



THE
SCAFFOLDING OF
SOVEREIGNTY

Global and Aesthetic Perspectives
on the History of a Concept

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The Sovereignty of the New Man After Wagner

Artist and Hero, Symbolic History, and the Staging of Origins

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Hier gebar ein neues Geschlecht eine neue Auffassung der Welt, indem es
durch ein uraltes Erlebnis schritt.

—ERNST JÜNGER, *STURM*

IN *DER MYTHUS DES ZWANZIGSTEN JAHRHUNDERTS* (1930), Alfred Rosenberg famously offered racial hierarchy as a restorative myth whose ciphers were already present in society but which still awaited its proper articulation, an “awakening” that was threatened as much by the enemies of national socialism as by a persistent, intentional neglect that had long and successfully relegated it to sleep.¹ Rosenberg proposed the following logic for the messianic awakening of the Nazi New Man:

And while . . . we have not yet been gifted the authentic Genius who will reveal to us the Myth, who will educate us to the Type, this knowledge still does not relieve anyone thinking deeply of the duty of carrying out the preliminary work—work which has always been necessary—as a new vital feeling struggles for expression, generating spiritual tensions. Until the time has come for the Great Man who will teach and live what millions thus far could only stammer.²

The Genius that would emerge—the Genius that was emerging into consciousness across this self-referential formulation—would at once recalibrate the entire terrain of feeling and life, generate the new ideal or “Type,” and incarnate and exemplify this ideal. Rosenberg’s feint was to present his

prophecy as mere preliminary staging work to “reveal” the Genius or Great Man, and nevertheless as an urgent vital duty, without which the myth and the new man would be lost altogether.³ Still the Genius remained a gift to passively receive, one that had not yet been granted: carrying out the imperative “preliminary work” involved negotiating spiritual tensions, speaking in stammer, prophesying, and shaping, so as to make possible the moment of fusion in which the labored uncovering of the myth would coincide with the gift of the Genius and the consciousness transformed by it.⁴

Rosenberg’s description of the present as a time of spiritual tension, work, and stammer—a precipice between a supposed redemption and an oblivion of Germany—expresses well one trend in the Nazi understanding of sovereignty as involving a future-oriented “awakening,” a staged rebirth in which the unity and ascent to hegemony of a primordial German *Volk* would be guaranteed in the same gesture as it guaranteed the awakening. The New Man was to be willed into being through mytho-religious and aesthetic work, heralding the awakening he represented. As the Hero of the new era, the New Man was also to be above all not merely a political but a national-aesthetic creation.

This essay examines the interweaving of two problems at the juncture of aesthetics and radical politics in modern European history. The first of these is a conviction, occasional after 1848 but prevalent after 1900, at least among antibourgeois intellectuals, that modern sovereignty paled by comparison to both divine-right kingship and terroristic revolution.⁵ Opponents of liberalism and parliamentarism who did not pine for monarchy routinely posited that the regimes controlling the major continental European states and empires were conceptually and aesthetically shallow operations that did not reach down to the true stratum of political or symbolic activity, did not go beyond a management of power, did not represent sources of political truth that could compete with revolutionary regeneration or with a belonging to a racial, national, or human community.⁶ Nationalist and racial thought postulated that the pure springs of society and sovereignty were to be discovered at the fount of a longer, truer, deeper history—one whose symbolic unity guaranteed national unity at a frequently evolutionary, unconscious social level.⁷ Revolutionary and anarchist activity often concurred that authenticity and political aura lay beyond, or more precisely *beneath*, these regimes, in their symbolic as well as political overturning. A return to the natural, to one’s own, like an advance toward a truly new regime, supposedly involved a

turn to a hidden symbolic truth, often a return to the beginning of history that could supposedly restore this hidden truth and harmony to society, political power, and aesthetics.

The second problem is the emergence of figures of the New Man as alternative, ostensibly more profound, forms of sovereignty. After 1918, the new regimes of the Soviet Union, fascist Italy, and Nazi Germany famously pursued projects of social and human regeneration. Promises of a New Man were also ubiquitous across the spectrum of political and avant-garde movements. Each assiduously staged its New Man as the embodiment of such promises, as the hoped-for sovereign of an anticipated new era disburdened of the social, economic, and political failures of the bourgeois present. Figures that were posited for the New Man were often complex, compound, and contradictory even within individual movements.⁸ Targeting the bourgeois man and the new woman, such figures included the political leader or hegemon (a tradition exemplified in and by Mussolini)⁹; bearers of "the will" now raised to superhuman status (e.g., Stakhanovites or the SS); and the new, scientifically designed, aesthetically and eugenically articulated norms for a new man, ranging from cyborgs (in dada or *Metropolis*) to sublime beings now re-create human reality itself.

This essay threads these problems together by arguing that Wagner's quasi-Romantic fiction of a coexistence between an artist/creator and the hero/leader—an entwining through which each acquired a specific kind of sovereignty—was redeployed after World War I, buttressed by a conceptually recast understanding of history's effects on human nature. For this vision of human history, events and political circumstances formed merely a top stratum, underwritten by a symbolically dense, "truer," and more meaningful substratum (or series of substrata) that occasionally emerged at the surface. Sovereignty had disappeared from the political landscape because merely political power failed to affect the depths where human nature was properly plastic. The New Man was exciting partly as a response to this failure: in the promise that he would effect a transformation of human nature, the New Man was to reach beneath society and history, recuperate the lost beginning (or beginnings), admit the failures of history and the contemporary. "He" would be at once *new* and *primal*, extra-historical at both ends, untainted; the future-oriented scheme for building a new life was both one of raising, into everyday life, the power and authenticity of the veiled, unknown, symbolic history and one of restoring a primal state unspoiled by

history and its perversions.¹⁰ Moreover, identifying this forthcoming transformation granted power to authors, artists, or politicians reading their "authentic" history and announcing, staging, and managing the New Man. Carrying out this "preliminary work," the artist of the New World and supposedly true interpreter of history would become one who *shares* and *co-constructs* sovereignty with the New Man.

After discussing *Siegfried*, I turn to consider the motif of a "second" or "secret" history in the human sciences, then to the persistence of this motif in philosophy, and finally to scientific endeavors toward such a transformation. Fundamentally locked into one another, in a manner that affected both the aesthetic figuration of the new man and the political logics of sovereignty, artist-creator-scientists molded history and its limits for the heroes and leaders who would embody its transformation.

The Prototype: Siegfried

When Siegfried enters, early in act 1 of Wagner's *Siegfried*, guiding his pet bear (and his relationship to nature), the questions of his kinship, destiny, and status as hero-in-the-making are foremost on his mind and, for different reasons, on that of the audience. He knows that Mime, who has raised him and who declares, "Ich bin dein Vater und Mutter zugleich," cannot be either. The two of them lack all physical resemblance as opposed to the animals Siegfried has observed in the forest during his journeys and which are, he snarls, "teurer als Du, Baum und Vogel, die Fische im Bach, lieber mach ich sie leiden als dich."¹¹ Mime's claim to parentage must be "unnatural." The Siegfried leitmotif is played for the first time in the opera as Siegfried recounts how, during one of these adventures, he first saw his own image in the river water.¹² Having been played at the end of *Die Walküre* in reference to who might cross the ring of fire and awaken Brünhilde, the motif immediately identifies Siegfried as this musically and formally defined hero,¹³ the one who will break Wotan's spear, end the punishment of Brünhilde, and act with the *free will* that his father, Siegmund, lacked.

