

# Words in the Music: Anthony Burgess's Ode to Hope (Part II: The World as Representation of His Inner Voice and Will)

音楽は語る — アンソニー・バージェスの希望の歌 —  
(第2部：その内なる声と意志の表象世界)

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## Keyword

- ① Anthony Burgess and the International Anthony Burgess Foundation
- ② Leonardo da Vinci, *viola organista*
- ③ Beethoven, Ninth Symphony
- ④ Wagner, Ring Cycle
- ⑤ Religious themes in literature, music, and criticism

## Abstract

In this article, the second of a multi-part series, we consider the musical influences of such composers as Beethoven, Wagner—and even Leonardo da Vinci—on Anthony Burgess, the twentieth-century British author who was himself an accomplished pianist and composer. We pay particular attention to Beethoven's Ninth Symphony and Wagner's Ring Cycle, along with archival materials offered to us at the International Anthony Burgess Foundation, in our efforts to illuminate the musical, religious, and moral interests of Anthony Burgess as a writer and a musician.

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## Introduction

This article is the second of a multi-part series that reports the findings of our research trip in early 2018 to the archives of the International Anthony Burgess Foundation in Manchester, England. In the first article, we considered the influences of the nineteenth-century Russian writer Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoevsky (1821-1881) —particularly his literary, philosophical, and musical interests—upon the thinking and writing of the twentieth-century British author, pianist, and composer, Anthony Burgess (John Anthony Burgess Wilson, 1917-1993). We explored these connections through the religious and moral themes and musical motifs found in both authors' works. To cite one example, had Burgess not read Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* (1866) and had he not absorbed its moral implications prior to revising *A Clockwork Orange* (1962) for publication, *Clockwork* might have lacked much of the philosophical tenor for which it is now recognized.

In this second article, however, we take a different approach and examine more closely Anthony Burgess's devotion to concert music, especially to composers ranging from the unexpected Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519) to the less surprising Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827) and Richard Wagner (1813-1883). We pay particular attention to Beethoven's Ninth Symphony (1824), based on the collected materials offered to us at the International Anthony Burgess Foundation. Altogether, we seek to illuminate the musical sources of Burgess's thinking and likely purposes in his composition of the novel *A Clockwork Orange* (1962) and some of his other less well-known works. One of the aims of this article is to clarify Burgess's interests in the Ninth Symphony, a major motif in *A Clockwork Orange*, and thereby understand why Burgess chose it to structure the novel. Burgess's own writings on Beethoven and the Ninth Symphony prove helpful in this regard.

As we discussed in our first article, Burgess was strongly influenced by Dostoevsky, and both authors shared a strong interest in Beethoven. In this second article, however, we pursue a separate and not entirely parallel track, in which Burgess acknowledges the influences on his work of Beethoven and several other classical composers. Indeed, the influence of classical music is widely found and felt throughout Burgess's corpus of novels, essays, and articles. To cite one telling example, Burgess held the music of Richard Wagner in high regard, which Dostoevsky most definitely did not. Burgess's interest in Wagner had to do not only with the music but also with the political and moral questions of "the will to power" which resonate in many Wagnerian operas and influenced them strongly, as found in the works of such nineteenth-century German philosophers as Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831), Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860), and Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900). Burgess's novel *The Worm and the Ring* (1961) mimicked the structure and content of Wagner's operatic "Ring Cycle." The connection between Burgess and Wagner, however, is not as widely known as that between Burgess and Beethoven in *A Clockwork Orange*, published in 1962, only a year after *The Worm and the Ring*. Nonetheless, both novels raise similar critical and moral issues through their connections to nineteenth-century orchestral music.

Burgess claims that composers' voices can be heard, much like a writer's, throughout their compositions. In the articles by Burgess that we examine here, Burgess explains in various ways that each composer has a distinctive voice that implies his artistic views and even his socio-political purposes: Leonardo, acting like a medical doctor, aimed to "cure" what he considered the "sickness" of music. Beethoven, an artistic and political rebel, struggled to make his compositions "speak" in the cause of human freedom. Wagner inserted his own unconventional views of artistic and political freedom into his operas. In the discussion that follows we consider the ways in which the echoing musical voices of Leonardo,

Beethoven, and Wagner can be heard in the literary and critical works of Anthony Burgess.

