismarck, is revealed through his belief in the Divine Right of Kings and the declaration of absolute authority.<sup>1</sup> Attempts were made to realise this through the dismissal of Bismarck and the subsequent appointment of personnel deemed loyal to the Emperor, combined with imperial intervention in day-to-day state affairs and, particularly in the 1890s, threats of a *coup d'état*. Particular attention was given by the Kaiser to foreign and security policy, areas over which he was constitutionally in command, although intervention was by no means restricted to these matters.<sup>2</sup> The image portrayed both at home and abroad was therefore one of a strong governing Emperor, standing at the centre of policy decision-making and exercising a powerful influence over all issues of national concern.

However, during the Weimar Republic historical research, in particular in Germany, brought into question the widely proclaimed 'persönliches Regiment', deeming it a fictional symbol, upheld by those circles close to the Kaiser in order to confirm his own self-aggrandisement, thereby gaining his confidence and enabling political manipulation. Such research tended to focus on the Kaiser's inadequacies as a political leader, based on a negative appraisal of his personal characteristics and his lack of knowledge of domestic and world affairs.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Wilhelm II's letter to his mother, Victoria, stands as one of the strongest declarations of this conviction: "[...] die Krone sendet ihre Strahlen durch 'Gottes Gnade' in Paläste und Hütten und - verzeih wenn ich es sage - Europa und die Welt horcht auf, um zu hören 'was sagt und was denkt der Deutsche Kaiser?' und nicht, was ist der Wille seines Kanzlers!". Quote from Elisabeth Fehrenbach, *Wandlungen des deutschen Kaisergedankens. 1871-1918*. R. Oldenbourg, München/Wien 1969, p. 90.

<sup>2</sup> For further details on the political situation during the Wilhelminian era and the Kaiser's influence over governmental policy see Wilfried Loth, *Das Kaiserreich. Obrigkeitsstaat und politische Mobilisierung*. Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, München 1996.

<sup>3</sup> An overview of the changing perception of the 'persönliches Regiment' in historical research is provided by Isabel V. Hull, "Persönliches Regiment", in: *Der Ort Kaiser Wilhelms II. in der deutschen Geschichte*. Hrsg. v. John C. G. Röhl unter Mitarbeit von Elisabeth Müller-Luckner. R. Oldenbourg Verlag, München 1991, p. 3-23.

This approach continued, with the exception of Erich Eyck's *Das Persönliche Regiment Wilhelms II.* (1948), to be adopted post-1945, centred around Hans-Ulrich Wehler and the so-called Bielefeld school. In his 1973 analysis Wehler described the post-Bismarckian Reich as an "autoritäre Polykratie ohne Koordination", the fall of the Chancellor having created a "Machtvakuum" which the Kaiser was unable to fill.<sup>4</sup> Elisabeth Fehrenbach, in her earlier 1969 study *Wandlungen des deutschen Kaisergedankens, 1871-1918*, also rejected the existence of the 'persönliches Regiment', though her analysis focused on the reasons behind the popular acceptance of this "Fiktion" and its consequent political effectiveness.

However, a number of historians have recently tended to reassess the rule of Wilhelm II, questioning the notion of the "Schattenkaiser" and re-emphasising the extent of his influence over policy formulation, be this in a positive or a negative manner. This reassessment of Wehler's theory, introduced by John Röhl in *Germany without Bismarck* (1967), underlies the collection of essays entitled the "Corfu Papers" (1982), which provide new interpretations of the Emperor, discussed in further detail in *Der Ort Kaiser Wilhelms II. in der deutschen Geschichte* (1991).

In the introduction to the "Corfu Papers" Röhl highlights the need to transcend the dichotomy which pervades the discussion on the existence of the 'persönliches Regiment', the term itself being open to a number of interpretations. He therefore supports Nicolaus Sombart's rejection of the term in favour of Norbert Elias' more neutral "Königsmechanismus" or "kingship mechanism" as a means of describing the "monarchocentric" nature of Wilhelm II's style of government.<sup>5</sup> Whilst accepting the erratic nature of his intervention and his loss of influence following the break with Chancellor Bülow in 1908, Röhl nevertheless highlights the Kaiser's dominance over both civil and military affairs. This control was exercised through a highly subjective

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<sup>4</sup> Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Das Deutsche Kaiserreich. 1871-1918*. Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, Göttingen 1973, p. 69.

<sup>5</sup> John C. G. Röhl, "Introduction", in: *Kaiser Wilhelm II. New Interpretations. The Corfu Papers*. Edited by John C. G. Röhl and Nicolaus Sombart. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1982, p. 1-22. This argument is further detailed in John C. G. Röhl, *The Kaiser and his Court. Wilhelm II and the Government of Germany*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1994, p. 115f. (First published in Germany as *Kaiser, Hof und Staat: Wilhelm II. und die deutsche Politik*. Verlag C. H. Beck, München 1987).

“Personalpolitik” and the establishment of a powerful circle of friends, in particular Count Philipp zu Eulenburg and the Liebenberg circle, and the expansion of a “neo-absolutist court culture”.<sup>6</sup>

This interpretation is supported by amongst others Isabel Hull, who defends the existence of the Emperor’s personal rule through remarks, both critical and supportive, made by Wilhelm’s contemporaries concerning the absolutist nature of government which, as Katharine Lerman points out, “reduced the role of the Chancellor within the executive to that of a courtier”.<sup>7</sup> Hull also focuses on the need to gain a clear understanding of the notion of ‘persönliches Regiment’, which may be defined not in strictly constitutional terms or as a fixed bureaucratic system of enlightened absolutism, but rather as “eine Art Bürgerkönigtum ohne Plebiszite”, combining the traditional monarchy with the needs of the modern bourgeois society.<sup>8</sup>

Although opinion remains divided as to the extent of the Kaiser’s political influence and as such the exact nature of the ‘persönliches Regiment’, the question itself being embedded within the wider debate on historical theory, it is nevertheless accepted that this principle formed the basis of Wilhelm II’s public image, which continued to be portrayed both at home and abroad, at least until the inevitability of Germany’s defeat in the First World War became apparent. Within the context of this study it is therefore the image, accorded a particularly high degree of attention by the monarch himself,<sup>9</sup> which is of prime importance, as this reflects the leadership ideal of both Wilhelm II and the general public who supported him. It is this image which contemporary political and intellectual circles responded to and which consequently shaped the turn of the century leadership debate.

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<sup>6</sup> Röhl, *The Kaiser and his Court*, op.cit., p. 70.

<sup>7</sup> Hull, op.cit. and Katharine A. Lerman, “The Chancellor as Courtier: The Position of the Responsible Government under Wilhelm II, 1900-1909”, in: *Der Ort Kaiser Wilhelms II. in der deutschen Geschichte*, op.cit., p. 44f (43-52).

<sup>8</sup> Hull, op.cit., p. 15-21. This synthesis of the traditional and the modern was previously highlighted by Fehrenbach, who described Wilhelm II’s rule as a combination of the established Prusso-German notion of Kaiserdom with the imperial and caesaristic interpretations which dominated the latter part of the nineteenth century, following the rise of Napoleon III and Bismarck. (Fehrenbach, op.cit., p. 89).

<sup>9</sup> See Thomas A. Kohut, *Wilhelm II and the Germans. A Study in Leadership*. Oxford University Press, Oxford/New York 1991, p. 127-140.

Publicly then Wilhelm II was presented as the personal embodiment of both a governing statesman and a representative figurehead, or to quote Eulenburg, “die Kombination des regierenden Staatsmannes und des schlafenden Heldenkaisers”.<sup>10</sup> Fulfilling both leadership functions, he was to unite the constitutionally separate roles of Emperor and Chancellor. This personalisation of government may therefore be viewed as an extenuation of the Carlylean and Bismarckian power ideal, which resulted in the further promotion of the ‘Kult des großen Mannes’ in German politics, the object of the ideal simply shifting from the Chancellor to the Monarch. However, Wilhelm II’s self-declared absolutism contrasted with Bismarck’s public proclamations of his subordination to Wilhelm I, who continued to be portrayed as the representative of the nation.

Furthermore, whereas under Bismarck this style of leadership was based on political pragmatism, reflecting, to quote Fehrenbach, a “Verstandesmonarchismus”, this developed under his successor into a type of “Gefühlsmonarchismus”,<sup>11</sup> centred on the charismatic effect of the Emperor, ironically described by Heinrich Mann as “die persönlichste Persönlichkeit”.<sup>12</sup> The effect of his dramatic speeches and his frequent travels throughout Germany contributed to this phenomenon, furthering his power as a national symbol.<sup>13</sup>

Wilhelm II’s sphere of influence was, moreover, not restricted to the political government of the nation, as had been the case under Bismarck, but extended beyond this to social and cultural matters, the Emperor claiming to represent what Friedrich

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<sup>10</sup> Quote from Johannes Haller, *Aus dem Leben des Fürsten Philipp zu Eulenburg-Hertefeld*. Gebrüder Paetel, Berlin / Leipzig 1926, p. 178. This allusion to the Barbarossa myth reflects the attempts made by Wilhelm II to publicly associate himself with Germanic tradition, placing himself in a line of great dynastic rulers. The Wilhelminian era witnessed a popular historical cult and the revival of German Romantic mythology, thereby expanding upon the earlier association of the ‘Kyffhäuser’ legend with Wilhelm I. (For further details on the use of the Barbarossa myth during this period see Fehrenbach, op.cit., p. 108-112).

<sup>11</sup> Fehrenbach, op. cit., p. 180.

<sup>12</sup> Heinrich Mann, *Der Untertan*. Mit einem Nachwort und Materialienanhang von Peter-Paul Schneider. Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, Frankfurt am Main 1991, p. 126.

<sup>13</sup> See Kohut, op. cit., p. 162-167.



Meinecke deemed the “geistige Gesamtpersönlichkeit der Nation”.<sup>14</sup> Thus he became the figurehead of a united Germany, creating a harmony between himself and his subjects, at least amongst the middle classes where the majority of his support was rooted. Thomas Kohut, in his psychological study of Wilhelm II’s leadership, highlights the interrelationship between the Emperor and the German people, Wilhelm’s personality and goals being reciprocated in the characteristics and needs of the country as a whole.<sup>15</sup>

This symbiosis, satirically portrayed in Heinrich Mann’s *Der Untertan*, reflects the need felt within the divisions of mass industrialised society for a strong leader who would unite Germany and raise its position as a world leader. This need is reflected in the political response to Wilhelm II, which was characterised by a duality previously identified in the reaction to Napoleon I and later to both Napoleon III and Bismarck. Although criticism was levelled at the Kaiser as an *individual*, particularly with regard to his political failings and loss of influence in the latter stages of his reign, the notion of strong personal rule represented by him was nevertheless widely accepted and promoted across the parliamentary spectrum.<sup>16</sup> As will be demonstrated in the following chapter, this defence of the ideal if not the individual is also revealed in the intellectual response to the ‘persönliches Regiment’.

The demand for strong leadership is further evidenced by the popular support for Hindenburg and Ludendorff during the war, the symbolic power of the Emperor being transferred to the military leaders following the collapse of Wilhelm’s popularity. As Fehrenbach demonstrates, the establishment of this military dictatorship adopted the modern element of Wilhelm II’s rule, which was based on a plebiscitary “Persönlichkeitskult”, whilst removing it from any form of traditional, dynastic

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<sup>14</sup> Quote from Fehrenbach, *op.cit.*, p. 226. This concept recalls Novalis’ earlier interpretation of the role of the king: “Einem König sollte nichts mehr am Herzen liegen, als so vielseitig, so unterrichtet, orientiert und vorurteilsfrei, kurz so vollständiger Mensch zu sein, und zu bleiben, als möglich”. (Novalis, “Glauben und Liebe”, *op.cit.*, p. 366).

<sup>15</sup> Kohut, *op. cit.*

<sup>16</sup> See amongst other commentators Fehrenbach, *op.cit.*, p. 133. Also Hull, *op.cit.*, p. 5 and Kohut, *op.cit.*, p. 163-167.

legitimation, thereby creating a rule based purely on the absolute authority of a charismatic individual, as was later to dominate German politics.<sup>17</sup>

The belief in and desire for the 'great man' is further reflected in the so-called 'Bismarck-Kult', which became increasingly important during the pre-war period prior to the rise of the "Ersatzkaiser" Hindenburg, the former Reichskanzler coming to be viewed as an idealised and mysticised alternative to the man responsible for his downfall. The image of Bismarck as propagated at the turn of the century is of particular importance as a mirror of changing perceptions of the leadership ideal, as was previously established in relation to the myths surrounding Queen Luise and Prince Louis Ferdinand of Prussia. Notably, the Napoleonic myth also enjoyed a wave of regeneration in Germany at this time.<sup>18</sup>

A particular characteristic of the development of the Bismarck myth during this period is a tendency towards the integration of cultural or intellectual aspects into the image of the political leader. This draws on criticism levelled by both Wagner and Nietzsche at the Chancellor and the political and military *Zeitgeist* which he represented. However, whereas both figures sought to achieve this intellectual component through an alternative *form* of leadership removed from the contemporary political sphere, the myth surrounding Bismarck focused on the need to integrate these elements into one individual, thereby echoing Wilhelm II's attempts to influence, through his "Persönlichkeitsfülle",<sup>19</sup> all aspects of national life.

This phenomenon is detailed by Wülfing *et al*, who focus on its role within the *fin-de-siècle* pedagogical debate in Germany, which sought to portray Bismarck as a, to quote Otto Lyon, "Künstler in Politik und Sprache",<sup>20</sup> thereby mediating between the then debated extremes of realism and idealism. Emphasis was placed on the "Staatskünstler" as a so-called "vollendeter Mensch" in possession of transcendental

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<sup>17</sup> Fehrenbach, *op.cit.*, p. 219.

<sup>18</sup> See Wülfing/Bruns/Parr, *op.cit.* for a more detailed analysis of the function of the myths of these leaders and their changing focus and interaction throughout the nineteenth century.

<sup>19</sup> Quote from Fehrenbach, *op.cit.*, p. 226.

<sup>20</sup> Quote from Wülfing/Bruns/Parr, *op.cit.*, p. 157.

and redemptive qualities.<sup>21</sup> Lyon's proclamations, which clearly incorporated traditional mythological patterns based on the belief in a messianic "Erlöser", were later developed by August Julius Langbehn, who focused on the need for a stronger intellectual element in order to suit the post-Bismarckian era:

Der großen Persönlichkeit Bismarck's fehlt immerhin der Hauch eines feineren Geisteslebens; die rauhe Zeit, in der und für die er geboren ward, hielt solche Einflüsse fern: er trägt nur das Schwert, das Myrthenreis ward ihm versagt. In dem preußisch-deutschen Staat und Volk der Zukunft sollte sich der Geist Bismarck's mit demjenigen Schiller's und Goethe's zur Einheit verschmelzen [...].<sup>22</sup>

The search for "eine Art geistiger Bismarck"<sup>23</sup> capable of achieving German cultural unity reflects a reaction against the materialism and dominant militarisation of Wilhelminian Germany, whilst retaining the strong element of nationalism which marked this period. Progressing from the fragmented arguments of the preceding era, the intellectual response to Wilhelm II may therefore be deemed an attempt to achieve what Michael Georg Conrad described in 1910 as "eine mächtige Synthese deutschen Geistes- und Gemütswesens".<sup>24</sup>

This desired synthesis was however not limited to educational circles and may indeed be interpreted beyond the immediate constraints of the myth of the 'Iron Chancellor' as the fundamental framework within which the wider discussion of leadership in the early twentieth century must be viewed. As shall be demonstrated in the course of this section, it reflects an attempt to unite the various elements identified in the preceding period - namely the Carlylean and Bismarckian power ideal, the Wagnerian focus on regeneration through art and elements of Nietzschean philosophy - drawing on the post-Napoleonic leadership ideal whilst combining it with and adapting it to more

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<sup>21</sup> "Nur ein ganzer Mann, bei dem Kopf und Herz, Licht und Wärme, Verstand, Gefühl und Wille in voller Harmonie stehen, jedes gleich gesund und gleich stark entwickelt, nur ein solcher vermag die Dinge zu sehen, wie sie sind, nur er vermag zu heilen, zu retten, zu erlösen." (Quote from *Ibid.*, p. 159).

<sup>22</sup> Quote from *Ibid.*, p. 165.

<sup>23</sup> Friedrich Lienhard, Quote from *Ibid.*, p. 176.

recent political developments. The following quotation taken from a diary entry of the young Harry Graf Kessler on 26th November 1897 provides the underlying motif for this era:

Zu erstrebendes Ziel heute in Deutschland: die philosophische Goethische Kultur mit der Bismarckschen politischen und der fin-de-siècle ästhetischen zu vereinigen; d.h. Persönlichkeiten zu bilden, die alle drei natürlich in sich tragen.<sup>25</sup>

It is this motif which shall constitute the basis of the following analysis of the intellectual discussion of leadership within Wilhelminian Germany and the Weimar Republic. It represents, at least to a certain extent, the modern application of the synthesis initially advocated by Nietzsche, reflected in his own ideal of “philosophische Gewaltmenschen und Künstler-Tyrannen”.<sup>26</sup> Fundamental differences between the two ideals are however clearly apparent.

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<sup>24</sup> Quote from *Ibid.*, p. 165.

<sup>25</sup> Diary entry from 26.11.1897. Quote from Peter Grupp, *Harry Graf Kessler. 1868-1937. Eine Biographie*. Verlag C. H. Beck, München 1995, p. 72.

<sup>26</sup> Quote from Ottmann, *op. cit.*, p. 276.

## Chapter Two

### *The spiritualisation of power: the desire for unity as revealed in the work of Harry Graf Kessler*

In accordance with the development of the Bismarck myth outlined above, the fundamental failing of Wilhelm II as identified by contemporary intellectual circles was the lack of true focus on 'Geist', on the free development of art and culture beyond the bounds of national political interest, as previously identified by both Wagner and Nietzsche following the foundation of the German Reich under Bismarck.

The diaries and publications of Harry Graf Kessler chronicle this dissatisfaction, which grew into stark opposition as he became increasingly involved in the promotion of modern art and culture.<sup>27</sup> Whilst remaining supportive of Germany throughout the War and indeed being made responsible for German cultural propaganda in Switzerland, Kessler nevertheless became increasingly disillusioned with the restrictive and politically determined art policy of the Wilhelminian regime, which he was later to define as "eine Mischung von Genußsucht, falscher Kultur, politischer Betriebsamkeit und Selbstsicherheit und, last not least, schlechten Manieren".<sup>28</sup>

It is the accusation of cultural dilettantism which also formed the basis of Kessler's post-war criticism of Hindenburg, whom he described, despite initial praise, as "der

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<sup>27</sup> Kessler was involved with the elitist cultural journal PAN, as well as with a project to re-establish Weimar as a cultural centre, as initiated by Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche. In 1902 he took over the position as head of the cultural museum in Weimar, although his modern aesthetic approach led to conflict with governmental policy, resulting in the formation of the anti-imperial 'Künstlerbund'. For further details see Grupp, op.cit.

<sup>28</sup> Tagebuch, 3.4.1923. Unpublished diaries held in the Deutsches Literaturarchiv, Marbach am Neckar. (Selected diary entries covering the period from 1918-1937 have been published by Wolfgang Pfeiffer-Belli under the title Harry Graf Kessler, *Tagebücher. 1918-1937*. Hrsg. v. Wolfgang Pfeiffer-Belli. Insel Taschenbuch, Frankfurt am Main und Leipzig 1996. However, earlier diaries, as well as those dating from the period April 1923 to November 1924, which were not published in the Pfeiffer-Belli edition, have been recovered and are held as manuscripts in the archive in Marbach. In order to achieve accuracy and consistency these manuscripts have been used for all further diary citations. The Deutsche Schillergesellschaft currently holds the right to the first publication of these diaries, and a complete edition is being compiled at present. For further details see Bernhard Zeller, "Aus unbekanntem Tagebüchern Harry Graf Kesslers", in: *Jahrbuch der Deutschen Schillergesellschaft*. 31 [1987], p. 3-34). See also the essays *Der Deutschen Künstlerbund* and *Herr von Werner* published in Harry Graf Kessler, *Gesammelte Schriften in drei Bänden*. Band II. *Künstler und Nationen. Aufsätze und Reden 1899-1933*. Hrsg. v. Cornelia Blasberg und Gerhard Schuster. Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, Frankfurt am Main 1988.

Gott aller Derer, die sich ins Philistertum zurücksehnen [...]”.<sup>29</sup> This phenomenon was however, according to Kessler, not to be associated purely with Wilhelm II, but was also a product of the pragmatic and militaristic Bismarckian era, as an earlier diary entry suggests:

Wir selbst und auch die Fremden hatten unsere Augen mit zuviel Aufmerksamkeit auf die deutsche Politik gerichtet um für eine aesthetische Betrachtung der deutschen Kunst noch Zeit oder Geschmack übrig zu haben. Das Wiedererwachen des Interesses hieran in weiteren Kreisen fällt daher auch mit Bismarcks Sturz zusammen.<sup>30</sup>

Kessler’s judgement of the Wilhelminian regime was therefore based predominantly on aesthetic considerations, both in terms of the actual physical appearance of the Kaiser<sup>31</sup> and with regard to governmental art policy. Criticism of the imperial “Schauspieler”<sup>32</sup> and perceived representative of a “gekrönter Dilletantismus”<sup>33</sup> was however later combined with attacks on the political approach of the Kaiser and his advisors, in particular with regard to foreign policy and the more fundamental absence of an underlying ideology.<sup>34</sup>

The interdependence of art and politics constitutes the key characteristic of Kessler’s ideological ethos, as demonstrated by his interest in the Greek “Polis” as a model for

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<sup>29</sup> Tagebuch, 15.5.1925. This may be contrasted with a 1916 diary entry which indicates Kessler’s support of Hindenburg’s dictatorship, the military leader in whom he placed his hope for the future of Germany being compared to Napoleon I: “Zweifellos bedeutet die Diktatur Hindenburgs eine ganz unberechenbar grosse Stärkung nach aussen und nach innen. Man kann sie nur mit der Rückkehr Bonapartes aus Ägypten und der Konsolidierung der französischen Verhältnisse durch den Staatsstreich vom 18 Brumaire in ihren mutmasslichen Wirkungen vergleichen. Hoffentlich folgt bald auf dieses Brumaire unser Marengo.” (Tagebuch, 3.9.1916).

<sup>30</sup> Tagebuch, 5.3.1895.

<sup>31</sup> See Grupp, *op.cit.*, p. 159.

<sup>32</sup> Tagebuch, 6.3.1902.

<sup>33</sup> Tagebuch, 19.12.1901.

<sup>34</sup> In his unfinished “Curriculum Vitae” Kessler outlines his three main criticisms of the Kaiser and his regime: “die brambarsierende, mit tönenden Schlagworten operierende, aber offenbar directionslose Außenpolitik”; “die steigende Erbitterung in der Bekämpfung jeder freiheitlichen oder demokratischen Gesinnung”; and “die prinzipielle Bevorzugung eines empörenden Kitsches in Kunst und Literatur”. Kessler, “Curriculum Vitae”, in: Harry Graf Kessler, *Gesammelte Schriften*, *op.cit.*, Band I, *Gesichter und Zeiten. Erinnerungen. Notizen über Mexiko*, p. 328 (319-334).

contemporary society.<sup>35</sup> In an echo of Wagnerian aesthetics, he aimed to promote art not for art's sake, but as a basis for the entire social and political structure, from which change and reform could be brought about:

Im letzten Grund erfüllt Politik nämlich immer nur in verschiedenen Formen eine Aufgabe: einem Volke, das heißt den idealen, intellektuellen oder künstlerischen Gaben eines Volkes, die höchste, mannigfaltigste und weiteste Entfaltung zu bahnen und zu sichern.<sup>36</sup>

It is this "Versuch einer Synthese von 'Geist und Macht'"<sup>37</sup> which therefore underlies Kessler's understanding of leadership, as indicated in the introductory quotation. Centred on what Peter Grupp describes as the "Primat der Kultur und der Persönlichkeit gegenüber der Politik und der Bürokratie",<sup>38</sup> this drew on the preceding leadership debate, incorporating aspects of Bismarckian, Wagnerian and Nietzschean ideology. An examination of Kessler's response to these three key figures will provide a more detailed insight into the constituent elements of this interpretation.

