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Akrasia and Aesthetic Judgment

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## Akrasia and Aesthetic Judgment

I find an element of Nazism, not only in Wagner's questionable literature; I find it also in his "music," in his [creative work], similarly questionable, though in a loftier sense—albeit I have so loved that work that even today I am deeply stirred whenever a few bars of music from this world impinge on my ear.

—Thomas Mann<sup>1</sup>

I

Practical judgment concerns action, and so differs from aesthetic judgment, which concerns evaluation. They are alike, however, in that both involve choice. The conclusion of a piece of practical reasoning is a determination about what to do.<sup>2</sup> The conclusion of a piece of aesthetic reasoning is a determination about what to esteem. Aesthetic judgment, moreover, though not about action, typically leads to action. One seeks out the objects one esteems, spends time with them, acquires them (or would if one could), commends them to others, and so on. Not all evaluations involve prescriptions, but aesthetic evaluations—unless they are of the driest, academic sort—typically do.

Aesthetic judgment informs estimation the way practical judgment informs action, by grounding it in reason. Nevertheless, a given estimate, like a given action, may fail to be caused by the reason that grounds it—may fail, that is, to be rational. Like practical judgment, therefore, aesthetic judgment leaves open the possibility of akrasia. One can go against one's better aesthetic judgment, preferring what it is irrational to prefer, esteeming what one has better reason not to esteem.

In *Irrationality*, Alfred Mele observes that evaluations, and not just actions, are subject to akrasia. "Akratic evaluative thinking can, I think, be characterized on the model of akratic action—thinking, after all, is a kind of action. ... Akratic evaluative thinking, I suggest, is (uncompelled) motivated evaluative thinking that is contrary to a decisive better judgment of the thinker—a judgment, that is, about proper modes of evaluation, evaluative principles, and the like."<sup>3</sup> The example Mele gives is of someone

whose better judgment tells him to take his family's needs into consideration when deliberating about a career change, but who fails to account sufficiently for those needs in his actual deliberation. If thinking is a kind of acting, then the scope of akrasia extends not only to actions, or the intention to perform them, but to judgments as well.

The view that judgments can be akratic is further supported by the phenomenon of doxastic incontinence, or akratic belief. Akratic belief runs counter to one's better evidential judgment, as in the classic case in which the wife discounts evidence that her husband has been cheating on her, focusing selectively on, or making salient, those bits of evidence that would count in favor of his innocence.<sup>4</sup> If evidential judgments are subject to akrasia, then there is no reason for disallowing akratic judgments of taste—or certainly not on the basis that aesthetic judgments are neither actions nor intentions.

If judgments can be akratic, why has aesthetic akrasia been overlooked?<sup>5</sup> Perhaps the chief reason is that aesthetic akrasia depends on a connection between evaluation and preference, and this connection has—in many cases, at least—been thought not to exist. We talk as if the art we admire (to simplify matters, I stick to art rather than expand the discussion to include the aesthetic judgment of nature) were or could be entirely different from the art we enjoy, as if a considered judgment about the worthiness of an artwork to be esteemed did not entail our taking pleasure in the artwork or preferring the artwork to one judged less worthy, as if liking were a brute fact not subject to normative considerations, as if it made no sense to speak of what we

*ought* to like, etc. We talk as if the dictum “no disputing about taste” applied not only to a community of individuals but to a single individual, as if it were true not only *among* us but *within* us, as if the hold of considered judgment did not extend to the domain of one’s own taste.

Thus, for example, Bernard Williams writes: “For many kinds of thing, you can distinguish between thinking that a given item is good of its kind and liking, wanting, or choosing that item. ... Philosophy cannot make logically compulsory the attitude of a man I know who, in one of those discussions of what bad music you most enjoy, said ‘I find I can survive on a diet of masterpieces.’”<sup>6</sup>

Williams’s example, which is intended to drive a wedge between evaluation and preference, is typical of the kind of thinking that has obscured aesthetic akrasia from view. That we need not survive on a diet of masterpieces is obvious enough. We may indeed prefer music that is not, in our estimation, good or as good as the music we judge superior. We may prefer, on occasion, or even often, Johann Strauss, say, to Beethoven. But a preference of this kind, which is, I take it, what Williams has in mind, does not support the claim that evaluation and preference are logically distinct. For the preferred music is not really inferior. It belongs to a different category and is judged by a different standard. It belongs to the category of light or low art, as opposed to high art.

Philosophy can indeed make compulsory, in the sense of rational, a preference for the sonatas of Beethoven over those of, say, Johann Nepomuk Hummel, whose music, being of the same kind (in the same style), is judged by the same standard. But it cannot compel us to prefer good music to “bad” (meaning “popular” or “light”). The division between high and popular culture leads us to speak loosely of a preference for bad art over good, whereas what we really mean is that we prefer—sometimes, or even always—low art to high. Low art places fewer demands on us, and that is one of our chief reasons for liking it. We cannot always engage with the profound, difficult, disturbing, or new. Nor should we be expected to.<sup>7</sup>

Williams’s example to the contrary, aesthetic evaluation implies a practice of preferment, one that tolerates exceptions but that cannot exist on a steady diet of them (to turn his example on its

head) without depriving aesthetic evaluation of credibility. Beethoven can be so intellectually and emotionally demanding that it is not unreasonable to seek relief in a composer like Hummel, whose music provides some of the lighter satisfactions of the classical style. But to regard Beethoven as the greater composer and simply (without explanation) prefer Hummel is irrational. The judgment of a person whose evaluations and preferences diverged in this way would rightly be regarded with suspicion.

Another reason why aesthetic akrasia has been overlooked is that art, being a product of the imagination, has been thought to involve us in ways that are themselves imaginary. In the imagination, a great many attitudes and emotions can coexist without conflicting either with one another or with what we really think and feel. The hold of considered judgment does not extend to the imagination, or certainly not to the same degree. I can imagine admiring Hitler, for example, by imagining I am a Nazi, but I cannot really admire him, or at least not rationally, since my real attitude toward Nazism is one of contempt. Similarly, I can imagine wanting to put Socrates to death by imagining I am one of the accusers in Plato’s *Apology*, but I cannot really want this, since I truly believe that Socrates is innocent. Finally, I can imagine hating Lear by imagining I am Goneril or Regan, but I can no more really hate Lear than hate my own father (although I can imagine hating my father by imagining I am someone else, or that I have radically changed).

