The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled "Veneration and Revolt: Hermann Hesse and Swabian Pietism" submitted by Barry Stephenson in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to offer an interpretation of the novels of Hermann Hesse in the context of Hesse's Swabian Pietist heritage. Hesse is one of the most widely read German authors in the world, and for two generations several of his works have been a staple of popular religion and spirituality in Europe and North America. Hesse's works have received a great deal of critical and scholarly study, but little has been done to better understand the influence of Pietism (the religion of Hesse's family and native Swabia) on Hesse's thought and literature. Hesse's Pietist upbringing and heritage contributed to his moral and political views, his pacifism and internationalism, the confessional and autobiographical style of his literature, his romantic mysticism, his suspicion of bourgeois culture, his ecumenical outlook, and, in an era scarred by two World Wars, to his hopes for the future. Hesse was no Pietist. In adolescence he rejected both the tradition and his family's expectation that he become a theologian, cleric, and missionary. But Hesse's conversation with his religious heritage continued throughout his entire life and is stamped on his literature; this study retrieves the details of that conversation.
PREFACE

‘Hesse and Swabian Pietism.’ Since beginning my dissertation this phrase has provoked more than a few blanks looks from those interlocutors who have ventured to ask what I am so busily working on. ‘Hesse and Buddhism,’ ‘Hesse and Jung,’ ‘Hesse and the Sixties,’ maybe even ‘Hesse and the Fairy Tale’—these titles make a good deal of sense: But ‘Hesse and Swabian Pietism?’ ‘Yes,’ I would frequently—and, toward the end, rather impatiently—plead: ‘Hesse’s novels owe a great deal to his Pietist heritage, but no one has really looked into it.’ ‘No way,’ a critic informed me one day in the coffee house I frequented while writing this study. ‘Hesse and LSD,’ would be a good topic.’ ‘LSD?’ ‘Yeah, he wrote his stuff—like Siddhartha and Steppenwolf—under the influence of LSD.’ ‘No,’ I calmly replied, having heard this one several times already. ‘LSD was discovered in 1938, Siddhartha was written in 1922, and Steppenwolf in 1927. No LSD. Pietism, that’s the key.’ My critic remained unconvinced. This study is the result of my attempt to put some flesh on an apparently bold claim.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My thanks go out to my supervisor Professor Douglas Shantz, Chair of Christian Thought, University of Calgary. Without his support and ideas this study would not have been written. To Peter Erb and Ron Grimes at Wilfrid Laurier University I owe a tremendous debt. They helped get me started on this path. Monika, Elea, and Kai have patiently put up with my absent-mindedness during too many suppers to count. Many an hour was spent talking Hermann Hesse with Jim Moreau; thanks for lending me your ear, and for straightening me out more than once. Thanks go out to my committee members and readers from the University of Calgary (Professor Morny Joy, Professor Lyle Eslinger, Dr. Horst Mastag, and Professor Clara Joseph) and to Professor Eugene Stelzig, State University of New York, Geneseo. I would like to express my gratitude to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council’s support of this study through a Doctoral Fellowship.
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INTRODUCTION

Despite all my rebelling ... I have nevertheless remained the missionary's son.
- Hermann Hesse, Christmas Eve, 1930

Hermann Hesse (1877-1962) was born and raised in the southwest German region of Swabia. His hometown of Calw is nestled in the idyllic Neckar valley, on the banks of the Nagold River. Hesse’s parents and grandparents were devout Pietists, members of an influential religious movement that emerged during the seventeenth century as a response to an excessive emphasis on religious confessions, the rationalization of religion, and the destruction of the Thirty Years War. Conceived by Philip Jacob Spener (1635-1705) the aim of the movement was to reinvigorate the spiritual life of individual Christians as well as the life of the Evangelical Lutheran Church through an emphasis on personal experience and charitable service in the world. Pietism struck deep roots in Swabia; the earliest Pietist conventicles there were founded in Stuttgart and Calw. Hesse’s hometown would remain a hot bed of Pietist activity well into the twentieth century. Hesse’s family ran a publishing house (Haus des Calwer Verlagsverein, founded in 1829) producing Bibles, religious histories, and devotional literature, largely in support of missionary work. Hesse’s grandfather Hermann Gundert (1814-1893) was a scholar and linguist of no little talent and served as a missionary in India. In India Gundert met a young Johannes Hesse (1847-1916), who had at the age of 18 dedicated himself to the service of Christ. After studies at the mission center in Basel, Johannes Hesse spent four years in India before being forced to return to Europe for reasons of ill health, where he joined Gundert in Calw and assisted him
in the running of the publishing house. It was in Calw that Johannes would meet Gundert’s
daughter Marie, and the two were married in 1873; their son Hermann, the second of four
children, was born July 2, 1879.

By all accounts, the Hesse family was single-minded in their commitment to Christ
and their dedication to embodying Christian life through practical service; they were also
learned, highly cultured individuals. Hermann Gundert was fluent in several European and
Indian languages, and his Malajalam-German lexicon is still the standard work in the field;
Johannes Hesse’s “thought and religion evidenced the broadening and tempering effect of
Latin literature, Greek philosophies, and Oriental religions.” Marie Gundert Hesse (1842-
1902), five years her husband’s senior, was born in Talatscheri, India, and spent her early
years between India and schools in Germany and Switzerland. Fluent in several languages,
Marie Hesse organized the extensive missionary events in and around Calw, wrote respected
biographies of Bishop James Hannington and David Livingstone, filled many volumes of
journals with recollections and verse, and was mother to nine children. The Hesse-Gundert
household, as Hermann Hesse would oft later recall, was abuzz with activity, magic, and
love, if also an exacting faith and clear sense of service to the kingdom of God.