### 1. Burgess and Leonardo da Vinci

“Figuration of the Invisible” is the title of Burgess’s book review in *The Observer* of *Leonardo Da Vinci as a Musician* (1982) by Emanuel Winternitz. For this review, also found in the IABF archives, Burgess took as his title the translation of a phrase of Leonardo’s that explained how music transforms insubstantial, otherworldly spirits into measurable forms of audible sound. In this regard, Burgess lauded Leonardo for his protean talents: “WE [sic] need not be surprised to discover that Leonardo was a musician. After all, he was everything else” (Burgess, “Figuration” 44). Historically Leonardo is widely known for his paintings and his engineering designs, but before Winternitz’s book and Burgess’s review of it, as a musician Leonardo was “certainly not to be taken too seriously” (Burgess, “Figuration” 44).

Winternitz, however, explains why Leonardo’s music deserves attention: “Since we can no longer hear the music which Leonardo produced from the lyre, we are inclined to assume that it was less important than his drawings and pictures, but to his contemporaries it may have seemed the reverse” (xxv). Consequently, as Winternitz brings Leonardo’s neglected musical efforts to the foreground, it is worth considering why Leonardo used a horse skull for his lyre. Even Winternitz, however, could not explain the mystery of the lyre, and so there still remain questions about the horse skull and its significance.

Burgess notes Leonardo’s concern for the ephemeral quality of music in performance and Leonardo’s invention of the *viola organista* as a potential corrective:

It worries him, as it worried other pre-electronic musicians, that notes

decay as soon as they are sounded. He calls this the sickness of music — *la malattia della musica* — and, with the invention of the *viola organista*, tried to cure it. This looks very much like a hurdy-gurdy or *Drehleier*, with strings set in motion by a mechanical device, such as a friction wheel. A page of Leonardo's notebooks shows a rough sketch of the instrument, as [sic] also of the germs of a canalisation plan. There's the Renaissance mind for you. (Burgess, "Figuration" 44)

For such a Renaissance mind as Leonardo's, modern electronic methods of recording and storing music would certainly have been appealing, as they provide a cure for the sickness of music by allowing any recorded composition to be replayed indefinitely.

Burgess, however, clearly appreciated Leonardo's *viola organista* on its own mechanical, pre-electronic terms: "Most interesting, to me at least, is that area where *sono* and *strepido* confront each other. The percussion section of the modern orchestra is dedicated primarily to hitting things and producing noise, but it also deals in tuned sounds" (Burgess, "Figuration" 44). *Sono* (sound) and *strepido* (roar or noise) are generally considered as not working in parallel fashion, but in Leonardo's musical mind, both aspects of sound produce music by confronting one another. According to Winternitz, this confrontation is "Leonardo's choice of expressions for various kinds of sounds" (104).

Winternitz explains that these definitions of sound are based on the many ideas about acoustics found in Leonardo's notebooks:

[Leonardo] is not entirely consistent, but in general he distinguishes expressions for sounds with definite pitch and others without. To the first group belong *voce*, *sono*, and *tono*, which could approximately be translated by "voice," "sound," and "tone." To the second group belong words such as *strepido* and *romore*, translatable, respectively, as "roar,"

“blast,” or “boom,” and “din” or “noise.” (Winternitz 104)

Through such theorizing, Leonardo anticipated the development of music into modern times. Burgess agrees: “We are on safe ground too with Leonardo as a theorist of acoustics, and as an inventor of musical instruments designed to exemplify some of his theories” (Burgess, “Figuration” 44). One question arising from Leonardo’s musical theory and practice is, quite simply, how did he gain such musical knowledge and skill?

Although Burgess does not mention it in his review, Winternitz argues that Leonardo had learned musical theory from Pythagoras’s writings on music that included the harmony of the spheres, observing that Leonardo mentions Pythagoras by name in his notebooks. Leonardo’s image of a “circle” to represent the human voice may suggest in microcosm a human life in the full circle of an entire lifespan.