The fact that I can imagine responding in different ways by imagining I am different people, or differently situated, or that I have changed, does not mean that I do not really respond to what I experience, be it fictional or real. My pity for Lear is not pretend, nor is my hatred for Goneril and Regan. These feelings really do belong to me, and are no less real, although they may be less intense or entail different consequences, than are my feelings toward people who do or did exist in real life. By the same token, the feelings I imagine and do not really have are no less *unreal* in the case of real objects than in the case of fictional ones. My imaginary sympathy for Hitler is no less *unreal* than is my imaginary sympathy for Goneril or Regan. The reality or unreality of my response cuts across the distinction between fact and fiction.

To the extent that art engages real attitudes and emotions and not just imagined ones—attitudes and emotions conditioned by, accountable to, and potentially in conflict with other attitudes and emotions—it is a possible source of akratic tension. It is worth noting that fictional characters, too, being similarly constrained by their characters, are subject to akrasia. Goneril and Regan can no more really pity Lear, or at least not rationally, given the fictional world of *King Lear* that Shakespeare has created, than I can really hate him, given my own world of thought and action. Fictional characters have not only real attitudes and emotions but imaginary ones as well. They can pretend, play-act (the play within a play), dissemble, and so forth.

It seems an odd thing to say that the attitudes and emotions of fictional characters are real. Surely they are not real in the sense in which my own attitudes and emotions are real. I am a real person, and they are not (I leave aside the complicating circumstance of historical figures in fictional or quasi-fictional works). This is no doubt true. But for our purposes it is irrelevant. What matters is that I, a really existing person, have attitudes and emotions that really belong to me, that are constrained and conditioned by one another, that reflect my considered judgment, in light of which I act, think, and judge—rationally, or, as the case may be, irrationally.

To be sure, the experience of art requires distance. We must not be so caught up that we fail to appreciate the artifice, fail to observe that the people on the stage are only acting, or that what is seen in a painting as having depth really only lies on the surface. However, we must not be so detached that we fail to appreciate the experience that art has to offer. To experience art is, among other things, really to love and hate, pity and fear, admire and condemn. Whoever only imagines these things and does not really feel them cannot begin to explain why art matters, why art is more—indeed, much more—than an idle pastime.

The view that our experience of art is unreal has been systematically advanced by Kendall Walton, in *Mimesis as Make-Believe*. According to Walton, the attitudes and emotions we experience in relation to art are imagined. They are fictional or *quasi*, and do not, accordingly, conflict, either with one another or with our real attitudes or emotions.

Arthur appreciates tragedies, but he finds happy endings asinine and dull. In watching a play he hopes that it will end tragically. He “wants the heroine to suffer a cruel fate,” [the scare quotes indicate that Arthur’s attitude is only fictional] for only if she does, he thinks, will the play turn out to have been worth watching. But at the same time he is caught up in the story and “pities the heroine,” “sympathizes with her plight.” He “wants her to escape.” Indeed his feeling of “pity” [*quasi* pity] and his “desire for the heroine’s survival” [*quasi* desire] constitute an important part of his appreciation of the tragedy, if that is what it turns out to be. Are we to say that Arthur is *torn* between opposite interests, that he wants the heroine to survive and also wants her not to? This does not ring true.

Contrast a genuine case of conflicting desires. In watching a bullfight or a neighbor’s marital squabble one might secretly (or otherwise) hope for blood, expecting to find a disastrous denouement entertaining. This desire need not exclude genuine sympathy for the victim or victims and a desire that it or they not suffer. But there will be a tension between the two, each qualifying and diminishing the other. Moreover, one’s sympathy is likely to color one’s hopes for the worst with guilt. Arthur is not like this. Both of his “conflicting desires” may well be wholehearted. He may hope unreservedly that the work will end in disaster for the heroine, and he may with equal single-mindedness “want her to escape such an undeserved fate.” He may be entirely aware of both “desires” and yet feel no particular conflict between them. He need not experience the slightest pangs of guilt for “wishing the heroine ill,” notwithstanding his most heartfelt “sympathy for her.”

The solution, of course, is that Arthur does not actually sympathize with the heroine or want her to be spared; it is only fictional that he does. What he really wants is that it be fictional that she suffer a cruel end. He does not have conflicting desires. Nor, for that matter is it fictional that he does.<sup>8</sup>

It is unclear, on Walton’s view, just who this Arthur is, or why his divergent but nonconflicting attitudes should “constitute an important part of ... [the] appreciation of ... tragedy.” The Arthur whom Walton is concerned to define is not the real Arthur, since the real Arthur experiences a tension between his conflicting attitudes, experiences his attitudes *as conflicting*. Nor is it someone with whom the real Arthur imaginatively identifies, since the Arthur in question is not a product of the imagination but

a real person—one, moreover, who genuinely participates in art, is “caught up in the story,” and does not just flex his imaginative muscle. Imaginatively identifying with characters in a story, seeing things from *their* point of view, e.g., as Lear sees Cordelia, is a subsidiary kind of imagining, according to Walton, that does not define one’s primary participation in art (or any other game of make-believe): “I suggest that the spectator engages in imaginings that are not part of his authorized game but occur along with it.”<sup>9</sup> Who, then, engages in the kind of imaginative participation Walton has in mind? What can it mean to be “caught up in the story” if we remain at such a distance psychologically that our involvement is or can be entirely without conflict?

Walton recognizes the importance of the role of psychological participation in addressing the “chief aesthetic question about fiction, the question of why we do not dismiss novels and stories and other such works as *mere fiction* and thus unworthy of serious attention.”<sup>10</sup> But his theory of psychological participation, with its fictional or *quasi* attitudes and emotions immunized against conflict and guilt, free of the hold of considered judgment, does not provide a satisfactory answer.

If to read a novel or contemplate a painting were merely to stand outside a fictional world pressing one’s nose against the glass and peer in, noticing what is fictional but not fictionally noticing anything, our interest in novels and paintings would indeed be mysterious. We might expect to have a certain clinical curiosity about fictional worlds viewed from afar, but it is hard to see how that could account for the significance of representations, their capacity to be deeply moving, sometimes even to change our lives. [But] we don’t just observe fictional worlds from without. We live in them ... together with Anna Karenina and Emma Bovary and Robinson Crusoe and the others, sharing their joys and sorrows, rejoicing and commiserating with them, admiring and detesting them.<sup>11</sup>

It is not we who live in these fictional worlds but some pale reflection of ourselves—a reflection less lifelike than the fictional but conflicted and guilt-ridden characters that inhabit them along with us.