A lot depends on this scene. First, the staging of the narcissistic moment bridges musical identity (the Siegfried leitmotif) and narrative self-recognition. For the rest of this act, as for act 2, Siegfried remains identifiable by his name and ever-expanding leitmotif, but his genealogy is as unknown

to him as he is unknown to himself.¹⁴ Wagner not only casts him through the Romantic theme of a wolf-child (in fact, a wolf-child twice over, a *Wälungsproß* rather than a *Wälung*)¹⁵ but also systematically deprives him of the links to others, the social instincts (notably fear), and the intellect ("ach bist du dumml!")¹⁶ that would allow him to engage meaningfully with his own background. Siegfried shifts from creature of myth to formal construct of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*—the one capable of true love in act 3, the one who, in breaking Wotan's spear early in act 3, breaks the Law—all laws, all relationships, all contracts, all the treaties that preserve the order of the universe—the one who destroys, à la Feuerbach, the rule of the gods for that of men and forces an anarchy in which order is promised only by the law of his sword.

Second, Wagner indicates here that Siegfried is attuned to a different set of signs than Mime, in that he is symbolically, musically at one with the course of the Ring itself.¹⁷ The truth that sponsors him is provided not by cultural attachments, language, intelligence, sociality, but by the music as a mirror of his presence and a bearer of symbolism: hidden, invisible to Mime, but for us and for Siegfried all the truer, the music signifies symbolically, bears "destiny," and is wielded by Siegfried as power. Mime persists in relying on language, which both characters have reduced to malicious chatter; Siegfried has become a creature of musical symbolism: the horn, the forest bird, the weaponlike quality of his speaking his name, the ever-expanding leitmotif.

Third, as is well known, Wagner establishes a relationship of culture to nature; it is this relationship that, together with Siegfried's self-recognition and identification with musical form, casts the originality of his character. Commentators have routinely noted the scene as a restoration of nature against (Jewish) culture, a claim that hinges on the failure of Mime's ("cultural") upbringing of Siegfried to substitute for proper paternity.¹⁸ Yet act 1 asserts little more than that all kinship must be explicitly rejected for a new relationship to nature to be instilled; Siegfried shows but a moment of sadness over his parents and immediately overrides the question of kinship for the reforging of the broken sword Nothung, which he demands of Mime, the "greatest of technicians" (*der weiseste Schmied*). Upon Mime's failure, he welds it himself, "naturally" or "instinctively." It is hardly accidental that in forging the weapon that will win him the Ring, Siegfried emerges as someone self-created, in charge of his own will and destiny.¹⁹ Rather than follow the

path laid out for him by Mime, Siegfried takes up this same path of his own; only through Siegfried's *own* subjugation of technique, tradition, and art to instinct and will do kinship and destiny come to be refracted into heroism. What wins here is not "nature" but rather an intimate absorption of nature that begins as much from destiny as from scratch, and that parallels the formal musical construction of the hero.

As Peter Caldwell elucidates, using Feuerbach, "the new myth was to do something, such as point to a new world. The modern mythmaker was interested in creation, not stabilization."²⁰ But how was this creation, this aestheticized purity, to work? Discussing his decision to work on Siegfried rather than Friedrich II, Wagner explained the role of myth as follows:

[Germany], in its actual reality, could nowise satisfy my longing; thus I felt that a deeper instinct lay behind my impulse. . . . As though to get down to its root, I sank myself into the primal element at home, that meets us in the legends of a past which attracts us the more warmly as the present repels us with its hostile chill. To all our wishes and warm impulses, which in truth transport us to the Future, we seek to give a physical token by means of pictures from the Past, and thus to win for them a form the modern Present never can provide. . . . My studies thus bore me, through the legends of the Middle Ages, right down to their foundation in the old Germanic *mythos*; one swathing after another, which the later legendary lore had bound around it, I was able to unloose, and thus at last to gaze upon it in its chastest beauty. What here I saw, was no longer the figure of conventional history, whose garment claims our interest more than does the actual shape inside; but the real naked man, in whom I might spy each throbbing of his pulses, each stir within his mighty muscles, in uncramped, freest motion: the type of the true human being.²¹

In treating "the origin" as the most primal past through which to delve, in order to then dislocate and undermine the present time and recover an unwrapped Siegfried, Wagner identifies both a "conventional history" that has defined the modern German present and a moment that exceeds, transcends this history.²² This text follows two movements: the second is Wagner's undressing of history and legend to get to the naked myth at its start—which he identifies with the naked, true human being.²³ Myth carries symbolic truth better than mere history. Wagner's use of the

Germanic *Nibelungenlied* hinges on this supposedly newly recovered northern Germanic identity being grounded in prehistory—not so much a racial unit but an Indo-European purity suspended between nature and history, whose racial and cultural coherence and authenticity had fallen to oblivion.²⁴

The first movement, however, brackets instead this gesture of returning to the origin by crafting Wagner's aim as future-oriented: to mediate the presently formless "wishes and warm impulses" so that these might rightly and unproblematically "transport us to the Future." Wagner would, in other words, use the Siegfried myth to both criticize mid-nineteenth-century culture and promise an original man instated now as a new man. "Although the splendid type of Siegfried had long attracted me, it first enthralled my every thought when I had come to see it in its purest human shape, set free from every later wrappage."²⁵ The structural transformation of an old, conventional myth into a new aesthetic compound would make it possible for the purity of this "true human being" to restructure the present, propelling "wishes and warm impulses" toward an improved, more coherent future. The pure moment of anthropogenesis figured in Siegfried's solitary self-recognition at river's edge, now allowed Wagner to pinpoint and reconstruct the background out of which the aesthetic and mythical sovereignty of the new could emerge—a supposedly prehistoric background that could be rendered present with as much ease as it could be telescoped back to a time formally and historically exterior to the history that has veiled it.

Wagner's aesthetic-political engagement during the Schopenhauer-fuelled years around German Unification when he completed *Siegfried* is closely tied to this metahistory. Amid the reconsiderations of legitimacy and sovereignty that 1848 and its aftermath only rendered more urgent, Wagner's abandonment of familial and political forms of authority helped construct a dual-sovereignty fiction grounded on the work of art.²⁶ The recuperation of the prehistorical moment and its projection into a new sovereign hero, alongside the recasting of the artist as "co-sovereign" with this hero, translated into Wagner's aesthetics a way of addressing the frustrations with parliamentary and constitutional projects. The impossibility of trusting a Rousseauian hope for a renewal of the social contract combined here with a suspicion of the Feuerbachian progress toward a materialist apotheosis of Man that he had espoused before "A Communication to My Friends." Instead of tolerating traditional monarchy, paternal authority, parliamentarism, or

socialism, Wagner framed an expanded, obverse political domain. Taking advantage of the myth of Germania—the myth, dating at least to Gibbon, of a “new” race having been born to Rome’s north and having led to its destruction—Wagner now identified the *Volk* with this Germanic “origin” while re-positing it as a domain that is aesthetic and symbolic first, and as a result more deeply, more naturally, political.²⁷

Choosing Schopenhauer’s Will over Feuerbach’s Man, Wagner also imported motifs shared at the overlap between naturalism and nationalism, some of them notably expressed in Jules Michelet’s *Le peuple* (1846), whose Romanticism and egalitarianism found the Ur-figure in the unsocialized peasant genius.²⁸ Michelet had relied on the Genius combining its natural/instinctual and critical faculties to become the redeemer who would restore *le peuple*. Wagner, treating aesthetics as the foundational technology of regeneration, used musical identification and the quasi-natural compound that Siegfried had now become to metonymically identify him with the artwork itself and present him as its liberating hero.²⁹

That he intended this aesthetic to be political—indeed revolutionary—was crucial. Decrying, in “Art and Revolution” (1849), “many an honest friend of Art and many an upright friend of men” who followed “socialistic doctrines,” Wagner specifically allied Art with Revolution. To destroy through Revolution the aesthetico-political regime defined by unfreedom and commerce was to re-create in the present the framework uniting community, nation, and art last found in Greek tragedy.³⁰ Pace Koselleck’s account of revolution, it remained for Wagner a circular, traditional movement essential for this reconstruction: “Only the great Revolution of Mankind, whose beginnings shattered Greek tragedy, can win for us this Art-work.”³¹ Both in the “circular,” recuperative sense and in the future-oriented destruction of established forms, Wagner insisted that “with us, true Art is revolutionary.” To call this an aestheticization of politics is altogether insufficient, for what he demanded, especially in “The Art-Work of the Future” (1849) was the artist’s participation in a revolutionary movement that was *aesthetic* first and that would result in his particular coextensiveness of the Artist, Artwork, and *Volk*.³² It is through this coextensiveness that the figures of Artist and Hero emerge.