As a musician himself, Burgess was fascinated by Leonardo’s musical thinking, performance, and instruments. Burgess concludes of Leonardo, “He left us a fine phrase: *Musica, la figurazione delle cose invisibili*. Music, belonging to the world of unseen spirits, nevertheless had to be brought down to earth in the form of measurable breath and counted beats” (Burgess, “Figuration” 44). Leonardo’s idea that “music had to be brought down to earth” anticipates the thinking of much later musical composers, Beethoven in particular.

## 2. Burgess and Beethoven

In his essay on Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony, Burgess says of Beethoven that “all he had was inner voices” (Burgess, “The Ninth” 4). The “inner voices” refer, at least in part, to Beethoven’s tragic fate as a composer who, on account of medical conditions that were untreatable during his lifetime, went clinically and profoundly deaf before reaching middle age. If a human voice becomes trapped

in a vicious or pointless cycle and words cannot be understood, as is typically the case with profound deafness, the voice becomes enfeebled, the spoken words frequently incomprehensible. For the Greek philosopher and mathematician Pythagoras of Miletus (c. 570 – c. 495 BCE), the purpose of life was to escape such vicious cycles, including the biggest one of all: “For him, the goal of life is freedom from the cycle of reincarnation, which can be gained by adhering to a strict set of behavioral rules, and by contemplation, or what we could call objective scientific thinking” (“Number Is the Ruler of Forms and Ideas,” 27).

Facing the tragic and absurd fate of becoming a deaf composer, Beethoven reflected on his personal vicious cycle with an eye to a way of escape. An early solution that he contemplated was suicide, as he wrote in what is now known as the “Heiligenstadt Testament,” a letter addressed to his two brothers but never sent and discovered posthumously. It was written in 1802 when Beethoven, at the age of thirty-two, had just received a diagnosis of progressive and irreversible deafness. In the course of composing the “Heiligenstadt Testament,” Beethoven moved beyond suicidal despair and constructed a countervailing virtuous cycle in which he resolved to fulfill his artistic destiny, even if it meant that he “must live in exile” imposed by deafness (Kavanaugh 57). Acknowledging the conditions that Beethoven eventually came to accept, Burgess observes, “The composer does not need sound. But eventually his signs must be realised as sound” (Burgess, “The Ninth” 5). Two decades after writing the “Heiligenstadt Testament” in the shadow of advancing deafness, Beethoven composed his masterpiece, the Ninth Symphony (1824), in total deafness. Beethoven’s Ninth affirms that the goal of life is transcendent freedom, of a kind not entirely unlike that proposed by Pythagoras. (Beethoven is reported to have said on his deathbed, “I shall hear in heaven.”)

Many music critics have considered Beethoven’s struggles with his tragic fate in relation to his music. One of them, Patrick Kavanaugh, acknowledges

Beethoven's predicament as a deaf composer, saying that "his music is one of tremendous achievement in the face of unimaginable difficulty and tragedy" (Kavanaugh 61). Commenting on Beethoven's major compositions in the years immediately following the "Heiligenstadt Testament" (1802), Burgess contends that Beethoven had become polemical in a musical way: "The symphony [Eroica] is supposed to be entirely a musical argument" (Burgess, "The Ninth" 3).

Explaining what is meant by the "musical argument" of the Third (Eroica) Symphony (1804), Burgess says, "A private significance is made manifest: I am here, Beethoven, not the anonymous purveyor of public entertainment but a suffering individual. Sturm und Drang. Struggle and eventual triumph [sic.] Music is becoming autobiographical" (Burgess, "The Ninth" 4). By mentioning *Sturm und Drang* (German for "Storm and Stress"), Burgess suggests that Beethoven had identified himself with a major artistic movement of his day, defined by the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* as "the German literary movement of the late 18th century that exalted nature, feeling, and human individualism, and sought to overthrow the Enlightenment cult of Rationalism. Goethe and Schiller began their careers as prominent members of the movement" ("*Sturm und Drang*," par. 1).