From an early age Hermann Hesse was groomed to follow in the footsteps of his
father and even more so his grandfather—the path of seminarian and theological student at
the Maulbronn cloister school near Calw and the Tübingen Stift. “In my twelfth year when
the question of my taking Greek arose I answered yes without hesitation, for to become in
time as learned as my father, and if possible my grandfather, seemed essential. But from that
day on, a life plan was laid out for me; I was to study and become either a preacher or a
philologist, for there were scholarships for these professions. My grandfather too had once
followed this path." But Hesse would reject his family’s plans and confessional, ecclesiastical Christianity in adolescence—a decision that precipitated a prolonged and difficult crisis in which Hesse struggled against the desires, faith, and pleas of his parents. At age fourteen Hesse dropped out of Maulbronn seminary, vowing to become, as he later recalled, "a poet or nothing at all," a goal he achieved, winning the Noble Prize for literature in 1946.

Today, Hermann Hesse is one of the most widely read German authors in the world; his novels have been translated into more than sixty languages; the study of Hesse’s life and works has produced a vast secondary literature. In his lifetime Hesse was widely read in Europe. Youth disaffected with the direction of industrial society, religious and educational institutions, and German nationalism found in his works hope for the future. Hesse received and replied to countless letters from young people searching for answers amidst the chaos of two world wars. Several of his works—Beneath the Wheel (1906), Demian (1919), Siddhartha (1922), and Steppenwolf (1927)—became popular with North American counterculturalists during the 1960s and 1970s. Hesse’s critique of social institutions and a literature imbued with an individualistic, mystical spirituality found a home in the spiritual awakening of the sixties. Interest in Hesse’s literature has not been limited to popular culture. Romain Rolland and Thomas Mann, Hesse’s peers and contemporaries, held his work in high esteem; T.S. Eliot was an admirer of the cultural criticism found in Hesse’s early essays on Dostoevsky; the Swiss theologian Hans Küng lauds Hesse’s literature as an example of the spirit of religious pluralism and inter-faith dialogue. 2002 was the 125th anniversary of Hesse’s birth, and the event was marked by a year of festivals, exhibits, conferences, concerts, lectures, readings, and interpretive travel-tours in Germany, Switzerland, India,
Japan, Korea, Italy, and Great Britain. 'Hermann Hesse Jahr' renewed scholarly interest in Hesse; many new works have appeared in the past three years. More than forty years after his death, and more than seventy five years after the publication of *Siddhartha* and *Steppenwolf*, the two works most closely identified with Hesse, and still standard fare in bookshops around the world and even the odd university class, Hesse continues to find a wide readership and is able to generate enormous interest. *Suhrkamp Verlag*, Hesse’s publisher, continues to average sales of thirty thousand volumes a month. Hesse’s appeal has been and remains as broad as it is deep. Hesse, it would seem, traveled a long way from his provincial Pietist roots in the small Swabian town of Calw—but appearances can be deceiving.

While the name of Hesse is well known, those familiar with his novels have often never heard of Pietism, yet this little known religious tradition played a significant role in shaping Hesse’s literary oeuvre. Hesse’s experience of Pietism was “deep and strong,” and remained a lasting influence. The “lives of my parents and grandparents,” Hesse would write, “were completely and entirely determined by the Kingdom of God, in whose service they stood ready. That people should see their lives as a loan from God, and endeavor to live them not on [the basis of] egoistic urges but as service and sacrifice to God, this chief experience and inheritance of my childhood has strongly influenced my life.” Far from a simple case of outright rejection, Hesse struggled to come to terms with his Pietist heritage in a “back and forth between veneration and revolt,” and his literary works bear the marks of this struggle. To be sure, Hesse was no Pietist; but he realized that “despite all [his] rebelling” he “nevertheless remained the missionary’s son”—that is, he stood in a tradition, and owed that tradition a loyalty and a debt. If Pietism was an obstacle to be overcome, it was no less a fundamental condition and context of Hesse’s thought, a fact that Hesse became increasingly
cognizant of as he matured as a writer. In a late letter to his cousin Wilhelm Gundert, Hesse discusses how both men received something of the spirit and character of their grandfather’s generation, through their work formed and shaped that inheritance anew, and in so doing passed it on to the next generation—“the tradition will not end.”\textsuperscript{14} As philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer has noted, tradition need not be equated with conservation. Rather, tradition implies transmission; the encounter with tradition “means learning how to grasp and express the past anew.”\textsuperscript{15} Hesse’s encounter with Pietism is to be found in his novels, essays, and stories, and my aim in this dissertation is to better understand the impact of Pietism on Hesse’s literature.

Hesse is popularly associated with the ‘mystical East,’ and the bulk of scholarly work dealing with the religious dimensions of Hesse’s writing has taken aim at understanding the influences of Asian literature and religious thought.\textsuperscript{16} But the originating point of what has become the global Hesse phenomenon, the small Black Forest town of Calw, can also be fruitfully considered the orienting center of Hesse’s corpus. Though Hesse would leave Swabia and even his country behind, he returned time and again to the world of his birth and youth—not often by train, to be sure, but frequently by way of memory, imagination, and narrative. Swabia and Calw were Hesse’s favored imaginal and narrative space:

\begin{quote}
Between Bremen and Nepal, between Vienna and Singapore I’ve seen many beautiful cities: cities on the sea and cities high in the mountains. And as a pilgrim I have taken a drink from many wells that later left in me the sweet poison of homesickness … the most beautiful city of all that I know is Calw on the Nagold, a small, old, Swabian town in the Black Forest.\textsuperscript{17}
\end{quote}

When I began to read Hermann Hesse’s stories, poems, recollections, and letters, years earlier having read several of his novels, I was surprised to discover how frequently they deal
with the history, people, and places of Hesse's native Swabia: the towns, the landscapes, the
details of Hesse's personal biography, but also the broader religious and cultural traditions of
Swabia are omnipresent in Hesse's fiction and essays. And even Siddhartha, the work that
served to wed Hesse to eastern religions, represented for Hesse a "turning back to
Christianity," and is closely connected to his Pietist-Protestant Swabian heritage. Like
many North American readers, I had been reared on images of Hesse as the icon of 1960s
counter culture—a "pilgrim of crisis," a "rebel-seeker," the "western man most in touch
with the wisdom of the east." But Hesse, I came to realize, was a man intimately in touch
with the place and wisdom of Swabia, and this offered me a fresh starting point from which
to approach the question of the religious dimensions of Hesse's literature.