In his expansion or inversion of the political, Wagner proposed a dual sovereignty around the *Volk*’s rebirth in the artwork: the sovereignty of the Artist who *is*, who *embodies* the *Volk* and gives it the artwork that mirrors it,

and that of the Hero who *is*, who *embodies* the *Volk* in that he bears its need through true political will and ethical purpose. Neither can exist without *Volk* and Artwork, neither can be true asymptotically from its truth. Only thanks to the Artwork can they perfectly express and restage the *Volk*, acquiring as a result a sort of divine right over it. Just like the *Volk* itself, the Artist and the Artwork emerge from a true *want* or *need* [*Noth*—recall the name of Siegfried's sword], by contrast with the "enemies of the *Volk*" who "feel no want" and with the "fashion" and commerce which Wagner associated with the false, "egotistic," contemporary artist. The feeling of collective want ("eine gemeinschaftliche Noth") turned the *Volk* into the ground of the Artist's existence and the force that is propelled by his Artwork.³³

A crucial second move involves the theorization of the artist's own place. The artist acquires his status as conduit of the vitality of the *Volk* into the artwork first as one of the set of artists that constitute the *Volk*'s aesthetic core.³⁴ Once he creates with and for it, he acquires a second, perfected identity with the *Volk*:

Who, then, will be the *Artist of the Future*? The poet? The performer? The musician? The plastician?—Let us say it in one word: the *Volk*. *That selfsame Volk to whom we owe the only genuine Art-work, still living even in our modern memory, however much distorted by our restorations; to whom alone we owe all Art itself.*³⁵

The Artist not only *expresses* the *Volk*, compressing it into the Artwork, but is tasked specifically with reuniting the *Volk* with itself, ironing out its folds, healing the fissures within it, and ensuring the supremacy of its *need*. This is clearest at the end of *Opera and Drama* (1851): rejecting "the State" and "the Philistine" that dominate current life, Wagner refuses to give up:

We shall not win hope and nerve until we bend our ear to the heartbeat of history, and catch the sound of that sempiternal vein of living waters which, however buried under the waste-heap of historic civilization, yet pulses on in all its pristine freshness. . . . Where the statesman despairs, the politician drops his hands, the socialist plagues himself with fruitless systems, and even the philosopher can only interpret, but not announce. . . . there it is that the *Artist*, with his clear eye, can see shapes [*Gestalten*] that reveal themselves only to a longing that demands the only truth—*Man*. The Artist has the power of seeing beforehand a yet unshapen world.³⁶

Again, it is not a matter of the Artist's Will alone but of his conducting the *Volk*, and even nature itself, into the future.³⁷

Wagner's theory of representation hinges on this point: the Artwork mirrors the *Volk*, constituting its self-expression and by the same token its self-recognition; the Artist serves as a mere conduit, but insofar as he also makes this self-identification and self-revelation possible, he is also exercising his own Will, which the *Volk* otherwise lacks. This Artist's Will consists precisely in its (asymptotic) self-erasure in the conduction of *Volk* into Artwork; it is heroic insofar as it constitutes the spark that restores this long-destroyed set of relations or provides the seed that "fecundates" and is by the same token exhausted in the Artwork as this mirroring and guiding *Zustand* of the *Volk*.

Hence the dual sovereignty model: the Artist is sovereign over the *Volk* insofar as he prefigures "a yet unshapen world" and dictates the superior, truer life he models on the Hero he draws out of the *Volk*. (In this regard, a lot could be said about *Lohengrin* and *Parsifal*, which complicate the picture by reinserting Christianity, and also about *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, which is far more dominated by the *Volk* than *Siegfried*.) Wagner is, writes Adorno, "'neither king nor emperor,' but one of the mass of citizens; yet he enjoys unlimited symbolic power over them."³⁸ By his will he shapes the supposedly formless human being into what the *Volk* already is, rendering the *Volk* dynamic and futural. As for his hero, the same mirroring effect is essential: when Siegfried sees himself as pure and unburdened by kinship and society, Wagner presents the self-recognition that the artwork is supposed to constitute. This is the looking glass for the *Volk* to become, so to speak, what it *already* is, and for the Artwork to become a guide of the *Volk*. Thanks to the temporal gesture of jumping to the beginning of history and thereby restoring a natural purity and a future, the *Volk* can now become an authentic, nonhistorical, true community. Siegfried and his Germania stand beyond history, half-liberated from it, "before" its beginning, and now anew in the restored futural present. Wagner stages the need for Need—which Siegfried gradually articulates as his—each figure supposedly forging the future. The Artist, who can do more than statesmen, politicians, and philosophers, reconstructs past and future, standing in control over the *Volk* while belonging to this same *Volk* through the Hero he raises from it. In the artist and the hero, the sovereign rises in two bodies once again.

A "Secret" History

When Wagner wrote of peeling history layer by layer, he meant layers of myth transformed by culture over time, and he inserted himself into several genealogies of the relation between history and human nature. As the nineteenth century ground on, pursuits of a secret, deeper, "truer" history through a symbolic universe awaiting its awakening and promising a superior understanding of human nature became more and more frequent. The figure of purity that had to be unveiled standing at the precipice of history with one foot outside and one in became a crucial motif. Herder and Hegel—especially the latter, with his famous preference for "philosophic" rather than "original" or "reflective" history—had already offered the quasi-Romantic basis for a history of meaning underlying the history of actions and events and requiring not merely narration and explanation but mining and management.³⁹ The complication of the human sciences in the later nineteenth century would multiply, thicken, and superimpose these layers of history to the point of giving the impression that history now carried geological strata, each of which had their own dynamics, logics, and force. Racial science and the theory of degeneration are only the best-known and most politically obvious versions of an inquiry where true meaning was supposed to reside deep beneath the surface of events. In dividing between groups, racial science called for the unitary depths of each of them to be sought out. Degeneration postulated new golden ages easily identifiable with a distant past.⁴⁰ Developments in several disciplines bound laws of human development with the history of either the species as a whole or particular groups within it. The anthropology of "primitive" societies established, from Tylor and later Frazer in Britain, Virchow in Germany, and Broca and later Durkheim in France, a series of fundamental metahistorical claims concerning the sources of meaningfulness (kinship systems, shared myths, skull morphology, etc.) underlying the evolution of complex societies out of more primitive ones.⁴¹ "Animism," typically used to describe belief systems deemed too elementary to be categorized among religions, also privileged them by identifying an intimacy with nature proper to those far behind in the socio-historical development of civilization. Historical linguistics, intimately bound since Friedrich Schlegel with the myth of an Indo-European (and at times specifically Aryan) provenance of European culture itself, adopted this commitment to historical derivation at a "fundamental," invisible level,

which for it was language and mythology.⁴² Indo-European linguo-mythology became an organizational principle that could be said to specifically underlie European society and history. (This continued all the way to the 1930s and beyond, when Georges Dumézil dodged Nicolai Trubetzkoi's criticisms of his scholarly rigor in linguistics partly by instrumentalizing language to ground Indo-European provenance on a mostly mythological and literary rhizome; the permutations and combinations of Indo-European semantics and its depths beneath European history were as complex as they were minutely differentiated.) *Völkerpsychologie*, beginning in the 1850s with Lazarus and Steinthal, and later continued by Wilhelm Wundt, eschewed biology to establish the laws of human societies on the basis of language and shared psychological elements that it defined at a minute, gestural, even psychophysical level. In his later work Wundt attempted to reconstruct this gestural and psychological basis in *Völkerpsychologie* as a proto-history.⁴³ Phylogenetic thought from Ernst Haeckel to World War II also contributed to the sense of the human body as subject to historical mutation—that is, as having acquired or developed specific characteristics over certain periods of time, characteristics that could nevertheless be quickly overturned (figure 17.1).⁴⁴