In effect, *Sturm und Drang* was a German strain of European Romanticism which traced much of its origins to the Swiss philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778). As noted by the cultural historian Paul Johnson, Rousseau originated "the cult of the divine genius in the 1770s and 1780s" (Johnson 125). This was exactly the kind of divinely-inspired artist that Beethoven subsequently came to embody. Johnson continues:

Beethoven was a key figure in the birth of the modern because he first established and popularized the notion of the artist as universal genius, as a moral figure in his own right – indeed, as a kind of intermediary between God and Man. His friend Bettina von Arnim said he "treated



God as an equal.” He seems to have felt that, by virtue of his creative powers, he had some kind of direct contact with the Deity, and that he, as a great artist, was an anointed one, like the prophets in the Bible. He was the first to assert that the artist was the arbiter of public morals, that he spoke for “suffering humanity.” In 1821 Shelley, in his *Defence of Poetry*, called the poet “the unacknowledged legislator of the world,” but Beethoven was already making the claim twenty years before and, what is more, on behalf of the musician, then a lowly species. (Johnson 117)

Consequently, in embracing the Rousseauian view of the artist as genius along with the principles of *Sturm und Drang* and then interpreting them to suit himself, Beethoven asserted his own rights as a heroic artist, a sublimely and supremely gifted individual who, through the force of his own genius, personally mediated between heaven and earth. As such a mediator, Beethoven, in his social function might seem almost Christ-like, but perhaps more anthropologically speaking, his position was not unlike that of a shaman in many premodern societies. In his last three decades Beethoven's increasingly disheveled appearance and worsening manners in public and in private only increased his resemblance to a half-mad medium, possessed by “inner voices” from the spirit world for which, in his own person, he provided a bridge to the external world of daily life.

In asserting and embodying the position of artist as hero, however, Beethoven also positioned himself, as he is conventionally seen by modern music critics, as another kind of bridge figure, mediating between eighteenth-century Classical music (in which the composer is viewed as a craftsman and effectively as a servant to his patron) and nineteenth-century Romantic music (in which the composer is now an artist viewed as a heroic individual, shaping his own destiny by creating original works of art).

Thus in the Third (Eroica) Symphony (1804), Burgess contends, Beethoven made music “autobiographical.” Twenty years later, in Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony (1824), Burgess claims, “music is becoming political.” As Burgess explains, the “Ode to Joy was once an Ode to Freedom” (Burgess, “The Ninth” 4). Significantly for Burgess, a major theme of *A Clockwork Orange* is Augustinian “free will,” and Beethoven’s Ninth provides the musical motifs of Burgess’s novel.

Beethoven’s philosophical views were certainly influenced by the strong contemporary currents of Romanticism, but there were numerous other sources of his thinking. Among them was the Catholic faith in which he had been raised. As Kavanaugh notes: “Although Beethoven was born a Roman Catholic, he never practiced this faith. . . . Beethoven had a strong interest in Eastern literature, and he even copied three Hindu passages that he kept under glass on his desk” (Kavanaugh 60). And so, in addition to contemporary variations on Romanticism, Beethoven was influenced by the Roman Catholicism of his upbringing, though, in adulthood he maintained a highly ambivalent stance towards the Church and its practices. Furthermore, Beethoven showed interests in such Eastern perspectives as Hinduism and, like many other educated and well-read German-speakers, had knowledge of classical Greek mythology and evidently felt some sympathy for its underlying “pagan” spirit.

Burgess sets Beethoven’s artistic production in perspective in order to better understand the origins of the Ninth Symphony, and to this end he briefly traces the history of all of Beethoven’s symphonies: “Number 1 in 1800, 2 in 1803, 3 in 1804, 4 in 1806, 5 & 6 in 1808, 7 and 8 in 1812, the year of Napoleon’s retreat from Moscow. But then comes a gap of 11 years before the appearance of the Ninth [1824]” (Burgess, “The Ninth” 4). Until the Ninth was completed, Burgess says, “a lot of thought had gone into it, and a lot of history had flowed by”

(Burgess, "The Ninth" 4). In the year before the Ninth Symphony, Beethoven's orchestral mass, the *Missa Solemnis* (1823), premièred. As Burgess observes, Beethoven used "meanings expressible in words," to compose the *Missa Solemnis*: "Beethoven is setting the words of the Latin mass and is clearly searching for musical patterns which are metaphors of those words" (Burgess, AB Review, Wilfred Mellers, *Beethoven and the Voice of God*, Sheet No. 2, lines 58-62). Burgess explains Beethoven's search for "musical patterns which are metaphors of those words" in this way:

[Beethoven] is also, a good freemason like Mozart, making use of symbols associated with the rituals of the craft like the three opening "knocks" and sonorities (clarinets, bassoons, strings of major thirds) associated with freemasonry. There is even a masonic key E flat. It requires, of course, an extreme eclecticism to reconcile Catholicism with freemasonry, since the Church has traditionally condemned secret societies, but music can effect the reconciliation because its meanings are not explicit. (Burgess, AB Review, Mellers, Sheet 2, lines 62-79)

Burgess finds Mellers helpful in understanding Beethoven's metaphorical approach to music. For example, Burgess cites Mellers's interpretation of the *Missa Solemnis*:

'The "goals" of the Mass, totally, is G major, which for Beethoven as for Bach is the key of blessedness,' says Mellers. Again, 'B minor, for Beethoven as for Bach, is a key of suffering, whereby a synthesis between God's D major and Man's B flat major occurs and, "for the time being," finds haven in G major's benediction.' (Burgess, AB Review, Mellers, Sheet 2, lines 84-94)

Burgess does not always agree with Mellers but is generally supportive of his analysis: "Professor Mellers's purely musical analyses of some of the Beethoven

sonatas are perfection, and I recommend his book for those alone” (Burgess, AB Review, Mellers, Sheet 4, lines 210-214). Burgess surveys the views of several musical critics in order to devise a definition of “what music means.” Mellers provides knowledge and inspiration, though in the end Burgess has to admit, “We do not know what music ‘means’ but there is no harm in looking for tentative literary analogues if these assist appreciation of the sheer sounds” (Burgess, AB Review, Mellers, Sheet 4, lines 198-203). A search for the meaning of music became for Burgess a life-long quest, which can be seen in the ways that he used musical structures and motifs in his novels.

Burgess concluded that ultimately for Beethoven, “music is a mental argument” (Burgess, “The Ninth” 5). He explains: “To all composers, whether they are deaf or not, music is an inner experience related to the penciling or inking of signs on music paper” (Burgess, “The Ninth” 5). However, one might ask how it is possible to decode, as it were, Beethoven’s argument and inner experience from his sheet music. In *The Music of the Spheres* Jamie James affirms that “[Beethoven’s music] is great music— but why? Not because it has lovely melodies, nor because its stirring rhythms stimulate nervous excitement. It is great music because it pointed the way to a new direction” (James 13). In short, Beethoven looked back in musical time in order to move music into a new future.

James continues to interpret the nature and significance of Beethoven’s music: “It was in the music of this hero that Romantic anthropocentrism first glimmers forth. In Beethoven originates the paradigm of the artistic personality, difficult and deeply individualistic, as well as the first strong emphasis on the human scale in the content of the music” (James 196). “Romantic anthropocentrism” suggests that the individual “self” is important in the universe, and the “inner experience,” as Burgess noted earlier in this chapter, is expressed in music openly. This way of thinking of “self-image” suggests the radical individualism of such later American

romantic poets and thinkers as Ralph Waldo Emerson and Walt Whitman, who, like Beethoven, celebrated the self while, simultaneously and paradoxically, viewing the personal self as an illusion, as seen in the Eastern philosophical traditions to which they were intellectually drawn.

In balancing such contradictions, Burgess insists, “Beethoven’s imagination never failed him” (Burgess, “The Ninth” 5). Indeed, Burgess argues, “Beethoven’s imagination” grew more powerful and influential from *Fidelio* onward, suggesting that the opera *Fidelio* provides roots for the Ninth Symphony. Ten years before the début of the Ninth Symphony, Beethoven’s only opera *Fidelio* was first performed under his direction in 1814. As Burgess observes, “A lot of thought had gone into it, and a lot of history had flowed by” before the Ninth was born (Burgess, “The Ninth” 4). The evolution of Beethoven’s inner voice seems to flow through the opera *Fidelio*. Explaining such developments in Beethoven’s thinking and style, James observes:

Nowhere is that clearer than in the opera, which began to wield some weighty influence in the affairs of the world. The operas of the early Romantic period are usually motivated by the passions of illicit love and the revolutionary fervor of young heroes—the diametrical opposite of the medium’s support of established authority in its formative years. Occasionally the librettos of the early Romantic period permit the heroes to engage openly in the business of toppling corrupt monarchs, as in the so-called rescue operas, of which Beethoven’s *Fidelio* is the most famous example. (James 205)