Yet another reason why aesthetic akrasia has been overlooked is that in reasoning about practical and theoretical matters we typically arrive at conclusions that fall on one or the other side

of a binary opposition. An action is either performed or not performed; a proposition is either true or false. In such cases it is easy to see how akrasia could arise. We judge one way, or the evidence points in one direction, and we act or believe otherwise. By contrast, aesthetic judgment need not, and usually does not, take the form of a binary opposition. We do not say that the value of one artwork cancels that of another, or that an artwork is either absolutely valuable or entirely worthless. Nor do we typically assign an artwork a determinate ranking along a comprehensive scale of aesthetic value.

Aesthetic judgment is not “lumping,” to use Wayne Booth’s word. The virtues and vices of artworks do not add up in any easy or obvious way. It is not clear how we should weigh, or that we should weigh, the “hilarious satirical incivility of Evelyn Waugh against his sexism, snobbery, and moral bullying,” or the “sustained lyrical intensity of Virginia Woolf’s *Jacob’s Room* against its overall formlessness and its frequent reminders that the implied author is embarked on an experiment that she herself does not quite understand.”<sup>12</sup>

Nevertheless, understanding art depends on a capacity to engage in evaluative activity of this kind, at least to a certain degree. Someone who professed to enjoy art but who had no evaluative concepts, who never formed estimates of relative worth, to whom no art was better or worse than any other, who could not grasp the idea of a canon—for whom, in effect, artistic value did not exist—would rightly be regarded as ignorant. To understand art is (among other things) to recognize its worth, even if that recognition is shifting and complex, even if the canon is not carved in stone. The form that aesthetic judgments often take, that of noting the virtues and vices of artworks but not weighing them against one another or adding them up to form a comprehensive assessment, misleads us into thinking that aesthetic judgment has no evaluative consequences. This is true to a degree. We need not prefer a sonata by Beethoven to one by Schubert. We can value them equally, whether for the same or for a different reason. But we cannot, on pain of aesthetic ignorance, value equally a sonata by Beethoven and one by Hummel, notwithstanding the vices of the former and virtues of the latter.

On the line I am pursuing, aesthetic judgment

is considered judgment. It is a judgment about the overall worthiness of art to be esteemed. Aesthetic judgment commits us to evaluative principles with respect to which our preferences potentially conflict—principles with which we may, in a given instance, fail to be in accord. If these principles are important enough, if our adherence to them is deep enough, we may find ourselves in a situation where the pull of aesthetic preference is properly characterized as weakness of will.

Akrasia is apt to be most acutely felt where it is a question of morality.<sup>13</sup> Moral lapses, or what are perceived as moral lapses by the agent or judge, are in general less tolerable than are other forms of weakness. We tend not to worry about disparities in thought, action, and judgment where the consequences are minor, or where our integrity as persons is not seriously called into question (if these do not come to the same thing). Perhaps an expert critic or devotee would be tortured by her greater love of the Manet she esteems less highly, but most of us would not give it much thought. By contrast, those of us who, like Thomas Mann and myself, esteem what we consider to be morally vicious find that fact deeply disturbing. We want *not* to feel the way we do.<sup>14</sup>

Art's potential to affect humanity for good or ill, a potential that Plato and Aristotle clearly saw and addressed, although in quite different ways, has been largely obscured for the past two hundred and fifty years by an aesthetic of autonomy, one of the chief expressions of which is psychological distance (disinterestedness). On the autonomy view, art is not good for anything, nor does it tell us anything about the world—not, at least, when we are judging it rightly. The autonomy view rules out certain considerations, in particular, moral or ethical considerations, and considerations of verisimilitude, as irrelevant to aesthetic judgment. It rules them out even in cases where art could reasonably be approached in terms of these considerations, where it is representational, or historical, or involves ideal types (gods and heroes). On the autonomy view, art is, regardless of its content, typically (though not always) governed by a principle of pure or abstract form (form abstracted from content).

There is something surely right in the claim of art to autonomy. Art should be able to exist for its own sake. It should not have to (although

it obviously may and often does) serve the interests of church, state, or private patron. But the autonomy view goes further than this in claiming not only that the artist should be free to create what he or she sees fit but that art and life are governed by distinct evaluative principles—principles that have nothing to do with, or are related only very tangentially to, one another. The idea of a distinct sphere of aesthetic value is particularly hard to subscribe to when art is filled with violence and hatred, when it perpetrates vicious lies, is ideological, exploitative, or propagandistic. It is hard to abstract the form of Leni Riefenstahl's films, for example, from their ideological content, which has to do with Nazi propaganda—hard not only psychologically but because it is unclear that doing so makes good aesthetic sense. The power and beauty of Riefenstahl's films would appear to be inseparable from the questionable attraction of Nazism itself.

The moral viciousness of art is apt to be most problematic in relation to what one takes to be the very greatest art there is. We may be able to discount a lot of art that is morally flawed simply because the art itself is not that good. It is easy to dismiss the films of Riefenstahl as racist or anti-Semitic, but what about *The Merchant of Venice*, *The Ring of the Nibelungs*, or even *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*? From a moral point of view these works are flawed, even deeply so. Yet they are highly estimable as art. *Huckleberry Finn* is an American classic, *The Merchant of Venice*, while not Shakespeare's greatest play, is still Shakespeare, and Wagner's *Ring* cycle is, although ideologically akin to Riefenstahl's films, one of the crowning achievements of nineteenth-century music. It is works like these that confront us with the problem of aesthetic akrasia. Their artistic stature is hard to deny, yet we have reason to condemn them. In our considered judgment, the worthiness of these artworks to be esteemed is questionable, and thus we may wonder at the rationality of our continuing admiration for them.

In the following section, I explore the morally problematic nature of Richard Wagner's art—in particular, *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, *The Ring of the Nibelungs*, and *Parsifal*. Then I examine the various responses to it that have appeared in the literature. Next, I offer my own akratic response to Wagner's art. Finally, I speculate about the meaning of aesthetic akrasia in re-

lation to aesthetic judgment and the theory of art generally.