With such pursuits, the sciences of man became sciences ostensibly researching the slightest ciphers of “true” human and historical meaning, and thus claimed the mantle of being the historically and structurally most fundamental, most primal ones. Further strategies and fictions of key epistemological significance were born and played out of this development. The fiction of “organic memory”—the notion that memory, including social memory, is inherited—provided space for an evolutionary model that bridged culture and not merely biology.⁴⁵ The epistemological gesture Thomas Henry Huxley identified in 1880 as “retrospective prophesy” allowed the reconstruction of codes in the deep past to look useful for the present, or even to appear true.⁴⁶ The standing attitude that “the savage” lay hidden just beneath the veneer of civilization—often identified with Freud but already quite widely held around 1900 and even more so in World War I—contrasted the limits of culture and the presumed force of natural laws beneath.⁴⁷

Along these parallel, intertwined lines of inquiry—anthropology, phylogenetic thought, psychology, and linguistic derivation—the same historicity appears: the past extends back to “the origin,” which is also the origin of the human; later developments constitute either rearrangements that cover over the origin (usually productively, in that they grow civilization)

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PL. 1



E. Haeckel del.

FIGURE 17.1 Photogravure frontispiece to Ernst Haeckel's *The Evolution of Man* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1905), with an androgynous classical Greek as the ideal point of an imagined history of youth

or divergences from its ostensibly true purpose. Just as geological discoveries undermined the chronology of religious history, projecting “worlds before Adam,” so a pure, basic humanity could be projected into the distant past.⁴⁸ Tiers that could now be known subtended the prosaic history of events, people(s), states, wars, or eminent persons. These tiers were not merely theologies or “philosophic history” but sites of anthropogenesis and temporal continuity across epistemic-symbolic knowledge and value. Across the different sciences, a shared image was regularly drawn: the grain of “true” history lay beneath the scope of everyday affairs, and they generated particular scientific aesthetics. Like the musical symbolism that only Siegfried and the initiated audience could hear, the density of history was simply inaudible to others. Primal processes ought to be studied, especially because modernity appeared to involve a flattening, a homogenization (in Carl Schmitt’s phrase, a “neutralization”) of complexity, passion, depth, and conflict.⁴⁹ In the process, philosophical and Romantic history became saturated with what the discourses on heredity, culture, and symbolism located at its birth. In matters of sovereignty, true novelty and transformation required a movement that could reach *beneath* the scope and density of normal human affairs and that allowed for a mining of the depths of human nature across this history, which also meant a reach beyond this history—to a moment quite like that of *Siegfried’s* Germania.

New, Twentieth-Century Sovereigns

In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche cast Wagner as the returning hero of “archaic” (preclassical) tragedy and the hope for aesthetico-political regeneration, playing out the very structure Wagner had invented on a new terrain (later, he in turn invented the Overman partly to outdo and deform this structure). By 1900 different designers of this metahistory doubled as creators of the future: out of the deep strata of the past, authors from Theodor Herzl in his Zionist *Altneuland* to Jack London in *Before Adam* could dredge and meaningfully deploy sovereign heroes and forces that were at once atavistic and new.⁵⁰ Wagner’s strategy had purified and recuperated the myth so it would commandeer a metahistorical narrative of Germany and impose the mirror-system of Artist-Volk-Hero. Now, the announcement of a hero or new sovereign could deploy an alternative, deeper, or thicker history, which

in turn located and justified the novelty of the hero/sovereign at the very beginning, at once in and out of the historical realm.

This was indeed common currency among theories of sovereignty and authority that cited a deeper history. Gustave Le Bon, in his “psychological” theory of the crowd, identified this with the “last sovereign force”; he proposed that to be successful, the leader, who is hypnotized together with the crowd he guides, *must* orate for that crowd images from its ancient racial past.⁵¹ Imaginary prehistory and futural leadership combined in political and sociological thought. By 1918, as Boris Groys and especially Eric Michaud have shown, artists from Kazimir Malevich to Hitler’s “government of artists” asserted themselves, their opposition to prosaic history, and their heroic new world all at once.⁵² The motif appears in the supposed primitiveness of Weber’s “charisma” and his sociohistorical accounts,⁵³ but it is nothing short of a structure in Carl Schmitt’s work, especially *Political Theology* (1922). By slashing the Gordian knot of sovereignty in its famous opening sentence—“Sovereign is he who decides on the exception”—Schmitt announced a new sovereign who, to exceed and contain the neutralizing drive of liberalism, to refashion norms, *must* rely on the hidden (and historically longer) undercurrents of (Catholic) political theology.⁵⁴ This announcement and alternative history served as an Archimedian standpoint for Schmitt to extricate both *himself* and *his sovereign* from liberal legal thought, to found his own legitimacy as interpreter of sovereignty while proposing sovereignty as needing recovery from beneath the layer of liberal neutralization designed to cover it. The same dual gesture opened Schmitt’s critical endorsement of Sorel’s theory of myth in *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy* and buttressed his later eminence as “crown jurist” and arbiter of National Socialism.⁵⁵ The Russian/French philosopher Alexandre Kojève similarly constructed his early theory of authority by way of a Hegelian history of modernity culminating in the “end of history” that serves as a stage for only two figures to maintain ontological superiority over the rest: the sovereign God-Man who ends the Master-Slave dialectic and history itself (i.e., Napoleon or Stalin) and the interpreting Sage (Hegel and Kojève) who writes and guides that sovereign.⁵⁶ The anthropogenetic moment of the struggle for recognition that founds man and history is mirrored in the end-historical sovereign’s creation of a world of equal citizens. Finally, it is quite possible to read Martin Heidegger’s *Being and Time* with Heidegger in Wagner’s role and authentic *Dasein* in Siegfried’s. An emphasis on Heidegger’s claim of the authenticity

of *being-toward-death* as a rise above the inauthenticity of social existence can suggest that being itself, thanks to the restoration to prominence Heidegger proposes for it, serves him as the “deeper” stratum for asserting both *his* and *the authentic Dasein’s* sovereignties over *das Man*.⁵⁷ *Being and Time* further establishes the history of being by announcing its forgetting since Plato, a forgetting of both the question of being and the history of being that Heidegger proposes to overcome by aligning the awakening of the question with the liberation of properly ontological history. In the newly recovered transparency of the ontological question, in the announcement of a figure of being-toward-death that can exceed the profane and inauthentic life of the present, Heidegger identifies the kind of authority that he would deploy as a logical political end of his ontology in his 1933–1934 attempt to guide the German Spirit and the National Socialist revolution.⁵⁸ Nor was the left immune to this language of a rise from the symbolic darkness of everyday history. Ernst Bloch directed dialectics (already an approach to sources of meaning) toward a specifically musical version of this “rise” in *The Spirit of Utopia*, citing Wagner and post-Beethovenian Germany, while Walter Benjamin struggled with awakenings—of memory, or elsewhere, à la Proust, from the dream—versus still other awakenings he engaged in relation to the writings of Klages and Jung.⁵⁹