Mark Boulby is among those Hesse scholars to point out that Hesse's literature
springs from "deep Swabian roots." Certainly there has been recognition of the "Swabian
Hesse." Hesse's early Gerbersau tales and novels such as Peter Camenzind and Beneath the Wheel evocatively portray the people, places, and ethos of Swabia. The documentary
style of Hesse's literary beginnings appeals to many Germanists. The Gerbersau stories are a
window into life in Swabia at the turn of the twentieth century, and the straightforward,
sentimental style of recollection informing them still resonates with German readers.
Scholars have commented that Hesse's literature is permeated by the "regional spirit" of
Swabia, that it "shows his love for his native Swabia and Calw, his connection to Swabian air
and land, with the spirit and idiom of Swabia," and that Hesse's memory of Swabia,
"continued to fascinate [him] until the end of his life." But they have rarely considered the
fact that no "German region had its spiritual tenor so deeply and permanently shaped by
Pietism as did Württemberg." Studying the religious dimensions of Hesse's literature
requires dealing with Pietism not just because Hesse was born into a Pietist family and in adolescence suffered a protracted religious and vocational crisis, but also because he was born into and so strongly affected by the ethos and worldview of Swabian culture, a culture greatly influenced by Pietism.

The methodological approach of this dissertation is informed by the work of Giles Gunn on the relations between religion and literature. Gunn calls for a hermeneutics of restoration to supplement the hermeneutics of suspicion that has dominated scholarly discourse in the past few decades. The connections between religion and literature, argues Gunn, are best understood “in terms of the ecology rather than the pathology of their relations.” This restorative and ecological impulse informs what I am attempting in this dissertation. My approach is similar to Gunn’s description of “traditional criticism,” which aims to achieve a “restoration of literary works and writers to certain of the religious and ethical traditions which inform them and which constitute a portion of their meaning.”

Pietism was for Hesse just such a tradition. Hesse was eclectic, and in his literature he cobbled together from a variety of sources a world view and a narrative identity. But the Pietist-Protestantism of Swabia is one of these sources, and an important one. It “was not by accident that I was born the son of pious Protestants,” Hesse writes. “I am Protestant by temperament and nature as well...” “I don’t know what you mean,” wrote Hesse in a letter of 1935,
Hesse’s emphasis on introspection and religious subjectivity, his autobiographical and confessional literary style, his ethic of self-will, his aesthetics and efforts to unify artistic and religious impulses, his conception of God, implicit epistemology and anthropology, his moral and political views, the skepticism and cynicism with which he viewed bourgeois, fin de siècle German culture, his chiliasm and utopianism, his pluralist, ecumenical outlook, his speculative mysticism, his criticism of church and state, his conception of a spiritual realm of immortal beings, his preoccupation with the themes of sin, grace, and guilt—all these aspects of Hesse's thought owe something to and are worked out in relation to Pietism and Protestant culture.

Many of these themes are central to Hesse's entire corpus, yet it is possible to associate certain of them with particular works, and this will be our approach here. The structure of the dissertation more or less follows the chronology of Hesse’s major novels, but uses each of these to focus on a particular set of issues or themes. I open each chapter with a discussion of relevant social-historical or theological features of Pietism, provide some biographical context, and then move on to examine one or more of Hesse’s novels. Where appropriate, the discussion will also draw on other works from Hesse’s corpus—letters, essays, and short stories. We begin with a look at Hesse’s adolescent crisis—the flight from Maulbronn, his rejection of Pietism, and the fictionalization of this period in his literature. I employ both a social-historical and a biographical-psychological perspective, a procedure that alters typical understandings of Hesse’s relationship to Pietism and his adolescent revolt, and which is more faithful to Hesse’s first major attempt at fictionalizing the Maulbronn affair, the short novel Beneath the Wheel. Chapter 2 deals with the relationship between Pietism and literary culture, the reaction of Hesse’s family to his
interest in Romanticism and his early writings, and Hesse’s first major literary success, Peter Camenzind. The years before and during the First World War were extremely difficult for Hesse. If the flight from Maulbronn marked the first significant period of crisis and a radical alteration in Hesse’s world view and way of life, the war years, understandably, marked a second period of profound self-scrutiny and transformation. In Chapter 3 we examine Hesse’s wartime writings— the novel Demian and several essays—in the context of Pietist chiliiasm and the impact of Pietist thought and culture on Hesse’s social and political views. Hesse’s mysticism has been frequently commented on. In Chapter 4 we approach Hesse’s Siddhartha from the perspective of the speculative mystical tradition in Swabia, in particular in the context of the work of Christoph Friedrich Oetinger. Oetinger was a favorite of Hesse’s and Siddhartha has many similarities and continuities with Oetinger’s Böhmist derived mysticism. With the publication of Steppenwolf Hesse gave birth to and consolidated a radically confessional style of writing that had been in process for several years. Steppenwolf is often read in connection to Hesse’s Pietist past, with the psychological dynamics of sin and guilt surrounding Hesse’s relationship to parents playing center stage. In Chapter 5 we approach Steppenwolf from the perspective of the Pietist “principle,” as Hesse referred to it, of ‘breaking the will.’ The last chapter, ‘Narrative Journeys and Joseph Knecht,’ examines the place of Pietism in Hesse’s final two novels, The Journey to the East and The Glass Bead Game, written during the rise of Hitler and the devastation of the Second World War. In these late works Pietism emerges as a central thread in Hesse’s narrative self and in his efforts to address the social and cultural problems of the day.
Literature Review