## II

Wagner penned three important essays in the wake of the Dresden revolution of 1848–1849: “Art and Revolution,” “Artwork of the Future,” and “Judaism in Music.” In the first of these, he rails against a corrupting capitalism that he would eventually identify with the Jews; in the second, he stresses the essential connection between art and race (*das Volk*); and, in the last, Wagner for the first time makes explicit the link between anti-Semitism and his own revolutionary politics. As Paul Lawrence Rose has argued, in *Wagner: Race and Revolution*, it is *against* the stereotype of the Jew, as cultural parasite, capitalist exploiter, loveless, and legalistic, that Wagner’s revolutionary conception of an idealized German *Volk* is primarily defined.<sup>15</sup>

There has never been any question that Wagner’s political agenda is carried over into his art. For Wagner, art and politics were inseparable, and a revolutionary agenda that was not also an artistic agenda was unthinkable. What, then, of Wagner’s anti-Semitism? Did that, too, form part of his art? The question is complicated by the fact that although Jews take center stage in many of Wagner’s writings, they appear nowhere in his artworks. This can perhaps be explained by Wagner’s perpetual state of financial dependence on others, including patrons, singers, and musicians, who were either Jewish themselves or pro-Jewish in their politics. A related reason, recently given by Marc Weiner in his *Wagner and the Anti-Semitic Imagination*, is that Jews did not figure in Wagner’s artworks because they did not have to. The anti-Semitic stereotypes employed by Wagner would have been plainly visible to his audience, whether or not they were explicitly realized in Jewish figures. Thus Wagner was able to further his revolutionary agenda while minimizing the risk of alienating his supporters.

*Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* is the story of a song contest, for the hand of the worthy and beautiful Eva, between the ardent but untutored Walther, an outsider who breaks the rules in order to create, and the cramped, spiritless Beckmesser, who as “marker” sees that the rules are mercilessly enforced. It is also a contrastive

study of German and Jewish culture, the one idealized, the other despised. *Die Meistersinger* is Wagner’s paean to “Holy German Art,” conceived as noble and love-inspired, and defined against the anti-Semitic stereotype of the Jewish artist as feelingless and formalistic.

In “Judaism in Music,” Wagner rails against the superficiality and capitalist exploitation of Jewish musicians, especially Felix Mendelssohn, whose “soilless stock” alienates him from the German music he imitates in “a fruitless effort from above.” His greatest contempt, however, is reserved for Jewish music itself, the music of the Synagogue. “Who has not had occasion to convince himself of the travesty of a divine service of song, presented in a real folk synagogue? Who has not been seized with a feeling of the greatest revulsion, of horror mingled with the absurd, at hearing the sense-and-sound-confounding gurgle, yodel, and cackle, which no intentional caricature can make more repugnant than as offered here in full, in naive seriousness?”<sup>16</sup>

It can hardly be doubted that the character of Beckmesser expresses Wagner’s anti-Semitic stereotype of the Jewish artist and Jewish music.<sup>17</sup> Weiner writes:

The notion that the development of German art is threatened by foreign influence is central ... to the ideological program of *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*. ... When Wagner had his hapless town notary, Sixtus Beckmesser, reproduce an “authentic German” art work [Walther’s prize song] in a garbled, “foreign, cold, strange, indifferent, unnatural, and distorted” fashion, the ideas of “Das Judentum in der Musik” [“Judaism in Music”] ... found dramatic representation. ... Beckmesser will never be able to penetrate into the “depths” of the “life-giving inner organism” of Walther’s prize song and will instead reflect back to the audience—the communal *Volk*—only a distortion of the superficial “exterior form of appearances” contained in its—Walther’s—artistry.<sup>18</sup>

The anti-Semitism of *The Ring of the Nibelungs*, Wagner’s great operatic cycle, is spread over a larger canvas. Wotan, who belongs to the superior race of the gods, renounces love for wealth and thus damns the gods to self-destruction. Both Wotan’s end, which is not only wealth but the power resulting from it, and his means, which involve the making and breaking of contracts, are stereotypically Jewish.<sup>19</sup> Alberich,

who belongs to a race of physically repulsive dwarfs, the Nibelungs, also renounces love for wealth—specifically, the gold of the Rhine-maidens—and the power of world domination that results from it. Rose writes:

Wotan is the god of contracts, bound to maintain the bourgeois marriage contract—based on financial interest ... no matter how much his nobler instincts go against it. In his less elevated moments, Wotan is also the god of power, willing to resort to trickery to secure the erection of Valhalla [the castle of the gods]. ... But while Wotan retains a splendour of character despite these failings, his antagonist, the Nibelung dwarf Alberich, represents only the repulsive aspects of bourgeois society, utterly debased and without any redeeming features. Grasping in his addiction to money, he tyrannizes his own Nibelung brothers in the furnaces of his industrial empire of Nibelheim, utterly dedicated to money and domination and cruelty—in a word, his is the ugliest face of capitalism. ... In the context of nineteenth-century German revolutionary thought, any allegory of capitalism must imply an antagonism to Judaism as both the spirit and the practice of modern bourgeois capitalism. This sub-text relating to Judaism was evident to contemporary German audiences, and there was no need to spell it out.<sup>20</sup>

Wagner's last opera, *Parsifal*, is widely regarded as his most anti-Semitic. Over the years, and in response to political events, including Bismarck's granting the Jews full emancipation in 1871, Wagner's line on the Jewish question hardened. Redemption through assimilation—the thoroughgoing destruction of Jewish culture, its beliefs and practices—no longer seemed a satisfactory answer. The Jews, as Wagner came to see them, were a race not (or not just) in the Herderian sense of a people (*Volk*) bound by tradition, but in a biological sense. Once a Jew always a Jew. Thus no Jew could be saved.<sup>21</sup> The Jews were beyond that greatest of Wagnerian leitmotifs, redemption:

... let Jew or Jewess intermarry with the most distinct of races, a Jew will always come to birth. Not into the remotest contact is he brought with the religion of any of the civilized nations, for in truth he has no religion at all. ... Thus, the Jew has no need to think nor chatter, not even to calculate, for the hardest calculation lies all cut and dried for him in an instinct shut against all ideality.<sup>22</sup>

This passage is from “Know Thyself,” one of three supplements to Wagner's last group of published essays, *Religion and Art* (1880–1881). Taken together, these essays constitute a brief for an Aryan Christianity racially purified of the Semitic blood of the Jews.<sup>23</sup> Jesus was not a Jew, although he lived among the Jewish people, and the Christian church was dreadfully mistaken in appropriating, as background for its own teaching of love and compassion, the Hebrew Bible, with its God of commandments and punishments, war and domination.<sup>24</sup> Wagner's *Parsifal*, like Wagner's Jesus, is utterly simple, the innocent fool. More pointedly, he is the redeemer who comes from nowhere, or certainly nowhere that could be remotely linked to the blood of the sexually impure Amfortas, or the irredeemably evil Klingsor. *Parsifal* is the symbolic coupling of redemption from sin with racial purity. As such, it is the perfect expression of Wagner's revisionist thinking, Wagner's barely masked anti-Semitism in its most evolved and virulent form.