This “rescue opera” *Fidelio* was Dostoevsky’s favorite (as mentioned in the first article of this series). Mozart was another of Dostoevsky’s favorites, and according to James, “it should be conceded that Mozart had already pointed in a revolutionary direction in his collaborations with Lorenzo da Ponte, particularly

*Le nozze di Figaro*, which openly sides with the servant class against a corrupt aristocracy” (James 206). Indeed, in *The Marriage of Figaro*, Mozart and da Ponte constructed a subversive musical comedy of manners based on a reversal of social expectations in which the servants are smarter than their masters but have to pretend otherwise. Following the lead of such predecessors, Wagner also pursued “a revolutionary direction” inspired largely by the audacious experimentation found in Beethoven’s Ninth, particularly its final choral movement. The Ninth seems to be the source of revolutionary thinking for both Wagner and Burgess, a matter to be considered in the next section.

### 3. Burgess and Wagner

Wagner clearly admired Beethoven. In addition, he seemed to imitate what Beethoven was doing with his music. In Burgess’s novel *On Mozart: A Paeon for Wolfgang*, the character Wagner confesses to the character Beethoven: “Without your glorious Ninth I could never have conceived of the Wagnerian music drama” (Burgess, *On Mozart* 15). Elsewhere, Burgess emphasizes Wagner’s dependence on Beethoven in his works and articles such as “Ring.” “True, Beethoven dragged the art of sound into regions of morality and philosophy in that Ninth Symphony which Wagner always regarded as his own starting-point” (Burgess, “Ring” 9). At times Burgess himself seems to imitate or echo themes of both Beethoven and Wagner in his writing, and so both of these composers might have been Burgess’s own “starting-point” as a writer and composer.

Burgess begins by identifying a modern European political subtext coursing beneath the Nordic mythology of Wagner’s Ring Cycle.

First, let us consider what the fairy tale is about. It looks, on the surface, like children’s stuff, but, if we look more deeply, we shall discover a very powerful political allegory. The Ring is about the corruption of

money and power and the need for revolutionary action in a world dominated by cynical tyranny. It is closer to Karl Marx and Bakunin than to a children's tale at twilight. (Burgess, "Ring" 1)

Burgess adopts a critical distance from the Ring Cycle by identifying the social and political undercurrents of Wagner's "music drama," a subtext that would have been more apparent to Wagner's audiences in his own day than it would be in subsequent centuries. Burgess's critical distance also takes the form of a joke about one of the Ring Cycle's titles "Twilight of the Gods," which suggests to Burgess "a cosy tea with muffins round the fire while the lights are low" (Burgess, "Ring" 1). Burgess's joke at Wagner's expense gives the children's fairy tale a very British ironic edge.

In the same ironic vein, Burgess undertakes a brief summary of the Ring's epic plot: "Three mermaids or naiads are swimming in the river Rhine. They have a huge piece of gold there" (Burgess, "Ring" 1). Up to this point, the story still sounds like a children's fairy tale. However, when the dwarf Alberich appears and steals the gold, he "sets up as a capitalist, making hundreds of other dwarfs, or *Niebelungen*." The whole atmosphere of the story changes to a "political allegory" considered above. The "ring," made out of the gold, "bestows supreme power," Burgess says. "So much, briefly, for the first of the four music dramas. Clearly, the gods are immortal, the giants stupid, the dwarf ugly and avaricious" (Burgess, "Ring" 2). Even as the world of the "Ring," reflects the turbulent times of mid-nineteenth-century Europe in which Wagner composed the Ring Cycle, the setting seems to move beyond Wagner's own contemporary events and becomes an extended metaphor for a fallen world of hopeless human reality. Ironically or not, there is hope in Burgess's observation that "the gods are immortal." In this notion, Beethoven and Wagner might have taken some comfort, i.e., finding some apparent certainty amidst the trials and suffering of human life.