Scientific Engagements

The substrata of history proved as essential to scientists committed to the diagnosis of physical as well as social ills, scientists who took to the very same engagement with sovereignty in their proposals for scientific as social renewal. If philosophers made less of the biological and psychological bases for such an alternative history, scientific figures from different parts of the political spectrum found these bases definitive. Elements of the discourse on an alternative, deeper history were common to scientific writings from ethnography through archaeology, biology, and experimental psychology. I will glance at each in that order. Pursuing enduring sources of meaning, anthropologists (including interdisciplinary ones, from W. H. R. Rivers to Émile Durkheim) made a mixed use of recapitulation, organic and social memory, and *Völkerpsychologie* to suggest continuities beneath mere empiricism.⁶⁰ “Primitive communism” was a matter of considerable public fascination,

adopted even by Rivers during his campaign with the Labour Party for a seat in the British Parliament.⁶¹ By 1940, as Peter Mandler has shown, one of the standard-bearers of the field, Margaret Mead (during the war an American cultural ambassador to Britain), was mobilizing a concept of “national character”—as much a broadly shared rationale for deeper sources of meaning as an ethnographic and Boasian sociocultural construct indebted to Wundt’s ethnopsychology. Prioritizing psychology as the basis for a “soft” social engineering, Mead employed her authority as participant-observer to show that it was possible “to change human nature” because “deep-seated cultural traits” were not biological but cultural in origin.⁶² Mead was far from alone: while denouncing racial biology as pseudoscience, biologist Julian Huxley and anthropologist Alfred C. Haddon sought in *We Europeans* to describe the descent and difference of ethnic groups in Europe, relying on an ethnolinguistic model of cultural derivation.⁶³ Their rhetoric, which at times approximates Mead’s on character, may have avoided proposing a new man, but it presented the often-deep cultural, ethnic, and linguistic mosaic of Europe as one that underwrote its history and present, and it offered social policy proposals ranging from opposition to miscegenation to the development of independent cultural spheres as a way out of Europe’s (and racism’s) current situation.⁶⁴ Cathy Gere has similarly shown such a return to the cusp of history in her studies of archaeologists Heinrich Schliemann and Arthur Evans, with Schliemann identifying the material basis for Greek epic and myth and Evans using and “rebuilding” Knossos in a modernist confection of a pacifist matriarchal and sexual prelapsarian utopia.⁶⁵ Their Mycenae and Knossos would be mobilized, not least by archaeologists and anthropologists, as sites of purity that offered Europeans a harmonious alternative future. Indo-European mythology received a major boon in the work of Georges Dumézil, who has been famously accused of imposing a fascist aesthetic onto his tripartite thesis on the structure of proto-Indo-European society and then obversely treating the last five thousand years as permutations of that structure.⁶⁶ Even if Mead and Evans may appear banal by comparison, their self-institution as scientific heroes of modernism and motivated purveyors of the present served precisely the sense of social/aesthetic engineering and promised new, purer worlds.

Biologists explicitly invested in radical political projects often used even stronger forms of the substrata-of-history argument to glance at prehistory and formulate the future. Finalism and vitalism in biology offered one well-

known way for Romantic motifs to weave themselves into an understanding of history and sovereign agency. But this was a broader concern: in a 1923 lecture, the British socialist biologist John B. S. Haldane (later a key contributor to the establishment of the modern synthesis) surveyed the state, dangers, and promise of modern science, and cast the worker and engineer in the mold of Daedalus.⁶⁷ The choice (over Prometheus)⁶⁸ was far from a mere adornment: Haldane presented his recapitulation of the ancient myth as a modern, scientific deicide redeemed by the Daedalian worker who would remold “traditional mythology” and “traditional morals” as well.⁶⁹ The worker as Daedalus would be “conscious of his ghastly mission, and proud of it,” as though he could redeem science from wartime technological violence and move society on a “true,” improved path, as prehistoric, amoral, and idealistic, but secular.⁷⁰ Socialism would require scientific biology as much as the model thanks to which the worker announced the refounding of technical and social engineering.

Eugenicists from Charles Davenport on pushed far too. The French-American surgeon Alexis Carrel, in his 1936 book *Man the Unknown*, claimed that “biological classes” were fundamentally tied to social classes, and eugenics must aid in a reengineering that would restore premodern sociobiological harmony.⁷¹ This harmony had been almost severed with the “base materialist” and “poor” mechanistic construction of modern man, and the democratic/egalitarian theorization of society since the Renaissance.⁷² These had resulted in a fabrication that “infringed upon” and “transgressed against” natural laws, facilitating man’s capacity to thwart natural selection in a way that allowed the survival of individuals of lower potential and thus facilitated the present crisis, resulting in the moral and spiritual destruction of man.⁷³ To Carrel, an aristocracy of geniuses should provide for humanity’s future by distinguishing itself from people of lower biological rank—a neo-proletariat. If technical science and politics had brought about moral, social, and intellectual decay, aristocratic eugenics could undo the consequences and redemptively reconstruct newly identical biological and social classes.⁷⁴ Carrel’s argument relied on three widely held forms of alternative history: the Catholic identification of the Renaissance as the moment when things went wrong, the biologicistic rhetoric of racial purity, which was supposedly undermined after the Middle Ages, and a modern techno-science that could be voluntaristically and eugenically controlled if and only if racial purity were reinstated on new ground.

Psychologists of different schools were just as convinced that their analytical work facilitated and even constructed truly new men, overcoming bourgeois society while placing them, too, on a pedestal from which they could structure not only this society but the past and future as well. Nitzan Lebovic has shown this in the case of *Lebensphilosoph*-psychologist Ludwig Klages, who was celebrated for providing a psychology that could renew and refocus human life against a modernity that was supposedly erasing it.⁷⁵ But the search for a deeper substratum was again not only property of the right. For Lev Vygotsky, who in keeping with Soviet expectations did not project purity to a moment prior to the past, psychology was nevertheless capable of both mining history and remaking it. His 1930 essay "The Crisis of Psychology" identified the crisis of the discipline with the crisis of the bourgeois world and heralded the capacity of psychology to become, in the "new society," the "science of the new man" precisely because of its capacity to dig beneath bourgeois life and recover the truth of society itself.

Our science could not and cannot develop in the old society. We cannot master the truth about personality and personality itself so long as mankind has not mastered the truth about society and society itself. In contrast, in the new society our science will take a central place in life. . . . The new society will create the new man. When one mentions the remolding of man as an indisputable trait of the new mankind and the artificial creation of a new biological type, then this will be the only and first species in biology which will create itself. In the future society, psychology will indeed be the science of the new man. Without this the perspective of Marxism and the history of science would not be complete. But this science of the new man will still remain psychology. Now we hold its thread in our hands.⁷⁶

It is too easy to read this approach as standing at a distance from the Romantic motif of a beginning of history and the first man that stood on it. Vygotsky's claim to be establishing, joining, analyzing, fabricating the New Man at the moment of its true, *finally natural* inception carries precisely the same variety of Romanticism, and the lack of a reference to a first man is belied precisely by the suggestion that the remolding of man can disdain the same (prosaic) history out of which it has emerged. Vygotsky's language, bridging a rhetoric of "remolding" with one of anticipated humanistic self-

invention, establishes on a new plane the Marxist dialectical play of restoring precapitalist nature while synthesizing a new, properly proletarian universality. (Such romanticism is no more alien to Trotsky's understanding of "proletarian science," to Lukacs's *History and Class Consciousness*, or to Bloch's interwar work.)