Reaction to *Parsifal* among Wagner's Jewish admirers was decidedly negative. Particularly telling was the reaction of those Jews who had converted to Christianity. In *Parsifal* they correctly saw Wagner's refusal of their own redemption. They understood that the path to their salvation could no longer be achieved through assimilation. The thoroughgoing destruction of Jewish culture that Wagner had called for at the end of “Judaism in Music” now took on a different and far more ominous tone: the destruction of the Jewish people itself.<sup>25</sup> In line with Wagner's revisionist thinking and its emphasis on racial purity, performances of *Parsifal* were restricted to Bayreuth, and Wagner's Jewish conductor, Hermann Levi, was let go. In the event, Levi was reinstated: King Ludwig, one of Wagner's most important patrons, intervened on his behalf. Nevertheless, Wagner took the baton from Levi and conducted the final “redemption” scene himself.

### III

If Rose and Weiner are correct, Wagner's audiences recognized the anti-Semitism in his music dramas and took little or no exception to it. Either they looked on anti-Semitism with indifference or else they found it attractive. In the late

nineteenth century, anti-Semitism was the fashion. It was a sign of the times. This is no longer true. Today, at least in more enlightened circles, the artistic expression of racism would be regarded as extremely vulgar. But Wagnerian opera is not out of fashion. Quite to the contrary, Wagner continues to fascinate and draw audiences, especially young audiences, from all over the globe. It is a sign of our times as well.

How is it, then, if Rose and Weiner are correct, that Wagner is loved and admired no less today than in his own day? Why do crowds of people still throng to his operas, often traveling great distances, as if on pilgrimage, and not only to Bayreuth, the opera house that Wagner built as a shrine to Wagnerian opera, but to ordinary houses, like those in Chicago and London? And how, finally, shall we explain the attitude of someone like Thomas Mann, who is deeply stirred by Wagner's music, even to the point of love, despite an awareness of the horrors of Nazism that echo within it?

For the enlightened lover and judge of art, Wagner is a problem. The problem of Wagner is the problem of the negative impact of moral value on aesthetic value—a problem that shows, in however negative a fashion, that moral and aesthetic value are not, as the autonomy view would have it, utterly distinct. The problem of Wagner is particularly acute because of the power of Wagner's ideas, both politically and artistically. If Wagner's political views were less powerful, they would not present such a problem for our valuation of his art. If Wagner were a weaker artist, we would not have to pay attention to his politics. We could simply ignore or dismiss the politics along with the art. That Wagner is not only an artistic but a political force to be reckoned with is shown by the variety of attempts to defend his art against the charge of moral viciousness, or to uphold it despite that charge. Since I believe that Rose and Weiner are correct, or that some version of the Rose/Weiner thesis is correct, I shall consider only those attempts that acknowledge the viciousness. I shall consider, and criticize, four of the most plausible or common defensive strategies.

The first strategy is to insist that Wagner's artistic viciousness, although undeniably there, is minimal. No art, or very little art, that is of real value can claim to be entirely free of moral controversy. This is especially true of the great-

est art there is, since it is this art that is apt to yield the most penetrating insights into the most pressing human concerns—concerns such as freedom, the good life, justice, mercy, peace on earth, redemption, and so on, which are hardly free of moral controversy themselves. Thus, art that takes on the big issues, that deals with the human condition, whether realistically, expressively, or in myth, is bound to be morally impure. Not only is Wagner impure, in this sense, but so, too, are Shakespeare, Dante, and even Beethoven. On this line of argument, moral impurity is an artistic liability that is virtually inescapable. The greater the art, moreover, the greater the liability.

The view that art is inescapably impure, from a moral standpoint, is akin to the view that art is justified when it speaks the truth, even if the truth is morally unkind. Neither view is useful, however, in defending Wagner. For one thing, Wagner does not speak the truth. Humanity is not, and ought not to be, as he depicts it. The main point, however, is that the moral impurity of art, if not entirely escapable, surely admits of degrees, and that Wagner's false and vicious views are central, not peripheral, to his artistic project. As we have seen, Wagner's racism is central to his revolutionary agenda, which agenda is in turn central to Wagner's art. The moral viciousness of Wagner's art lies at its very heart. It can neither be minimized, nor can it be defended as true.

The second strategy, which is adopted by Weiner, is to insist that although Wagner's racism is central to his artistic project, and central as well to the reception of Wagner by contemporary audiences, it need not be central to our own reception of Wagner. Weiner writes:

Personally, I refuse to receive Wagner's works as he would have had them received, and the fact that our culture is not Wagner's may constitute our redemption (to use one of his favorite terms) from the Wagnerian agenda and may allow us to experience his breathtakingly beautiful and stirring musical-dramatic accomplishments as works that can be enjoyed *despite* their initial, intended message of racial exclusion.<sup>26</sup>

It is true that Wagner's iconography may no longer mean to us what it once meant to his contemporaries. We may no longer perceive, in the high-pitched whining or shuffling and stumbling

of a Beckmesser or an Alberich, in the low-pitched voice (*Heldentenor*) or Aryan “good looks” of a Walther, Siegfried, or Parsifal, the racial stereotypes that were plainly apparent to Wagner’s audiences. We may no longer know which races Wagner had in mind, or whether, in fact, he had any races in mind—actual races, that is. But it is not hard to see that Wagnerian opera endorses racial exclusion of one kind or another, or, at the very least, that it equates the fitness and worth of human beings with physical and racial characteristics.

Let us take two central examples from Wagner’s *Ring*: Siegfried’s contempt for Mime, and the attraction of the Wolsung twins. Siegfried, who is initially portrayed as a naïf, totally innocent of the world and his noble parentage, is raised by Mime as a son. Notwithstanding his ignorance and the nurturing of Mime, the beautiful and fearless Siegfried cannot suffer the hideously ugly dwarf. Apparently, since he has never seen another human being, Siegfried instinctively senses Mime’s hideousness, and we, too, are meant to see that no real bond could possibly exist between two such disparate types, the one well formed and, unbeknownst to him, noble, the other misshapen and, as it must inevitably turn out, despicable. Wagner succeeds in convincing us that Siegfried’s contempt is quite natural, requiring no justification or explanation whatsoever. It is the same with Siegfried’s biological parents, the Wolsung twins, Siegmund and Sieglinde. Their attraction to one another, based on an unconscious perception of kinship, is the opposite of Siegfried’s contempt.