Burgess interprets the tragic vision of the moral drama that drives the Ring Cycle: “We need another kind of being, . . . We need Siegfried” (Burgess, “Ring” 2). The archetypal hero Siegfried who appears in the third music drama, Burgess notes, “is a brave man but very unlucky.” Despite Siegfried’s superhuman efforts, he ultimately succumbs to misfortune and defeat. Burgess concludes almost bluntly: “The Superman does not triumph: he dies” (Burgess, “Ring” 5). In an effort to move beyond tragedy, however, in a separate opera outside the Ring Cycle, Wagner created his “next and last hero, Parsifal, a holy fool in search of the Holy Grail” (Burgess, “Ring” 5-6). The death of the Superman Siegfried and the quest of the next hero Parsifal are most certainly meant to recall Jesus’s death and resurrection.

Taken together, the Ring Cycle and the final opera *Parsifal* express Wagner’s iconoclastic purposes. Burgess says that Wagner “wanted a break with the past — not only socially but musically” (Burgess, “Ring” 6). Burgess explains the process of creating a new order as Wagner had originally planned:

The works he began to sketch in 1848 and 1849 combined the desire for a reformed society with the ideal of a new, freer kind of dramatic music. Thus, he proposed a work called *Jesus von Nazareth*, in which Christ should be a political revolutionary, and began to write the libretto for *Siegfrieds Tod* (Siegfried’s Death — the original *Götterdämmerung*) — an opera, or music drama, fit for the new age which seemed to be dawning. (Burgess, “Ring” 6)

Generally consistent with Burgess’s views, Kavanaugh regards Richard Wagner’s artistic and political visions and fortunes in the context of the momentous European revolutionary year of 1848: “As early as 1848, Wagner found himself compelled to address an insistent internal longing for transcendent meaning in life. He wrote, ‘I came to the primal fount of every modern rendering



of this situation — to the man Jesus of Nazareth” (Kavanaugh 106). Such profound soul-searching raises the question — what exactly happened to Wagner?

Burgess describes the major turning point in Wagner's life history: “In 1849 there was an uprising in Dresden, and Wagner joined in it. He did not fight at the barricades, but he expended inflammatory words which made the authorities issue a warrant for his arrest. Liszt helped him to escape to Switzerland. . . . [Later, Wagner] said that, had he not escaped, he would certainly have been tried and sentenced to death. In Zurich he had operatic visions” (Burgess, “Ring” 6).

Wagner's political attitudes and the perilous experiences he underwent as a consequence of his political views seem to be similar to Dostoevsky's, even though Dostoevsky did not care at all for Wagner's music dramas. Musical taste aside, both men underwent similar spiritual journeys, moving from political radicalism and towards the New Testament as the foundation of a new life. Wagner's narrow escape from likely arrest and possible execution, facilitated by his friend Franz Liszt, has remarkable parallels with young-man Dostoevsky's mock execution and its last-minute pardon, contrived by Tsarist authorities to make Dostoevsky, and others like him, grateful for the Tsar's ostensible mercy. Both men underwent searing near-death experiences that altered them for the rest of their lives. Similarly, in *Crime and Punishment*, Raskolnikov undergoes a transformation after confessing to his murders and thereby receives a promised commutation of his death sentence to a long prison term. The New Testament that sits by Raskolnikov's bedside during his long imprisonment is a symbol of his route to redemption that parallels the religious changes in the minds and lives of both Dostoevsky and Wagner brought about by their own near brushes with death.

Burgess interprets Wagner as both a product of his time and a setter of its standards by placing Wagner and his music dramas in the overlapping contexts of developments in German philosophy and European political history

during his lifetime: “Wagner liked to think that *The Ring* was an illustration of Schopenhauer’s philosophy, which found no virtue in striving and tried to seek in passive resignation relief from the machinations of the Universal Will” (Burgess, “Ring” 6). As Burgess continues, “It is his participation in the revolutionary politics of Europe which began with the Parisian turmoils of 1848 — the year of revolutions — that makes us see *The Ring* as a political allegory” (Burgess, “Ring” 6).

Burgess praises Wagner’s Ring Cycle by placing it, again, in context, this time in the history of art: “This cycle of drama, music, myth, and social allegory is one of the great human achievements” (Burgess, “Ring” 8). Carrying the praise and the context even further, into the future of human thought, Burgess explains that in Wagner’s musical universe, “the orchestra. . . lives its own complex life and illuminates the narrative at a level which anticipates the Freudian and Jungian unconscious” (Burgess, “Ring” 9).