More than anyone it was Carl Gustav Jung who established the psychological logic of "deeper," archetypal history by proposing concepts of a "collective unconscious" and an "archetype" that were forcefully dependent on the idea of a symbolic, mythical substratum underwriting everyday life. This became essential for his analysis of individuality and collectivities. After years of multiplying the symbols and complexes that structure the unconscious (tendencies Freud policed through the Oedipus complex), Jung claimed in 1912 that "psychoanalytic research into the nature of subliminal processes will be enormously enriched and deepened by a study of mythology," by which he meant "indo-European" myth.⁷⁷ Though explicitly a form of *Völk-erpsychologie*, his study radicalized earlier varieties of that field. As opposed to Wundt's focus on the laws of ethnopsychological development, whose history left behind the age of heroes for a rational modernity,⁷⁸ Jung expanded ethnopsychology into a vast symbolic and mythological reservoir that encompassed archetypes and iterable symbols of a collective unconscious. This was "self-identical in all Western men and thus constitutes a psychic foundation, superpersonal in its nature, that is present in every one of us,"⁷⁹ and whose shared forms each individual in turn appropriates and molds. By comparison to a subjective unconscious, the collective one is "sheer objectivity," a participation in the cultural and social forms and myths, and specifically an *inheritance* of the conditions for the regeneration of such forms.⁸⁰ Family environments and traditional forms of symbolic orientation fall by the wayside; instead, archetypes "can only be explained by assuming them to be deposits of the constantly repeated experiences of humanity."⁸¹ What is more, the collective unconscious conducts *individuation*: in their persistence, archetypes render wholeness possible on different terms in each other. Still, only thanks to a "transcendent function" can the individual master the forms of the collective unconscious as they appear in his, or perhaps her, dreams and other unconscious activity—only through this "function" can individuation become complete. Jung's Wagnerian site for this transcendent function is, in 1917 as in 1940, one of heroism: the patient struggles

to consciously dominate unconscious energies, like the hero who struggles and eventually triumphs over a monster and is reborn at the moment of his triumph; then, "the unconscious, robbed of its energy, no longer occupies the dominant position."⁸² The domination of this unconscious is a heroic attempt at self-transcendence and individuation.⁸³

The collective unconscious concept, Jung continued, has acquired particular salience in the period since 1789, marked by the "end of religion" and the diffusion and complication of the symbolic unconscious. Insofar as we do *not* believe, the symbolic collective unconscious has become confused, if not impoverished: whereas in, for example, Catholicism, one inhabits a given set of available symbols, for "us" the synthesis of individual and collective unconscious is more complicated and the need to study and deploy these archetypes all the more pressing. Jung claimed, in 1916: "Only in the age of enlightenment did people discover that the gods did not really exist, but were simply projections. Thus the gods were disposed of. But the corresponding psychological functioning was by no means disposed of; it lapsed into the unconscious, and men were thereupon poisoned by the surplus of libido that had once been laid up in the cult of divine images."⁸⁴ Only the psychoanalyst can cure the pathology caused by the loss of organized symbolic systems.

Hence the synthesis of this argument on subjective wholeness with the purpose of the philosopher/psychoanalyst and the artist who expresses it. In the artist or creative man, the collective unconscious "comes alive . . . like an all-pervading, omnipresent, omniscient spirit. It knows man *as he always was, and not as he is at this moment*; it knows him as myth."⁸⁵ As with the Artist in Wagner's *Art-work of the Future*, Jung's analyst and artist are bound to the unconscious (which replaces the *Volk*) and are capable of raising it to self-consciousness, individual and collective. Jung's self-conception as transferential facilitator enables precisely his sense of his project as one of organizing Indo-European archetypes and *Völkerpsychologie* in a manner that aided man to escape a relapse into a dark, deformed, partially speaking, quasi-ethnoracial collective unconscious. It is these elements that would triumph in Jung's racial and pro-Nazi claims of the mid 1930s, and that promised even unconscious collective renewal.⁸⁶

The New Man and Dual Sovereignty

Were the dual sovereignty motif and the dense-history motif really about sovereignty, rather than mere utopian expectation? After all, the case could be made that the Second Empire, Paris Commune, and Third Republic in France; the unification of Germany and rise and decline of the German empire; the unified Italian kingdom; and the Austro-Hungarian compromise, to say nothing of the newly sovereign states of Eastern Europe after World War I, had far more reality to them—and affected governing relations in far more local and determined fashion than the imagination of a new man. Yet the lack of actual political power among many of the intellectuals discussed here should not blind us to the fact that a new sovereignty was not merely a desideratum and a matter of the exercise of power by post-World War I regimes or intellectual radicals unsatisfied with the political options immediately available for the transformation of society. Moreover, as Marcel Mauss recognized already in 1920, and with specific reference to Wagner, the search for absolute origins became both *during* and just *after* the Great War a distinct foundation of national sources of, and claims to, sovereignty.⁸⁷ In that form, the hero-artist doublet clocked a new way of understanding history and human nature—a demand that science, cultural or “biological” particularity, and technology be put to use toward a better world. An aestheticized conception of this better world premised on the New Man’s atavism guided its power over the present and future. No less crucially, these were positions shared across the political spectrum, *even among liberals* who subscribed to at least some of the strata of history, who were at least tolerant of motifs of heroism and genius for arguments on liberal autonomy they proposed, and who were happy either to imagine the new man as the successful outcome of a colonial enterprise or, as Mosse has indicated, to adopt a limited version of this argument for bourgeois self-regeneration. The new man offered a far more radical and immediate imagination and analysis of modernity, a myth of historical depth and regeneration beyond economic, political, and legal problems, than negotiations of territory or immediate power relations at the domestic or international levels did. In its reliance on the new sciences of psychology and biology, not to mention archaeology, anthropology, and linguistics, it offered a way of conceiving past, present, and future, and of perceiving the social transformation of modernity at its violent limits. A new man seemed essential for the overcoming of the moral

and political morass of bourgeois society, and he needed as much a designer (aesthetic or scientific) as he did historical substrata. In the recapitulation and administration of the compound, symbolically dense deeper layer of history, what was now called to the surface was the project of the artist/author who would also be quasi-sovereign by way of his puppeteer-like attachment to the leader or new man he heralded. Thus, the New Man would remain at once pure of supposedly contemptible reality and imbued with true symbolic power, so as to serve as a sort of absolute regulatory ideal that restructures all political and aesthetic action. He would be truly *new* if he were ostensibly capable of sifting through and using this symbolic heritage while remaining unbound by it.

I close where I began, with Rosenberg: despite his obsession with the Gobineau-originating “myth of the blood,” the only one he deemed “truly alive” because it was at once “new yet ancient” (*alt-neue*),⁸⁸ Rosenberg, too, relied on multiple strata. “Blood” was complemented by Wagner—including the dual sovereignty model. Yet if for Wagner the artist and hero stand juxtaposed as two non-coinciding figures mirroring the *Volk*, Rosenberg replayed the Wagnerian schema with a significant transformation that perfected and dissolved Wagner’s logic—the fusion of artist and hero. National Socialism could be as much its own artist as its hero, with the true “new Genius” being anticipated, or rather at once “already here but yet to come.”⁸⁹ “Blood” and “Wagner” were further complemented as strata by Rosenberg’s versions of the Aryan or Indo-European fantasy with its “warrior nobility,” of Madame Blavatsky’s theosophy, and of a Norse/Teutonic north-south organization of racial hierarchy attached to a motif of artistic creation akin to German Grecophilia. The Will of the new was to be created aesthetically as well as politically: in its dual sovereignty over its supposed *Volk*, as at once artist and hero of the future, Nazism embodied and announced its compound New Man, dredging him out of a supposedly pure past in order to freeze the present under his anticipated power.