Wagner’s intended message of racial exclusion does not entirely depend, as Weiner’s argument would seem to imply, on a specific knowledge of racial types. We do not need to know about Teutons, Aryans, or Semites in order to get the message that racial difference justifies contempt, or that love and fellow-feeling exist only within and never across racial lines. Weiner to the contrary, the fact that our culture is not Wagner’s leaves Wagner all the more open to criticism, since our culture—or certainly Weiner’s culture—differs precisely in its awareness of racism as something to be overcome.

The third strategy is to admit there is “a little Nazi in all of us.” This is how Weiner put it to me in personal conversation. A toned-down expression of the same view appears in his book:

... could the “continuing appeal” that Wagner’s music dramas hold for audiences today be based, in part, on their continuing capacity to evoke within Western society, in which Wagner is still primarily performed, those very images of race, sex, and nation that continue to underscore and perpetuate the notions of difference so fundamental to Western culture? Do these works occupy such a prominent position within the Western canon precisely because they dramatize so forcefully the process of exclusion?<sup>27</sup>

It should be noted that the explanation Weiner gives here contradicts his earlier explanation, according to which we are no longer aware of Wagner’s racist iconography and so can enjoy the music dramas with moral impunity. However, I shall ignore this fact and concentrate on the question of whether the little Nazi in all of us—assuming there *is* a little Nazi in all of us—suffices to explain Wagner’s continuing appeal. Our enjoyment of Wagner cannot be explained simply by acknowledging the existence of racist elements in our thinking. For the question is not whether such elements exist. Rather, the question is how those elements figure in our thinking as a whole. Most of us, even if we have racist tendencies, are not outright racists. We are not neo-Nazis. In our considered judgment, racism is something to be condemned rather than applauded or condoned. Weiner’s explanation does not suffice because it fails to consider that our attraction to Wagner may be irrational, that it may result from a judgment that is partial or ill-considered, or from no judgment at all.

The fourth strategy is to argue that Wagner’s continuing appeal is neither rational nor irrational, that it is not the result of a judgment for which any sort of reason, however partial or ill-considered, could be given, but rather an instinct or gut feeling. In his recent book on Wagner, Michael Tanner says that Wagner’s art propagates values that lie below the surface of our understanding, thereby defeating all attempts at criticism. Tanner is surely right that we cannot criticize what we cannot understand. But it is hard to see how Wagner’s art, charged as it is with revolutionary *ideas*, falls into that category. Moreover, even if it were true that Wagner’s art eludes the understanding, it is not at all clear that we should admire, rather than, say, mistrust it. We may be intrigued, even fascinated. But should we admire Wagner as a great artist just because

we are impressed by his power to affect us unconsciously? In order for Tanner's explanation to go through, our attraction to Wagner must be incorporated into a considered judgment that takes the unconscious appeal of his art into account. Wagner's appeal, albeit unconscious, does not "mark ... the defeat of criticism," since it must itself submit to critical appraisal.<sup>28</sup>

The explanations offered by Weiner and Tanner, which effectively protect Wagner's art from moral censure, either by morally implicating the critic or by denying the possibility of criticism, do not fully reckon with the fact that aesthetic judgment has a normative as well as a descriptive component. We may enjoy Wagner's art for any number of reasons, including those given by Weiner and Tanner. But we need not regard the art we enjoy as *ipso facto* worthy of esteem. Aesthetic judgment concerns what we *should* like and not (or not just) what we *do* like.

#### IV

My own approach to the problem of Wagner is not strictly a solution. It does not solve the problem of Wagner in the sense of justifying the continuing appeal of his art. But it does point the way to a solution—by making room for and, indeed, in the case of Wagner, prescribing aesthetic reform. The criticism voiced in these pages has all gone to show that Wagner's viciousness is central to his art. What, then, of the critic who continues to esteem Wagner while condemning his racist agenda? In my view, such a critic exercises poor judgment due to aesthetic akrasia. If and when the akrasia is resolved, the critic's judgment will change.

Like Thomas Mann, I find the racism of the music dramas deplorable, and yet I am deeply stirred. Indeed, I am stirred because of the very racism I deplore. Wagner's revolutionary fervor sweeps me along, and I become fascinated, or at least not repulsed, by the idea that humanity should be redeemed through the destruction or exclusion of its "lower" or "inferior" members. The appeal of Wagner's racism lies in an ideal of purity. Wagner's racism speaks powerfully to a longing for simplicity and wholeness, to a yearning for finality and totality, to a craving for existence without shading, complexity, compromise, or doubt. It is this, I think, more than any-

thing else, or at least as much as anything else, that makes the music dramas so compelling.

In my considered judgment, Wagner's art is not worthy to be esteemed because the ideal of purity on which it centrally depends for its artistic success is not itself a worthy ideal. Quite to the contrary, Wagner's ideal of racial purity is morally vicious. It is the pursuit of evil. I am not so prudish or naive as to deny the attractiveness of this ideal. But such an admission hardly justifies my continuing to admire Wagner as a great artist. In my considered judgment, a taste for Wagner shows poor judgment and should therefore be changed. I cannot say just how this change comes about—how, that is, a move from aesthetic akrasia to evaluative strength is effected. However, I do know that change of this kind is possible.

In *The Case of Wagner*, Friedrich Nietzsche describes his own devaluation of Wagner as a move from sickness to health. In Nietzsche's memorable words, "*Wagner est une névrose*" (Wagner is a neurosis) that corrupts music by corrupting those who enjoy it.

Wagner's art is sick. The problems he presents on stage—all of them problems of hysterics—the convulsive nature of his affects, his overexcited sensibility, his taste that required ever stronger spices, his instability which he dressed up as principles, not least of all the choice of his heroes and heroines—consider them as physiological types (a pathological gallery!)—all of this taken together represents a profile of sickness that permits no further doubt. *Wagner est une névrose*. ... Wagner represents a great corruption of music. He has guessed that it is a means to excite weary nerves—and with that he has made music sick.<sup>29</sup>

Whereas Wagner's music is likened to a nervous disease, Bizet's *Carmen* acts as a tonic, improving Nietzsche's health and consequently his taste.