Kessler's opinion of Bismarck, who exercised a dominant influence over his childhood and the formation of his political standpoint,<sup>39</sup> is marked throughout his diaries and memoirs by a self-confessed ambiguity; torn between admiration for the man and doubts concerning a number of his policies, Kessler was driven towards an inner conflict which he was never able to fully resolve. Despite support of the Chancellor's foreign policy and the central goal of German unification, he became increasingly alienated by the lack of ideology, an alienation which, as indicated above, was to continue under Wilhelm II. Attempts made to embrace political pragmatism, defined

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<sup>35</sup> Kessler, "Lehrjahre", in: Kessler, *Gesichter und Zeiten*, op.cit., p. 158f.

<sup>36</sup> Kessler, "Der Deutsche Künstlerbund", in: Kessler, *Künstler und Nationen*, op.cit., p. 75f (66-77). For further details on the interdependence of culture and politics and the revolutionary force of art and the artist see also the essay "Im memoriam Paul Cassirer", in: Kessler, *Künstler und Nationen*, op.cit., p. 272-276.

<sup>37</sup> Hans-Ulrich Simon, "Nachwort", in: Eberhard von Bodenhausen. *Harry Graf Kessler. Ein Briefwechsel. 1894-1918*. Ausgewählt und hrsg. v. Hans-Ulrich Simon. Marbach am Neckar 1978, p. 213f.

<sup>38</sup> Grupp, op.cit., p. 118.

<sup>39</sup> See "Mémé", "Lehrjahre" and "Curriculum Vitae", in: Kessler, *Gesichter und Zeiten*, op.cit.

by the young count as the quintessence of great statesmanship,<sup>40</sup> ultimately failed, as Kessler came to view Bismarckian “Realpolitik”, combined with a demonic will to power, as the cause of the subsequent “Verkleinerung des deutschen Menschen”.<sup>41</sup>

Nevertheless, Kessler was prepared to accept a high degree of political autonomy as a means by which specific goals could be achieved:

Bismarck hat bei jedem Erfolg, den er herbeiführen wollte, alles, was zu ihm mitwirken konnte, ins Auge gefasst; hat immer den ganzen sozialen Körper, den König, den Hof, das Parlament, die Arbeitermassen etc. wie sovieler Räder betrachtet, die er richtig einstellen musste, damit sie ganz natürlich zum gewünschten Ziel zusammenarbeiteten.<sup>42</sup>

This support of a caesarean approach to leadership reflects the so-called “inhaltlich-ideelle” legitimisation of action, combined with the perceived quasi-divine right of a charismatic ‘great man’, as previously encountered in the intellectual and political response to Napoleon I.

Echoing the earlier decontextualisation of the post-Napoleonic leadership debate, Kessler’s fascination with the “archaische god”<sup>43</sup> Bismarck was, in consistence with his later response to Wilhelm II, based on the aesthetic concerns which dominated his political ideology:

Nach der einen Seite zog mich unwiderstehlich Bismarck als Mensch: sein Format, seine Sprache, das Deutsch seiner Briefe, seiner Reden, seine Rembrandtsche Erscheinung. Das alles wirkte auf mich wie Musik! Und doch fühlte ich, ohne daß ich mich dem

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<sup>40</sup> Tagebuch, 13.10.1898.

<sup>41</sup> Kessler, “Lehrjahre”, op.cit., p. 158; 161-164. As such Kessler echoed criticism previously levelled at Bismarck’s pragmatism by Nietzsche: “...wie viele möchten von ganzem Herzen mit Bismarck einer Meinung sein, wenn er selber nur mit sich einer Meinung wäre oder auch nur Miene machte, es fürderhin zu sein!”. (Nietzsche, “Morgenröte”, op.cit., p. 125 [125ff, 167]).

<sup>42</sup> Kessler, “Lehrjahre”, op.cit., p. 158.



Zauber entziehen konnte, immer deutlicher, daß der glänzend orchestrierten und gespielten Komposition etwas fehlte: ein durchgehendes Motiv, das ihren Variationen einen über den Tag hinausweisenden Sinn gegeben hätte.<sup>44</sup>

The above passage summarises the ambiguity of Kessler's response to Bismarck, praise of the charismatic leader contrasting with opposition to political pragmatism and the absence of a fundamental ideology.<sup>45</sup> Similarly, the mystical 'Persönlichkeitskult' also determined Kessler's admiration of Wagner, despite his mistrust of the subjective "künstlerischem, litterarischem, religiös-philosophischem Credo"<sup>46</sup> of Bayreuth:

Ich konnte mich wie bei Bismarck nicht dem Zauber seiner Persönlichkeit, seines Genies entziehen. Wirklich hatten Wagner und Bismarck in den Mitteln, mit denen sie wirkten, und auch in der Taktik, durch die sie siegten, manches gemein.<sup>47</sup>

This aesthetic approach reveals clear parallels with Nietzsche's initial response to both Wagner and Bismarck, Kessler's references to the magical quality of the Chancellor's use of language recalling Nietzsche's letter to von Gersdorff, in which he compares Bismarck's speeches to "starken Wein". Indeed, the similarities in their approach appear to serve Kessler as justification of his own inner conflict:

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<sup>43</sup> Tagebuch, 23.9.1887.

<sup>44</sup> Kessler, "Lehrjahre", op.cit., p. 157f (97-231).

<sup>45</sup> A similarly ambiguous response to the Chancellor may be identified in Fontane's later correspondence which, in contrast to his earlier praise, is marked by a conflict between admiration of the individual, in particular his writings and speeches, and his lack of principles: "Diese Mischung von Uebermensch und Schlauberger, von Staatengründer und Pferdestall-Steuerverweigerer [...] von Heros und Heulhuber, der nie ein Wässerchen getrübt hat, - erfüllt mich mit gemischten Gefühlen und läßt eine reine helle Bewunderung in mir nicht aufkommen. Etwas fehlt ihm und gerade das, was recht eigentlich die Größe leihet". Brief an Martha Fontane anlässlich des Bismarck-Tages, 1.4.1895, in: Fontane, *Briefe*, op.cit., Band IV, p. 440.

<sup>46</sup> Tagebuch, 21.7.1897.

<sup>47</sup> Kessler, "Lehrjahre", op.cit., p. 186.

Nietzsche stand mit seinem "guten Europäertum" zu Bismarcks Politik in einem schroffen Gegensatz, bewunderte aber mit gewissen Vorbehalten dessen starke und geniale Persönlichkeit.<sup>48</sup>

The ideal which emerges from Kessler's reactions is therefore a mythical 'Dioskurenpaar', a synthesis of the statesman and the artist cum philosopher, as previously identified within the *fin-de-siècle* Bismarck myth. The Chancellor had provided the outer geo-political form, but had failed to achieve national cultural and spiritual unity, as previously criticised by Wagner and Nietzsche: "Was hatte Bismarck seinem Machtstaat an Geist - an Ideen, Idealen, Wunschträumen - mitgegeben?"<sup>49</sup> The basis advocated by Kessler for the realisation of this goal was the application of Nietzschean philosophy. The unification of 'Geist' and 'Macht' through an underlying belief in the power of the individual becomes clear in the following passage, taken from Kessler's memoirs:

Auf einem anderen Wege führten uns Nietzsche und unsere eigenen Erfahrungen zum selben Schluß und auf den gleichen Punkt wie die Betrachtung der Politik der Weltreiche, die lange auf der Höhe ihrer Macht sich gehalten hatten. Ebenso wie sie brauchte auch eine Kultur, um zu dauern, als ihre unentbehrlichsten Träger Persönlichkeiten, die ihr angepaßt und von ihr geprägt, doch stark und ungebrochen geblieben waren.<sup>50</sup>

Kessler's interpretation of Nietzschean philosophy, a continuing critical assessment of which is chronicled in his diaries, focused on the notions of personal sacrifice and heroism, beyond the constraints of traditional or religious values. Particular emphasis was placed within this context on the individual aspect of self-overcoming. However, clear links with the 'Kult des großen Mannes' rejected by Nietzsche may,

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<sup>48</sup> Kessler, "Lehrjahre", op.cit., p. 216. This recalls Ottmann's discussion of Nietzsche's early Bismarck reception, described as: "Bewunderung für die Person Bismarcks bei gleichzeitiger Verdammung seiner Politik". (Ottmann, op.cit., p. 16).

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., p. 216.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 210.

paradoxically, be identified, Kessler himself falling victim to the “Rattenfängergenie”,<sup>51</sup> to whom he planned to erect “eine Art von Tempel”.<sup>52</sup>

A particular element of Kessler’s interpretation of Nietzsche was the focus on aristocracy, a principle which underscored both his political and cultural judgements, as is clearly evident from his pamphlet *Der Deutsche Künstlerbund* (1904). Rejecting the cultural “Herde” of Wilhelminian Germany, Kessler advocates a universal application of the “Kundry-” or “Zarathustragebot”, namely the principle “daß jeder immer dem Höherbegnadeten dienen soll”.<sup>53</sup> Uniting both Wagnerian and Nietzschean ideology, this interpretation of aristocracy was again based on aesthetic as opposed to traditional social criteria.<sup>54</sup>

The elitist notion of self-sacrifice in the name of the culturally or spiritually superior individual is also expressed in the essay *Kunst und Religion* (1899), in which Kessler analyses the interrelationship between the ‘Heiliger’ and the ‘Menge’.<sup>55</sup> By drawing parallels between art and religion in terms of the powerful feelings and divine images which they create, he is able to define the artist as a charismatic spiritual leader capable of consciously evoking mass religious sentiment, thereby echoing Wagner’s sanctification of art and the artist, detailed in *Religion und Kunst*.

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p. 211.

<sup>52</sup> Plans for the so-called “Nietzsche-Denkmal” are outlined in a letter from Kessler to Hofmannsthal dated 16.4.1911, in: *Hugo von Hofmannsthal. Harry Graf Kessler. Ein Briefwechsel. 1898-1929*. Hrsg. v. Hilde Burger. Insel Verlag, Frankfurt am Main 1968, p. 323 (323-326).

<sup>53</sup> Kessler, “Der Deutsche Künstlerbund”, op.cit., p. 76.

<sup>54</sup> It should however be noted that despite opposition to the cultural tendencies of the Wilhelminian era, Kessler was nevertheless aware of the ultimate need for cultural democracy and the problem of how to achieve this goal: “Die Gesellschaft des Mittelalters war politisch eine Aristokratie, geistig eine Demokratie; seitdem geht die Tendenz immer ausgesprochener auf eine politische Demokratie unter einer geistigen Aristokratie. Die “allgemeine Bildung” ist Nichts als die allgemeine geistige Wehrpflicht, die die Massen in den Dienst der neuen Lehnsherren stellt. [...] Problem der Universalität. Man fühlt, dass in dieser Zeit (Romantik, Gothik) die Massen an der Kultur teilhatten, oder, anders, dass die Kultur universal war. Gegensatz zu Stendhals “happy few”. Die Kultur hat sich seit dem Mittelalter immer mehr zusammengezogen, ist immer weniger Seelen adaequat geworden; mit dem Steigen ihrer Komplexität hat sich die Zahl der Barbaren immer mehr vergrößert, bis die Kultivierten nur noch eine Insel sind. Die Gothik, das Christentum haben dieses Problem gelöst, vollkommen gelöst für die Elite und die Masse ihrer Zeit. Die “Provinz” ist z.B. eine Erscheinung, die dem Mittelalter ganz fehlt. Überall war die Gemeinde durch die Kirche mit der höchsten Kultur “de plein pied”. Wie werden wir dieses Problem lösen?”. (Tagebuch, 11.9.1908).

<sup>55</sup> Kessler, “Kunst und Religion”, in: Kessler, *Künstler und Nationen*, op.cit., p. 9-47.

Hildegard Nabbe highlights this particular hierarchical aspect of Kessler's *Kulturphilosophie*, which when applied to political issues resulted in the support of a fundamentally conservative approach, in contrast to the cultural modernism which he and the intellectual circles around him advocated.<sup>56</sup> Grupp also emphasises the political implications of these aristocratic convictions:

Die Kriege eines Friedrich II., eines Napoleon oder Bismarck empfindet er dem zeittypischen Kult des großen Mannes gemäß als Taten heldenhafter Einzelner, die Kriegsbegeisterung der Massen aber als abstoßendes Spektakel. So sehr er die englische Führungsschicht bewundert, so sehr stößt ihn das "niedere Volk" ab.<sup>57</sup>

This approach, again reminiscent of Grabbe and Carlyle, may, according to Grupp, be traced not only through Kessler's pre-war support of the fundamentals of imperial policy, but, paradoxically, is also evident in relation to his post-1918 engagement for democracy and European co-operation,<sup>58</sup> as this was implemented through elite groups, operating outside of the established party structure.<sup>59</sup>

A degree of ambiguity may indeed be identified in Kessler's sustained belief in 'great men' and simultaneous support of democracy. The following reference to Hindenburg certainly reflects support of the 'Heroen-Kult', revealing the traditional myths of the demonic and the charismatic power of the individual over the "gemeinen Mann":

Dass Hindenburg in seinem Fühlen repräsentativ ist, weit mehr als Bismarck [...] ist eine unermessliche Kraftquelle. Jedes Wort von ihm trifft ins Herz des gemeinen Mannes, ganz unabsichtlich, und

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<sup>56</sup> Hildegard Nabbe, "Mäzenatentum und elitäre Kunst. Harry Graf Kessler als Schlüsselfigur für eine kulturelle Erneuerung um die Jahrhundertwende", in: *Deutsche Vierteljahresschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte*. 64. Jahrgang (1990), p. 655 (652-679).

<sup>57</sup> Grupp, op.cit., p. 157.

<sup>58</sup> See for example Kessler, "National and International Democracy", in: Count Harry Kessler, *Germany and Europe*. Published for the Institute of Politics by the Yale University Press, New Haven 1923, p. 107-150.

<sup>59</sup> Grupp, op.cit., p. 187f.

treibt ihn vorwärts in Sieg und Tod. Er ist damit fast ebenso sehr wie mit seinem Kombinieren und Können ein Teil der dämonischen Gewalt, die die deutsche Weltherrschaft aufrichtet.<sup>60</sup>

However, it would be wrong to overlook other statements made by Kessler which indicate a more positive approach to the masses, such as this diary entry made in 1896:

Es ist doch wohl eine Einseitigkeit von Schopenhauer und Nietzsche als Höhepunkte der Menschheit blos grosse Individuen zu setzen. Auch ganze Komplexe von Menschen können Genie haben, und ich zweifle sogar, ob nicht die geniale Masse sogar Etwas Gewaltigeres, Wunderbareres, als das geniale Individuum ist, auch in schöpferischer Beziehung.<sup>61</sup>

This quotation therefore implies not, as Grupp suggests, a Nietzschean rejection of the masses in favour of a totalitarian 'Heroen-Kult', be this of an aesthetic, philosophical or political nature, but rather a more balanced approach, acknowledging the contribution made by both groups to the development of society, "die einzelne grosse Persönlichkeit" being perceived "als Teil, als leuchtenden Punkt auf der gewaltigen Welle, die sich plötzlich über dem Flächenniveau des Menschheits-Ozeans erhebt".<sup>62</sup> As such Kessler recalls Wagner's concept of the great individual acting within and dependent upon the artistic community as a whole.

This element is particularly pronounced in the post-war diaries, following the abdication of the Kaiser and the subsequent foundation of a republic. Describing his plans for a new journal, Kessler hopes to abolish the popular 'Persönlichkeitskult', as represented in the failed 'persönliches Regiment' of Wilhelm II:

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<sup>60</sup> Tagebuch, 26.3.1918.

<sup>61</sup> Tagebuch, 22.5.1896.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

Das Ganze ist ein Aristophaneskes Unternehmen, das die Geister in Bewegung halten kann; zuwider jeder Form des "Pompier"-haften, der abgelebten Tradition, dem unantastbaren "Grossen Mann", der sacrosancten Dummheit und Dumpfheit auch im radikalen Lager.<sup>63</sup>

However, despite this apparent Nietzschean revision of traditional values the fundamental characteristic of Kessler's leadership ideal remained the strong individual leader, his opposition being largely restricted to the Kaiser and the "geistige und ethische Hohlheit"<sup>64</sup> which he represented. Central to an understanding of this apparent contradiction is an identification of the distinction made by Kessler between an acceptance of the principle of autonomous leadership through a charismatic individual and concerns regarding specific policies, as also reflected in his comments concerning Bismarck.

As demonstrated by his response to Bismarck, Wagner and Nietzsche, the individual leader sought by Kessler was therefore to combine political, aesthetic and philosophical qualities, as he felt that Wilhelm II's attempts to achieve this "Persönlichkeitsfülle"<sup>65</sup> had failed. The notion of genius, a key element throughout the post-Napoleonic leadership debate, was therefore defined not in terms of a particular type or form, but rather in the overarching sense of divine creation:

Genie haben heisst neue Vorstellungen schaffen, zu seinem eigenen Nutzen oder zu dem anderer, Vorstellungen, die sich unmittelbar in Handlungen umsetzen (Napoleon, Bismarck) oder Vorstellungen, aus denen sich zunächst neue Vorstellungsreihen, Weltanschauungen entwickeln (Plato, Kant, Hegel.), oder schliesslich Vorstellungen, die nur den inneren Menschen erwecken oder entwickeln (die Künstler: Giotto, Bach). Weil das Genie die

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<sup>63</sup> Tagebuch, 28.1.1919.

<sup>64</sup> Kessler, "Graf Hermann Keyserlings politische Ideen", in: Kessler, *Künstler und Nationen*, op.cit., p. 186 (186-192).

<sup>65</sup> Quote from Fehrenbach, op.cit., p. 226.

Seele des Menschen fortlaufend schafft, kann man es auch die das  
Göttliche schaffende Kraft nennen.<sup>66</sup>

This broad interpretation, reminiscent of views expressed in Carlyle's *On Heroes and Hero-Worship* and Burckhardt's *Die historische Größe*, led Kessler to seek a synthesis of action and reflection, the embodiment of Goethe and Napoleon in one individual, Frederick the Great being viewed as an example of this ideal.<sup>67</sup> It is this particular unification of 'Geist' and 'Politik' which also formed the basis of Kessler's admiration of Walter Rathenau, the potentially tragic conflict between the two elements forming the underlying structure for his biography of the assassinated foreign minister.<sup>68</sup>

Increasingly, particularly during the post-war period, emphasis was placed on the philosophical and aesthetic elements within this synthesis. In *Graf Hermann Keyserlings politische Ideen* (1919) for example, Kessler focuses on the need for a "Spiritualisierung" of society and the ideological as opposed to military interpretation of heroism, stating: "Denker und Idealisten hat Deutschland heute nötiger als Politiker oder Soldaten".<sup>69</sup> Similarly in *Weltpolitik und Erziehung* (1922) the emphasis is

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<sup>66</sup> Tagebuch, 21.11.1898.

<sup>67</sup> In 1887 the young Kessler wrote the following statement which demonstrates his dual focus on politics and the arts: "Read the greater part of the 3<sup>d</sup> book of the Hellenics in the morning and the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> books of *Dichtung α Wahrheit* in the afternoon. It is remarkable how the two greatest Germans of the 18<sup>th</sup> century resemble and completed one another. Neither Goethe nor Frederic cared much for Germany or the Germans as a people, and yet the one raised the German arms and the other German literature to the pinnacle of glory; while on the other hand if Goethe admired the military greatness of Prussia, Frederic certainly cared very little for the literary greatness of Germany. And yet Frederic was a great, a very great man." (Tagebuch, 24.7.1887) Frederick the Great's attempts to unite art and politics in Germany are later contrasted with Bismarck's failure to achieve cultural unity in Kessler's memoirs: "Hatte er [Bismarck] Geist und Macht zusammengefaßt [...] wie es der große Hohenstaufe Friedrich in seinem Reich wenigstens versucht hatte?" (Kessler, "Lehrjahre", op.cit., p. 216).

<sup>68</sup> Harry Graf Kessler, *Gesammelte Schriften*, op.cit., Band III, *Walther Rathenau. Sein Leben und sein Werk*.

<sup>69</sup> Kessler, "Graf Hermann Keyserlings politische Ideen", op.cit., p. 187. A similar statement was made by Heinrich Mann in his 1910 essay "Geist und Tat": "[...] der Typus des geistigen Menschen muß der herrschende werden in einem Volk, das jetzt noch empor will. [...] Der Faust- und Autoritätsmensch muß der Feind sein". Mann emphasises the need for "Geistesführer" to unite thought and action, providing a fusion of the two spheres as was previously experienced during the French Revolution. He criticises, like Kessler, the dominance of the shallow personality cult which dominated, and therefore hindered the development of, Wilhelminian society, a point of view which was to later shape the novel *Der Untertan*, as referred to above. However, in contrast to Kessler, Mann blames intellectuals for encouraging this elitist ideal of the 'great man', perceiving Nietzsche

placed on the reacquisition of individual responsibility, the fundamental ethical principle which had been sacrificed in the name of state power.<sup>70</sup>

Central to this belief is again Nietzschean philosophy, which, according to Kessler, is to be interpreted in intellectual as opposed to specifically political or social terms. This approach is made clear in the count's correspondence with Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche, Kessler, despite his close association with the Nietzsche-Archiv, remaining opposed to Frau Förster-Nietzsche's attempts to portray her brother as the ideological forerunner of National Socialism. In a letter dated April 1928 Kessler emphasises the "höhere Ebene" of Nietzsche's philosophy: "Die Ideen Ihres Bruders reichen über die Politik weit hinaus und haben es nicht nötig, sich mit irgend einer Tageserscheinung zu identifizieren".<sup>71</sup>

However, despite an increasing emphasis on the sphere of 'Geist' as a reaction to the growth of political radicalism and nationalism, Kessler continues to view the aesthetic, philosophical *and* political elements of leadership as interdependent aspects of an overarching ideology, politics being understood, in contrast to Nietzsche, within the contemporary realm of the modern state. Thus his ideal of a strong, charismatic leader was to be achieved not as an alternative to, but rather within the public and political sphere. Nevertheless, Kessler was aware that in the absence of such leadership lay the danger of the popular acceptance of decontextualised absolutism, the intellectual ideal giving way to the practical and immediate needs of the people:

Leadership on the Communist as well as on the Nationalist side is [...] deficient. But leadership would hardly be necessary if misery and social disintegration ended by driving the masses to extreme resolutions. They would take whatever leadership they could get, so

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as one of the initial instigators of this phenomenon. (See Heinrich Mann, "Geist und Tat", in: Mann, *Ausgewählte Werke in Einzelausgaben*. Hrsg. im Auftrag der Deutschen Akademie der Künste zu Berlin von Alfred Kantorowicz. Aufbau Verlag, Berlin 1954. Band XI. Essays, 1. Band, p. 7-14).

<sup>70</sup> Kessler, "Weltpolitik und Erziehung", in: Kessler, *Künstler und Nationen*, op.cit., p. 240-244.

<sup>71</sup> Roswitha Wollkopf, "Das Nietzsche-Archiv im Spiegel der Beziehungen Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsches zu Harry Graf Kessler", in: *Jahrbuch der Deutschen Schillergesellschaft*. 34 (1990), p. 162 (125-167).



long as it promised them something different from their present intolerable situation.<sup>72</sup>

This prophetic warning, delivered in 1923, reveals Kessler's insight into the basic need for leadership in periods of social and political unrest, and outlines the dangerous confusion between guidance and dictatorial authority which was later to characterise German politics.

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<sup>72</sup> Kessler, "National and International Democracy", op.cit., p. 129f.

### Chapter Three

#### *A return to tradition: "Herrschaft und Dienst" in the George-Kreis*

A further important source of information concerning the leadership debate in early twentieth century Germany is the work of the so-called George-Kreis, a group of artists and intellectuals centred around the poet Stefan George. Although Kessler and George were acquainted, Kessler was never directly involved with the 'Kreis', whose members did not, generally speaking, share the count's interest in contemporary political affairs, remaining largely removed from public intervention.<sup>73</sup> Indeed, Kessler was to refer to George as one of a series of "falsche Propheten", seeking a regeneration of humanity within the confusion of the post-war era,<sup>74</sup> a statement which itself echoes Thomas Mann's parody of self-declared genius *Beim Propheten*.<sup>75</sup>

However, an examination of the portrayal of leadership within the George-Kreis reveals a number of parallels with the Kesslerian approach. Dissatisfied with the lack of cultural and intellectual ideology in Wilhelminian Germany, both figures were searching for alternative leadership in the form of a heroic individual. Differences lay not in a fundamentally different interpretation of the concept and its contemporary requirements, but rather in the style to be adopted and the emphasis to be placed on certain elements and characteristics. Analysis again clearly demonstrates the integration and development of nineteenth century theories and ideologies, in particular the influence of Nietzsche, Wagner, Carlyle and Bismarck, into the Georgian interpretation, combined with an adaptation of the recurrent Napoleonic ideal and the associated advocacy of Caesarism.