Notes

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1. Alfred Rosenberg, *Der Mythos des 20. Jahrhunderts* (1930; Munich: Hoheneichen Verlag, 1939), 678.
2. *Ibid.*, 601.
3. The book itself is supposed to serve as a dawning of the consciousness of the myth (e.g., *ibid.*, 521–22). As Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy emphasize, for Rosenberg the world of myth is itself dated, obsolete, dead; yet in its Sorelian sense, “Myth is the power to bring together the fundamental forces and directions of an individual or of a people, the power of a subterranean, invisible, nonempirical identity.” Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, “The Nazi Myth,” *Critical Inquiry* 16, no. 2 (1990): 305.
4. Eric Michaud, *The Cult of Art in Nazi Germany* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 84–100.
5. Michel Foucault usefully discusses Napoleon’s mixing of personal, imperial, juridical, and disciplinary power in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage, 1995), 217. Chateaubriand’s treatment of the coronation of Charles X in his *Memoirs from Beyond the Grave* (book 28, chap. 5) is one of the early formulations of a stylized but powerless sovereignty.
6. Reasons of brevity prohibit me from tracing this motif closely; suffice it to recall the writings of Jules Michelet, Ernest Renan, Friedrich Nietzsche, Gustave Le Bon, Vladimir Lenin, Hermann Kayserling, Stefan George and his circle, Oswald Spengler, Carl Schmitt, and Walter Benjamin.
7. Le Bon’s *The Crowd* is exemplary of this tendency.
8. This element is largely left aside in efforts to account for the New Man; cf. Peter Fritzsche and Jochen Hellbeck, “The New Man in Stalinist Russia and Nazi Germany,” in *Beyond Totalitarianism*, ed. Sheila Fitzpatrick and Michael Geyer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 304–42. George Mosse presented the New Man as a specifically bourgeois fantasy of self-overcoming, with the focus on “bourgeois” rather than “self-overcoming.”
9. Pierre Milza, “Mussolini,” in *L’Homme nouveau dans l’Europe fasciste*, ed. Marie-Anne Matard-Bonucci and Pierre Milza (Paris: Fayard, 2004), 75–86; Milza, *Mussolini* (Paris: Fayard, 1999).
10. Foucault discusses a quite similar earlier theme—the fantasized return of a buried or lost king, together with the advent of early modern racism—in his treatment of sovereignty in *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975–76*, trans. David Macey (New York: Picador, 2003), 55. Wagner’s *Siegfried* clearly gains from this genre, but the terms in which the modern version of this motif has to be understood are somewhat different:
11. *Siegfried* 1.197–201, in Richard Wagner, *Der Ring des Nibelungen. Textbuch mit Varianten der Partitur*, ed. Egon Voss (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam, 2009), 213.
12. *Siegfried* 1.265–80; Wagner, *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, 216.
13. Maurice Olender, *The Languages of Paradise* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 141–42, offers a helpful analysis of the use of myth in the contrast between the visible hero and the invisible Jewish God, even if his analysis of *Siegfried* is rather fast and meets with difficulties.
14. “Viel weiss ich noch nicht, noch nicht auch, wer ich bin,” he tells Fafner to the sound of his twice-played leitmotif.

15. On the wolf-child, see Nicolas Pethes, *Zöglinge der Natur* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2007).
16. *Siegfried* 1.251; Wagner, *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, 215.
17. Theodor Adorno, *In Search of Wagner*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (London: Verso, 2005), 92.
18. David J. Levin, *Richard Wagner, Fritz Lang, and the Nibelungen* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).
19. The sword's connotation of broken paternity and its restoration by Siegfried are essential themes; otherwise Fricka's objections to Wotan's claim in *Die Walküre* that Siegmund possesses free will could be raised anew.
20. Peter Caldwell, *Love, Death, and Revolution in Central Europe* (New York: Palgrave, 2009), 110. Wagner can further be said to have staged Siegfried—including his foibles, failure, and death in *Götterdämmerung*—in a manner that specifically brought to its close the domain of old Germanic myth. Instead of that domain, at the end of *Götterdämmerung* we find the deployment of a new world, a new aesthetico-political myth played out with the repetition of the first bars of the *Rheingold's* prelude. In this reading, spectators could feel the cathartic end of the cycle to impose the new form of the old myth in order to *replace* their own world as well as the old myth at the same time.
21. Richard Wagner, "A Communication to My Friends" (1851), in *Wagner on Music and Drama*, ed. Albert Goldman and Evert Sprinchorn (New York: Dutton, 1964), 264.
22. For Wagner's "studies" and the origins of the "inner history" motif, see Friedrich Heinrich von der Hagen, *Der Nibelungen Lied* (Breslau: Max, 1816), xi, and the sources in Levin, *Richard Wagner*, 151n2.
23. For all their proximity, especially on the will, Schopenhauer and Wagner differ essentially on the use of the past—on the value of this symbolic dredging aimed to restore the will. See Schopenhauer's treatment of the past in *The World as Will and Representation*, trans. E. F. J. Payne, vol. 1 (New York: Dover, 1969), §57, 311.
24. Olender, *Languages of Paradise*, 6–9, 19; Stefan Arvidsson, *Aryan Idols* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), chap. 4.
25. Wagner, "Communication to my Friends," 265. Egon Voss correctly warns against reducing Siegfried to a mere expression of Wagner's theoretical and social works from the 1840s and 1850. Egon Voss, in Wagner, *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, 461.
26. Wagner, introduction to "Art and Revolution," in *The Art-Work of the Future and Other Works*, trans. William Ashton Ellis (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993), 24.
27. Edward Gibbon, *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (New York: Penguin Classics, 1996), 1:230; Herder, *Another Philosophy of History and Other Political Writings* (London: Hackett, 2004), 33. The theme dates to Tacitus's *Germania*; see Christopher B. Krebs, *A Most Dangerous Book: Tacitus's "Germania" from the Roman Empire to the Third Reich* (New York: Penguin, 2012), and Eric Michaud, "Barbarian Invasions and the Racialization of Art History," *October* 139 (Winter 2012): 59–76. For Wagner's appeal to *Germania*, see Wagner, "Hero-dom and Christendom"

- (1881), in *Religion and Art*, trans. William Ashton Ellis (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), 278. On the relative absence of a racial purity argument in the early nineteenth century, see Brian Vick, "The Origins of the German Volk," in *German Studies Review* 26, no. 2 (May 2003): 241–56.
28. Jules Michelet, *The People*, trans. John P. McKay (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1973). Compare to Wagner, "Art-Work of the Future," 75.
 29. Other thinkers distant from liberalism, pursued a similar strategy for art, describing it without irony or paradox as formative of the positive, scientific future. See, e.g., Auguste Comte, *République occidentale, ordre et progrès* (Paris: Mathias, 1848).
 30. Wagner, "Art and Revolution," 54–56, esp. 56.
 31. Wagner, "Art and Revolution," 53. On the dual meaning of revolution and the late eighteenth-century shift toward a singular, future-oriented meaning, see Reinhart Koselleck, "Historical Criteria of the Modern Concept of Revolution," in *Futures Past* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985), 39–54.
 32. This goes thus a step beyond Philipp Ther's claim that national operas (Verdi's in addition to Wagner's) involved "not just one but of two utopias of unity"—that is, the artistic unity of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* and the social unity of the theater itself. Ther, *Center Stage: Operatic Culture and Nation Building* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2014), 13.
 33. Wagner, "Art-Work of the Future," 75, 77; see also 194n.
 34. *Ibid.*, 195–96.
 35. *Ibid.*, 204–5, emphasis in original.
 36. Wagner, *Oper und Drama* (Leipzig: J. J. Weber, 1869), 348, modified from Wagner, *Opera and Drama*, trans. W. A. Ellis (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 374–75.
 37. Wagner, *Oper und Drama*, 349–50, translation modified from Wagner, *Opera and Drama*, 375–76.
 38. Adorno, *In Search of Wagner*, 20.
 39. Hegel, *Introduction to the Philosophy of History* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1988), 3.
 40. See the classic accounts by George Mosse, *Toward the Final Solution* (New York: Fertig, 1978), 76–108, and Paul Weindling, *Health, Race and German Politics, 1870–1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), chap. 2–3. On the division of Germanic from Latin races, see Käthe Panick, *La Race Latine: Politischer Romanismus im Frankreich des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Bonn: Ludwig Röhrscheid, 1978), and Pierre Michel, *Les barbares, 1789–1848* (Lyon: PUL, 1981).
 41. E. B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, 2 vols. (London: John Murray, 1871).
 42. Max Müller's work, including his course for future colonial bureaucrats, *India: What Can It Teach Us?* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1882), exemplifies these concerns. More broadly, see Anna Morpurgo Davies, *History of Linguistics*, vol. 4, *Nineteenth-Century Linguistics* (London: Longman, 1998), chap. 3. For philology and linguistic origins, see Olender, *Languages of Paradise*, 15, 19ff., as well as Judith R. H. Kaplan, "Language Science and Orientalism in Imperial Germany" (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin–Madison, 2012). On religion, see Arvidsson, *Aryan Idols*, introduction and chap. 2, and Tomoko Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), chap. 5.