May I say that the tone of Bizet's orchestra is almost the only one I can still endure? That other orchestral tone which is now the fashion, Wagner's, brutal, artificial, and "innocent" at the same time—thus it speaks all at once to the three senses of the modern soul—how harmful for me is this Wagnerian orchestral tone! I call it *sirocco*. I break out into a disagree-

able sweat. *My good weather is gone. ... I become a better human being when this Bizet speaks to me. Also a better musician, a better listener.*<sup>30</sup>

Nietzsche's turn toward Bizet, given the extent of his admiration for and personal attachment to Wagner, signifies what must have been a prodigious struggle. Despite its obvious grandstanding, *The Case of Wagner* provides a genuine example of aesthetic reform.

v

I turn now to the place of aesthetic akrasia within a general theory of art. We have seen what aesthetic akrasia tells us about aesthetic judgment—namely, that aesthetic judgment is a species of considered judgment that is, like all such judgment, potentially subject to conflict. What does aesthetic akrasia tell us about art? What must art be like, such that it permits, and seems at times even to promote, as in the case of Wagner, evaluative weakness? Can akrasia itself be a source of aesthetic value? Must it always be accounted a vice or can it be part of what makes at least some art worthwhile?

Let us first address these questions in the case of Wagner. Can the fact that Wagner's art invites akrasia possibly be said to count in its favor? This question is not as strange as it sounds. Akrasia is not a pleasant experience; no one, presumably, would seek it out. But other emotions and states called for by art—for example, the pity and fear appropriate to works of tragedy—are not pleasant experiences either. Pity, fear, pain, sadness, and even horror seem to be fully compatible with aesthetic satisfaction.<sup>31</sup> That we take delight in, or willingly engage with, artworks that evoke these and other "negative" responses shows that aesthetic experience need not, in any narrow sense, be pleasurable.<sup>32</sup>

Insofar as the tragic emotions of pity and fear underscore the vulnerability to which human attachments—to family, friends, country, life, etc.—give rise, and the akrasia occasioned by Wagnerian opera underscores the vulnerability, the liability to prejudice, cruelty, etc., to which the longing for purity gives rise, we may think of these cases as on a par. Among the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune are not only loss, destruction, and death, but the indignity of being a

creature whose very own will is subject to evaluative weakness. Just as the experience of pity and fear can be valued because it fortifies and enlarges our humanity, so too, it might be thought, the experience of akrasia can be valued as instructive or even humbling.

However, tragedy and Wagnerian opera are not on a par as regards the negative responses they elicit. The plot of a tragedy, its central element, according to Aristotle, is *designed* to elicit the tragic emotions. Whoever does not experience as pitiful and fearful the unfolding of tragic events—events concerning a terrible reversal of fortune on the part of a basically good person who is, in relevant respects, not unlike ourselves—simply fails to get the point. Akrasia does not play a similarly central role in Wagnerian opera. In fact, it plays no role at all. Wagner's art is not ironic; it does not distance us from its vision.<sup>33</sup> Rather, it *charms* us into finding that vision attractive.

In the *Critique of Judgment*, Kant is careful to distinguish beauty, as the proper ground of aesthetic judgment, from charm. Nevertheless, Kant reserves a place for charm in aesthetic judgment as a heuristic. Since charm is what often draws our attention to an object, it puts us in a position to respond to the object's beauty:

... charms may be added to beauty as a supplement: they may offer the mind more than that [*sic*] dry liking, by also making the presentation of the object interesting to it, and hence they may commend to us taste and its cultivation, above all if our taste is still crude and unpracticed. But charms do actually impair the judgment of taste if they draw attention to themselves as [if they were] bases for judging beauty. For the view that they contribute to beauty is so far off the mark that it is in fact only as aliens that they must, indulgently, be granted admittance when taste is still weak and unpracticed, and only insofar as they do not interfere with the beautiful form.<sup>34</sup>

I agree with Kant that charm should not be made the basis of aesthetic judgment. However, I submit that charm is not only what draws us to art in the first place but is what continues to hold our interest. I do not think the proper pleasure of art contains no admixture of charm. Indeed, I would go so far as to say that charm does not just *coincide with* but actually *constitutes* that pleasure in very many instances.

Much of what we find charming in art derives from wishful fantasies that are as unshakable as they are unrealistic: the triumph of good over evil, the purity of innocence, the nobility of suffering, the coupling of beauty with goodness and ugliness with evil. In a quite general sense, art—or certainly much of it—reassures us that things fit together, that there is purpose or meaning to what can be senseless or chaotic in reality. After all, the business of art is *appearance*. If bad people are not always ugly, or good people beautiful, that is no matter for the artist, whose variety, preselected with an eye to unity, need not contain any loose ends or rough edges. Art is an *artificial* whole, not a real one.

Although the proper pleasure of art may indeed lie in its charm, aesthetic judgment must take more than art's charm into account. Aesthetic judgment, as a considered judgment about the worthiness of art to be esteemed, must take into account potentially all that a human being purposes and endeavors, believes, desires, and values. Art is free to set its own terms, to aim at whatever it likes and exert whatever power it has to attract and hold our interest. But the critic is likewise free, and there is no reason to assume that the terms of criticism and those of art will be the same. A critic who understands what art is about and appreciates its success in achieving its aim can nevertheless condemn a work as unoriginal, trivial, pandering, or base. Art's business is to persuade, proposition, seduce. The critic's business is to respond, not just as an expert in this or that period or style, or as one whose powers of discrimination are surpassing, but as a human being in the fullest sense.

In judging art we judge the experience art has to offer. This experience, I have suggested, requires psychological participation on the part of a *real* self, not a *quasi* one—a self with its own attitudes and emotions, a self that is wise or foolish, worldly or naive, prejudiced, conflicted, weak-willed, a self that is lulled into apathy or stirred into action, that has gone “beyond morality” or remained within the bounds of convention. What we are to make of art, how we judge it, will depend in part on who we are in relation to it, on how we are reflected in and affected by it. In the act of judging, we bring to art our *whole self*—a self that can be strengthened and preserved by art but also weakened and in some cases destroyed.