Joseph Mileck claims that “Pietism’s influence remained the major determinant in Hesse’s life.” Yet when I turned to the secondary literature I discovered that little work has been done to interpret Hesse’s works in the context of their Christian influences. The “secondary literature on Hesse is immense” but “since the study of Gerhard Mayer in 1956 scarcely anything new” has contributed to our understanding of Hesse’s relationship to Christianity. In particular, studies of the relations between Hesse’s literature and Pietism are conspicuous by their absence. An early dissertation on Hesse and Pietism is one of the very few works devoted to the topic, but it is a biographical study, and as Joseph Mileck commented, nearly forty years ago, “remains of interest only to the biographer or to the student of Pietism, but has no direct bearing on Hesse and his art.... The problem has still to be investigated.” Forty years on, the problem remains relatively untouched. The reception and interpretation of Hesse’s works have been strongly shaped by the weight of scholarly and popular interest in timely topics: Buddhism and the East, Romanticism and Modernism, Nietzsche and Psychoanalysis have been timely, Pietism, has not. Both insight into and misunderstanding of the impact of Pietism on Hesse and his art are scattered across two generations of scholarship, and it is high time to collect what has been done, submit it to critique, and add something new to the discussion.

As mentioned, there are few studies focusing on the question of Hesse and Pietism. Discussions of Pietism tend to be scattered throughout the secondary literature, and I will draw on and refer to these in the course of our study. Here, I will give an overview of general
trends in Hesse scholarship. In the following two sections I will provide a brief introduction to Pietism in Swabia, and discuss my theoretical and methodological approach to the topic.

Where the question of Pietism has drawn the attention of Hesse scholars the methodology employed has generally followed the route of intellectual biography, and has concentrated on family history, largely for two reasons. First, Hesse’s grandfather, Hermann Gundert, mother Marie (Gundert) Hesse, and father, Johannes Hesse (1847-1916) were missionaries in India, and as Hesse writes, the family “had not only a rich and fairly thorough knowledge of Hindu forms of belief but also… sympathy, though only half admitted, for those forms. I breathed and participated in spiritual Hinduism from childhood just as much as I did in Christianity.” Hesse’s interest in Asian religions was thus first stimulated by his family, and a discussion of the family serves as a springboard to Hesse’s encounter with the literature, religions, and cultures of Asia.

The second, and for the purposes of this dissertation, more important reason Hesse’s family has received attention in the secondary literature is because the religious culture and vocation of Pietism is something that Hesse first absorbed and then rejected in his youth. Christoph Gellner, for example, opens his study with a biographical account of Hesse’s early years, drawing attention to Hesse’s family’s ties to India, their prudish Pietistic morality, and Hesse’s rebellious confrontation with social institutions and family. This storyline has become almost canonical in Hesse studies; its recounting is something of a required, ritualized act. Hesse’s life was the grist for the mill producing his fiction, and much of his literature deals with the formative years of childhood and adolescence, with the world of Calw and Swabia, with Pietism, and with the Maulbronn affair. Attention has been given in
the secondary literature to Hesse’s fictionalization of these early years, where discussion of the Pietism of Hesse’s family naturally comes into play.  

What kinds of conceptions of Hesse’s relationship to Pietism and its impact on his literature are to be found in the secondary literature? A short passage from Walter Sorell’s 1974 study, Hermann Hesse, A Man Who Sought and Found Himself, is representative of general trends:

Such a self-willed, indeed, obstinate boy as the young Hesse could not help but revolt against Christianity, surrounded as he was by the strict and constricting rules of Pietism that took the evil in man for granted and was ready to exorcise it with all possible means for the sake of the soul’s salvation.... But wherever Hesse encountered any dogmatic restraint imposed on the individual, he withdrew.... He selected from each doctrine the features which respected the inner freedom of man, the humane and enlightening pathways leading to our experience of God.

There are several features of this passage I should like to highlight.

First and foremost is the tendency among Hesse scholars to draw attention to the crisis of Hesse’s adolescence. While this is indeed an important biographical context informing Hesse’s literature and his mature attitude toward Pietism, the picture remains incomplete if this is the only image the reader receives. Persistent and narrow interest in Hesse’s experiences at Maulbronn seminary and his troubled youth serves to reduce all discussion of Pietism to Hesse’s family—and thereby to theoretical and methodological approaches that concentrate on biography and psychological dynamics—and emphasizes only one side (rejection and flight) of a dialogical relationship to Pietism. As Richard Helt rightly observes, “the emphasis Hesse scholars have tended to place on many of the crises of the author’s unquestionably traumatic youth seem[s], upon closer scrutiny, to be notably excessive.” Helt concludes that Hesse’s “variously anomalous phases of behavior must be
characterized as well within the realm of normal adolescent rebelliousness." A broader understanding of Pietism as a cultural tradition informing Hesse’s thought and literature is rare in Hesse studies, though such a perspective is central to this dissertation. Maulbronn, for example, represents far more than “Hesse’s past redux” as one scholar refers to Hesse’s early fictionalization of his brief stint at the seminary. “Maulbronn” in Hesse’s literature has cultural resonances: it is the world of Swabian parsonages and Latin schools, of spiritual grandeur, of humanistic learning, of the Tübingen Stift, of cultural elites, the world of Schiller and Mörike and Hölderlin, the spiritual home of the fathers of Württemberg Pietism, Johann Albrecht Bengel and Friedrich Christoph Oetinger, and of its sons, among them Johann Christoph Blumhardt, Hesse’s grandfather Hermann Gundert, and Hesse himself. In spite of his early departure from the seminary and a thorough-going critique of educational institutions, “Maulbronn” is very much part of Hesse’s literary imagination, and we do not understand the full significance of Maulbronn if it is narrowly associated with Hesse’s adolescent crisis.