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<sup>73</sup> In 1905 for example Kessler was involved in an exchange of open letters between German and English intellectuals in an attempt to improve relations between the two nations. Hofmannsthal, at this time a mutual friend, passed the letter on to George, who declined to sign with the following justification: "Krieg ist nur letzte folge eines jahrelangen draufloswirtschaftens von beiden seiten. das verklebmittel einiger menschen daucht mir ohne jede wirkung". (*Briefwechsel zwischen George und Hofmannsthal*. Hrsg. v. Robert Boehringer. Georg Bondi, Berlin 1938, p. 226). The extent to which George supported direct political intervention will be discussed in greater detail at a later stage in this chapter.

<sup>74</sup> Kessler, Tagebuch, 31.5.1918.

<sup>75</sup> Thomas Mann, "Beim Propheten", in: Mann, *Gesammelte Werke in 13 Banden*, op.cit., Band VIII, Erzahlungen. Fiorenza. Dichtungen, p. 362-370.

In examining the opinions of the George-Kreis within this context it is necessary to consider both attitudes towards outside political and cultural leadership and the internal organisation of the so-called 'Staat' itself. It must be stressed that membership of the 'Kreis' changed over time, and it is not possible to speak of one homogenous point of view. Nevertheless, despite differences of opinion concerning particular issues, a general "Kreis-Kollektivismus"<sup>76</sup> or common set of values prevailed in terms of overall ideology. This may be applied more specifically to the leadership ideal, an examination of letters and publications revealing a general consensus on this matter, thus enabling a thematic analysis of the overall debate.

Particular attention must be paid in this context to the (self)-stylisation of Stefan George and his role as 'leader' of the 'Kreis', the structure of which itself changed as time progressed.<sup>77</sup> A principal source of information in this respect are the *Blätter für die Kunst (BfdK)*, a private journal of restricted circulation founded by George in 1892. This publication grouped together, often anonymously, work by various members and associates of the circle, accompanied by introductory statements or "Merksprüche", which may be viewed as the official voice of the George-Kreis.<sup>78</sup>

Other important sources with regard to the portrayal of George include Friedrich Gundolf's paper *Stefan George in unserer Zeit* (1918) and subsequent book *George* (1920), as well as Friedrich Wolters' *Stefan George und die Blätter für die Kunst. Deutsche Geistesgeschichte seit 1890* (1930). Gundolf and Wolters were both long-

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<sup>76</sup> Klaus Landfried, *Stefan George - Politik des Unpolitischen*. Mit einem Geleitwort von Dolf Sternberger. Lothar Stiehm Verlag, Heidelberg 1975, p. 162.

<sup>77</sup> For details on the gradual development of the increasingly hierarchical structure of the 'Kreis' see amongst others *Blätter für die Kunst (BfdK)*. Begründet von Stefan George. Hrsg. v. C. A. Klein. Abgelichteter Neudruck. Zum Jubiläumsjahr 1968. Verlag Helmut Küpper vormals Georg Bondi, Düsseldorf/München 1967. 1. Band, Vorwort, p. V-XVI; Frank Weber, *Die Bedeutung Nietzsches für Stefan George und seinen Kreis*. Peter Lang, Frankfurt am Main 1989, p. 63; Heinz Raschel, *Das Nietzsche-Bild im George Kreis. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der deutschen Mythologeme*. Walter de Gruyter, Berlin/New York 1982, p. 30.

<sup>78</sup> The preface to the 1967 edition of the collected *BfdK* identifies George as the "Begründer und tatsächlicher Herausgeber" of the journal. (*BfdK*, op.cit., p. VIII). A number of George's poems which were first published in the *Blätter* were later included in his own anthologies. Unfortunately a large proportion of George's correspondence was either destroyed or remains in private ownership, (see Michael Winkler, *Stefan George*. J. B. Metzlersche Verlagsbuchhandlung, Stuttgart 1970, p. 5f.), although a collection of unpublished letters is held in the Stefan George-Archiv at the Württembergische Landesbibliothek in Stuttgart, and several accounts of conversations with the poet have been produced.

standing members of the 'Kreis', although Gundolf had broken away from George by the mid 1920s. The range of their publications, produced largely with George's approval and co-operation under the auspices of the *Blätter für die Kunst*, demonstrates the development of the leadership ideal over time.

The work of the George-Kreis was marked throughout by calls for an alternative form of leadership to that being provided in both public and intellectual circles, be this under Wilhelm II or during the Weimar Republic. Particular emphasis was placed on the post-war needs of the German youth, who sought direction "in diesen gelockerten führungslosen zeiten",<sup>79</sup> the war having left what Gundolf refers to as a "Loch", an intellectual and political vacuum.<sup>80</sup> The object of this analysis is therefore to determine the *type* of leadership sought by the 'Kreis'.

Within this context it must be emphasised that the objectives of Stefan George evolved over the course of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, resulting in changes concerning the poet's self-perception and the ensuing interpretation of leadership. This evolution may be divided into three main stages, in which George's ideal shifts from aesthetic to spiritual and subsequently to an increasingly political form of guidance.<sup>81</sup> This chapter aims to trace this progression and, in so doing, to identify the influence of nineteenth century interpretations on Georgian ideology.

Criticism of the Wilhelminian era was based on the perceived absence of aestheticism and cultural promotion, as also identified by Kessler. Direct references to the Kaiser were however avoided, emphasis being placed more generally on the philistine and militaristic 'Zeitgeist' which he was believed to represent:

Wenn wir von den schädlichen einflüssen des Preussentums reden so  
weiss jeder verständige dass wir uns gegen keine person - nicht

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<sup>79</sup> *BfdK*, op.cit., 6. Band, 1919, p. 5.

<sup>80</sup> Friedrich Gundolf, *George*. Georg Bondi, Berlin 1920, p. 19.

<sup>81</sup> This structure is identified by amongst others Raschel und Weber, op. cit., also Claude David, "Stefan George und die Gesellschaft", in: *Deutschland-Frankreich. Ludwigsburger Beiträge zum Problem der deutsch-französischen Beziehungen*. 2. Band. Hrsg. v. Deutsch-Französisches Institut Ludwigsburg. Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, Stuttgart 1957, p. 117-136.

einmal gegen einen volksstamm richten sondern gegen ein allerdings  
sehr wirksames aber aller kunst und kultur feindliches system.<sup>82</sup>

Such criticism echoes throughout the early twentieth century, the contemporary era being referred to by Gundolf as “seelenmördernd” and “kunstwidrig”,<sup>83</sup> ‘Geist’ having been overcome by technological development and the drive for financial gain in mass industrialised society. Wolters later reiterates these sentiments, his more explicit reference to the negative influence of Wilhelm II and the lack of ideology in Wilhelminian Germany echoing Kessler in this respect:

Der letzte Kaiser mit der gespielten Theatralik seiner Herrschaft war  
nur der sichtbarste Ausdruck für die Hohlheit und Leere des  
öffentlichen deutschen Daseins.<sup>84</sup>

The reference to “Theatralik”, implying falsity and a lack of intellectual substance, was also used in this context by George, who described Wilhelm II as a “schlechten Schauspieler”,<sup>85</sup> also referring in the poem “Der Krieg” to “Spotthafte Könige mit Bühnenkronen”.<sup>86</sup> As such it recalls Nietzsche’s earlier criticism of the “höhere Menschen”, in particular Wagner, as “Aufführer und Schauspieler großer Sachen”.<sup>87</sup>

George, like Kessler, sought a “Spiritualisierung” of society in order to overcome this phenomenon. However, whereas Kessler aimed to achieve this through practical public intervention, George emphasised the need to distance oneself from this sphere. The first issue of the *BfdK* declares the editorial objective as purely aesthetic, “alles

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<sup>82</sup> *BfdK*, op.cit., 3. Band, 1900/01, p. 2.

<sup>83</sup> Friedrich Gundolf, *Stefan George in unserer Zeit*. Dritte Auflage. Weiss’sche Universitäts-Buchhandlung, Heidelberg 1918, p. 19. (Als Vortrag gehalten in Göttingen am 15. Dezember 1913).

<sup>84</sup> Friedrich Wolters, *Stefan George und die Blätter für die Kunst. Deutsche Geistesgeschichte seit 1890*. Georg Bondi, Berlin 1930, p. 436.

<sup>85</sup> Quote from Landfried, *Stefan George - Politik des Unpolitischen*, op.cit., p. 74.

<sup>86</sup> Stefan George, “Der Krieg”, in: Stefan George, *Gesamt-Ausgabe der Werke*. Endgültige Fassung. Band 1-17. Georg Bondi, Berlin 1927-1934. Band 9, *Das Neue Reich* (1928), p. 31 (28-34). See also Landfried, *Stefan George - Politik des Unpolitischen*, op.cit., p. 73. This theme recurs throughout *Der Untertan*, the Emperor being described by Mann as a “großen Künstler”, the actor being deemed the most representative figure of the Wilhelminian era. (Heinrich Mann, *Der Untertan*, op.cit.).

<sup>87</sup> Nietzsche, “Also Sprach Zarathustra”, op. cit., p. 590.

staatliche und gesellschaftliche ausscheidend".<sup>88</sup> A new type of leadership was therefore sought, which would provide an intellectual alternative to the dominant political and economic orientation:

Die Jugend die wir vor uns sehen gestattet uns den glauben an eine nächste zukunft mit höherer lebensauffassung vornehmerer führung und innigerem schönheitsbedürfnis. Sollten aber grosse umwälzungen und ausbrüche entstehen, so wissen wir dass diese ganz anderer art sein müssen als die staatlichen und wirtschaftlichen plänkeleien die heute die gemüter erfüllen.<sup>89</sup>

This aesthetic form of guidance was however to be provided within what Claude David refers to as "eine geschlossene Künstlergemeinschaft".<sup>90</sup> Focus was placed not on national cultural promotion but rather on the gradual generation of a new ideology through an elitist intellectual circle.

The ethos of the George-Kreis was therefore based initially on the popular *fin-de-siècle* notion of *l'art pour l'art*, "eine kunst aus der anschauungsfreude aus rausch und klang und sonne".<sup>91</sup> George was portrayed as the representative of new German art, continuing in the tradition of Nietzsche, Böcklin and Klinger,<sup>92</sup> the observations made by Nietzsche in *Die Geburt der Tragödie* and the *Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen* serving as legitimisation for George's own aesthetic programme.<sup>93</sup> George's plans for artistic leadership are outlined in a letter to Hofmannsthal:

nur so viel ist gewiss: dass in allgemeinem wie besonderem sinn etwas GESCHEHE ermöglicht nur die *eine* art der führung, wol weiss ich: durch alle haltung und führung wird kein meisterwerk

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<sup>88</sup> *BfdK*, op.cit., 1. Band, Oktober 1892, p. 1.

<sup>89</sup> *BfdK*, op.cit., 3. Band, 1900/01, p. 4.

<sup>90</sup> David, op. cit., p. 123.

<sup>91</sup> *BfdK*, op.cit., 2. Band, Jänner 1896, p. 2.

<sup>92</sup> C. A. Klein, "Über SG, Eine Neue Kunst", in: *BfdK*, op.cit., 1. Band, Dez. 1892, p. 45-50.

<sup>93</sup> See Weber, op.cit., p. 47ff; Raschel, op.cit., p. 16.

geboren - aber ebensogut wird ohne diese manches oder alles unterdrückt.<sup>94</sup>

George's hope of developing "eine sehr heilsame Diktatur"<sup>95</sup> in conjunction with Hofmannsthal was however not to be realised, Hofmannsthal finally breaking away from George in 1906. Nevertheless, the notion of aesthetic leadership outlined above meant that particular emphasis was placed on the role of the poet *per se*, increasing importance being accorded to poetry in favour of the other art forms.

The perceived role of the poet centred on a twofold "Amt", as defined by Gundolf in *Hölderlins Archipelago* (1911) and *Dichter und Helden* (1912), namely the preservation of the glory of past heroes and consequently the awakening of future 'great men'.<sup>96</sup> Parallels with Hölderlin's self-image as lyrical mediator between the divine and the temporal, as evidenced in the poetic fragments dedicated to Napoleon, are clearly identifiable.

Gradually the poet came to be placed in the role of "Seherdichter",<sup>97</sup> the prophet who as a result of his cosmic insight held a right and duty to speak out against the spirit of his time, thus shaping both individuals and entire nations through divine revelation:

Des sehers wort ist wenigen gemeinsam:  
Schon als die ersten kühnen wünsche kamen  
In einem seltnen reiche ernst und einsam,  
Erfand er für die dinge eigne namen -  
[...]  
An deren kraft und klang er sich ergetzte,  
Sie waren, wenn er sich im höchsten schwunge  
Der welt entfliehend unter träume setzte,  
Des tempels saitenspiel und heilige zunge.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> *Briefwechsel zwischen George und Hofmannsthal*, op.cit., p. 158 (158-162).

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 150 (149-152).

<sup>96</sup> Friedrich Gundolf, "Hölderlins Archipelagus" (1911) and "Dichter und Helden" (1912), in: Gundolf, *Dichter und Helden*. Weiss'sche Universitätsbuchshandlung, Heidelberg 1921.

As this poem by George implies, the type of leadership sought evolved from a purely aesthetic to a predominantly spiritual form, emphasis no longer being placed on “eine kunst für die kunst”,<sup>99</sup> but rather on the cosmic and eternal, a restoration of a belief in the divine through its human embodiment.<sup>100</sup> Art, or more specifically poetry, remained central to the ethos of the ‘Kreis’, whilst becoming a means through which “neue Menschen” could be formed. The perceived role of George consequently shifted from that of an influential poet to that of a spiritual “Führer und Lehrer”, acting through the transcendental medium of language.

A number of similarities may be identified with the Wagnerian understanding of leadership in this respect. Dissatisfied with the lack of cultural foundation in the Bismarckian era and opposed to the prevailing economic influence over art and society, Wagner, as demonstrated in the preceding section, also turned towards an increasingly spiritual approach, founded within the aesthetic sphere. Both art and the individual artist became sanctified, providing spiritual guidance through a transcendental insight into the basic forces of life, as is also evident in Kessler’s essay *Kunst und Religion*.

The fundamental difference between Wagnerian and Georgian theory therefore lay not within the goal of a rebirth of German art, and hence of society as a whole, but rather in the means with which this rebirth could be achieved. Whereas Wagner focused on the united power of the “Gesamtkunstwerk”, George portrayed poetry as the only true transcendental force, due to the nature of language as “die Substanz der menschlichen Seele”.<sup>101</sup> Furthermore, Wagnerian ethos centred on the creative interaction between the “künstlerischer Genossenschaft” and the individual ‘Genie’, whereas George rejected the value of the specialised artistic genius, turning instead

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<sup>97</sup> Gundolf, “Hölderlins Archipelagus”, op.cit., p. 19.

<sup>98</sup> Stefan George, *Gesamt-Ausgabe der Werke*, op.cit., Band 4, *Das Jahr der Seele* (1928), p. 52f.

<sup>99</sup> *BfdK*, op.cit., 1. Band, Okt. 1892, p. 1.

<sup>100</sup> The difference may be seen in the following comment made by Gundolf: “Besser alle Kunstschatze vernichtet als die Kunst je zur bloßen Zier und zum Genuß zu erniedern!”. (Gundolf, “Dichter und Helden”, op.cit., p. 28).

<sup>101</sup> Gundolf, *Stefan George in unserer Zeit*, op.cit., p. 14.



from the notion of the “Gesamtkunstwerk” to that of the “Gesamtmensch”.<sup>102</sup> Nevertheless, the notion of an elitist community under the influence of an artistic “Diktator” was adopted and indeed expanded upon.

By rejecting the traditional notion of genius due to its overspecialisation George appears to be echoing Nietzsche’s calls for a redefinition of ‘Größe’. Particular parallels may be drawn with the parable ‘Von der Erlösung’, in which Zarathustra encounters a man with a giant ear, whom he deems to be not a genius as he is informed but rather an “umgekehrter Krüppel”.<sup>103</sup> This interpretation is supported by comments made by, amongst others, Gundolf concerning the lack of true greatness in modern society: “Niemals hat es so gewimmelt von aufgeblasenen Schulmeistern, verrückten Pfaffen, phrasentrunknen Hochstaplern, von Poeten und Propheten wie Nietzsche sie zeichnet [...]”.<sup>104</sup> The Georgian understanding of “Heldenverehrung” is, according to Gundolf, not to be confused with the popular “Persönlichkeitskult”, which merely attempts to fill the vacuum in society, whilst overlooking the need for a more fundamental regeneration.<sup>105</sup>

However, rather than embracing Nietzsche’s redefinition of greatness in the form of individual self-overcoming, to be achieved through isolation and personal suffering, the members of the George-Kreis maintained, like Wagner, a belief in the charismatic leader figure, simply applying this to the cosmic “Gesamtmensch”. The utopian notion of the “Übermensch” as leader over himself was therefore reapplied to a specific individual, as demonstrated in the following passage taken from Gundolf’s *George*:

Nietzsche stellt ein neues Ziel in die höchste Höhe: den Übermensch, die Vision eines erhabenen Einsiedlers, die Umkehr der Wirklichkeit, eine eschatologische Wunschfigur .. er ersinnt das Andere, das weder er selbst noch seine Zeit schon füllt. George

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<sup>102</sup> See for example Gundolf, “Dichter und Helden”, op.cit., p. 46. A similarity may be observed here between Wilhelm II.’s attempts to portray himself as a leader interested in and holding influence over all aspects of the so-called ‘Geist der Nation’ and the spiritual or cosmic “Gesamtmensch” of the George-Kreis.

<sup>103</sup> Nietzsche, “Also Sprach Zarathustra”, op.cit., p. 667.

<sup>104</sup> Gundolf, *George*, op.cit., p. 17f.

stellt ein gesteigertes Leben dar das er selbst schon verwirklicht,  
kein spannendes, ziehendes Droben und Drüben, sondern ein  
bindendes, verbindendes Hier und Jetzt.<sup>106</sup>

As previously identified in the writings of Kessler, a form of secularised apotheosis was therefore adopted in the name of Nietzsche, to which the philosopher himself was, following his break with Wagner, fundamentally opposed.

Indeed, Gundolf's publications reflect a return to the traditional "Heroen-Kult" of early to mid nineteenth century Germany, incorporating definitions of 'Größe' established during the Napoleonic regime. Fundamental to this ideology is the role of the individual in history and as such a restoration of the belief in the 'great man'. Echoing Carlyle and Burckhardt, Gundolf emphasises the eternal need for and belief in such a figure, the "Bedürfnis nach Führern und Lehrern" who will destroy the obsolete or shape a new form out of prevailing chaos.<sup>107</sup> A similar notion is expressed in George's "Das Zeitgedicht", in which he criticises the contemporary misinterpretation of 'Größe' and the loss of traditional historical idols, whilst maintaining the conviction that this faith may be restored in the future:

Ich euch gewissen, ich euch stimme dringe  
Durch euren unmut der verwirft und flucht:  
> Nur niedre herrschen noch, die edlen starben:  
Verschwemmt ist glaube und verdorrt ist liebe  
Wie flüchten wir aus dem verwesten ball?<

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<sup>105</sup> Gundolf, "Dichter und Helden", op.cit., p. 26.

<sup>106</sup> Gundolf, *George*, op.cit., p. 49.

<sup>107</sup> See Gundolf, "Dichter und Helden", op.cit. Gundolf also makes explicit reference to Carlyle, "ein glaubensdürstiger und anbetungswilliger Mann", in Friedrich Gundolf, *Caesar im neunzehnten Jahrhundert*. Georg Bondi, Berlin 1926, p. 21. For further comments on "Heldenverehrung" see *BfdK*, op.cit., 4. Band, 1904, p. 5. Carlyle's work enjoyed a popular revival at the beginning of the nineteenth century, leading to a number of new editions of the lectures *On Heroes and Hero-Worship*, in which the author was frequently linked to German nationalism and his work presented as a means of restoring heroism to Germany. See for example the introduction to Thomas Carlyle, *Helden und Heldenverehrung*. Übersetzt von Ernst Wicklein. Eugen Diedrichs, Jena 1913: "Ach, so gebt uns einen Führer, der uns leite, der uns den göttlichen Grund der Wirklichkeit wieder erschließe, uns wieder Wunder sehen und Schauer kosten lasse! Wir sind bereit, ihm zu folgen". (p. 5).

[...]

Ihr wandet so das haupt bis ihr die Schönen  
Die Grossen nicht mehr saht - um sie zu leugnen  
Und stürztet ihre alt- und neuen bilder

[...]

Ich sah die nun jahrtausendalten augen  
Der könige aus stein von unsren träumen  
Von unsren tränen schwer .. sie wie wir wussten:  
Mit wüsten wechseln gärten - frost mit glut,  
Nacht kommt für helle - busse für das glück.  
Und schlingt das dunkel uns und unsre trauer:  
Eins das von je war (keiner kennt es) währet  
Und blum und jugend lacht und sang erklingt.<sup>108</sup>

A consequence of the belief in the 'great man' and, as mentioned earlier, the sanctification of art is the accordance of a quasi-divine status to the leader figure in question, as highlighted above in relation to the transcendental role of the poet. By defining the 'great man' as a synthesis of God and man,<sup>109</sup> driven by an inner calling, Gundolf automatically frees him from responsibility for his own actions, which remain fully justifiable, "unabhängig von Nutzen oder Moral".<sup>110</sup> Clear similarities may be identified not only with Carlyle but also with the preceding response to Napoleon I and the absolute right accorded to him by, amongst others, Hegel.<sup>111</sup>

Inherent in this form of sanctification, which again echoes both Wagner, and later Kessler, is religious worship of the 'higher' individual, according to the principle of "Herrschaft und Dienst", as expressed in Wolters' 1909 publication of the same title. Biblical analogies may be identified throughout the work of the George-Kreis, with

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<sup>108</sup> Stefan George, "Das Zeitgedicht", in: George, *Gesamt-Ausgabe der Werke*, op.cit., Band 6/7, *Der Siebente Ring* (1931), p. 32f. The sense of longing and the faith in the future arrival of a great leader evident in this poem recall Hans Carossa's *Epigonenleid*, as referred to in the foreword to this study.

<sup>109</sup> Gundolf, "Dichter und Helden", op.cit., p. 29f.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., p. 44.

<sup>111</sup> Gundolf identifies this parallel in *Caesar im neunzehnten Jahrhundert*, op. cit., p. 52. Wolters later compares George himself to the Hegelian "weltgeschichtliche Individuen". (Wolters, *Stefan George und die Blätter für die Kunst*, op.cit., p. 564).

reference to both the poet in general and more specifically to Stefan George, in particular post 1904 when the prophetic role of the “Priester des Lebens”<sup>112</sup> and the cult surrounding him became increasingly pronounced.<sup>113</sup> Gundolf’s “Gefolgschaft und Jüngertum”, published in the 1908/09 edition of the *BfdK*, serves as a detailed example of this phenomenon, in which an analogy is drawn between Christ and his disciples and the notions of love and sacrifice in the name of the poetic “Führer”.<sup>114</sup> Klaus Landfried provides a detailed analysis of these two publications, in which he highlights the differences between the texts whilst identifying their common function:

Sie waren rationalisierende Benennungen für die “charismatische Herrschaft” des Dichters, der durch eine immer weniger umrissene “Erneuerungsideologie” seinen Herrschaftsanspruch zu legitimieren verstand.<sup>115</sup>

This therefore reflects the secularisation of the early nineteenth century leadership myth, as applied to a specific individual, whose position is legitimised through his pseudo-divine status. It stands in direct contrast to the proclamation made by Nietzsche in *Ecce Homo* that he should not be viewed as a holy redeemer.<sup>116</sup>

George’s self-portrayal as a leader figure and the implementation of a mystical and elite ideology, actualised in the structure of the ‘Kreis’, is evident in a number of his poems. These include “Der Jünger”, which incorporates a declaration of absolute devotion and obedience to “meinem grössten Herrn”,<sup>117</sup> and “Manuel and Menes”, in which the interdependent but strictly hierarchical relationship between “Herr” and

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<sup>112</sup> Friedrich Wolters, *Herrschaft und Dienst*. Opus 1. Die Einhorn-Pressen im Verlag Otto von Holtzen, Berlin 1909, p. 44. See also “Herrschaft und Dienst” in: *BfdK*, op.cit., 4. Band, 1908/09, p. 133-138.