The year before Burgess published *A Clockwork Orange*, he released the novel entitled *The Worm and the Ring* (1961). Even though this novel proved unsuccessful and remains generally neglected, it is worth asking why Burgess chose Wagner’s Ring Cycle to structure the novel. In response to the poor reception of *The Worm and the Ring*, Burgess produced another novel with similar themes but a very different approach to them, *A Clockwork Orange*. In a third article that extends our series, we intend to discuss these two novels by comparing the parallel themes and the public difficulties that Burgess endured because of them. Indeed, in the two “sister novels” of *A Clockwork Orange* and *The Worm and the Ring*, Burgess may have tried to explore in modern contexts “the great musical message of *The Ring*” (Burgess, “Ring” 9).

Burgess ends by assessing the persistent musical legacy of Wagner: “In the late twentieth century composers are still trying to free themselves from

the Wagnerian heritage” (Burgess, “Ring” 10). Many composers who followed Wagner have had ambivalent attitudes towards his persistent influence on music, including their own. Burgess might have been one of them himself. After all, what is Wagner’s music about? If Wagner’s mature religious views are given sufficient attention, the center of his music could be “the fulfillment of Christ’s pure teaching” that “looked forward to the world’s spiritual future” (Kavanaugh 106). This may be so, even as the Ring Cycle’s secular political allegory continues to be heard just beneath the surface of the music dramas. In Wagner, viewed from a spiritual point of view, there will be no more Superman or Hero. There will be only “an eternal one,” that is, the Christ of the Gospels.

### Conclusion

The novel *A Clockwork Orange* may be considered Burgess’s own political allegory, rooted in the traditions of Beethoven’s *Fidelio* and the Ninth Symphony as well as in Wagner’s Ring Cycle. Both Beethoven and Wagner eventually conclude that power should ultimately reside in God’s hands. In *A Clockwork Orange*, at least in the original ending of the British edition, Burgess does much the same. In a forthcoming third article, we intend to continue our investigations into such intersections between music, religion, and philosophy.

In the third article then, we will continue to examine the musical, dramatic, and symbolic implications of Beethoven and Wagner in relation to Burgess’s writing. We will consider them further in the contexts of Burgess’s thinking about politics, religion, and philosophy. We will take as our starting point the two Burgess novels already mentioned in this article, *A Clockwork Orange* (1962) and *The Worm and the Ring* (1961). But we will look further into the Burgess corpus and consider a third Burgess novel which contains many of the political and religious themes of the previous two. This third novel is *Man of Nazareth* (1979),

which together with the two aforementioned novels appropriately makes what Burgess calls “a holy number,” a trinity, as it were. In the thinking of Beethoven, Wagner, and Burgess, (another trinity), all political themes ultimately reside in a spiritual context.

There remains much more to discuss than space permits in the present article. Consequently, in our third article (which should complete our own trinity) we will pick up where this article leaves off. We will consider in greater detail the evolution of Wagner’s thinking and musical composition in light of such German philosophers as Schopenhauer and Nietzsche. Moreover, we may also explore further some potential connections between Leonardo and Pythagoras, and Leonardo and Dostoevsky. We will certainly examine more closely the ways in which Wagner was deeply affected by Schopenhauer’s pessimism and resignation regarding “the will to power,” as reflected in such later works as the Ring Cycle and *Parsifal*. Some influences, we will see, were not always positive, when, for example, the musician and his guiding philosopher grew in different directions. For Wagner, his deepening Christian faith ultimately led to a personal falling out with Nietzsche, whose increasing criticisms of the weaknesses of Christianity prompted his notorious assertion that “God is dead.” All such developments may prove worthy of further discussion.

Throughout our next article, we will continue to do what we have undertaken here: That is, we aim to persist in our efforts to understand the musical, religious, and philosophical sources of the twentieth-century writer and musician Anthony Burgess. To these ends, we intend to examine Burgess further in light of the musicians, religious figures, and philosophers whose influence is felt in his writing and who interested him enough to reflect upon them in his own wide-ranging body of published and unpublished work.

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