The *akrasia* occasioned by Wagnerian opera is by no means unique. We are surrounded by images, artistic and other, that invite the wrong kind of admiration, images that glorify what is base, trivial, or vain, images of power, beauty, and wealth that manipulate our desires and empty our pocketbooks. To the extent that artworks exploit these images, and a great many do, aesthetic judgment cannot be separated from moral judgment. Art's worthiness to be esteemed depends in part on the worthiness of the interests it engages, the attitudes and emotions it calls forth, the values it brings into play. It depends not only on whether we *are* pleased, but also on whether, in our considered judgment, we *should be* pleased—whether the proper pleasure of art is itself judged proper.<sup>35</sup>

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1. Quoted in Paul Lawrence Rose, *Wagner: Race and Revolution* (Yale University Press, 1992), p. 173.

2. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, ed. R. McKeon (New York: Random House, 1941), 1147a25–30.

3. Alfred Mele, *Irrationality: An Essay on Akrasia, Self-Deception, and Self-Control* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 53–54.

4. For a discussion of this kind of case and of other cases of akratic belief, see Amélie Rorty, “Akratic Believers,” *American Philosophical Quarterly* 20 (1983): 175–183; David Pears, *Motivated Irrationality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984); John Heil, “Doxastic Incontinence,” *Mind* 93 (1984): 56–70; and Alfred Mele, “Incontinent Believing,” *The Philosophical Quarterly* 36 (1986): 212–222.

5. It has not been entirely overlooked; see Anita Silvers, “Aesthetic ‘Akrasia’: On Disliking Good Art,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 31 (1972): 227–234.

6. Bernard Williams, *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy* (Harvard University Press, 1985), p. 125.

7. It is not that low art does not have profound content but rather that it treats that content—death, disease, war, famine, etc.—oversimply, sentimentally, or sensationally.

8. Kendall Walton, *Mimesis as Make-Believe* (Harvard University Press, 1990), pp. 258–259.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 255.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 241.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 273.

12. Wayne Booth, *The Company We Keep: An Ethics of Fiction* (University of California Press, 1988), p. 60.

13. It has been observed, however, that *akrasia* need not be immoral and can in fact be moral, as when a person re-

solves to commit murder but does not carry it off because of failure of nerve.

14. See Harry Frankfurt, "Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person," *The Journal of Philosophy* 68 (1971): 5–20. A person's will is free if she is free to want what she wants to want. A person's will is weak (i.e., not free) if what she wants to want and what she in fact wants conflict.

15. Rose, *Wagner: Race and Revolution*.

16. "Judaism in Music," in Richard Wagner, *Judaism in Music and other Essays*, trans. William Ashton Ellis (University of Nebraska Press, 1995), pp. 90–91.

17. It is usually said that Beckmesser is a caricature of Eduard Hanslick, the influential Viennese critic and one of Wagner's most outspoken opponents. There is textual support for this, since in an earlier draft Beckmesser is called "Hanslich."

18. From Marc Weiner, *Richard Wagner and the Anti-Semitic Imagination* (University of Nebraska Press, 1995), pp. 66–67. Embedded quotations are from "Judaism in Music" and another of Wagner's essays, "What is German?" For a similar treatment of Beckmesser, see Barry Millington, "Nuremberg Trial: Is There Anti-Semitism in *Die Meistersinger*?" *Cambridge Opera Journal* (1991): 247–260.

19. The central opposition between love and law was explicit in an earlier draft of the *Ring*, as John Deathridge notes in his introductory remarks to the Metropolitan Opera's video disc (*Deutsche Grammophon*, James Levine, conductor): "Sounding as if she has just finished reading the complete works of Feuerbach [whom Wagner read and admired], she [Brünnhilde] announces that 'love' (*Liebe*) is in direct antithesis to 'law' (*Gesetz*). All along, this has been the crux of Wotan's dilemma: to overcome his frustrated love of humanity he has had to break his own laws. In doing so he has come to realize that power based on 'law' can carry no moral force. But society is cleansed by his destruction, and freedom and order will be restored. If Alberich cursed love for the sake of power at the beginning of the cycle, Brünnhilde completes the circle at the end with the announcement that power [=law] has been dissolved for the sake of love."

20. Rose, *Wagner: Race and Revolution*, pp. 68–69.

21. A view based on Wagner's racist misreading of Darwin.

22. "Know Thyself," in Richard Wagner, *Religion and Art*, trans. William Ashton Ellis (University of Nebraska Press, 1994), p. 271.

23. Judaism is a religion not of race but of covenant, signified by acceptance of the commandments brought down by Moses from Mount Sinai. In accordance with both the

history and the practice of Judaism, a person of any race or nationality who enters the covenant is a member of the Jewish people, and of equal status to those "born Jews" who are brought into the covenant shortly after birth. The point is made movingly by the Bible itself: Ruth, great-grandmother of King David, from whose house the Messiah is to come, is herself a convert to Judaism.

24. Wagner, *Religion and Art*, p. 233: "it is sufficient to derive the ruin of the Christian religion from its drawing upon Judaism for the elaboration of its dogmas."

25. Wagner, "Judaism in Music," p. 100: "But remember, only one thing can redeem you from the burden of your curse—the redemption of Ahasverus: Destruction [*Untergang*]!"

26. Weiner, *Richard Wagner and the Anti-Semitic Imagination*, p. 29.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 30.

28. Michael Tanner, *Wagner* (Princeton University Press, 1996), pp. 154–155.

29. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Case of Wagner*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), p. 166.

30. *Ibid.*, p. 157.

31. See Aristotle's discussion of tragic pleasure in the *Poetics*. See also Stephen Davies, *Musical Meaning and Expression* (Cornell University Press, 1994), pp. 307–317 and "The Evaluation of Music," in *What is Music?* ed. Philip Alpers (Pennsylvania State University Press, 1987), pp. 303–325; Jerrold Levinson, "Music and Negative Emotion," *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 63 (1982): 327–346, reprinted in *Music, Art, and Metaphysics* (Cornell University Press, 1990) and "Pleasure and the Value of Works of Art," in *The Pleasures of Aesthetics* (Cornell University Press, 1996), pp. 11–24.

32. See Martha C. Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 378–394, *Love's Knowledge* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), and "Tragedy and Self-sufficiency: Plato and Aristotle on Fear and Pity," in *Essays on Aristotle's Poetics*, ed. Amélie Oksenberg Rorty (Princeton University Press, 1992), pp. 261–290.

33. For art that does incorporate such a distancing device, see my "The Practical Wisdom of Beethoven's *Diabelli Variations*," *The Musical Quarterly* 79 (1995): 35–54.

34. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. Werner S. Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987), §14.

35. I would like to thank the anonymous readers of *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* who provided valuable comments and suggestions on an earlier version of this paper.