<sup>113</sup> For further details see Hansjürgen Linke, *Das Kultische in der Dichtung Stefan Georges und seiner Schule*. Helmut Küpper, vormals Georg Bondi, München und Düsseldorf 1960.

<sup>114</sup> “Gefolgschaft und Jüngertum”, published anonymously in: *BfdK*, op.cit., 4. Band, 1908/09, p. 106-112.

<sup>115</sup> Landfried, *Stefan George - Politik des Unpolitischen*, op.cit., p. 172.

<sup>116</sup> Nietzsche, “Ecce Homo”, op.cit., p. 513.

<sup>117</sup> Stefan George, “Der Jünger”, in: George, *Gesamt-Ausgabe der Werke*, op.cit., Band 5, *Der Teppich des Lebens und Die Lieder von Traum und Tod mit einem Vorspiel* (1932), p. 51.

“Helfer” is detailed.<sup>118</sup> Later on in the *Siebente Ring* cycle in the poem “Der Eid” George introduces a violent and military aspect to the ‘Kreis’ ideology, in which the “söhne” display an absolute and in the words of Landfried “masochistische”<sup>119</sup> loyalty to their leader:

Lenker auf den wegen UNSRER not,  
Nenn dein dunkelstes gebot!  
Plüge über unsre leiber her:  
Niemals mahnt und fragt dich wer!<sup>120</sup>

The mystical and indeed sinister nature of George’s charismatic power was captured at an early date by Hofmannsthal in the 1891 poem “Der Prophet”:

Von seinen Worten, den unscheinbar leisen,  
Geht eine Herrschaft aus und ein Verführen,  
Er macht die leere Luft beengend kreisen  
Und er kann töten, ohne zu berühren.<sup>121</sup>

The dominant position held by George within the ‘Kreis’ bears a strong resemblance to the personality cult of Bayreuth, Wagner having been described in similar terms by Nietzsche, who saw in him a “Zauberer” and “Verführer”.<sup>122</sup> The “mystagogische Selbstinszenierung” referred to by Thomas Mann with regard to Wagner could be equally applied to George, with Mann’s own novella *Beim Propheten* providing a satirical examination of this phenomenon.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> Stefan George, “Manuel and Menes”, in: George, *Der Siebente Ring*, op.cit., p. 42f.

<sup>119</sup> Landfried, *Stefan George - Politik des Unpolitischen*, op.cit., p. 103.

<sup>120</sup> Stefan George, “Der Eid”, in: George, *Der Siebente Ring*, op.cit., p. 61 (60f).

<sup>121</sup> Hugo von Hofmannsthal, “Der Prophet” (1891), in: Hofmannsthal, *Gesammelte Werke in zehn Einzelbänden*. Hrsg. v. Bernd Schoeller in Beratung mit Rudolf Hirsch. S. Fischer Verlag, Frankfurt am Main 1986 (1956). Band I. Gedichte, Dramen (1891-1898), p. 125.

<sup>122</sup> See Part II, Chapter 3. Further details on the cult aspect of the George-Kreis, which has been the subject of a number of detailed investigations, may be found in: Wolfgang Braungart, “‘Durch Dich, für Dich, in Deinem Zeichen’. Stefan Georges poetische Eucharistie”, in: *George-Jahrbuch*. 1 (1996/97), p. 53-79 and Hansjürgen Linke, op.cit.

<sup>123</sup> Thomas Mann, “Beim Propheten”, op.cit.

Such parallels with the 'Wagner-Kult' are further supported by the positive response from within the George-Kreis to the period during which Nietzsche was viewed as one of Wagner's 'disciples'. This aspect, highlighted by both Heinz Raschel and Frank Weber, is exemplified in George's poem "Nietzsche", first published in 1900/01:

Erschufst du götter nur um sie zu stürzen  
Nie einer rast und eines baues froh?  
Du hast das nächste in dir selbst getötet  
Um neu begehrend dann ihm nachzuzittern  
Und aufzuschrein im schmerz der einsamkeit.<sup>124</sup>

Weber draws particular attention to the paradoxical nature of George's response to Wagner as, whilst rejecting fundamental aspects of his aesthetic programme, George nevertheless implies that Nietzsche betrayed the composer by breaking from him, thereby negating his own effectiveness.<sup>125</sup>

This approach is symptomatic of George's response to both Wagner and Nietzsche, emphasis being placed not on specific ideas or philosophies, but rather on those aspects of the individual which may be adopted and manipulated in order to legitimise and support his own ideology, in this case the "Meister-Jünger" paradigm.<sup>126</sup> This is further reflected in the recurrent criticism of Nietzsche's solitude, deemed unproductive when contrasted with George's own circle and proclaimed "Wirken von Mensch zu Mensch".<sup>127</sup>

The principal element of Nietzschean philosophy which George chose to incorporate into his own ideology was, as was the case with Kessler, the presupposition of a

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<sup>124</sup> Stefan George, "Nietzsche", in: George, *Der Siebente Ring*, op.cit., p. 12 (12f). First published in *BfdK*, op.cit., Band 3, 1900/01, 5f. For further discussion of the links between Nietzsche and George see Raschel op.cit. and Weber op.cit.; also *Stefan George Kolloquium*. Hrsg. v. Eckhard Heftrich et al. Wienand Verlag, Köln 1971 and Erich Berger, *Randbemerkungen zu Nietzsche, George und Dante*. Limes Verlag, Wiesbaden 1958.

<sup>125</sup> See George, *Gesamt-Ausgabe der Werke*, op.cit., Band 8, *Der Stern des Bundes* (1928), p. 34.

<sup>126</sup> See Weber, op.cit., p. 98.

<sup>127</sup> Wolters, *Stefan George und die Blätter für die Kunst*, op.cit., p. 548.

'Rangordnung' within humanity and a subsequently aristocratic interpretation of society, leading to the recommendation of cultural elitism. References may be identified throughout the work of George and the *BfdK* to the need to withdraw from the "herde",<sup>128</sup> which is defined in predominantly aesthetic terms. Referring to the "neue Kunst" Klein, official editor of the *BfdK*, writes as follows:

Es erhellt dass diese dichtungsort von vornehmen geistern einen genuss bereiten kann. wer anders aber als ein vornehmer geist hat sich jemals um ernsthafte kunst gekümmert und giebt es nicht genug geschriebenes für die menge?<sup>129</sup>

George's interpretation of the "Irrende Schar"<sup>130</sup> and its contrast with the "wahllose menge"<sup>131</sup> therefore does not entirely echo Nietzsche's philosophical understanding of aristocracy as developed in his later works, despite clear linguistic parallels. Whereas the Nietzschean elite is based on the Zarathustrian notion of the 'höherer Mensch', the works of the 'Kreis' focus increasingly on a belief in the quasi-divine nature of the poet himself, who must protect language from the damaging influence of the "entgeisterter Mengen".<sup>132</sup>

This aristocratic approach is further detailed in the poem "Die Fuehrer", in which the popular leader, celebrated by the spiritless masses, is contrasted with his spiritual counterpart, who stands alone in prayer.<sup>133</sup> However, whereas Nietzsche's 'Adel' occupies a separate worldly sphere, the Georgian 'great man' may, at least according to Gundolf, nevertheless exercise direct power over the masses for whom he speaks:

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<sup>128</sup> Stefan George, *Das Jahr der Seele*, op.cit., p. 118f.

<sup>129</sup> Klein, op.cit., p. 50.

<sup>130</sup> Stefan George, "Irrende Schar", in: George, *Gesamt-Ausgabe der Werke*, op.cit., Band 3, *Die Bücher der Hirten- und Preisgedichte, Der Sagen und Sänge und Der Hängenden Gärten* (1930), p. 58f.

<sup>131</sup> Stefan George, "Der Täter", in: George, *Der Teppich des Lebens und Die Lieder von Traum und Tod mit einem Vorspiel*, op.cit., p. 49.

<sup>132</sup> Gundolf, *Stefan George in unserer Zeit*, op.cit., p. 16.

<sup>133</sup> Stefan George, "Die Fuehrer", in: George, *Der Siebente Ring*, op.cit., p. 38f.

So wenig wir uns an der Uebereinstimmung mit der Mehrzahl liegt, so wenig scheun wir uns vor der Unterwerfung unter die wirkliche geistige Macht, und Macht auszuüben selbst über die Menge, in hundertfachen Graden und Ableitungen, gehört zur Größe, unbeschadet aller Exklusivität der Absicht und Haltung.<sup>134</sup>

The manipulative process outlined with regard to the selective adaptation of Nietzschean philosophy within the George-Kreis is further reflected in the poet's proclaimed role as "Anspruch, Maß und Mitte".<sup>135</sup> In a society which had witnessed an "Entwertung aller Werte"<sup>136</sup> the poet or 'great man' was accorded the right to provide new values, thus implying a moral and ethical form of leadership, in addition to the spiritual guidance outlined above. In this respect echoes of Nietzschean ideology may again be heard, as well as similarities with Hölderlin's search for a divine mediator. However, George has, in a reflection of the continued secularisation process, elevated his own "Maß" to the position perceived as dangerous by Hölderlin, producing a set of values independent from the "Gottheit".

However, as the notion of 'Größe' was reapplied to a specific figure, so too did the provision of 'Maß' lose the Nietzschean aspect of individualism, as the Georgian set of values were deemed universally valid. Furthermore, despite George's proclaimed "bruch mit der Gesellschaft"<sup>137</sup> and its social norms, these values do not appear to lie "jenseits von Gut und Böse", but rather are redefined within traditional moral and religious parameters, as indicated by Gundolf with reference to the "vorbildliche Menschen", "die man nicht lieben kann, ohne ein neues Maaß von Gut und Böse, von Schön und Häßlich, von Würde, Pflicht und Schmach zu bekommen".<sup>138</sup>

An assessment of the links between the Nietzschean and the Georgian understanding of leadership must examine the extent to which George's interpretation encompasses a political element, 'political' leadership having been defined above as the third stage

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<sup>134</sup> Gundolf, "Dichter und Helden", op.cit., p. 28.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid., p. 27.

<sup>136</sup> Gundolf, *George*, op.cit., p. 18.

<sup>137</sup> *BfdK*, op.cit., 4. Band, 1908/09, p. 3.



in the evolution of George's 'Führertopos'. The establishment of a totalitarian form of charismatic leadership had been established within the Georgian 'Staat', it remains to be determined however whether or not this so-called 'Kreispolitik' was extended into the wider political arena.

This question has proven the subject of a number of analyses, concentrating in particular on George's response to the First World War and the rise of National Socialism, the full details of which cannot be fully analysed within the context of this thesis.<sup>139</sup> However, a number of issues directly relating to the overall leadership question must be considered. This examination will therefore concentrate on two key aspects: firstly, the chosen leadership *form* and its inherent implications, and secondly, the *type* of leadership sought in the latter stages of George's intellectual development.

As this analysis has identified, George and the 'Kreis' attributed quasi-divine qualities to the poet, who became the provider not simply of aesthetic, but also of spiritual and ethical guidance. However, although poetry was increasingly defined as the only truly transcendental art form, the term 'great man' was reserved not purely for the poet, but also for other *types* of leader figures. This is initially indicated in the 1895 issue of the *BfdK*, in which the artist is compared to the more traditional heroic figure:

Was ist der künstler? der künstler ist vor allem liebhaber des lebens -  
des lebens und seiner reize. hierin gleicht er dem mann der that, dem  
feldherrn, dem helden: von dem unterscheidet er sich dadurch dass  
der schwerpunkt seines wirkens ins geistige, traumhafte verlegt  
ist.<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> Gundolf, *Stefan George in unserer Zeit*, op.cit., p. 13.

<sup>139</sup> See David, op.cit.; Landfried, *Stefan George - Politik des Unpolitischen*, op.cit.; Klaus Landfried, "Politik der Utopie - Stefan George und sein Kreis in der Weimarer Republik", in: Werner Link (Hrsg.), op.cit., p. 62-81.; Klaus-Jürgen Grün, "Stefan Georges politisches Schweigen", in: *Castrum Peregrini*. Heft 217-218, 44. Jahrgang, Amsterdam 1995, p. 107-118.; Manfred Durzak, "Autonomes Gedicht und politische Verkündigung im Spätwerk Georges", in: *Sprachkunst. Beiträge zur Literaturwissenschaft*. Heft 1/2 (1973), p. 81-90.

<sup>140</sup> Ludwig Klages, "aus einer Seelenlehre des Künstlers", in: *BfdK*, op.cit., Band 2, Februar 1895, p. 139 (137-144).

In this passage the artist is elevated to the sphere of the heroic, the specific *form* of action providing the only distinction between the artist and the military hero. This element is particularly pronounced in the work of Gundolf who, again echoing Carlylean thought, emphasises the various and equally important forms which the 'great man' may take, namely the poet, the military leader or the religious figure.<sup>141</sup> As Carlyle defines the Cromwellian or Napoleonic "Hero as King" as the ideal form of leadership in mid nineteenth century Europe, so too does Gundolf identify Caesar as the model leader for Weimar Germany, thus contrasting with Burckhardt's attempt at a reassessment of this 'Rangordnung'.<sup>142</sup>

Praise of Caesar, Alexander and Napoleon, as is common to many of the works issuing from the George-Kreis and is also evident in Nietzsche's work, implies the support of political and military dictatorship, particularly when considered in conjunction with the aristocratic and hierarchical 'Kreis' ideology as hitherto described. However, emphasis is placed not on the military talent or political standpoint of these 'Herrscherfiguren', but rather on their personal characteristics as heroic "Gesamtmenschen". Gundolf for example, in an echo of Burckhardt's definition of 'Größe', highlights Caesar's "Seelenkraft" as his defining quality.<sup>143</sup>

A distinction must be made within this context between the work of certain members of the 'Kreis', in particular Gundolf, and that of George himself, who focuses on the leading figures of intellectual and literary history as opposed to such military conquerors. However, as Landfried points out, a number of spoken references to Napoleon are recorded, which reveal a continuation of the political abstraction and "bewundernde Hervorhebung des Genialischen und Dämonsichen",<sup>144</sup> as previously identified in the work of amongst others Hölderlin, Goethe and Nietzsche. Similarly

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<sup>141</sup> Gundolf, "Dichter und Helden", op.cit., p. 48.

<sup>142</sup> See for example Friedrich Gundolf, *Caesar. Geschichte seines Ruhms*. Georg Bondi, Berlin 1924, p. 7. It should be noted that the emphasis placed by Gundolf on Caesar and the consequently increasing political or military orientation coincides with the author's break from George, the admiration for the poet thereby being transferred to the historical hero.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid., p. 239. In a subsequent essay Gundolf refers explicitly to Burckhardt's praise of Caesar, drawing parallels with the Hegelian "weltgeschichtliche Individuen" whilst emphasising the value placed by Burckhardt on personal characteristics. (Gundolf, *Caesar im neunzehnten Jahrhundert*, op.cit., p. 54f).

<sup>144</sup> Landfried, *Stefan George - Politik des Unpolitischen*, op.cit., p. 77f.

the poem "Die Tat" describes a young man "sich sehrend ruhm - und blutbedeckt, nach tod und wunden", although this is removed from any concrete historical or political sphere, emphasis being placed on the romantic and aesthetically oriented notion of personal heroism.<sup>145</sup> This focus is later reiterated in "Einem jungen Führer im ersten Weltkrieg":

Alles wozu du gediehst rühmliches ringen hindurch  
Bleibt dir untilgbar bewahrt stärkt dich für künftig getös..  
Sieh, als aufschauend um rat langsam du neben mir schrittst  
Wurde vom abend der sank um dein aufflatterndes haar  
Um deinen scheidel der schein erst von strahlen ein ring  
Dann eine krone.<sup>146</sup>

The fundamental criterion for greatness as defined by both George and other members of the 'Kreis' is therefore not the means by which a goal is achieved, but rather the actual goal itself:

Nur der Weg, nicht der Wille ist bei Säher und Täter verschieden.  
Beide leben [...] um die Welt im Ganzen zu verwandeln, ihr einen neuen Gesamtsinn zu geben, magisch, nicht nur technisch, in ihr fortzuwirken: durch Umwandlung der menschlichen Dingeschau oder Umwälzung der menschlichen Ordnungen .. von innen nach außen durch das neue Wort, von außen nach innen durch die neue Tat.<sup>147</sup>

Similarly Karl Wolfskehl, in an article written in close co-operation with George, describes the desired "Erlöser" as an absolute individual who transcends accepted social norms, "möchte es nun ein staatenumwälzender Eroberer oder ein

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<sup>145</sup> George, "Die Tat", in: George, *Die Bücher der Hirten- und Preisgedichte, Der Sagen und Sänge und Der Hängenden Gärten*, op.cit., p. 50f.

<sup>146</sup> George, "Einem jungen Führer im ersten Weltkrieg", in: George, *Das Neue Reich*, op.cit., p. 43 (42f).

<sup>147</sup> Gundolf, "Dichter und Helden", op.cit., p. 47.

weltenumstürzender Heiland sein".<sup>148</sup> The ultimate purpose of the 'great man' is therefore to be viewed within the "Reich der Innerlichkeit",<sup>149</sup> being based on the spiritual regeneration of society and a re-establishment of the belief in the power of the individual.

This decontextualised, objective-oriented notion of leadership, as previously advocated by amongst others Grabbe in the wake of the Napoleonic phenomenon, therefore does not necessarily indicate the need for political or military rule. However, it does inherently imply the legitimisation of any action, particularly when considered in conjunction with the accordance of an absolute right to a quasi-divine, totalitarian leader of any form, as indicated in the following passage taken from Gundolf's *Dichter und Helden*:

Der kosmische Held will niemals bloße Machtverschiebungen oder Verbesserungen, mag er sich auch solcher als Vorwand oder Mittel bedienen, ja selbst von solchen Idealen bewegt werden: sie verhalten sich zu seiner Kraft und Wirkung wie der Weltbrand zum Funken der ihn veranlaßt.<sup>150</sup>

Landfried highlights in this respect the increasing, albeit utopian, barbarism of George's works, introduced in *Der Siebente Ring* and continued in *Das Neue Reich*.<sup>151</sup> The series of "Jahrhundertsprüche" in particular highlight George's poetic disregard for the lives of the masses and the inevitable triumph of "Der Eine", the leader who may ignore all accepted moral constraints.<sup>152</sup>

The interlinkage of culture and power evident in George's work may be explained through the notion of synthesis, which formed the basis of the understanding of

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<sup>148</sup> Quote from Landfried, *Stefan George - Politik des Unpolitischen*, op.cit., p. 173 (173f). Wolfskehl and George thereby confirm and indeed advocate the "Dispensation vom gewöhnlichen Sittengesetz" identified by Burckhardt as the limitation of a political leader.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid., p. 113.

<sup>150</sup> Gundolf, "Dichter und Helden", op.cit., p. 53.

<sup>151</sup> Landfried, *Stefan George - Politik des Unpolitischen*, op.cit., p. 101ff.

<sup>152</sup> Stefan George, "Jahrhundertspruch" and "Ein Zweiter - Ein Sechster", in: George, *Der Siebente Ring*, op.cit., p. 208f.

leadership presented by the George-Kreis, as also advocated by Kessler and the early twentieth century proponents of the Bismarck myth. This is particularly apparent in a statement made by Gundolf in a letter to his former doctoral examiner Gustav Roethe, an advocate of the Carlylean "Heroen-Kult" and frequent critic of the absence of "Heldentum" in contemporary Germany.<sup>153</sup> Writing to him in 1914 Gundolf outlined his hopes for a restoration of such heroism, which echo those of Kessler made seventeen years earlier:

[...] dass die Goethische Bildung und die Bismarcksche Kraft nicht mehr nacheinander oder gar gegeneinander sondern miteinander ein Reich füllen und formen [...] und Deutschland nicht nur 'das heilige Herz der Völker', sondern auch der heilige Leib wird.<sup>154</sup>

This theory later formed the basis of Gundolf's interpretation of Nietzschean philosophy, which he described as an attempt to overcome "den uralten Zwiespalt zwischen machtloser Weisheit und unweiser Macht", Caesar being described as "der gesundete Zarathustra: der reife Herrscherweise".<sup>155</sup>

The notion of synthesis may indeed be identified in a number of publications issuing from the George-Kreis and associated intellectuals. Rudolf Pannwitz for example sought a solution to the impending European cultural crisis in the coming of a new "imperator" who would combine the "heroisch-priesterlich" aspect of leadership with the "heroisch-kriegerisch"; Napoleon and the Nietzschean 'Übermensch' stood as examples of these two desired elements.<sup>156</sup> Similarly Berthold Vallentin in his biography *Napoleon* (1923) portrayed the French Emperor as the personal unification

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<sup>153</sup> See for example Gustav Roethe, "Deutsches Heldentum" (1906), in: Roethe, *Deutsche Helden*. Verlag Quelle und Meyer, Leipzig 1927, p. 1-18. Roethe was increasingly criticised by George as a result of his standpoint during the First World War (see *Stefan George - Friedrich Gundolf. Briefwechsel*. Hrsg. v. Robert Boehringer mit Georg Peter Landmann. Helmut Küpper, vormals Georg Bondi, München und Düsseldorf 1962, p. 174; 266f; 343).

<sup>154</sup> Friedrich Gundolf, *Briefe*. Neue Folge. Hrsg. v. Lothar Helbing und Claus Victor Bock. 2. Auflage. Stiftung Castrum Peregrini, Amsterdam 1965, p. 143.

<sup>155</sup> Gundolf, *Caesar im neunzehnten Jahrhundert*, op.cit., p. 86ff.

<sup>156</sup> Rudolf Pannwitz, "Die Krisis der europäischen Kultur", in: Pannwitz, *Werke*. Verlag Hans Carl Nuernberg, Berlin 1917, 2. Band. Whilst warning against the misinterpretation of Nietzsche as a

of art and politics, the latter being understood in an individual and creative sense as “die Auswirkung seiner eigenen Schöpferkraft”.<sup>157</sup> Wolters, whilst emphasising the power of ‘Geist’ over and above military action in the post-war period, also refers in *Goethe als Erzieher zum vaterländischen Denken* (1925) to an ideal synthesis of Goethe and Napoleon, “in der der Mensch nicht den Krieger und der Krieger nicht den Menschen aufhebt, sondern beide in der bildhaften Erscheinung eines heldischen Daseins aufgehen”.<sup>158</sup>

This theory forms the basis of Wolters’ later study *Stefan George und die Blätter für die Kunst* (1930), which, in contrast to the earlier *Herrschaft und Dienst*, places additional emphasis on the overtly political aspect of George’s ideology. “Der Meister” is therefore portrayed as both “Bildner” and “Führer”, these two aspects being united through “männlich harte Liebe”.<sup>159</sup> Similarly Gundolf, who described George as “Priester, Prophet, Herrscher und Künstler”,<sup>160</sup> summarises the poet’s ‘completeness’ in comparison to the one-sided leadership exercised by the leading figures of the nineteenth century:

Der Vierspalt der heutigen Reize und den einseitig sprengenden Kräften der Seele oder des Geistes, dem Furor eines Luther oder Bismarck oder Wagner oder Nietzsche, wie der modernen Wissenschaft, welche die Allheit der Dinge oder Begriffe suchen, stellt er die Ganzheit des Menschen entgegen [...]”.<sup>161</sup>

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religion himself, Pannwitz viewed his philosophy as the culmination of the romantic “verehrung des höchsten typus mensch” which marked the early nineteenth century.

<sup>157</sup> Berthold Vallentin, *Napoleon*. Georg Bondi, Berlin 1923, p. 449.

<sup>158</sup> Friedrich Wolters, *Goethe als Erzieher zum vaterländischen Denken*. Altona 1925.

(Veröffentlichungen der Schleswig-Holsteinischen Universitäts-Gesellschaft und Studentenhilfe Ortsgruppe Altona. Heft 1), p. 20. Although by this stage no longer associated with the ‘Kreis’, Hofmannstahl expresses a similar approach, describing Napoleon as the “Fusion des Fatalen [...] mit dem Praktischen”. He continues: “In so fern ist er, wie wenige, von beiden Hemisphären des europäischen Daseins aus gleichzeitig zu gewahren: von der politischen und von der geistig-kontemplativen”. (Hugo von Hofmannsthal, “Napoleon”, in: *Das Tage-buch*. 2. Jahrgang (1921), p. 590 [588-592]).

<sup>159</sup> Wolters, *Stefan George und die Blätter für die Kunst*, op.cit., p. 539 and 555f.

<sup>160</sup> Taken from notes on a lecture on George given by Gundolf in the mid 1920s and referred to in *Stefan George - Friedrich Gundolf. Briefwechsel*, op.cit., p. 368f.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 368.