43. For an explicitly historical perspective on *Völkerpsychologie*, see Wilhelm Wundt, *Elements of Folk-Psychology* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1916); Egbert Klautke, *The Mind of the Nation* (New York: Berghahn, 2013); and Stefanos Geroulanos, "The Plastic Self and the Prescription of Psychology," *Republics of Letters* 3, no. 2 (2014).
44. George W. Crile, *A Mechanistic View of War and Peace* (New York: Macmillan, 1915), 69. On the reach of Haeckel's recapitulation theory, see Knox Peden, "Alkaline Recapitulation," *Republics of Letters* 4, no. 1 (2014).
45. Laura Otis, *Organic Memory* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994).
46. Thomas Henry Huxley, "On the Method of Zadig," in *Science and Culture* (London, 1881), 128–48. See also Carlo Ginzburg, "Clues," in *Clues, Myths, and the Historical Method* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 117.
47. James G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, vol. 1 (1896; London: Macmillan, 1920), 236. For a phylogenetic version of this account attached to World War I, see Crile, *Mechanistic View of War and Peace*, 47–52.
48. Martin Rudwick, *Worlds Before Adam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008). See also, e.g., Cathy Gere, *Knossos and the Prophets of Modernism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 4, 7.
49. On neutralization, see Carl Schmitt, *Concept of the Political*, trans. George Schwab (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 35, 70, 78.
50. Theodor Herzl, *Altneuland* (Leipzig: Hermann Seemann, 1903); Jack London, *Before Adam* (London: Macmillan, 1907); see also Georges Sorel, *Reflections on Violence*, ed. Jeremy Jennings (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Carl Schmitt, *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy*, trans. Ellen Kennedy (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1988), chap. 4.
51. Gustave Le Bon, *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind* (1895; Atlanta: Cherokee, 1982).
52. Michaud, *Cult of Art*, 186–91; Boris Groys, *The Total Art of Stalinism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992).
53. See Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, ed. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), vol. 2, chap. 14.
54. Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, trans. George Schwab (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).
55. Schmitt, *Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy*, 73, 76; see also Schmitt's engagement with Mussolini and critique of "polytheism" for endangering Sorelian theory, 76.
56. See my *An Atheism That Is Not Humanist Emerges in French Thought* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), 162–63, 166, and the permutations of authority in Kojève's *La Notion de l'autorité* (1942; Paris: Gallimard, 2004).
57. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (New York: Harper-Collins, 1962), §53.
58. See Richard Wolin, ed., *The Heidegger Controversy* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992).
59. Ernst Bloch, *The Spirit of Utopia* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 192.
60. W. H. R. Rivers, *Psychology and Politics* (London: Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1923), 91.
61. W. H. R. Rivers, "An Address on Socialism and Human Nature," in *Psychology and Politics* (London: Kegan Paul, 1923), 107–39. Rivers was criticized by Marcel Mauss

- in *Manual of Ethnography* (1967; New York: Durkheim Press, 2007), 102 and, indirectly, by Bronislaw Malinowski in *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (1922; London: George Routledge, 1932), 97.
62. Peter Mandler, *Return from the Natives* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 97; see also 58, 115.
 63. For similarities to Mead, see Julian Huxley and Alfred Cort Haddon, *We Europeans* (New York: Harper, 1936), 15, 70–71, 74. A similar refusal of race compounded by alternative concepts can be found in Paul Rivet, ed., *L'espèce humaine* (Paris: L'Encyclopédie française [VII], 1937).
 64. Huxley and Haddon, *We Europeans*, 235.
 65. Gere, *Knossos and the Prophets of Modernism*, 11, 17, 80; Cathy Gere, *The Tomb of Agamemnon* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).
 66. Carlo Ginzburg, "Germanic Mythology and Nazism: Thoughts on an Old Book by Georges Dumézil," in *Clues*, 126–45.
 67. J. B. S. Haldane, *Daedalus; or, Science and the Future* (New York: Dutton, 1924).
 68. *Ibid.*, 46.
 69. *Ibid.*, 90.
 70. *Ibid.*, 92–93.
 71. Alexis Carrel, *Man the Unknown* (London: Harper, 1935), 298.
 72. *Ibid.*, 271–73, 278.
 73. *Ibid.*, 272–73, 321.
 74. *Ibid.*, 298–99.
 75. Lebovic further argues that a similarity between Klages, Freud, and Edward Spranger can be found in this pursuit, as in their sources in Dilthey, Nietzsche, and *Völkerpsychologie*. Nitzan Lebovic, *The Philosophy of Life and Death* (New York: Palgrave, 2013), 111.
 76. Lev Vygotsky, "The Historical Meaning of the Crisis in Psychology" (1927), in *Collected Works*, vol. 3 (New York: Plenum, 1997), 342–43.
 77. Carl G. Jung, "Therapeutic Principles of Psychoanalysis," in *Jung Contra Freud* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 121. On Jung's role in the multiplication of symbols in the rewriting of the *Interpretation of Dreams*, see Lydia Marinelli and Andreas Mayer, *Dreaming by the Book* (New York: Other Press, 2003).
 78. Jung was clearly aware of Wundt, and cites his *Grundriss der Psychologie* in "The Psychology of the Unconscious" (1917), in *Collected Works*, vol. 7 (New York: Pantheon, 1953), 17; so was Freud (in *Totem and Taboo*).
 79. Jung, "Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious" (1934), in *The Integration of the Personality* (New York: Farrar & Rinehart, 1939), 52–53. The revised 1954 edition of this essay starkly avoids the "Western" focus of this point.
 80. Jung, "Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious" (1934), in *Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious* (London: Routledge, 1968), 22; Jung, "The Role of the Unconscious" (1918) in *Civilization in Transition* (New York: Pantheon, 1964), 10–11. Jung would later compare his collective unconscious to the work on mythology by Mauss, Hubert, and Lévy-Bruhl. See Jung, "The Concept of the Collective Unconscious" (1936), in *Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, 42–43.
 81. Jung, "Psychology of the Unconscious," 69.
 82. *Ibid.*, 77.

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83. Jung, "The Psychology of the Child Archetype" (1940), in *Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, 166, 167.
84. Jung, "Psychology of the Unconscious," 92; see also Jung, *Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, 23.
85. Jung, "Role of the Unconscious," 10.
86. Jung, "The State of Psychotherapy Today," in *Civilization in Transition*, 166–67.
87. Marcel Mauss, "La nation," in *Oeuvres complètes III* (Paris: Minuit, 1969), 601.
88. Rosenberg, *Der Mythos des 20. Jahrhunderts*, 699.
89. The expression is Michaud's.