Second, Sorell repeats, almost word for word, the understanding of Hesse’s relationship to Pietism found in Joseph Mileck’s influential study: “Early revolt against the severity of an impassioned Pietism that was convinced of the evil of human nature and the necessity of breaking the will for the sake of salvation was to extend itself to a revolt against Christianity itself.” The image of revolt and flight has become something of an unchallenged trope in Hesse scholarship, and it generally portrays Pietism in a pejorative light. A major problem in Hesse scholarship has been the use of stereotypes and caricatures when discussing Pietism, a topic that we further consider in Chapter 1. Here, we can briefly
mention some reasons for its presence in Hesse scholarship, and thereby suggest some principles by which it might be avoided.

It is important to recognize that Pietism is "one of the least understood movements in Judeo-Christian history." Many early studies of Pietism are the product of scholars working out of orthodox Lutheran or liberal Protestant traditions, traditions that often held an antagonistic and biased attitude toward Pietism. Modern Pietist studies can be dated to 1974, the year marking the establishment of the journal *Pietismus und Neuzeit*, and scholars have worked to address the problems of stereotyping and caricature that are common in early studies. These stereotypes and caricatures have crept into critical studies of Hesse's life and work, and one aim of this dissertation is to address this problem.

A related issue is that study of Hesse's work has been influenced by disciplinary borders. This is particularly true in Germany, where the study of religion has historically taken place in theological schools, while literary studies have been the purview of Germanists. There has often existed an uneasy relationship between these two academic cultures, and so the field of religion and literature, which lends itself to interdisciplinary study, tends to be ploughed from one angle or the other, but not both at the same time. Hesse, due to his strong antipathy toward organized and ecclesiastical religion, has often been the object of criticism and attack from theologians and those with confessional commitments, while Germanists, who tend to be more sympathetic to Hesse, may lack the necessary background in religious studies to fully explore the connections between Hesse's literature and religion. Hans Küng has commented on this problem, claiming that when it comes to Hesse most theologians are "prejudiced by dogma" while most Germanists are "skittish" and "helpless" when dealing with religious questions." Study of the religious dimensions of
Hesse’s fiction has generally been taken-up by scholars with a background in literary criticism where there seems to be an implicit tendency to discuss Pietism in pejorative terms.

Lastly, the portrait painted of Pietism in the secondary literature on Hesse is primarily drawn from two sources, *Kindheit und Jugend vor Neunzehnhundert* (Childhood and Youth Before 1900), two volumes of early letters edited by Hesse’s wife and published after Hesse’s death, and Hesse’s works, works generally critical of religious institutions as well as elements of the Pietist worldview in which Hesse was immersed in his youth. While the *Kindheit und Jugend* letters are of immense value in understanding Hesse’s childhood, his complex and difficult adolescence, family dynamics and desires, and the details of Hesse’s departure from Maulbronn seminary and bitter falling out with his parents, they are not necessarily the best—certainly not the only—source from which to develop an understanding of Pietism. In the secondary literature on Hesse there are very few references to scholarship on Pietism. Pietist studies have developed by leaps and bounds in the past thirty years; these studies can be productively brought to bear in critically assessing the treatment of Pietism in secondary studies, and in understanding the presence of Pietist themes and influences on Hesse’s life and literature.

To return to our representative passage, we find another prominent notion in Hesse scholarship, namely, that Hesse secularized those elements of Pietism that are “humane and enlightening.” A few critics have pursued the question of Pietism’s influence on Hesse beyond his youthful revolt to discover some general thematic parallels. Hesse, it is argued, absorbed the inwardness and emphasis on personal experience and self-examination found in Pietism and this religious subjectivity found its way into Hesse’s literature. While such observations are true enough, they lack specific detail and are also typically situated in what
we may term a secularization narrative\textsuperscript{61} in which ecclesiastical, doctrinal, liturgical, and communal aspects of Pietism\textsuperscript{62} are seen as leftovers of a narrow and even harmful form of religion. Again, Mileck: “schools of philosophy and religious sects, whether Western or Eastern, with their stereotyped systems and dogmas, and the consequent restraint imposed upon the individual, could only repel Hesse.... Hesse’s revolt against authority, against the encumbering trappings and human frailties so characteristically present in religious institutions, combined with his quest for the basic truths common to all enlightened, humane religions was to take him beyond the pale of Christian orthodoxy.”\textsuperscript{63} More than forty years after Mileck published his seminal work on Hesse (from which the quote above is drawn) he takes the same basic track in relating Hesse to Pietism: “Rebel against this Pietist heritage though Hesse did, he never shed much more than its trappings.... Indeed it could be argued that Hesse was essentially a twentieth century secularized Protestant.”\textsuperscript{64}

The notion that Hesse absorbed aspects of Pietist thought and culture in his youth and then later incorporated these into his literature is not so much incorrect as poorly framed. The language of “shedding trappings,” the “pale of orthodoxy,” the “human frailties” of institutional religion, and the search for “humane,” “enlightened” religion imply a prejudicial view of positivistic forms of religion—doctrinal, ritual, and communal activities are seen as mere and problematic surface features that must be done away with in the search for the core of authentic, personally meaningful religion. Hesse, considered further along the road of secularization, is seen as naturally driven to distance himself from the “narrowness” and confessional stance of Pietism, while at the same time drawing out of Pietism certain features of religion’s essence.
The prevalence of this secularization narrative in Hesse scholarship has had a two-fold effect: critics may suggest thematic parallels between Hesse's literature and Pietism without giving due attention to their differences, while on the other hand, there is a tendency to uncritically accept Hesse's rejection of Pietism without giving the latter a fair hearing. Hesse's writing, where it is critical of Pietism, is not merely representative of a more general "natural" movement in the period of modernity away from institutional, dogmatic forms of religion—this literature itself has a polemical thrust; it is part of the modernist critique of religion, and has helped to create the narrative line of secularization, rather than merely reflect a teleological process. Literature does cultural work; in it problems are addressed, critiques leveled, worldviews and values evaluated, rejected, proclaimed. The sensibilities of New Historicism draw critical attention to over-determined narratives and the competing voices of history, and are a necessary corrective to the fusion of intellectual-biography with the assumption of a natural process of secularization that has dominated Hesse scholarship.