The notion of the "Gesamtmensch" therefore appears to have undergone a shift of emphasis, focus having moved from the need to possess transcendental insight to a heroic figure encompassing the various elements of leadership, namely aesthetic, spiritual and political. The latter element, understood in terms of the modern state, receives particular attention, the publication reading as an attempt to justify George's "politisches Schweigen" during the First World War and to restyze "der Herrscher" as "der einzige staatliche Dichter der Deutschen".<sup>162</sup>

Although references to the "Staat" were frequently used in connection with the George-Kreis, Wolters is clearly referring in this context to an influence beyond that of the restricted "Künstlergemeinschaft". Emphasis is placed throughout the book on the interrelationship between art and politics and their unification in George. The ideology advocated by Wolters is aristocratic and anti-democratic, based on the dictatorial power of one individual leader.

Wolters is therefore not seeking a redefinition of leadership, but rather the integration of intellectual elements into the traditional conception of political rule. By combining this with the mythical cult as previously described, he is able to declare George a charismatic, quasi-divine leader in possession of an absolute right to shape or destroy whatever lies in his path, with the power and insight to lead the German youth and to restore the global position of the nation.

The so-called "Woltersbuch" was criticised both internally and externally for its extreme apotheosis, Gundolf for example described the work as "heillos schlecht" and "durch und durch verlogen".<sup>163</sup> However, although the book was written by Wolters, widely acknowledged as the most politically oriented member of the 'Kreis', George was nevertheless closely involved with its conception and publication, leading us to question Landfried's claim that George was unable to perceive the interdependence of art and politics.<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>162</sup> Wolters, *Stefan George und die Blätter für die Kunst*, op.cit., p. 443.

<sup>163</sup> Quote from Storck in: "Max Kommerell. 1902-1944." *Marbacher Magazin* 51 (1985). Bearbeitet von Joachim W. Storck, p. 22.

Although the 'Kreis'-ideology was initially centred on an "Abkehr vom Leben"<sup>165</sup> and the separation of art from all spheres of public life, the editors of the *BfdK* began increasingly to suggest possible political intervention of the artist, albeit on a more fundamental level, removed from the constraints of 'Tagespolitik':

Niemals war wie heute eine herrschaft der massen, niemals daher die tat des einzelnen so fruchtlos. wol sind zeiten denkbar wo auch der Künstler es für nötig hält das schwert des kampfes zu ergreifen: über allen diesen welten- staats- und gesellschafts- wälzungen steht er aber als bewahrer des ewigen feuers.<sup>166</sup>

George did not seek mass public control, but rather a gradual influence between individuals.<sup>167</sup> As Landfried points out, he maintained a critical distance from the so-called "Zeitmächte", his ethos being based essentially on the superiority of the "Reich der Innerlichkeit".<sup>168</sup> Nevertheless, references to contemporary politics became increasingly apparent, as indicated by the "Zeitgedicht" and the "Jahrhundertsprüche" in the *Siebente Ring*. This was then accentuated during the post-war period, in particular in *Das Neue Reich*, driven largely by the need to overcome the leadership vacuum and the political instability which characterised the Weimar Republic, an indication of this being George's praise of Hindenburg in "Der Krieg".<sup>169</sup>

Support of strong political rule, where necessary involving the legitimisation of violent or despotic action in the name of a 'higher' cultural and spiritual goal, is reflected in George's response to a number of political rulers or ideologies. This may be first identified in the previously cited declaration taken from the *BfdK*, in which reference is made to the Wilhelminian regime as "ein allerdings sehr wirksames aber

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<sup>164</sup> Landfried, *Stefan George - Politik des Unpolitischen*, op.cit., p. 107f.

<sup>165</sup> *BfdK*, op.cit., 3. Band, 1900/01, p. 3.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, 4. Band, 1904, p. 11.

<sup>167</sup> See Berthold Vallentin, *Gespräche mit Stefan George. 1902-1931*. Castrum Peregrini Presse, Amsterdam 1961, p. 102f and a letter from Gundolf to Sabine Lepsius, dated 3.8.1910, in: Gundolf, *Briefe*, op.cit., p. 62-71.

<sup>168</sup> Landfried, *Stefan George - Politik des Unpolitischen*, op.cit., p. 104, 113.

<sup>169</sup> George, "Der Krieg", op.cit., p. 31 (28-34).



aller kunst und kultur feindliches system".<sup>170</sup> Landfried argues that George's criticism of the Emperor is based on purely aesthetic considerations, with no reference being made to the 'persönliches Regiment', his portrayal of military and political leaders being of an apolitical nature.<sup>171</sup> However, the description of the regime as "sehr wirksam" could be seen to imply a positive assessment of the constitutional system and the personalised form of government.

This is also suggested in George's unpublished poem "Der Preusse", first included in the 1902 manuscript for the *Siebente Ring* and found with him after his death. Although George, in an echo of Nietzsche's *Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen*, criticised Bismarck as the "herold [...] seeloser jahrzehnte", the fragment does nevertheless praise the Chancellor for his military achievements. It is implied that he should have sought a greater degree of political autonomy, seizing control and thereby inspiring the Germans, breaking the idolisation of Napoleon:

Du griffest - doch nicht weit genug ... du trogest  
Nicht kühn genug  
[...]  
Nie war dir schritt noch regung die das blut  
Uns höher trieb - nie wort das niederzwang  
Uns staunend noch vorm korsischen kometen...  
Bei macht gebrach dir edelfreie hand  
Und stolz des schweigens als man dich entliess  
Du wolltest diener sein - kein Grosser<sup>172</sup>

Read in conjunction with Wolfskehl's comment, taken from the essay written with George referred to above, that Bismarck cannot be seen as a model leader for contemporary Germany due to his failure to transcend the "gegebenen (bürgerlichen)

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<sup>170</sup> *BfdK*, op.cit., 3. Band, 1900/01, p. 2.

<sup>171</sup> Landfried, *Stefan George - Politik des Unpolitischen*, op.cit., p. 75.

<sup>172</sup> Stefan George, extract from "Der Preusse", in: Robert Boehringer, *Mein Bild von Stefan George*. Zweite ergänzte Auflage. Helmut Küpper vormals Georg Bondi, Düsseldorf und München 1968 (1950), p. 83 (82f).

Grenzen”,<sup>173</sup> it appears that the acceptance of a “Verstoß gegen Moral und Gesetz”<sup>174</sup> has in fact been translated into the sphere of “Zeitpolitik”.

Consequently George’s statement in a letter to Goebbels and the cultural minister Rust: “Zwar bin ich der Ahnherr jeder nationalen Bewegung - wie aber der *Geist* in die Politik kommen soll - das kann ich Ihnen nicht sagen”,<sup>175</sup> would also imply not, as Landfried suggests, a strict dichotomy between ‘Geist’ and ‘Politik’ and George’s inability to recognise the links between the two spheres,<sup>176</sup> but rather the acceptance of a hierarchical and nationalistic dictatorship, if combined with cultural and intellectual elements, as previously discussed in relation to Kessler.

This is supported by comments recorded by Vallentin, in which George admittedly criticises Wolters’ public activity, but nevertheless highlights the post-war necessity of tackling political issues, emphasising the possibility of direct intervention. According to Vallentin, George, referring to the ideas expressed in Wolters’ “Blättergeschichte”, stressed the need for the ‘Kreis’ ideology to be adopted by “eine grosse Täterperson” such as Mussolini, who would translate it into political reality.<sup>177</sup>

As indicated by Klaus-Jürgen Grün, George cannot be directly associated with established political ideologies such as National Socialism, as he was operating within different parameters, working ultimately towards the spiritual renaissance of Germany through the power of the aesthetic.<sup>178</sup> Despite references to the failure of contemporary leaders and utopian demands for social and political revolution, he remained distant from specific policies or individuals, withdrawing increasingly into isolation during the latter stages of his life.

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<sup>173</sup> Quote from Landfried, *Stefan George - Politik des Unpolitischen*, op.cit., p. 173.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid., p. 44

<sup>175</sup> Quote from Raschel, op.cit., p. 100. In this letter George declined to accept plans made by Goebbels and Rust to nominate him as the president of a newly founded poetic academy.

<sup>176</sup> Landfried, *Stefan George - Politik des Unpolitischen*, op.cit., p. 107f.

<sup>177</sup> Vallentin, *Gespräche mit Stefan George*, op.cit., 4.1.1920 (p. 48), 24.5.1924 (p. 72f) and 19.2.1928, (p. 101ff).

<sup>178</sup> Grün, op.cit. See also Landfried, “Politik der Utopie”, op.cit.

Nevertheless, the belief in a charismatic saviour operating outside accepted moral and ethical constraints was clearly open to misinterpretation and abuse, particularly when one considers the more overtly political and nationalist orientation of certain members of the George-Kreis, in particular Wolters. Raschel draws a parallel between George and Nietzsche in this respect, attributing George's work to "demselben gefährlichen Zwischenbereich - nämlich zwischen dem Dichterischen, dem Religiösen und Politischen - [...], wie Nietzsches *Also Sprach Zarathustra*".<sup>179</sup>

Similarities with Nietzsche and the increasingly radical orientation of his later works may indeed be identified. Prophesying a period of nihilism, both figures were, like Wagner before them, searching for an alternative leader to the contemporary ruling elite, capable of regenerating the German culture and spirit. However, despite a withdrawal from the sphere of 'Tagespolitik', the very criticism levelled by Nietzsche and George at the state negates claims that they advocated an apolitical ideology. Furthermore, both the Nietzschean and the Georgian approach were based on a rejection of democracy and the "Herde" in favour of a cultural and political aristocracy and a reaffirmation of the fundamental role to be played by the individual in the historical process.

To this extent both figures supported the ideals expressed by Carlyle in *On Heroes and Hero-Worship*. However, whereas George and his associates reiterated the established tenets of the Carlylean 'Heroen-Kult', Nietzsche rejected this phenomenon, advocating instead a redefinition of greatness, to be interpreted philosophically within the sphere of the individual.

The fundamental difference between Nietzsche and George with regard to the leadership ideal therefore lies in the distinction between the utopian and the real, the personal and the collective. George took the notion of the "Übermensch", abandoning the philosophical ideal of man as leader over himself, and translated this into the quasi-divine, poetic "Gesamtmensch". By placing himself, rather than his philosophy, in the role of spiritual leader, operating within a hierarchical circle of 'disciples', he

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<sup>179</sup> Raschel, op.cit., p. 167.

contradicted Nietzsche's post-Wagnerian philosophy and the Zarathustrian necessity of suffering and isolation, deemed by George to be the root of his "predecessor's" 'failure'.

Despite the multi-faceted interpretation of leadership common to both figures, Nietzsche's iconoclastic rejection of all previously accepted forms of leadership is therefore to be contrasted with George's selective adaptation and synthesis of preceding approaches. As such parallels may be drawn with the concept of leadership previously identified in the work of Kessler, who, despite a stronger emphasis on contemporary political and public intervention, also sought to combine the Bismarckian, Wagnerian and Nietzschean ideal within one charismatic and heroic individual.

## Chapter Four

### *The Intellectual Apotheosis: Kommerell's "Der Dichter als Führer".*

As stated in the introduction to this section, Max Kommerell's *Der Dichter als Führer in der deutschen Klassik* (1928) may be perceived as the culmination of the intellectual discussion on leadership in early twentieth century Germany. Published shortly before Kommerell's break with the George-Kreis, it stands at a turning point in both the author's personal development and the wider historical debate. The concept of "Führertum" had, as demonstrated, become increasingly prevalent in both political and intellectual circles during the Weimar Republic,<sup>180</sup> prior to becoming synonymous with the National Socialist hierarchy.

However, despite the significance of this book, of which there have been a further two editions, it remains the subject of a relatively limited amount of academic attention, particularly when compared with Kommerell's later, post-Georgian works. Due to the author's close association with George, the book is largely deemed a reproduction of the 'Kreis' ideology, as implied by its publication under the auspices of the *Blätter für die Kunst*. To a certain extent this is indeed the case. However, a more detailed examination is required in order to establish the nature of the concepts which Kommerell wished to portray and to determine the degree to which the book constitutes an intellectual expression of George's notion of elite, spiritual leadership.

Through an analysis of *Der Dichter als Führer* it is therefore hoped to demonstrate the influences which Kommerell was subject to, with regard not only to George and his 'Kreis', but also to the earlier nineteenth century leadership debate. Of particular importance in this context is Kommerell's interpretation of both Hölderlin and Nietzsche, with whose work he had been familiar since childhood, and, in particular in the case of Nietzsche, to which he devoted much critical attention subsequent to the break with George. In examining these influences it is necessary to consider whether 'der Dichter' is to be interpreted as a political leader, or whether through his book

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<sup>180</sup> See Storck, "Max Kommerell. 1902-1944", op.cit., p. 16.

Kommerell has in fact provided us with a spiritual alternative to the National Socialist 'Führerprinzip'.

Although *Der Dichter als Führer* shall constitute the main focus of this analysis, it is nevertheless necessary to consider other works produced by Kommerell, both prior to and following his break with George, not least the *Gespräche aus der Zeit der deutschen Wiedergeburt* (1929), described by Helmut Heissenbüttel as the "poetische Gegenstück" to the prose work.<sup>181</sup> The publications written by Kommerell immediately after his break with George, in particular his inaugural speech at Frankfurt University on Hofmannsthal and the essay *Jugend ohne Goethe*, also provide an insight into the author's changing perceptions of leadership. Further information may be gathered from Kommerell's selected *Briefe und Aufzeichnungen* (1967), edited by Inge Jens, and from the author's 'Nachlaß', held in the Deutsches Literaturarchiv in Marbach am Neckar. Unfortunately the vast majority of correspondence dating from the so-called "George-Zeit" was later destroyed, although a small number of letters addressed to George are held at the Stefan George-Archiv.<sup>182</sup>

Begun in 1925 with the aim of advancing his professional career,<sup>183</sup> *Der Dichter als Führer* focuses on the interrelationship between the German classics and their contribution to German literary and national development. Chapters are dedicated to Klopstock, Goethe, Schiller, Jean-Paul and Hölderlin, a choice of figures which enables Kommerell to form direct links between the classical and the romantic periods.<sup>184</sup> Echoing Heine's "mystische Gemeinschaft", Kommerell perceives the

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<sup>181</sup> Helmut Heissenbüttel, "Ein Versuch in Hermeneutik", in: Max Kommerell, *Gedichte, Gespräche, Übertragungen*. Mit einem einführenden Essay von Helmut Heissenbüttel. Walter-Verlag, Olten 1973, p. 19.

<sup>182</sup> Letters written to Kommerell's sister Jul Strebel between 1921 and 1933 currently remain inaccessible, as does a letter to his sister Margarete, dated 1928.

<sup>183</sup> In a letter to his close friend and former teacher Ernst Kayka, dated January 1926, Kommerell wrote: "Ich bin sehr fleissig und schreibe an einem Buch, was mir den Weg bahnen soll, aber fast vor zu tiefe Rätsel führt: ich muss Fülle und Verhängnis der grossen deutschen Zeit vor 150 Jahren neu durchdenken". (Quote from Storck, op.cit., p. 15).

<sup>184</sup> In so doing Kommerell adopts a similar approach to that employed by Wilhelm Dilthey in *Das Erlebnis und die Dichtung* (1905), which grouped together three earlier essays on Lessing, Goethe and Novalis with a final chapter on Hölderlin. Like Kommerell, Dilthey presents the development of German poetry through the contributions made by certain individuals and the influence which they

poets in question as part of a "lebendige Gemeinschaft wirkender, ringender, siegender, unterliegender oder verklärter Geister"<sup>185</sup> who together form "die deutsche Allheit".<sup>186</sup> He therefore echoes the traditional "Heroen-Kult" in its reiteration of the role of the individual in history, the poets being presented in mythical tones as legendary heroes and prophets, their individual opinions and emotions interpreted by the author himself.

As a result criticism was levelled by contemporary writers at the subjectivity of the book, described by Benno von Wiese as "eine romantische Mischung von Heroenkult, historischer Belletristik, malerischen Ausblicken, seelischen Analysen und zahllosen Wertungen".<sup>187</sup> However, within the context of this analysis it is not necessary to examine the accuracy of the book or the validity of Kommerell's approach, but rather the concepts which he expresses in relation to the leadership debate and the personal opinions which are thereby expressed.

The development of German poetry outlined by Kommerell is a linear process, which may be divided into two key periods: initially we witness the revival of the German language and its central role within the spiritual development of the nation, as carried out through Klopstock and Herder, this process reaching its climax in the work of

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exercised over one another, with particular emphasis being placed on the biographies of the individual poets. A number of thematic and textual parallels may be identified between *Das Erlebnis und die Dichtung* and *Der Dichter als Führer*, Dilthey having in fact described the poet as "Führer seiner Nation". (Wilhelm Dilthey, *Das Erlebnis und die Dichtung. Lessing, Goethe, Novalis, Hölderlin*. Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen 1970, p. 50). Such similarities led to the hypothesis that Kommerell had in fact been familiar with Dilthey's work. Further investigation did however fail to reveal any references to the author or his work in Kommerell's remaining correspondence and notes, although the absence of manuscripts from the period in which *Der Dichter als Führer* was written should be noted. It may nevertheless be stated that Dilthey did contribute to the intellectual context in which Kommerell worked. This may also be said of Ernst Cassirer, whose more philosophically oriented collection of essays *Idee und Gestalt* reveals a similar approach to that adopted by Kommerell, and in which the author does indeed refer to both Dilthey and Gundolf. Despite the absence of any direct contact between Cassirer and Kommerell, the interest in spiritual leadership expressed by Cassirer nevertheless contributed to the intellectual environment of the period concerned. (See Ernst Cassirer, *Idee und Gestalt. Goethe, Schiller, Hölderlin, Kleist*. Bruno Cassirer, Berlin 1921).

<sup>185</sup> Wolfskehl, January 1929. Quote from Storck, op.cit., p. 16.

<sup>186</sup> Max Kommerell, *Der Dichter als Führer in der deutschen Klassik. Klopstock, Goethe, Schiller, Jean Paul, Hölderlin*. Dritte Auflage. Geleitwort von Eckhard Heinrich. Vittorio Klostermann, Frankfurt am Main 1982, p. 483. (Erste Auflage 1928 bei Georg Bondi, Berlin).

Goethe and Schiller; in the second part of the book, Kommerell then describes the post-Goethian development through Jean Paul and Hölderlin, who form a bridge between classicism and romanticism, thereby introducing a new era in German literature.

Being the driving force behind this quasi-eschatological development, each poet is forced to challenge his own era in order to introduce the new *Zeitgeist*, an influence initially accredited to Napoleon by Hegel. Echoing the concept of the “weltgeschichtliche Persönlichkeit”, Kommerell identifies two different types of leader, namely those whose life is the embodiment of the “Weltwille” itself, such as Goethe, and those in whom fate manifests itself for a limited period of time. The latter type is demonstrated through the description of Klopstock, who failed to maintain his leadership position having ceased to abandon himself to the course of fate, the existence of a subconscious drive being deemed a fundamental characteristic of leadership.

As the embodiment of fate the poetic leader commands obedience from both individuals and time itself, his quasi-divine qualities granting him, again in an echo of Hegelian philosophy, an absolute right to act as he deems necessary:

Unter Zwergen, denen sein Dasein Unmaß und Frevel ist, richtet sich der Freie Große auf, prägt Kraft und Sendung in ewige Sinnbilder, hier als Führer den Brüdern rufend dort sich selbst zum Gott erhebend, und verwirft die Welt um sich mit dem einzigen Vorrecht des Glühenderen.<sup>188</sup>

The poet is therefore perceived as a synthesis of the divine and the temporal, his role being to mediate between the two spheres. This “Mittler-Amt des Heros”<sup>189</sup> becomes a particular focus of attention in the final chapter dedicated to Hölderlin, whom

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<sup>187</sup> Benno von Wiese, “Germanische Literaturen. Max Kommerell, ‘Der Dichter als Führer in der deutschen Klassik’ (Rez.)”, in: *Deutsche Literaturzeitung für Kritik der Internationalen Wissenschaft*. Heft 28/13. Juli 1929, p. 1339 (1337-1340).

<sup>188</sup> Kommerell, *Der Dichter als Führer*, op.cit., p. 108.



Kommerell believes to have fundamentally influenced Hegel's philosophy in this respect.<sup>190</sup> Kommerell recalls Hölderlin's own need for a transcendental mediator and his gradual recognition that he may himself fulfil this very role through the divine power of language: "nicht mehr tatlos steht er auf der Grenze zwischen Menschen und Göttern .. als Sprecher bewirkt er den Grad der Näherung, zu der sein Gott jeweils gewillt ist".<sup>191</sup> As such the prophet then foretells the coming of God - "*Er redet nicht, nachdem der Gott erschien, sondern damit der Gott erscheine [...]*"<sup>192</sup> - thereby fulfilling the same mission as the other heroes referred to in *Der Einzige*.<sup>193</sup> In so doing Kommerell has abandoned the elements of self-proclamation and secular autonomy which had marked the mid to late nineteenth century leadership debate and returned to the approach first advocated by Hölderlin.

The interpretation of leadership which the author conveys may be divided into two principal elements, namely the guidance which exists on a personal level between individuals, and on a wider level the influence exercised over communities and peoples over an extended period of time. The former element is traced throughout *Der Dichter als Führer*, as for example in the portrayal of Goethe's influence over Herder and Schiller. According to Kommerell, Herder served as "Befreier und Lenker"<sup>194</sup> to Goethe, enabling him to realise his own creative potential, a concept expressed poetically in the *Gespräche zur Zeit der deutschen Wiedergeburt*, in which Herder acknowledges his role in Goethe's poetic development:

Dann bin Entdecker ich, du Herr vom Eiland  
Dann bin Erwecker ich und du der Heiland.<sup>195</sup>

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<sup>189</sup> Ibid., p. 449.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid., p. 408f.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid., p. 448.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid., p. 475.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid., p. 456f.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid., p. 100.

<sup>195</sup> Max Kommerell, "Herders Krankenzimmer in Strassburg", in: Kommerell, *Gespräche aus der Zeit der deutschen Wiedergeburt*. Verlag der Blätter für die Kunst. Otto von Holtz, Berlin 1929, p. 14 (9-14).

Goethe's subsequent need for his own "Schüler"<sup>196</sup> was eventually fulfilled through his relationship with the young Carl August and later Schiller, who despite initial reservations was prepared to submit to Goethe, having understood his own need for a human as opposed to an abstract ideal.<sup>197</sup>

According to Kommerell Goethe chose to limit his sphere of influence to select individuals, having acknowledged that any attempt at a wider degree of leadership would remain fruitless:

Das Geschick zeigt ihm den einzig rettenden Weg. Nicht in der gestaltlosen Vielheit, auf die einzuwirken der Schulverbesserer sich vorsetzt, sondern in den Wenigen, in dem Einen der rein ist von den Gebrechen der Zeit oder stark genug sie abzuschütteln, lohnt und fruchtet die Niederlegung so schmerzvoll gesammelter Weisheit.<sup>198</sup>

This insight is applied by Kommerell to the other relationships depicted in *Der Dichter als Führer*, particular emphasis being placed on the guidance of an elite group of individuals or 'Kreis'. Klopstock is credited with having initially introduced this "Erlebnis dichterischer Gemeinsamkeit"<sup>199</sup> to Germany, having exercised his natural "Herrscherbewußtsein"<sup>200</sup> over a close circle of friends in the absence of a wider community. This aspect is also highlighted in the work of Schiller, with particular reference being made to the "Wirkungskreis streng männlicher Gemeinschaft"<sup>201</sup> depicted in the fragment *La Valette*.

A gradual increase in their sphere of influence is however portrayed by Kommerell as the ultimate goal of the 'poetic leaders'. Despite the unfeasibility of this in certain eras, as demonstrated above, the development depicted in *Der Dichter als Führer* nevertheless points towards the formation or revival of an entire people. This element

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<sup>196</sup> Kommerell, *Der Dichter als Führer*, op.cit., p. 92.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid., p. 218f.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid., p. 76.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid., p. 34.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid., p. 220.

is accorded particular attention in the final chapter of the book, in which Hölderlin's poetry is attributed the task of awakening the German nation.

The type of leadership provided by the poet may therefore be interpreted in both aesthetic and spiritual terms, thereby recalling Nietzsche's reference to "Der Dichter als Wegzeiger für die Zukunft".<sup>202</sup> Aesthetically he was able to liberate and direct the creative potential of individual 'Kreis' members, an essentially pedagogical role fulfilled by Herder in relation to both Goethe and later Jean Paul. In spiritual terms, the leader would act, again in an echo of Hegel's description of Napoleon, as a "Seelenführer"<sup>203</sup> for his 'disciples', providing them with ethical guidance. Applied on a larger scale this meant that the poet was able to shape a community in his own form, representing its members in spiritual and emotional terms as the "Stimme der Gesamtheit"<sup>204</sup> and conveying a universal set of values or "Maß", as initially sought by Hölderlin.

A number of parallels with the ideology of the George-Kreis are clearly evident, Kommerell's approach being based on the much celebrated role of the 'great man' within the historical process. By stressing Herder's attempts to establish a new "Größenmaß" in the light of the "Kleinförmigkeit" of his own era,<sup>205</sup> Kommerell implies the need to review the contemporary understanding of greatness, thereby echoing the work of Gundolf, with whom he was closely associated.<sup>206</sup> Defined as the central tenet of the work of Goethe and Schiller, the "Gewicht der Person"<sup>207</sup> is therefore deemed superior to any state, religion or ideology. Referring to the sense of divine unity which Schiller achieved through his submission to Goethe, Kommerell writes:

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<sup>202</sup> Nietzsche, "Menschliches, Allzumenschliches", op.cit., p. 776f (99).

<sup>203</sup> Kommerell, *Der Dichter als Führer*, op.cit., p. 150.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid., p. 71.

<sup>206</sup> In 1920 Kommerell lists the work of Gundolf, together with George and the 'Jahrbücher der BfdK', amongst his current reading material. (See Max Kommerell, *Briefe und Aufzeichnungen. 1919-1944*. Aus dem Nachlaß hrsg. v. Inge Jens. Walter-Verlag, Olten 1967, p. 90). Kommerell transferred from Tübingen to Heidelberg in order to study under Gundolf, whom he described as "eine herrliche Erscheinung von begeisternder Reinheit". (See Ibid., p. 89).

<sup>207</sup> Kommerell, *Der Dichter als Führer*, op.cit., p. 302.

Nicht die Idee noch der Staat noch das absolute Ich und am wenigsten Volk und Vielheit ist dies Ganze, sondern - ein vielsagender Widerspruch - der Einzelne, der große Einzelne, in dem allein das Ganze sich darstellt, da wir von keiner Gottheit wissen es sei denn durch göttliche Menschen.<sup>208</sup>

Gundolf's theory that certain individuals embody the "Kultureinheit"<sup>209</sup> of an entire era is therefore echoed in *Der Dichter als Führer*, his interpretation of history as "die Wechselwirkung der schöpferischen und der empfänglichen Menschen"<sup>210</sup> forming the basis upon which Kommerell constructs his own argument.

Pre-empting the linear approach later to be adopted by Kommerell, Gundolf portrays George as the successor of Goethe, Napoleon, Hölderlin and Nietzsche, the five "sinnbildliche Bewahrer" of the cosmic "Gesamtmensch".<sup>211</sup> "Der Meister" is depicted as the poetic leader who has realised the goal of his predecessors, namely the regeneration of the German language and the role of the poet.<sup>212</sup> Similarly in Wolters' *Herrschaft und Dienst* Dante, Goethe, Nietzsche and Böcklin are named as past "Herrscher" over the "Geistige Reich".<sup>213</sup>

Kommerell's study may therefore be viewed as a retrospective application of Gundolf's and Wolters' work, extended in order to examine in greater detail the classical period. Indeed, the fulfilment of the Gundolfian "Sprachschöpfer-Amt"<sup>214</sup> had been applied by Kommerell to George as early as 1920, as revealed in a letter to Ernst Kayka: "er übergibt künftigen Dichtern die Sprache als gereinigtes verfeinertes

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<sup>208</sup> Ibid., p. 282f. In "Dichter und Helden" Gundolf writes: "es gibt für den Menschen keine außermenschlichen freischwebenden Ideen: nur in Menschen verkörpern sich Ideen (auch die Idee Gott)". (Gundolf, "Dichter und Helden", op.cit., p. 47).

<sup>209</sup> Gundolf, "Dichter und Helden", op.cit., p. 30.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>211</sup> Gundolf, *George*, op.cit., p. 28.

<sup>212</sup> Gundolf, *Stefan George in unserer Zeit*, op.cit., p. 14.

<sup>213</sup> Wolters, *Herrschaft und Dienst*, op.cit., p. 48. Wolters, who was responsible for introducing Kommerell to the "Meister", exercised a similar influence to Gundolf over the young student, who was to refer to him as a "starken, weisen und milden führer" and "ein wahrer König und Vater der Menschen". (Kommerell, *Briefe und Aufzeichnungen*, op.cit., p. 105f). Kommerell left Heidelberg to study at Marburg, where Wolters was then lecturing.

<sup>214</sup> Gundolf, *Stefan George in unserer Zeit*, op.cit., p. 16.

Werkzeug”.<sup>215</sup> Furthermore, Kommerell’s depiction of the formation of a community as the ultimate goal of the poetic leader constitutes a reiteration of the task attributed to George by both Gundolf and Wolters, itself an expression of George’s own hopes for the future expansion of his ideology.<sup>216</sup>

It may therefore be concluded that through *Der Dichter als Führer* Kommerell applies essentially Georgian ideology to the classical period, thereby sanctioning the “geistigen Führungsanspruch des Dichters” and the “geschichtliche Wirkungsmacht einer genialen Persönlichkeit”, as demonstrated by Jens.<sup>217</sup> This theory is supported by contemporary reviews of the book, issuing from both within and outside the immediate sphere of the George-Kreis. Paul Böckmann for example criticises Kommerell’s utilisation of “Georgeorthodoxie”, in particular the implementation of the ideals expressed in Wolters’ *Herrschaft und Dienst*:

[...] der verfasser [will] nur die lebensformen anerkennen und wahrnehmen [...], die im Georgekreis - speciell in dem kreis um Wolters - lebendig geworden sind. die geschichte muss sich der formel von ‘herrschaft und dienst’ fügen; als wertvoll wird nur das anerkannt was den weg bahnt zur vergottung des menschen.<sup>218</sup>

This phenomenon is clearly due in part to Kommerell’s integration into the circle and his acceptance of its ethos. Indeed, the direct influence exercised by George over the book is acknowledged by Kommerell in a letter to the “Meister”: “Jedenfalls kann die Patentschaft des Great cosmicien nimmer ganz verleugnet werden!”<sup>219</sup> The close relationship which he formed with George, whom he referred to as his poetic “Führer,

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<sup>215</sup> Kommerell, *Briefe und Aufzeichnungen*, op.cit., p. 58.

<sup>216</sup> See Vallentin, *Gespräche mit Stefan George*, op.cit., p. 102. Gundolf referred to George’s role as: “die Gestaltung, die Gemeindebildung und - langsam stufenweise - die Volkwerdung des Ewigen Menschen”. (Gundolf, *George*, op.cit., p. 31).

<sup>217</sup> Inge Jens, in: Max Kommerell, *Essays, Notizen, Poetische Fragmente*. Aus dem Nachlaß hrsg. v. Inge Jens. Walter-Verlag, Olten 1969, p. 14.

<sup>218</sup> Paul Böckmann, “Max Kommerell, ‘Der Dichter als Führer’, (Rez.)”, in: *Anzeiger für deutsches Altertum und deutsche Literatur*. 48. Band/4.12.1929, p. 190 (189-195).

<sup>219</sup> Kommerell an George, Ende Mai 1927, Stefan George-Archiv, Stuttgart.

Vorbild”<sup>220</sup> as early as 1920, is reflected in the time which they spent together between 1924 and 1928, notably during the writing of *Der Dichter als Führer*.

A further, more direct influence was also exerted through what may be termed ‘censorship’, as the manuscript for the book was checked by Wolters, George and Edith Landmann before being approved for publication under the auspices of the *Blätter für die Kunst*. Due to the absence of letters or manuscripts dating from this period it is difficult to assess the extent of this influence, although it may be concluded that Kommerell’s work was directed in accordance with the opinions of the leading ‘Kreis’ members, Gundolf having by this stage broken away from George.

Nevertheless, further examination reveals a number of elements which lead us to reconsider the extent to which *Der Dichter als Führer* is simply a reiteration of Georgian ideology. The similarities between Kommerell’s description of the classical poets and the cult surrounding George are indeed undeniable, the ‘Kreis’ ethos forming one of the principal themes of the book. Nevertheless, implications of doubt concerning this ideology may be identified, with reference being made to the dangers of absolute subordination to the poetic “Herrscher”. Kommerell’s description of the charismatic, mystical control exercised by Herder over the young Goethe, in a passage which recalls the concerns expressed in Hofmannsthal’s previously referred to poem “Der Prophet”, provides an example of this:

Hinreißend als Werber, furchtbar als Lehrer und sowie man einmal mit ihm gesprochen hatte für immer unentbehrlich, machte er den zur Herrschaft Geborenen sich dienstbar weit über sein Recht hinaus, ein Menschenbestricker dessen abstoßende Gewalten der Starke bald als heimlichere Arten der Anziehung empfinden lernte.<sup>221</sup>

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<sup>220</sup> Kommerell, *Briefe und Aufzeichnungen*, op.cit., p. 58.

<sup>221</sup> Kommerell, *Der Dichter als Führer*, op.cit., p. 85.

Similarly both Schiller and Jean Paul are portrayed as fearing the "Freiheitsberaubung"<sup>222</sup> of the Goethe-Kreis, whilst acknowledging the fundamental role to be played by the "gläubig-kräftiger Gewaltherrscher"<sup>223</sup> within their own personal development. As the book progresses less emphasis is placed on the Georgian "Wirken von Mensch zu Mensch", but rather, as in the case of the Hölderlin chapter, on the value of isolation, Plato being identified as Hölderlin's only true leader, following the deterioration of his relationship with Schiller. Importance is consequently accorded not to direct and immediate influence, but to the potential to achieve this in the future.

It must be noted that Kommerell's doubts are indeed veiled, and his concerns are counteracted by a reiteration of the fundamental need for the form of guidance epitomised by the 'George-Kreis'. Nevertheless, the shift of emphasis which occurs indicates a gradual change in the author's approach and as such his relationship with George. Hans Egon Holthusen suggests that the very process of writing *Der Dichter als Führer* led Kommerell to question his allegiance to the 'Kreis' and its 'master', his admiration being transferred from George to Goethe.<sup>224</sup> It would be possible to develop this theory further by arguing that this change is reflected within the book itself, which represents, consciously or otherwise, not merely a transferral of allegiance, but also a challenge to the whole ethos of "Herrschaft und Dienst".

We are indeed aware that such a change occurred definitively shortly after the publication of *Der Dichter als Führer*, Kommerell having formally broken away from the circle in the summer of 1930. The fears which he initially held concerning the dominance of the 'Kreis'<sup>225</sup> were borne out, as disclosed in the "Tagebuch: ein Wendepunkt in meinen freundschaftlichen Beziehungen", published by Jens. Here

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<sup>222</sup> Ibid., p. 228.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid., p. 361.

<sup>224</sup> Hans Egon Holthusen, *Das Schöne und das Wahre*. Neue Studien zur modernen Literatur. R. Piper & Co. Verlag, München 1958, p. 43.

<sup>225</sup> In a letter to Jul Strebel written in 1920, following his transferral to Heidelberg, Kommerell wrote: "Oft denke ich, ob ich wohl in den nächsten Semestern Gundolf einmal kennen lernen möchte. Ich glaube nicht, da ich ihn wohl nicht aushalten könnte, und seine Fähigkeit, alles Lebendige zu formulieren auf mich angewandt meinem Werden schaden könnte". (Kommerell an Jul Strebel, Nachlaß, 8.7.1920.)

Kommerell details his recognition of the dangers which the 'Kreis' posed to his "geistige Gesundheit",<sup>226</sup> thereby echoing the doubts expressed with regard to the classical poets:

Das ganze umeinanderleben wie es sich herausgebildet hatte, beruhte auf einer so vollständigen Aufgabe des persönlichen Selbstgefühles, wie ich sie höchstens für einen Jüngling, niemals für einen Mann, angemessen und erträglich nennen kann.<sup>227</sup>

This threat to the individual is reiterated in Kommerell's later essay *Schiller als Gestalter des handelnden Menschen* (1934), in which the loss of self depicted in Schiller's fragment *Die Malteser* - "man hört auf Person zu sein"<sup>228</sup> - contrasts starkly with the earlier interpretation in *Der Dichter als Führer*. Similarly in *Hugo von Hofmannsthal* (1930), a speech which publicly marked the separation from George, Kommerell, whilst acknowledging the need felt by the young poet for George's guidance, nevertheless stresses the dangers inherent in this type of absolute leadership.<sup>229</sup>

The representation of the 'Kreis' as a pseudo-religious sect, as detailed in the so-called "Woltersbuch", is indeed cited by Kommerell as one of the contributory factors to his alienation from the circle. In a letter to his close friend Hans Anton, Kommerell details this opposition, thereby revealing the limitations of his own conception of "Heldenverehrung":

[...] er hat der ganzen Gründung durch sein Buch die Ansicht des Kirchlichen gegeben, hat Gegnerschaften von Rang mit kleinen Gesten der Sekte erledigt, hat die Verehrung des großen Menschen

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<sup>226</sup> Kommerell, *Briefe und Aufzeichnungen*, op.cit., p. 183 (182-186).

<sup>227</sup> Ibid.

<sup>228</sup> Max Kommerell, *Schiller als Gestalter des handelnden Menschen*. Vittorio Klostermann Verlag, Frankfurt am Main 1934, p. 27.

<sup>229</sup> Max Kommerell, *Hugo von Hofmannsthal. Eine Rede*. Vittorio Klostermann Verlag, Frankfurt am Main 1930, p. 8f.



[...] entstellt zu einer Devotion, die ein Frösteln der Scham in feinem Geistern hervorrufen muß [...].<sup>230</sup>

As *Der Dichter als Führer* was written essentially in chapter order,<sup>231</sup> it may therefore be argued that the praise of Klopstock and his formation of the 'Kreis' reveals Kommerell's early perception of George, whereas the later chapters reflect the growing deterioration in their relationship. This interpretation is supported by the so-called "Ablehnungsbrief",<sup>232</sup> in which Kommerell details the gradual process of alienation which began in 1927, the year in which the Goethe chapter was completed and work on Hölderlin begun.<sup>233</sup> Given this information Kommerell's letter to Kayka in which he states with reference to the recently published book: "[...] auch steht sonst von mir allerlei Persönliches drin für kundige Augen"<sup>234</sup> could be interpreted as a further indication of this hidden development.

Kommerell did experience particular difficulties during the writing of the Hölderlin chapter,<sup>235</sup> which was approved by George in October 1927: "Gottlob ist der Hölderlin=teil zu allseitiger zufriedenheit gediehen!"<sup>236</sup> These difficulties were however due at least in part to Kommerell's long-standing admiration for and identification with Hölderlin, whom he described at the age of nineteen, prior to

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<sup>230</sup> Kommerell, *Briefe und Aufzeichnungen*, op.cit., p. 195 f.

<sup>231</sup> This may be gathered from the letters from Kommerell to George held in the Stefan George-Archiv. These do however indicate that the chapter on Schiller was completed before the chapter on Goethe.

<sup>232</sup> In this letter to George, dated 17.6.1930, Kommerell refused the offer of a place on a "Stiftungsrat" to be founded in order to further the work of Stefan George. (See Kommerell, *Briefe und Aufzeichnungen*, op.cit., p. 170 f).

<sup>233</sup> This is also indicated by the remaining correspondence. Kommerell's early letters to George are marked by declarations of allegiance and servitude, detailing George's "leise führung" and Kommerell's desire for somebody "wer mich als stärkerer zwingt und dem ich die waffen tragen darf". (Kommerell an George, 1922, Stefan George-Archiv, Stuttgart). Later correspondence is however more factual and marked by Kommerell's frequent, and largely unfulfilled, requests to see George. Similarly Kommerell's diary for 1927 suggests that his presence was not requested as frequently as had previously been the case. (Tagebuch und Annalen, Nachlaß).

<sup>234</sup> Kommerell an Kayka, 6.1.1929, Nachlaß.

<sup>235</sup> See for example a letter from Kommerell to George, written in June 1927: "Meine Arbeit geht leidlich". (Kommerell an George, 31.5.1927, Stefan George-Archiv, Stuttgart). Kommerell's diary for this period also contains references to "schwerste Arbeit" and "angestrengt Arbeit". (Tagebuch und Annalen, Nachlaß).

<sup>236</sup> Kommerell an Jul Strebel, 14.10.1927, Nachlaß.

meeting George, as “mir alles, Anfang und Ende und fast das Maß aller Dinge”.<sup>237</sup> As a result Kommerell expressed, in a letter written to George, doubts concerning his ability to write about Hölderlin:

So stehe ich den [sic!] wieder dem Phänomen, dem für mich aufregendsten vielleicht das ich kenne, ohne abstand gegenüber nachdem ich es jahrlang fast scheu umgangen habe. Möge nur das rechte wort beschieden sein zwischen deutlichkeit und scheu, so wie ich's sagen darf und muss.<sup>238</sup>

Later correspondence with a student who hoped to study Hölderlin's work confirms that Kommerell was unable to convey within the scope of the study his true perception of the poet:

[...] ich hatte immer erwartet einen Schüler zu finden, der mein lange gesammeltes und (trotz des Dichter als Führer) hartnäckig zurückgehaltenes Wissen um Hölderlin mir abblockte, denn ich selber werde kaum je darüber schreiben.<sup>239</sup>

In his later work Kommerell, as demonstrated by Holthusen, was to gradually distance himself from the Georgian portrayal, which centred on the perception of Hölderlin as George's intellectual “Vorläufer” and the prophet of a coming German “Reich”.<sup>240</sup> In a letter to Heidegger dated July 1942 Kommerell refers to the links established by

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<sup>237</sup> Quote from Hans Egon Holthusen, “Max Kommerell in seinen Briefen”, in: *Merkur*. 22 (1968) Nr. 238, p. 170 (168-172). Holthusen traces the development of the Hölderlin-motif in Kommerell's work, which acts as a reflection of the wider changes in his literary and political approach.

<sup>238</sup> Kommerell an George, Ende Mai 1927, Stefan George-Archiv, Stuttgart.

<sup>239</sup> Quote from Dorothea Hölscher-Lohmeyer, “Entwürfe einer Jugend. Zu den frühen unveröffentlichten Briefen Max Kommerells”, in: *Zeit der Moderne. Zur deutschen Literatur von der Jahrhundertwende bis zur Gegenwart*. Hrsg. v. Hans-Henrik Krummacher, Fritz Martini und Walter Müller-Seidel. Alfred Kröner Verlag, Stuttgart 1984, p. 347 (339-362).

<sup>240</sup> See for example the two poems and the essay dedicated to Hölderlin in the *BfdK*. Referring to him as a “grossen Führer”, the second poem contains the following verse: “Er wäre unser einer sah er heute / Da sich erfüllt die zeit der Dioskuren / Erblühend Hellas jugend und erneute / In wettern die aus seinen sprüchen fuhren”. (“Hölderlin II”, in: *BfdK*, op.cit., 10. Folge, 1914, p. 135). As subsequently stated in *Der Dichter als Führer*, Hölderlin is portrayed by George as “der eckstein der nächsten deutschen Zukunft und der rufer des Neuen Gottes”. (Stefan George, “Hölderlin”, in: *BfdK*,

George between Hölderlin and the question of national development,<sup>241</sup> a tendency which Holthusen believes led Kommerell, in the light of contemporary political circumstances, to state in a letter to his colleague Karl Reinhardt: "Ich verbiete mir jetzt Hölderlin".<sup>242</sup>

This aspect has been further examined by Dorothea Hölscher-Lohmeyer who, echoing the concerns initially expressed by Walter Benjamin,<sup>243</sup> describes Kommerell's politicisation of Hölderlin under the influence of George, which was to manifest itself in the "nationalen Erwartungstönen"<sup>244</sup> evident in the closing stages of *Der Dichter als Führer*. In so doing she raises the question of whether Kommerell's "Führer" was indeed intended as a nationalist political leader, in addition to the aesthetic and spiritual interpretation hitherto described. In order to answer this question it is necessary to further examine the author's political stance and its reflection in his work.

Initially distanced from contemporary affairs,<sup>245</sup> Kommerell's political opinions had been shaped by certain members of the 'Kreis', in particular Wolters, as detailed in a letter written by Kommerell to his sister Jul in 1923:

Ich war ja noch während des Krieges sehr un-teilnehmend. Doch keiner wird sich der Folge des jetzt Geschehenden entziehen können. Wolters' äusserste Beteiligung bricht in mancher Einschaltung und beiläufigen Bemerkung der Vorlesung durch. Ich kann mir bei ihm und Hans wo meine mangelnde Kenntnis dieser Bereiche versagt, Rat erholen [...].<sup>246</sup>

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op.cit., 11. und 12. Folge, 1919, p. 122ff). For further details see Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Hölderlin und George", in: *Hölderlin Jahrbuch*. 15 (1967/68), p. 75-91.

<sup>241</sup> Kommerell, *Briefe und Aufzeichnungen*, op.cit., p. 399.

<sup>242</sup> Quote from Holthusen, "Max Kommerell in seinen Briefen", op.cit., p. 171.

<sup>243</sup> See Walter Benjamin, "Wider ein Meisterwerk", in: *Die Literarische Welt*. 6 (1930), Nr. 33/34, p. 9ff.

<sup>244</sup> Hölscher-Lohmeyer, op.cit., p. 350.

<sup>245</sup> In June 1920 Kommerell wrote with reference to the forthcoming Reichstagswahl: "Wählen laß doch einfach bleiben. Es ist alles voller Dreck und Gestank, und wir, die wir's ... wissen, beschmutzen uns die Hände". (Quote from *Ibid.*, p. 360).

<sup>246</sup> Kommerell an Jul Strebel, 1923, Nachlaß.

This influence is subsequently revealed in *Der Dichter als Führer*, not least through the advocacy of an aristocratic ideal based on the eternal "Gesetz des Ranges".<sup>247</sup> The belief in the 'great man' which underlies the book inevitably leads to the dismissal of the masses as 'Herde' and 'Pöbel', and Kommerell perceives the task of leadership to be the enforcement of this natural hierarchy:

Inmitten der Vielheit der Köpfe, Buntheit der Seelen eine Verpflichtung nach oben zu schaffen, war von jeher die Tat unsrer Führer - und was sich bei uns als Führertum gebärdete mit der Losung, Bedürfnisse der Breite zu befriedigen, war Lüge und Verrat und hat sich darin erfüllt, daß Duldung und Freiheit solange verbreitet wurde, bis das geduldete Schlechte dem Edeln jede Duldung und Freiheit versagte.<sup>248</sup>

This conviction is most vehemently expressed in Kommerell's analysis of the response made by Schiller and Goethe to the French Revolution. Whereas Herder's early search for a new "Größenmaß" had been portrayed in literary terms, the opinions expressed in this context are clearly of an overtly political nature. Through a positive description of Schiller's ultimate opposition to the democratic ideal Kommerell is able to express his own point of view, thereby applying the "Herrschaft des Vornehmen"<sup>249</sup> to contemporary society. In a passage which echoes convictions expressed in Carlyle's later work, he advocates the suppression of the masses and their subjugation to a higher will:

Wie der Mensch auseinanderklafft in Sinnlichkeit und Vernunft, so jede Gesamtheit in den abstrakten objektiven Willen und die Vielzahl willkürlicher einzelner, die nur durch Unterdrückung: die

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<sup>247</sup> Kommerell, *Der Dichter als Führer*, op.cit., p. 281.

<sup>248</sup> Ibid., p. 301.

<sup>249</sup> Ibid., p. 300.

Wirkungsart des physischen Staates, dem übergeordneten Willen dienstbar gemacht werden kann.<sup>250</sup>

Kommerell's use of the classical poets in order to convey his own political opinions reflects a tendency particularly evident in Wolters' *Goethe als Erzieher zum Vaterländischen Denken*.