A final notable aspect of Sorell's depiction of Hesse's revolt is that it tends to misrepresent Hesse's youthful rebellion as a complete break with his past. That Hesse rebelled against his Christian heritage, that his thinking and art owe a great deal to Asian religions, that Nietzsche and Goethe, both outspoken critics of Christianity, were important literary and philosophical influences, that Hesse was an advocate of the individual and repeatedly and consistently had harsh words for the church and organized religion—all this is well known, and highlights Hesse's adversarial relationship to Christianity. But following the First World War, Hesse began a conscious "turning back to Christianity" in an effort "to reacquaint [him]self with the belief [he] was raised in.... [he] found [him]self driven to make a new effort to get to know the Protestant form of Christianity."65 The title of our study,
"Veneration and Revolt," derives from Hesse's self-description of his relationship to Pietism, a phrase that captures the dialectical encounter with Pietism found in Hesse's literature. Hesse scholars have not been dialectical enough, too easily emphasizing Hesse's break with family and tradition, without giving due attention to Hesse's encounter with tradition. Pietism was for Hesse a life-long conversation partner and his relationship to Pietism needs to be understood in terms of development.

**Swabian Pietism**

A basic assumption of this dissertation is that a literary work's contexts are relevant to our understanding and appreciation of that work. Given that Hesse came from a devout Pietist family and that his works are strongly autobiographical, knowledge of Pietism can aid our reading and interpretation of Hesse's novels. It is precisely for this reason that most studies of Hesse's life and literature include an introductory chapter dealing with Hesse's family, his childhood, and in particular his rejection of the path through Maulbronn. In Hesse's case, life and literature are tightly interwoven, and it is both natural and relevant to ask the question posed by Lewis Tuskan: "What did it mean to be born into a devoted Pietist family and community in late-nineteenth-century Germany?" Above, I suggested that the answering of this question in the secondary literature has been plagued by several problems: Hesse scholars have implicitly drawn on stereotypes of Pietism, relied too heavily on the Kindheit und Jugend letters as a source for understanding Pietism, and failed to avail themselves of the secondary literature on Pietism. I also commented that there is need to broaden this question of context from the Pietism of Hesse's family to a view of Pietism as a
religious and cultural tradition native to Swabia, a perspective we will begin developing in this section.

Hesse’s literature can be fruitfully read as a conversation with his Swabian Pietist past, a past that includes parents and family, but also a wider tradition. Pietism was a cultural force in Swabia, and as such part of Hesse’s cultural memory. Martin Schmidt, writing in 1972, discussed how Pietism influenced aspects of German music, philosophy, and literature. In recent years, several studies have emerged examining the impact of Pietism on such individuals as Bach, Goethe, Schiller, Hölderlin, and Nietzsche, and on broader cultural trends. Theodore Ziolkowski comments that “the period... 1750-1850... is the age in which Hesse, as he repeatedly stated, feels spiritually most at home.” This period is very much the high point of Pietist influence in Swabia. Hesse repeatedly projects himself back into this world, drawing on elements of it in composing his plots. Hesse writes autobiographical fiction, but the product has a depth dimension, or what Paul Ricoeur calls a “depth hermeneutic.” Biographical memory and cultural memory are interwoven in Hesse’s fiction.

In *Journey to Nuremberg* (1926), a semi-fictive account of a lecture tour Hesse took in November of 1925 that passed through Swabia, Hesse writes of the flood of memories that the land and cityscapes evoked:

This trip to Swabia, born from dark memories... was foreordained to awaken in me echoes of my early days and to tell me how deeply rooted and inescapable everything is.... On my last evening in Ulm, while I was going to bed, I fell to thinking of this and that that had happened to me on my Swabian trip... and suddenly it occurred to me how much all this was under the influence of the past, how many of the dead had joined in the conversation, yes, how the liveliest parts had been dictated by the dead.
Mileck comments that Hesse’s writings during the period 1916 to 1927 “bask in psychoanalytic thought,” and he mentions Journey to Nuremberg, with its “flood of memories” in this context.\textsuperscript{71} A psychoanalytic frame, for all its relevance to interpreting and understanding Hesse’s thought and work, nevertheless emphasizes biographical memory at the expense of cultural memory, the conversations with parental imagoes rather than the conversation with tradition. The notions of ‘Heimat,’ ‘Herkunft,’ ‘Kultur,’ ‘Tradition,’ ‘Gedächtnis,’ ‘Erinnerung,’\textsuperscript{72} are central to German religious, philosophical, and aesthetic discourse, and they were important to Hesse; the conversations with the dead influencing his literature include but extend beyond his family and personal biography.