Links with the work of Roethe may also be established in this context. Having referred in 1906 to the classical and romantic poets as model heroes for the future, he subsequently used them to support his own anti-democratic argument.<sup>251</sup> In a speech given in 1924 he notably called for Goethe to lead the Germans forward to a brighter future with the words: "Goethe, wir grüßen Dich, wir danken Dir, Du unser Freund, unser Held, unser Führer!".<sup>252</sup> There remains no conclusive evidence that Kommerell was familiar with the work of Roethe, although the time period in which the speech was given does coincide with the conception of *Der Dichter als Führer*. Furthermore, a reference made to Roethe by Kommerell in a letter to Kayka in 1925 also suggests a degree of familiarity.<sup>253</sup>

Nevertheless, Kommerell's rejection of the democratic ideal appears to be based, like that of Burckhardt, on its negative effect on cultural development, the concepts of self-determination and political freedom being dismissed as "Geistergift".<sup>254</sup> His assessment of state affairs is centred not on established conservative ideology, but rather on the wider implications of actions on the "Gestalt des Menschen"<sup>255</sup> as a whole. Proving the central focus of the examination of Goethe's and Schiller's response to the French Revolution, this notion is reiterated with reference to

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<sup>250</sup> Ibid., p. 245. An earlier example of this hierarchical approach to the state may also be found in the unpublished poem "Politeia", written by Kommerell during the "George-Zeit". (Nachlaß).

<sup>251</sup> Gustav Roethe, "Deutsche Dichter des 18. und 19. Jahrhunderts und ihre Politik" (1919), in: Roethe, *Deutsche Helden*, op.cit., p. 276-299.

<sup>252</sup> Gustav Roethe, "Goethe. zum 28. August 1924", in: Ibid., p. 332 (307-332).

<sup>253</sup> Kommerell an Ernst Kayka, 2.12.25, Nachlaß.

<sup>254</sup> Kommerell, *Der Dichter als Führer*, op.cit., p. 216. In a letter dated November 1943 Kommerell refers to a seminar which he is giving on Burckhardt, praising his approach to history and "seine Einsichten in die Weltgeschichte, in den fragwürdigen Begriff der historischen Größe!". (Brief an Hans Carossa, 30.11.1943, in: Kommerell, *Briefe und Aufzeichnungen*, op.cit., p. 433 [427-434]).

<sup>255</sup> Kommerell, *Der Dichter als Führer*, op.cit., p. 301.

Hölderlin, whose admiration for Napoleon and enthusiasm for the Peace of Lunéville was, as demonstrated in part one, largely independent of political circumstances or opinions.

Kommerell's opposition therefore appears to encompass all aspects of the modern state, the poet being portrayed as the only individual capable of fundamentally changing society. As such the poet must remain removed from the sphere of 'Zeitpolitik', Schiller and Goethe having themselves proved the eternal "Abstand des geistigen Menschen zu den Zeitwirren",<sup>256</sup> a statement which may be viewed as a historical legitimisation of George's public silence during the First World War.<sup>257</sup>

Consequently Schiller's isolation and suffering, seen as the root of genuine heroism, is contrasted with the "Zähneblecken und Wutschnauben der zeitgenössischen Freiheitsschwärmer".<sup>258</sup> Kommerell argues that the realisation of an immediate influence over the contemporary sphere, achieved through charismatic power and an affinity with the "Bildungspöbel", is not an indication of true leadership. Echoing Nietzsche and subsequently George, he states that the only real "Mann des Volkes" must deny both his time and his people, an observation which reveals opposition to the understanding of leadership popular in Wilhelminian and Weimar Germany.<sup>259</sup> Dismissing, like George, philosophy, the state and religion in favour of an aesthetically oriented ideology, Kommerell declares that beauty, to be conveyed through poetry, is the only lasting form of guidance and regeneration, as demonstrated in Schiller's *Briefe zur ästhetischen Erziehung des Menschen*. This notion is based on the "Weltgesetz: daß im Dichter und *nur* im Dichter das Ebenmaß des Menschlichen in verworrenen Läuften bewahrt ist [...]".<sup>260</sup>

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<sup>256</sup> Ibid., p. 245.

<sup>257</sup> See George, "Der Krieg", in: George, *Das Neue Reich*, op.cit., p. 28-34. This notion is reiterated by Kommerell in the *Gespräche*, in which Goethe, during his meeting with Napoleon, states: "Vom besten was ich wusste / Schwieg ich. Ich bin kein titan der die welt / Rückt aus den fugen, will was ist". (Max Kommerell, "Tag in Erfurt", in: *Gespräche aus der Zeit der deutschen Wiedergeburt*, op.cit., p. 31 [28-35]).

<sup>258</sup> Kommerell, *Der Dichter als Führer*, op.cit., p. 179.

<sup>259</sup> Ibid., p. 253.

<sup>260</sup> Ibid., p. 247.

A contrast may be identified in this context with Gundolf's *Dichter und Helden*, in which the military or religious figure is also defined as a potential leader. In the opening chapter of *Der Dichter als Führer* Klopstock is criticised for failing to recognise the heroism of Frederick the Great, although greater value is placed by Kommerell on the "Doppelgröße" of Heinrich von Staufen, both "Lenker des Staats" and "Pflanzer im inneren Reich".<sup>261</sup> Furthermore, praise of Napoleon is, in accordance with traditional mythology, based not on his military achievements, but rather on his demonic personal characteristics. Heroism being defined as a synthesis of the divine and the temporal, the French Emperor is equated with both Goethe and Hölderlin, a trend which dominated much of the work of the 'Kreis', as well as the contemporary cult surrounding Napoleon and Bismarck.

This notion is also expressed in the conversational poem *Tag in Erfurt*, in which both the traditional Napoleonic mythology and the need for spiritual guidance over and above military leadership are revealed.<sup>262</sup> Through Goethe Kommerell emphasises the distinction between the two spheres, as highlighted in *Der Dichter als Führer*, and the need for the inner formation of a people independent of any geo-political solution:

Dies land lebt doppelt - was Ihr antrefft: wirrwarr  
 Von herrn die nicht herr - sind, volk das nicht folgt -  
 Mit fug gebt Ihr DER unform Eure form.  
 Das andre ist geheim: ein land der geister,  
 Es atmet und gedeiht allein im Wort.  
 Nie stört es Eure herrschaft noch umspannt  
 Ihr EINES je dies EIGENSTE.<sup>263</sup>

Similarly, in the conversation between Goethe and Carl August entitled *Quartier zu Niederrosa* Goethe refers to the unfulfilled need for a leader to unite Germany, yet,

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<sup>261</sup> Ibid., p. 50.

<sup>262</sup> Napoleon: "Feldherr war ich und wurde staatsmann / Weil DEN ich nirgend fand. Die schlimme lücke / Füll ich nicht selbst. Mir fehlt der Zweite Geist, / Er presst in seelen sonderzahl den stempel / Der herrschaft den ich unerbittlich schnitze, / Er wahr wenn ich verwese mein gewirk. (Kommerell, "Tag in Erfurt", op.cit., p. 32).

<sup>263</sup> Ibid.

echoing George's words in the "Jahrhundertsprüche",<sup>264</sup> warns that this leader may not be a political or military conqueror as expected:

Nur werdet gross ihr wo gestuft ihr gipfelt  
In Einem der in sich euch all befassend  
Das in euch trächtige zur tat beruft...  
Dies ist nicht helden - ist nicht könig-zeit -  
Es sei er thronte denn wo ihrs nicht ahnt.  
Nie kommt die Wende dorthier wo man späht,  
Nie der befreier wie das Volk ihn denkt.<sup>265</sup>

The desired synthesis of "Geist" and "Macht", fundamental to the intellectual debate on leadership during this era, was therefore perceived by Kommerell, as by George, within the individual poet.<sup>266</sup>

This approach is associated with the concept of poetic action, a notion which, as Holthusen points out, features heavily in the work of the George-Kreis.<sup>267</sup> Kommerell refers to this in the chapter on Schiller, a theory reiterated in his later essay *Schiller als Psychologe* (1934/35), in which a similar, if less politically charged, interpretation of "Tat" is maintained.<sup>268</sup> The equation of "Idee" and "Tat" contrasts strongly with the early nineteenth century tendency to view the two elements as diametric opposites. In Heine's *Das Buch Le Grand* for example, intellectual and artistic reflection were rejected as ineffective when compared to the military action of Napoleon, although the poet did later come to view the two spheres as complementary phenomena.

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<sup>264</sup> George, "Jahrhunderstpruch. Ein Dritter", in: George, *Der Siebente Ring*, op.cit., p. 208: "Der mann! die tat! so lechzen volk und hoher rat, / Hofft nicht auf einen der an euren tischen ass!".

<sup>265</sup> Max Kommerell, "Quartier zu Niederrossa", in: *Gespräche aus der Zeit der deutschen Wiedergeburt*, op.cit., p. 26 (24-27).

<sup>266</sup> Goethe for example is described as uniting "im Geistigen das Staatliche, im Staatlichen das Geistige". (Kommerell, *Der Dichter als Führer*, op.cit., p. 266).

<sup>267</sup> Holthusen, op.cit., p. 46.

<sup>268</sup> Max Kommerell, "Schiller als Psychologe", in: *Jahrbuch des freien Deutschen Hochstifts*. 1934/35, p. 177-219.



Kommerell highlights this transition with reference to Hölderlin, who initially perceived himself as subordinate to the military conqueror, but subsequently came to recognise his own heroic qualities, therefore being able to view Napoleon and himself as outward manifestations of the same inner spirit.<sup>269</sup> In so doing Kommerell confirms the interpretation of the two fragments *Buonaparte* and *Dem Allbekanntem* given in part one, in which Hölderlin is able, through “Gesang”, to overcome the perception of Napoleon as an “überpoetische Größe”.<sup>270</sup>

The “Utopie von Dichtung als Tat”<sup>271</sup> is therefore revealed most strongly in the final chapter of the book, in which emphasis is placed on the inner formation of a community, achieved by Hölderlin through “zarte Stärke”.<sup>272</sup> Criticising the tendency of contemporary society to view heroism in terms of physical strength, Kommerell, through his analysis of Hölderlin’s poetry, advocates a renaissance of the spiritual understanding of the concept:

[...] noch immer hemmt uns das Vorurteil, die Kraft nur in ihrem derben Auftreten, nie in ihren zarten Äußerungen anzuerkennen. Zum Heroen neuerer Zeit gehört untrennbar das Geistige, und in der Jugend das Zarte und der Traum.<sup>273</sup>

The ultimate need for the outer formation of a nation is not denied, but this must be preceded by a process of spiritual development, and Kommerell believes that poetry is the only means of realising this deeper, more fundamental influence:

Aber nicht Ereignisse die mit Gewalt von Sturm und Erdstoß rütteln, nicht Krieg noch Umsturz war stark genug die Schlafende Vaterlandseele zu wecken .. nur das Zarteste Leiseste ist es: der

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<sup>269</sup> Kommerell, *Der Dichter als Führer*, op.cit., p. 454ff.

<sup>270</sup> Görner, *Hölderlins Mitte*, op.cit., p. 112.

<sup>271</sup> Arthur Henkel, “Max Kommerell, (1902-1944)”, in: *Die Wirkung Stefan Georges auf die Wissenschaft. Ein Symposium*. Hrsg. v. Hans-Joachim Zimmermann. Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, Heidelberg 1985, p. 53 (51-59).

<sup>272</sup> Kommerell, *Der Dichter als Führer*, op.cit., p. 428.

<sup>273</sup> Ibid.

Sendling der Götter muß ihr nahen und ihren träumenden Mund  
erschließen [...].<sup>274</sup>

Parallels with Nietzsche's understanding of greatness as expressed in *Also Sprach Zarathustra* - "Die stillsten Worte sind es, welche den Sturm bringen"<sup>275</sup> - are clearly apparent. Kommerell had indeed been familiar with Nietzsche's work from an early age, and a critical analysis of in particular *Also Sprach Zarathustra* may be traced throughout his many notes on this topic, a selection of which have been published by Jens. Written during the 1930s, they reveal the later development of Kommerell's interpretation of Nietzsche's work.

Kommerell's thoughts on the subject are summarised in two unpublished fragments which compare and contrast the work and ideology of Nietzsche and George. His analysis reveals a critical examination of the pseudo-religious cult of the George-Kreis and the "dämonische Kunst Georges [...], Menschen einzufangen, zu beschwören, zu binden".<sup>276</sup> George's promise of elite redemption is contrasted with the Zarathustrian command of isolation and denial.

Whilst acknowledging the similarities in their approach, namely the desire to achieve a "geistige Horizontbildung"<sup>277</sup> in the face of impending anarchy, Kommerell reveals the "umgekehrte Dynamik" of their work.<sup>278</sup> Whereas Nietzsche became increasingly isolated, having abandoned Wagner and the Bayreuth cult, itself a pre-emption of the 'Kreis' ethos, George became increasingly dependent upon the "Meister-Jünger" paradigm. As such Kommerell's alienation from George, stemming largely from the self-effacement which he enforced, in many ways echoes Nietzsche's break with Wagner and subsequent criticism of him.<sup>279</sup>

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<sup>274</sup> Ibid., p. 481. (See also the words of Goethe in "Quartier zu Niederrosa": "Ist herzschlag wahren reichs ein stilles lied." Kommerell, "Quartier zu Niederrosa", op.cit., p. 26).

<sup>275</sup> Nietzsche, "Also Sprach Zarathustra", op. cit., p. 675.

<sup>276</sup> Max Kommerell, "Zwei symbolische Bücher". Über Nietzsche und George. Nachlaß.

<sup>277</sup> Ibid.

<sup>278</sup> Kommerell, "Notizen zu Nietzsche und George", in: Kommerell, *Essays, Notizen, Poetische Fragmente*, op. cit., p. 228 (225-250).

<sup>279</sup> In his unpublished notes Kommerell answers the self-imposed question "Was bedeutet der Bruch mit Wagner?" with the answer, which may equally be applied to his own break from George: "eigene Verantwortung". (Max Kommerell, *Aufzeichnungen zu Nietzsche, Nachlaß*).

Associated with this process is the identification of the principal distinction between the work of the two figures, as discussed in the preceding chapter, namely the difference between the utopian and the real. Citing *Also Sprach Zarathustra* and *Der Stern des Bundes* as examples, Kommerell contrasts the “geistige Typenbildungen” portrayed in the former with George’s attempts at the formation of an actual circle of ‘disciples’.<sup>280</sup> The so-called ‘Nietzsche-Legende’ of the ‘Kreis’, which portrayed Nietzsche as George’s predecessor, is consequently dismissed as false and an attempt to conceal the fundamental contradictions in their respective ideologies,<sup>281</sup> an element which also contributed to Kommerell’s later rejection of George’s interpretation of Hölderlin, as demonstrated.

If we consider the shift of emphasis which occurs during *Der Dichter als Führer* away from the ‘Kreis’ ideology and towards a recommendation of Nietzschean ‘Einsamkeit’ - the very element criticised as ineffective by George - then it may be suggested that, despite the clear similarities with George’s portrayal of Hölderlin, Kommerell’s thought undergoes a progression away from George and towards Nietzsche. This concurs with the parallels with Nietzschean phraseology identified in the Hölderlin chapter and the points of contention revealed in Kommerell’s later comparison of Nietzsche’s and George’s work. This trend continues in, for example, the speech *Hugo von Hofmannsthal*, in which the Austrian poet is defined not as a leader, but rather “die Seele, die in die Welt ruft und der keine Antwort wird”.<sup>282</sup>

Hölscher-Lohmeyer argues that *Der Dichter als Führer* is a reiteration of the “Denkschema von Heros und Masse, Genie und Pöbel”<sup>283</sup> common to both Nietzsche’s and George’s work, Kommerell’s association with Wolters and Gundolf having led to the adoption of Nietzschean ideology and subsequent links with the right-wing nationalist movement.<sup>284</sup> Such ideals are indeed characteristic of the work of both figures. However, this theory is based on the contemporary political

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<sup>280</sup> Kommerell, “Zwei symbolische Bücher”, op.cit.

<sup>281</sup> Ibid.

<sup>282</sup> Kommerell, *Hugo von Hofmannsthal*, op.cit., p. 27.

<sup>283</sup> Hölscher-Lohmeyer, op.cit., p. 354.

application of Nietzsche's philosophy and its equation with the ideals of the George-Kreis and therefore overlooks the spiritual content accorded such attention by Kommerell, who notably defined Hölderlin, the "Führer [...] zum neuzeitlichen, im Dichterischen wurzelnden Heldentum",<sup>285</sup> as the most suitable potential leader for contemporary Germany:

Und wenn Hölderlins des scheinbar tatfernsten Name in diesem Zusammenhang befremden könnte, sei daran erinnert, daß er durch seine vertiefte Sicht des Volkes Führer war und immer mehr Führer wird.<sup>286</sup>

The value placed on the inner definition of a nation, combined with the support of "zarte Stärke", imply the author's distance from the political sphere, particularly when read in conjunction with Kommerell's declaration: "Den Satz D.M.'s 'Geistbücher sind Politik' weis' ich zurück. Ich habe nichts damit zu schaffen".<sup>287</sup> This therefore leads us to believe that *Der Dichter als Führer* is to be viewed as a purely spiritual leader. Heissenbüttel argues that the politicisation of the 'Kreis' ideology was indeed a contributory factor in Kommerell's alienation from George, as revealed in his criticism of Wolters, who constituted the most politically active member of the circle and himself embodied its hierarchical structure.<sup>288</sup>

This said, in the memorial essay written on Wolters' death in 1930, Kommerell does praise his former idol as "der Versonnene, der Spaßmacher und der König", a synthesis of the ancient Greek hero and a contemporary representative of the German nation. Particular attention is paid to Wolters' "Staatlichkeit" and, echoing *Der Dichter als Führer*, his role as "Erzieher" over a community. In a passage which implies the political aspect of his work Kommerell writes:

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<sup>284</sup> Ibid., p. 360.

<sup>285</sup> Kommerell, *Der Dichter als Führer*, op.cit., p. 458.

<sup>286</sup> Ibid., Vorbemerkung.

<sup>287</sup> Kommerell, *Briefe und Aufzeichnungen*, op.cit., p. 197.

So war ihm der Dichter ein Machthaber, das Wort ein verpflichtendes Zeichen, die von ihm ergriffenen eine beinahe wehrhafte Gemeinde, das Wissen ein Werkzeug des Führertums und Gesinnung ein nach innen gütig werbender, nach außen gewaltsamer Bodengewinn.<sup>289</sup>

The ambiguity of his response to Wolters is in fact characteristic of Kommerell's wider approach to politics, which manifests itself in *Der Dichter als Führer*. Despite the emphasis placed by him on the "Grenze" between the contemporary political and the intellectual,<sup>290</sup> further details which may be gathered from the unpublished correspondence appear to contradict a purely spiritual or aesthetic interpretation of Kommerell's work. In a letter to Kayka dated February 1929 he acknowledges his friend's opposition to the underlying political content of his book, whilst emphasising the positive recognition which he has received as a result:

Lieber Ernst: Du hast mich durch den schönen Widerhall auf mein Buch herzlich erfreut und ich danke Dir. [...] Dass Du die politischen Schärfen, ja wenn ich nicht irre, überhaupt das latente politische Bekenntnis hinwegwünscht, trifft mit Einwendungen von anderer, von mir auch durchaus geschätzter Seite zusammen. Aber wieder andre fühlten sich gerade dadurch erwärmt und bestätigt, so dass eins das andre aufwiegen kann. Jedenfalls wäre mir ohne dies kaum die hocheureliche Würdigung zuteilgeworden in einer politischen Zeitschrift: der Ring, 13.1.29, die ein überraschend hohes Niveau verrät.<sup>291</sup>

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<sup>288</sup> Heissenbüttel, op.cit., p. 16f. This is supported by a comment made by the former 'Kreis' member Boehring, in which he criticises Kommerell for preventing Hans Anton from pursuing a political career. (Boehring, op.cit., p.171).

<sup>289</sup> See Kommerell, *Briefe und Aufzeichnungen*, op.cit., p. 164-169. It should however be noted that Kommerell did write in a letter to George: "Durch Hans übergebe ich einen kleinen Aufsatz über F.W., zu dem ich mir verpflichtet scheine". (Kommerell an George, 28.5.1930, Stefan George-Archiv, Stuttgart).

<sup>290</sup> Kommerell, *Der Dichter als Führer*, op.cit., p. 281.

<sup>291</sup> Kommerell an Kayka, 15.2.29, Nachlaß. The article in *Der Ring* refers to the need for a new leadership in Germany, to be drawn from the "Adel der Seele", which will complement the already existent "männlicher Tatkraft" epitomised by Bismarck and consolidated through opposition to the

The reference made to “anderer, von mir auch durchaus geschätzter Seite” could be read as an allusion to certain members of the ‘Kreis’, thereby implying, in contrast to previous assumptions, George’s opposition to the politicisation of the work. This conclusion remains circumspect, but is supported by a more direct reference made by Kommerell in a letter to George, following his critical comments concerning the *Gespräche*,<sup>292</sup> in particular the conversation centred on Hölderlin:

Dass Du die (immer etwas schwierige und bedenkliche) Umarbeitung des H. billigst ist mir recht. Ich würde mich doch für sie entscheiden gegen die erste, denn wo es sich um ein öffentlich vorzulegendes Ganzes handelt, ist das Compositionelle ausschlaggebend. An der ersten fassung ist mir mehr das einzelne lieb, auch hab ich gegen sie, dass sich ansätze zu Politischem darin finden. Solches muss man entweder ganz machen oder lassen - nicht en passant.<sup>293</sup>

Kommerell’s later notes on Nietzsche and George also reveal criticism of the latter due to his “Verschmähen der Öffentlichkeit” which led to the dismissal of contemporary phenomena such as Bismarck and Socialism, to be contrasted with

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“regierenden Scheingewalten”. The desired “seelische Größe” is to be based on the ideals of “Rang”, “Zucht” and an “innerliche [...] Verbindung mit großen Tätern”, which the author believes to be reflected in Kommerell’s work. (Walther Gräntzdörffer, “Der Adel im Staat”, in: *Der Ring. Politische Wochenschrift*. Berlin 13.1.1929, p. 33ff).

<sup>292</sup> “Nur dies: wenn man das recht hat den grössten masstab anzulegen, so könnte man nach dem Herder=schluss fast von Hölderlin noch stärkeres verlangen. Es war damit: mich hat Apollo geschlagen, noch mehr anzufangen! Was meinst Du? ...” (See George an Kommerell, 1929, Stefan George-Archiv, Stuttgart. Also published in *Stefan George 1868-1968. Der Dichter und sein Kreis. Marbacher Katalog*. Ausstellung und Katalog Bernhard Zeller, Werner Volke, Gerhard Hay. Marbach am Neckar 1968, p. 319). Kommerell’s own comments also suggest that he complied with George’s amendments and maintained his relations with the ‘Kreis’ in order to ensure the publication of the book, as had previously been the case with *Der Dichter als Führer*: “Schon um Jahresfrist vorher war ich an diesem Punkt gestanden, hatte mich jedoch - trotzdem schier unerträgliche Monate voraufgegangen waren, noch einmal beschieden, um ein unschätzbares Ganzes menschlicher Beziehungen und Werke nicht zu gefährden. Darauf beendete ich meine Gespräche, deren Aufnahme und Druck als Gemeinsames Unternehmen noch einmal alles beiseite schob;”. (Kommerell, *Briefe und Aufzeichnungen*, op.cit., p. 182 [182-186]).

<sup>293</sup> Kommerell an George, 30.6.1929, Stefan George-Archiv, Stuttgart. It may be noted in addition that George himself, despite his self-portrayal as the “Herrscher in Geistigen Reich”, was concerned about the use of the term “Führer” within the context of the classic poets. (See Storck, op.cit., p. 16).

Nietzsche who, despite his isolation, remained “ganz der offenen Gegenwart zugewandt”.<sup>294</sup>

The second part of the aforementioned letter to Kayka does however provide a possible insight into this dichotomy. Referring to the article in *Der Ring*, Kommerell continues:

Freilich ist hier das doch mehr Beiläufig=Politische als das Hauptsächlichste genommen - aber was tut's? Der Standpunkt wenigstens ist vornehm und es ist kein Makel, den eigenen damit verwechselt zu sehen. Natürlich musst Du politisch im höheren Sinn nehmen: ich bekenne mich zu den abstufenden distanz=schaffenden, zu den bauenden ordnenden Mächten - sonst nichts. Ob du dies konservativ oder revolutionär nennst, gilt gleich und vielleicht fällt es zusammen: wer sich im 20. Jahrhundert zu dem verschollen=Urältesten stellt, ist der “schlimmste” Revolutionär.<sup>295</sup>

It is clear from this statement that Kommerell shared with both Nietzsche and to a certain extent George an opposition to ‘Zeitpolitik’, which led to the advocacy of an intellectual “Schweigen zum Tag”.<sup>296</sup> Simultaneously however, again in an echo of Nietzschean and Georgian thought, this was not to be viewed as an apolitical stance, but rather the espousal of a more fundamental ethos, removed from accepted ideologies yet based on the admiration for the ‘great man’ within a hierarchical society, as expressed through the portrayal of Goethe and Schiller. Parallels may also be drawn in this context with Hölderlin’s “ästhetische Politikkritik”,<sup>297</sup> according to which the role of the poet was to mediate between and thus unite the spheres of poetry and politics. Kommerell was indeed aware of the explicitly political implications of *Der Dichter als Führer* and although he did not intend the direct contemporary interpretation of his work as put forward in *Der Ring*, he was

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<sup>294</sup> Kommerell, “Notizen zu Nietzsche und George”, op.cit., p. 229.

<sup>295</sup> Kommerell an Kayka, 15.2.29, Nachlaß.

<sup>296</sup> Kommerell, *Der Dichter als Führer*, op.cit., p. 301.

<sup>297</sup> Görner, *Hölderlins Mitte*, op.cit., p. 111.

nevertheless prepared to acknowledge that it could, and indeed inevitably would, be read in this manner.

This appreciation of the potential effect of poetry in politically sensitive times finds further expression in Kommerell's post-Georgian work which, despite the break from the 'Kreis', nevertheless reiterates a number of concepts fundamental to the book. In *Jugend ohne Goethe* (1931) for example Kommerell continues to focus on the "Urjugendwunsch"<sup>298</sup> for a poetic leader, thereby demonstrating that he has not simply abandoned the entire concept, but rather the particular ethos of "Herrschaft und Dienst" associated with the George-Kreis. His recommendation of Goethe as a contemporary leader for the "noch schmelzbare Jugend"<sup>299</sup> is reiterated in the fragment *Zwei symbolische Bücher*, in which both Nietzsche and George are rejected as suitable icons in favour of the classic poet:

Wir erinnern uns, dass einmal Goethe gelebt hat - zwischen diese Titanen gedrängt und von ihrem Zuruf beunruhigt erholen wir uns am stillsten, das das Mächtigste ist und dessen absichtsloses Wirken sich in der Geduld des Jahrtausende an uns vollzieht.<sup>300</sup>

Kommerell therefore echoes the earlier emphasis on "Hölderlinische Zartheit"<sup>301</sup> which constituted the main focus of the final chapter. By contrasting the eternal validity of Goethe's work with the need felt in contemporary society for a political and social revolutionary, he presents the poet as a spiritual alternative who is nevertheless able to exercise a fundamental influence over the formation of the nation.<sup>302</sup>

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<sup>298</sup> Max Kommerell, *Jugend ohne Goethe*. Vittorio Klostermann Verlag, Frankfurt am Main 1931, p. 14.

<sup>299</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>300</sup> Kommerell, "Zwei symbolische Bücher", *op.cit.*

<sup>301</sup> Kommerell, *Der Dichter als Führer*, *op.cit.*, p. 429.

<sup>302</sup> This perception of Goethe as a potential spiritual leader for contemporary Germany recalls Hofmannsthal's essay "Blick auf den geistigen Zustand Europas" (1922), in which the author describes the need for "einen geistigen Beherrscher" who will guide Europe through the spiritual crisis of the post-war era. Hofmannsthal seeks this leader in the synthesis of Dostoyevsky and Goethe, the latter being described as "eine geistige Macht des allerersten Ranges, nicht bloß Künstler, sondern Weiser, Magier, wahrer Führer der Seelen, Stiller auch des religiösen Bedürfnisses". (Hugo



This concept becomes particularly apparent in the closing stages of the essay, in which Kommerell highlights the danger of abandoning Goethe's educational values in favour of a purely physical interpretation of Germanic heroism. In words which foresee the subsequent development of the National Socialist ideal he writes:

[...] wer meint, daß niemand hinderlicher sei als Goethe dabei, daß der Deutsche sich wieder in die blutstarke und blutgierige blonde Bestie zurückverwandle, der sei erinnert: Bildung als Gipfel der Menschheit einzubüßen reichen einige Minuten der Zerstörung hin, die einmal verscherzte wiederzuerwerben bedarf es der Jahrhunderte.<sup>303</sup>

The perception of a nation in cultural and spiritual terms, as also advocated by Kommerell through his portrayal of Goethe in the *Gespräche*, is reiterated in the speech *Hugo von Hofmannsthal*. Here Hofmannsthal's poetry is presented as a force which, independent of the immediate political situation, is capable of uniting Austria and Germany in a deeper, eternal sense:

Fein und edel wie der entflohene Geist seines Landes ist was er schrieb. Und indem wir uns eben an die Trauer über die Zersetzung des Brudervolkes gewöhnen, zwingt es uns vielleicht schon umzulernen. Blieben dort wirklich tiefer gelagerte Schichten im Zusammensturz unversehrt, dann wird ein neues Österreich die Kraft des alten in sich aufnehmen können, weil ein Dichter sein Gesicht geformt hat - sollte auch dies Gesicht manche abendliche Züge tragen! [...] Und wo es uns die harte Rüstigkeit, zu der uns der deutsche Augenblick nötigt, irgend erlaubt, verfolgen wir das liebenswürdige Erbe Hofmannsthals zurück bis dahin, wo es mit

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von Hofmannsthal, "Blick auf den geistigen Zustand Europas", in: *Hoffnung Europa. Deutsche Essays von Novalis bis Enzensberger*. Hrsg. v. Paul Michael Lützeler. S. Fischer Verlag, Frankfurt am Main 1994, p. 258-261).

<sup>303</sup> Kommerell, *Jugend ohne Goethe*, op.cit., p. 37.

unserem deutschen gemeinsam abzweigt aus der Schöpfung Goethes, und grüßen in ihm *den* deutschen Stamm, dessen Leichtsinns noch etwas Hellenisches hat.<sup>304</sup>

The interrelationship between poetry and politics as it is presented in the above passage may be viewed as a precursor to Kommerell's subsequent "innere Emigration" which, as Holthusen points out, should not be viewed as simply an escape from reality, but rather an attempt to reflect upon classical literature from the contemporary perspective.<sup>305</sup>

Kommerell's initial response to the rise of National Socialism was marked by ambiguity, combining doubts concerning the intellectual content of the ideology,<sup>306</sup> as also referred to by George, with the hope that the leadership ideal expressed in *Der Dichter als Führer* could be transferred to the political arena: "Ob sich aus der jetzigen Diktatur ein wirkliches Führertum entwickelt, in das die Nazis nolens volens als bewegte Masse einmünden [...], verfolge ich mit Spannung".<sup>307</sup>

However, Kommerell's correspondence from 1933 onwards reveals a confirmed opposition to National Socialism, as revealed in the following letter to his sister, in which the author, now a lecturer at Frankfurt, details the negative intellectual and political effect of the Hitlerian regime:

Es ist nicht Verhängnis, sondern Fehlgriff. Das alles ist völlig dunkel, und jeder kann nur sein Nächstes tun, und versuchen, unabhängig zu bleiben. Ein Widerstreben ist für den Augenblick undenkbar. Ich habe es bei einem kleinen Versuch erfahren.

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<sup>304</sup> Kommerell, *Hugo von Hofmannsthal*, op.cit., p. 27.

<sup>305</sup> Holthusen, "Max Kommerell in seinen Briefen", op.cit., p. 170.

<sup>306</sup> In a letter to Jul Strebel in Summer 1932 Kommerell wrote with reference to the National Socialists: "[...] freilich muß man sie noch geistig aufbessern. Vielleicht mach ich noch einen Versuch". (Quote from Jens in: Kommerell, *Briefe und Aufzeichnungen*, op.cit., p. 28).

<sup>307</sup> Ibid., p. 27.

In unserm engem Kreis sind wir um so rüstiger. Ich habe mein Kolleg unter sehr großem Zulauf (für meine Verhältnisse) begonnen und schreibe daneben weiter am Jean Paul.

[...]

Man tut sich zusammen, und es ist herrlich, wie viel Treue und Kameradschaft es im Kleinen gibt.<sup>308</sup>

By focusing on an alternative, spiritually oriented image of Germany Kommerell was able to express his own opinions, his literary activity becoming, due to the circumstances in which it was presented, a form of conscious political resistance.<sup>309</sup> By understanding this phenomenon we are granted a further insight into the message underlying *Der Dichter als Führer*.

As demonstrated in the preceding analysis, Kommerell's fundamental perception of the leader as a heroic individual who, through the power of poetry, can provide spiritual and ethical guidance for a community, is maintained throughout his work, despite the break from George and the ethos of "Herrschaft und Dienst". This continuation in Kommerell's thought is also evident in his political standpoint. As the author himself was largely distanced from "Zeitpolitik", emphasis being placed rather on a more fundamental approach to politics, so too is the form of leadership advocated in his study of an essentially spiritual nature. This is evidenced by the focus on "geistige Tat" and "zarte Stärke" which underlies the work.

As such it may be argued that Kommerell's 'poetic leader', himself a synthesis of the divine and the secular, reflects the intellectual realisation of the quest for spiritual guidance initially evident in the work of Hölderlin. The unfulfilled desire for 'Maß' evident in *Der Einzige* has, according to Kommerell, ultimately been achieved through Hölderlin and the classic poets. *Der Dichter als Führer* recalls Hölderlin's interpretation of the role of the poet as mediator between poetry and politics, Kommerell having demonstrated the fundamental unity of the two spheres.

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<sup>308</sup> Kommerell an Jul Strebel, 16.5.33, Nachlaß.

<sup>309</sup> See Storck, op.cit., p. 54-59.

Kommerell's "Führer" is, like Nietzsche's "Übermensch", not an overtly political leader, but may nevertheless, through his very opposition to the modern state, exercise a political function. The recognition of this potential influence is initially revealed in Kommerell's letter to Kayka of 1929, and is subsequently demonstrated by his so-called "Wendung ins Innere" in response to the rise of National Socialism. Although the references to national regeneration cannot be ignored, they should, in the light of the above development, not be interpreted as synonymous with, but rather as a spiritual and intellectual alternative to the form of nationalism which was to dominate the understanding of leadership in 1930s Germany.<sup>310</sup>

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<sup>310</sup> A clear vindication of this may be found in National Socialist circles, as exemplified in an article published in the right-wing *Zeitschrift für deutsche Bildung*. In an essay entitled "Held und Volk im Georgekreis" Hans Rößner juxtaposes the Georgian and the Hitlerian 'Heldenideal', Kommerell's *Der Dichter als Führer* standing as the archetype of a false ideal which, being based in the spiritual realm, has no links with the contemporary Germanic hero. The poetic leader is described as "die sublimste Versinnlichung eines ästhetischen Humanismus" and a "chimärisches Trugbild", removed from political reality and the biologically determined German "Volk". (Hans Rößner, "Held und Volk im Georgekreis", in: *Zeitschrift für deutsche Bildung*. Heft 2 [Februar 1938], p. 49-58).

## *Conclusion*

Dem Deutschen, so kühn er auch den Flug ins Land der Ideen wagt, geht doch immer erst dann das Herz auf, wenn ihm die lebendige Persönlichkeit als Träger der Idee entgegentritt. Wir sind nicht zufrieden mit dem Bewußtsein, daß unsere Nation eine große geistige Gesamtpersönlichkeit ist, sondern wir verlangen einen Führer für sie, für den wir durchs Feuer gehen können.<sup>311</sup>

In 1913 the historian Friedrich Meinecke contested Germany's ability to exist as a spiritually and intellectually defined entity, emphasising instead the popular need for a heroic personality, an absolute leader as the personal embodiment of all thought and ideology. This statement was later to be vindicated in the most problematic way, and the notion of the political "Führer" has since overshadowed the discussion on leadership in post-war Germany.

Whilst the roots of this charismatic personality cult, centred as it was on the political and military leader figure, may be identified, it is nevertheless important to emphasise the alternative interpretations of the concept. By highlighting these alternative approaches and their intellectual origins it is therefore possible to open up a broader debate and hence to reconsider the contemporary discussion of leadership without focusing on existing ideological preconceptions. It was this desire to foster a more objective approach which led to the decision not to focus explicitly on the rise of Hitlerism, but rather to investigate the intellectual or poetic understanding of leadership, with particular reference to the spiritual leader as a possible alternative to the archetypal "Führer".

Furthermore, analysis did not focus on the discussion of despotism during the Enlightenment as it was felt that, whereas the influence of Frederick the Great was an essentially "inner-German" phenomenon, the rise to power of Napoleon I resulted in a paradigmatic debate on leadership for which one central figure served as the catalyst.

This ensuing debate extended beyond national boundaries, reaching an extent which had not previously been experienced in Europe or, in particular, Germany.

The considerable and recurring influence exercised by the French Emperor in this context is reflected in the notion of the 'great man' or 'großer Einzelner', as referred to by Meinecke, which has been identified as a leitmotiv underlying the debate on leadership throughout the period in question. This ideal was formed during and as a result of Napoleonic hegemony, the early nineteenth century having been characterised by a process of secularisation which witnessed a shift from the poetic quest for spiritual guidance to the accordance of pseudo-divinity to the political and military hero. This process was accompanied by the gradual decontextualisation of political authority in favour of the charismatic legitimisation of the individual leader figure, himself liberated from accepted moral constraints.

This mythical ideal of the essentially political and military leader was further developed by Carlyle, whose theoretical advocacy of the power ideal found its practical realisation in the form of Bismarck. As a result of this transition from myth to reality, the element of spiritual guidance which, although occupying a subordinate role, had nevertheless been evident in the early writings on Napoleon, was gradually separated from political and military rule, the pragmatic Bismarckian era being characterised by a strict dichotomy between the two spheres.

The popular notion of the charismatic political figure therefore continued to dominate the leadership discourse, finding its ultimate expression in the 'persönliches Regiment' of Wilhelm II. It is notable that this period also witnessed a revival in the mythological cults surrounding both Napoleon I and Bismarck, a trend which serves to reinforce the popularity and influence of the "Kult des großen Mannes" at the beginning of the twentieth century. This desire for the "großer Einzelner" within the political sphere was particularly apparent following the First World War, the leadership vacuum which characterised the Weimar Republic having further exacerbated the quest for "der Führer".

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<sup>311</sup> Quote from Fehrenbach, op.cit., p. 91.

However, the dominant politicisation and militarisation of the Bismarckian and subsequently the Wilhelminian era had drawn criticism from prominent intellectuals due to the perceived absence of inner guidance and cultural promotion, and appeals were therefore made for a redefinition of greatness. This tendency, particularly evident in the work of Wagner, Burckhardt and Nietzsche, itself reflects a return to the quest for spiritual leadership which characterised the early nineteenth century, although guidance was now sought through the medium of both art and philosophy as opposed to traditional religious faith. Such intellectual opposition, later echoed by both Kessler and the George-Kreis, would therefore appear to contradict the traditional understanding of 'Größe' as hitherto identified.

Nevertheless, analysis has shown that the search for the "großer Einzelner" was not simply abandoned, but rather also applied to the spiritual and intellectual sphere. This is exemplified by the Wagnerian sanctification of art which, despite emphasis on the power of the community, led to the apotheosis of the individual artist and the formation of the personality cult of Bayreuth, of which the young Nietzsche was himself to be a key proponent. A similar trend may also be observed in the work of Burckhardt, who, whilst identifying philosophy as the only true realm of greatness, continued to support the notion of and desire for the great individual *per se*. This tendency was common within intellectual circles at the turn of the century, as exemplified by Hans Carossa's *Epigonenleid*, and was to find its ultimate realisation in the elite and hierarchical cult of the George-Kreis, of which Stefan George was the self-styled "Führer".

Furthermore, the focus on spiritual guidance which characterised intellectual opposition to both Bismarck and Wilhelm II did not exclude, but rather integrated, political elements. Whereas the early nineteenth century had witnessed the frequent juxtaposition of 'Geist' and 'Tat', both Wagner and Nietzsche re-emphasised both the spiritual *and* the political force of 'Geist', albeit removed from the sphere of 'Zeitpolitik'. Wagner, despite having abandoned attempts at direct political involvement, therefore sought a regeneration of the Greek understanding of the 'Polis' through the aesthetic, with the ultimate aim of revolutionising society as a

whole. Similarly, Nietzsche hoped to use his philosophy not only as a means of providing inner guidance for the individual, but also as a basis upon which politics could be redefined within a philosophically oriented, aristocratic society.

This tendency to integrate the spiritual and the political continued to develop in the early twentieth century, as revealed in particular in the work of the George-Kreis. This intellectual circle has frequently been considered with regard to the Georgian 'cult', although a more detailed analysis of the underlying cultural and political ethos, in particular concerning the meaning of leadership, has proven worthy of further investigation.

In the poetry as well as in the theoretical work of the 'Kreis' the distinction between the intellectual and the political sphere was abandoned altogether as 'Dichtung' itself became 'Tat'. The poet was perceived as a cosmic "Gesamtmensch", a quasi-divine force, capable of exercising a fundamental influence over all spheres of life, as reflected in the description of George as a "Priester, Prophet, Herrscher und Künstler". The Georgian 'great man', himself liberated from all moral constraints, was not restricted to the cultural sphere, but could take any form, the ideal hero being presented as a synthesis of the poet and the political statesman or military leader.

Despite attempts made by George to distance himself from the modern state, the ethos cultivated within the George-Kreis, which was originally a purely aesthetic ideology, began to reveal an increasingly contemporary political orientation. This development, evident in particular in the work of Wolters and Gundolf, therefore reflected the notion of intellectual leadership which had been adopted during the Napoleonic era by the "christlich-deutsche Tischgesellschaft", which sought to use the medium of language in order to exercise a direct influence over the immediate political, and indeed military, situation. This use of literature and poetry as a complementary form of political leadership had, as demonstrated, also characterised Carlyle's later work.

George, like Carlyle, did not seek a position of political power himself, but hoped that his ideology could be realised within the modern state. A more direct approach was



introduced by Kessler, whose interpretation of leadership, as well as its perceived absence in contemporary society, has been revealed through an examination of his largely unpublished diaries. Kessler, in contrast to George, sought a synthesis of 'Geist' and 'Macht' within a public leader figure. His own attempts at political influence, combined with his praise of Walter Rathenau, reveal the contemporary perspective of his intellectual ethos.

Despite variations in emphasis, the leadership ideal which emerged in Germany at the beginning of the twentieth century may therefore be defined as the synthesis of political, intellectual and spiritual guidance, the latter being provided through the medium of art and philosophy. Following the fragmentation of the *fin-de-siècle*, which witnessed the evolution of three, seemingly irreconcilable, interpretations, attempts were made to unite the Bismarckian, the Wagnerian and the Nietzschean ideal within the figure of one charismatic individual, the mystical glorification of which had underlined political and intellectual discourse from the Napoleonic era onwards. This tendency, as summarised by Kessler, is further reflected in Wilhelm II's attempts to portray himself as a "geistige Gesamtpersönlichkeit", as well as in the changing focus of the Napoleonic and Bismarck myths.

However, the contemporary realisation of such a synthesis necessitated the selective manipulation, or at least misinterpretation, of its constituent elements, drawn as they were from the mid to late nineteenth century. This is particularly apparent in the early twentieth century adaptation of the understanding of leadership as initially put forward by Wagner and, subsequently, Nietzsche.

Although Wagner did, as demonstrated, foster a mythical personality cult and advocate social and political revolution, albeit through art, he nevertheless abandoned the ideal of the charismatic political figure in favour of a spiritually oriented conception. This shift of emphasis is evident in the composer's ultimate rejection of Bismarck and the pragmatic ethos which he represented. As such, the tendency, characteristic in particular of Kessler's writings, to merge the Wagnerian and the Bismarckian ideal, although representative of Wagner's initial hopes for the creation

of the political and cultural unity of the nation, nevertheless fails to provide a true reflection of the fundamental change evident in Wagner's work.

A similar misrepresentation may be observed in the early twentieth century application of Nietzschean philosophy within intellectual circles. Nietzsche's work was undoubtedly characterised by an aristocratic world-view which found its expression in the cultural elitism of Kessler and the George-Kreis, and the "Übermensch" may indeed be interpreted as the ultimate, albeit utopian, development of an irrational 'Heroen-Kult'. This said, Nietzsche had, following his break with Wagner, denounced all pre-existing interpretations of leadership and was vehemently opposed to the Carlylean hero-worship of which he was to become the revered object. Furthermore, George's self-portrayal as the concrete realisation of the, now personalised, "Übermensch" failed to acknowledge Nietzsche's recommendation of isolation, suffering and the autonomous leadership of the individual self.

By analysing the work of both Wagner and Nietzsche from the leadership perspective it is therefore possible to gain a new insight into this particular aspect of their respective ideologies. This should be distinguished from the misrepresentation of their work which characterised the early to mid twentieth century and led, ultimately, to the perception of both figures as the ideological forefathers of the National Socialist "Führerprinzip". It is therefore hoped that this study has demonstrated how both Wagner and Nietzsche may in fact be viewed as the formulators of two ideals which, although themselves characterised by fundamental differences, may both be understood as intellectual alternatives to this principle.

The key aspects of this alternative interpretation may be identified as elements within the work of Max Kommerell, whose book *Der Dichter als Führer* represents the culmination of a number of fundamental tenets of the discussion of leadership as hitherto described. An essential part of any investigation into the intellectual reflection on leadership in this period, it reveals those elements which were significant to the development of the discussion throughout the nineteenth century, and in so doing enables a retrospective understanding of the nature and influence of the work of key contributors to the overall debate. The analysis of Kommerell's unpublished notes and

correspondence has provided an invaluable insight into his work and thought, opening up a discussion which had previously focused largely on the author's personal relationship with Stefan George.

Although Kommerell does undeniably perpetuate the Georgian apotheosis of the individual, itself a reflection of Hegelian and Carlylean theory, closer examination of *Der Dichter als Führer*, combined with the insight gained from unpublished sources, has in fact revealed the advocacy of, above all, the Hölderlinian and the Nietzschean understanding of this concept. This is reflected in the writer's gradual alienation from the hierarchical structure of the George-Kreis, the notions of 'Herrschaft und Dienst' being replaced by those of isolation and inner strength.

In the light of the growing power of National Socialism, which was itself to bring about the ultimate realisation of the danger of "Vermessenheit" as initially warned against by Hölderlin, Kommerell appealed for an alternative approach to the charismatic and totalitarian perception of leadership. His quest for spiritual and moral guidance was not altogether separated from the political sphere, but rather emphasised how the political and the intellectual could interact in order to provide a balanced approach through the cultural self-definition of a nation.

The glorification of the individual poet did remain as the product of the "Heroenkult" highlighted by Meinecke, but the political and military orientation and the desire for self-sacrifice which the historian identified as a fundamental characteristic of German society was replaced by spiritual guidance of the individual. As such *Der Dichter als Führer* may be considered as a valuable alternative interpretation of "Führung" which remains relevant to the discussion of leadership in contemporary Germany.

In many ways the rise of the Third Reich and Hitler's ultimate defeat constitute a caesura in German intellectual history, creating the need for a reassessment of the concept of leadership in the wake of its development into totalitarianism and dictatorship. It is for this reason that, as stated above, the close of the 1920s was chosen as a historical parameter for this study. This said, the work of Fritz von Unruh

may be cited as evidence of a post-war continuation of the poetic reflection on leadership as hitherto described.

Despite the different ideological context in which his later plays were written, the themes which Unruh uses reflect a sense of continuity from the pre-war debate. This is revealed in the plays *Louis Ferdinand Prinz von Preussen* (1913), *Bonaparte* (1927) and *Bismarck oder Warum steht der Soldat da?* (1955), which each provide a satirical portrayal of the once mythically revered figures, reducing their apparent greatness to ridiculous triviality. Echoing concerns expressed by, in particular, Goethe, Grabbe and later Nietzsche, the writer demonstrates the danger posed by self-aggrandisement to the individual, as well as the threat which faces humanity when it chooses to focus on one heroic "Retter".<sup>312</sup>

The prophetic words of warning uttered to Napoleon by his brother Lucien in Unruh's play *Bonaparte* recall Hölderlin's early analysis of greatness, reflecting a theme which, as demonstrated, characterised much of the subsequent discourse and was to prove to be of continued, and indeed fundamental, significance during the post-war period. The warning stands alone as a defining parameter for any future discussion of leadership, whichever form it may take: "herrschen heißt nicht maßlos sein".<sup>313</sup>

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<sup>312</sup> Fritz von Unruh, "Bonaparte", in: Unruh, *Sämtliche Werke*. Endgültige Ausgabe, im Einvernehmen mit Kurt von Unruh. Hrsg. v. Hanns Martin Elster und Bodo Rollka. Haude und Spenersche Verlagsbuchhandlung, Berlin 1987. Band 2, Dramen I, p. 156 (7-159).

<sup>313</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 70.

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