Like his character Emil Sinclair, Hesse “cannot tell [his] story without reaching a long way back. If it were possible I would reach back farther still—into the very first years of my childhood, and beyond them in distant ancestral past.”\textsuperscript{73} The story of Hesse’s relationship to Pietism and its impact on his literature is not adequately told if the focus remains merely biographical; an understanding of the “distant ancestral past” is also required, and this past includes Pietism. Through his character Joseph Knecht, the hero of Hesse’s final novel, The Glass Bead Game, Hesse articulates an understanding of the formative impact of one’s heritage:

\begin{quote}
[a]n individual is not an end in himself; he is born not only into a family but also into a country, an epoch, and a culture, and long before he could have known it, Knecht too was surrounded by movements, problems, yearnings, conceptions, misconceptions, and dreams arising from the time and place in which he lived.\textsuperscript{74}
\end{quote}

To borrow the language of Gadamer, Hesse’s was a historically effected consciousness,\textsuperscript{75} his “family,” “country,” “culture,” and “ancestral past,” formed an inescapable horizon encircling Hesse’s life and work, a horizon significantly shaped by the tradition of Pietism.
While many studies of Hesse recount the family history, very few situate Hesse's literature in the context of the Pietist tradition, a concern to which we now turn. The following is a brief introduction to Pietism; a fuller picture of the Pietist tradition, especially in Swabia, will emerge in the course of our study.

The origins of Pietism are found in the life and work of Philip Jacob Spener (1635-1705), a theologian, minister and head of the orthodox Lutheran Church in Frankfurt from 1666 to 1686. Pietism was a reform movement within, at times against, the German Lutheran Church in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, spreading to North Europe and having a significant impact on the development of Christianity into the twentieth century. The Pietist movement influenced many aspects of church life and worship, church-state relations, public and private attitudes toward conversion and redemption, and the experience of sin and repentance. The central institution of early Pietism, as Johannes Wallmann has emphasized, was the conventicle, in which members met privately, outside the bounds of church authority (and often church sanction), under the leadership of a charismatic personality who may or may not be an ordained minister, in order to cultivate a life of true Christian piety. Wallmann has also called attention to the importance of Spener's promotion of biblical devotion and the chiliast 'hope for better times' for the church.

Known in German as the Erweckungsbewegung, the "awakening" or "revival" movement, Pietism was a call to lead a devout and holy life in service of God. In an introduction to a publication of the sermons of the German theologian and mystic Johann Arndt (1555-1621), Spener issued a number of proposals designed to reinvigorate both a church that was seen as having failed the aims of the Reformation by allowing scholastic
dogmatism to replace Luther’s call for spiritual renewal, and the piety of individual Christians: the reading of Scripture was to be promoted among the laity; Luther’s call for a spiritual priesthood should be taken seriously, countering the monopoly of the clergy; the living of a Christian life in love of God and neighbor and practical service, rather than mere ascent to right doctrine, was to be emphasized; the scholastic training of clergy should be replaced with attention to pastoral work, homiletics, and a life of prayer and contemplation.

With the aid of August Hermann Francke (1663-1727), the Pietist movement established itself in Northern Germany, in Halle, focusing on social service, practical education, and building close ties to the newly founded university and to the Junker nobility of Prussia. Spener’s ideas and enthusiasm for his practical reforms spread rapidly throughout Germany, taking on unique characteristics and emphases in different areas. Swabia was one region in which the new movement was to gain a foothold, but it was shaped and colored enough by local traditions that Pietism in Swabia is generally considered one of three or four types or varieties of a much broader movement.

Pietist conventicles were established in Württemberg in 1684, and many of them were separatist in nature. The movement toward lay spirituality, inner experience, and a certain suspicion of clergy and the church initiated by Spener was furthered by Radical Pietists who helped transmit the literature of the medieval mystics to Protestantism, and were harsh critics of both church and state. Gottfried Arnold (1666-1714) argued in his Unparteitische Kirchen und Ketzerhistorie (Impartial History of the Churches and Heretics, 1699) that continuity with authentic Christianity often rested with those labeled as heretics, rather than with orthodoxy. A tendency to radicalism was characteristic of the first wave of Pietists in Swabia, who regularly drew the censure of the church consistory. Many of these early Swabian
Pietists promoted chiliasm (or millennialism), which entailed enthusiastic expectancy of the establishment of the Kingdom of God, and an era of peace and justice.

In Halle, Spener and Francke established close ties to the court in Brandenburg-Prussia. Their work in Prussia was supported by Frederick William I (who reigned from 1713 to 1740), and under whose rule Pietism became in practice the state religion. Several studies have examined the role of Pietism in the rise of state absolutism in Germany, especially in Prussia, as Pietism there contributed to the political, cultural and religious unification of the number of smaller antagonistic states that emerged in the wake of the Thirty Years War. Spener had little success with his reforms in Frankfurt, which is indicative of some regional differences between north and south Germany. When Pietism first established itself in Swabia, it was closely associated with protests against the rise of state absolutism and the baroque culture of the Swabian court. The provincial pastors and working class laity that were attracted to Pietism met together to discuss and “defend the interests of the Estates, with which the church was closely linked, against the perceived political, social, and cultural dangers of absolutism.” In time, Pietism slowly built ties with the Landeskirche, and these protests waned somewhat, though there remained in Swabia a tradition of liberal and democratic thought that drew on certain elements of the Pietist tradition.

Swabian Pietism was informed by a long present speculative mystical tradition. The scholastic Albertus Magnus, teacher of Thomas Aquinas, the medieval mystic Suso, the natural philosopher, healer and alchemist Paracelsus, and Johannes Kepler, with his quasi-religious vision of the harmony of the spheres were Swabians. Johannes Valentinus Andreae (1586-1654), who possibly authored The Chemical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreutz, a key text of alchemical and hermetic traditions in Germany, studied theology at the Tübingen
Stift, Swabia's intellectual and religious center, and was chief clergyman in Calw. Andreae was greatly influenced by the thought of the Lutheran mystic Johann Arndt, whose works inspired Spener's reforms. Seventeenth century Swabian Pietism was characterized theologically by a fusion of millennialism and speculative mysticism, and institutionally by conventicles with radical and separatist tendencies.

As Pietism established itself in Swabia, the emphasis on personal experience characteristic of the movement was deepened, absorbing and developing local interest in hermetic, mystical, speculative thought. The Pietists' penchant for mysticism, inwardness, and concentrated attentiveness to the movements and states of the soul contributed to a proliferation of spiritual autobiography, confessional writing, and scores of new hymnals and devotional books. In the humblest of Swabian homes in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the speculative mysticism of Emmanuel Swedenborg and Jacob Böhme was read alongside the devotional books of Arndt and Johann Heinrich Jung-Stilling, the later serving as a nodal point for contact amongst Pietists, Romantics, and Spiritualists. Friedrich Christoph Oetinger (1702-1782) and Johann Albrecht Bengel (1697-1752) are the fathers of Württemberg Pietism, and their thought is greatly influenced by mystical traditions. Oetinger was especially fond of Jacob Böhme, and was censored by the Lutheran church for his translations of Swedenborg and his advocacy of a theology of universal restoration. Hesse's grandfather was fond of Oetinger's theology, and Herr Classen, who worked in the publishing house run by Hesse's family, was a theosophist. Hesse studied Oetinger in his youth, and was enamored with him in his later years. Bengel's thought was also characterized by this speculative, hermetic tradition, to which he added a strong element of chiliasm. Combining his knowledge of astronomy with a detailed exegesis of the Book of Revelations,
Bengel went so far as to postulate 1836 as the year of the Second Coming of Christ. Chiliastic and apocalyptic tendencies within Swabian Pietism led to a strong sense of the importance of historical awareness and a proclivity to watch for the "Zeichen der Zeiten," the signs of the times that would allow one to discern the conjunction of historical events with divine revelations.

A central feature of Pietism in Swabia (and elsewhere) was a commitment to social service. In addition to contributing to the intellectual atmosphere of the university of Halle, Pietists under the leadership of Spener and Francke built orphanages, a publishing house, homes and shelters for indigent widows and itinerant beggars, schools, and small scale industries such as a brewery and farm. The practical reforms undertaken in and around Halle became a model for the growth of "inner missions" that Pietism would come to be identified with during the nineteenth century. Pietists emphasized love of God and neighbor. The Christian life was not to be merely one of right belief but right action, and this meant an active life in service of one's community. Pietism emphasized spiritual rebirth, but this was to be demonstrated, as Spener described it, through the praxis pietatis—practical piety. Orthopraxis was more important than orthodoxy. The Pietist commitment and tradition to social service remained intact in Swabia into Hesse's day; praxis pietatis was central to the Pietist revivals of the 1830s and 1840s, and was a foundation stone for the faith of Hesse's family.

Radical and millennialist tendencies within Swabian Pietism at times led to an uneasy relationship between Pietists and both state and church, which manifested itself in a half-century of disputes between members of Pietist conventicles and members of the evangelical church. These disputes were eventually settled in 1743, in the famous Pietistenreskript.
legislation which granted Pietists in Württemberg freedom of association and activity. In short, Pietism became absorbed into the corporate structure of the church. Conventicles were allowed to exist, provided they were under the guidance or at least the oversight of the local pastor, and did not lead to factionalism within the church. In this way the leaders of Pietist circles were generally well respected members of the community and often held positions of power and influence within the church and/or educational institutions. Politically, Pietism in Swabia after 1743 tended toward quietism. The eighteenth century in Württemberg was marked by long battles between the Estates and the Duke, but Pietists tended to withdraw from political activity. When it was forced upon them, as was the case with Johann Albrecht Bengel, there was a general disinclination to political life: “[As a politician] I felt I was at the end of the world, in Stuttgart I am in the midst of ... quagmire and tumult, and on top of this I, who have spent my life in nothing but spiritual affairs, must in my old age become an apprentice in worldly matters.” Bengel’s sentiments reflected the general opinion, but political quietism was perhaps a factor in helping thrust Pietism to the forefront of theological, intellectual, and culture developments.

During the eighteenth and into the nineteenth centuries Pietists, including the Swabians Friedrich Christoph Oetinger and Philip Matthias Hahn (1739-1790), were in the middle of the vigorous and momentous social and religious debates which defined modernity, attacked from one side by the Enlightenment and other by Orthodoxy, all the while the target of a satirical literary avant-garde. Religious liberals thought Pietists backward and quaint and perhaps even dangerous; conservatives saw their intense inner piety and tendency to radicalism and separatism as a potential threat to the stability of state and church. Pietism played a role in the founding of modern biblical study. Bengel made major
contributions in this area. Bengel also helped shape the tenor of the educational system. His first publication was on Cicero’s letters, indicative of the interest among Pietists in Swabia in classical, neohumanist, and liberal education. While some Pietists held to a clear distinction between Athens and Jerusalem, this was not the case in Swabia. The Latin and cloister schools which Hesse attended, and the Tübingen Stift, which in the eyes of his family he was destined for, were home to the major figures of Pietism in Swabia. Pietism, one of the roots of Romanticism, also influenced German music, philosophy, and literature. Bach, Kant, Goethe, Schleiermacher, Herder, Hegel, Novalis, Hölderlin, Schiller, and Mörike, the last five of these Swabians, are to be counted among those influenced by Pietist circles. Swabia was fertile ground for a culture of poets and literati strongly influenced by the land’s speculative, mystical, Pietist ethos, and Hesse is to be counted among the last of a long line of writers steeped in this tradition.

As Hartmut Lehmann has observed, Pietism cultivated religious individualism, but this was often circumscribed by the conventicle structure of Pietism, while at the same time intoning particular regional groups with the character of the charismatic figure around which the conventicle was built and flourished. Within the conventicle, one needed to recognize Spener (alongside Luther and other seminal individuals) as a father of Pietism, but also the local “patriarchs,” who gave unique regional flavor and character to the broader Pietist movement. In Swabia, Pietism came to be closely associated with a tradition of broadly educated and highly trained churchmen, theologians, scholars, and literati with deep connections to scripture, classical Greece, speculative mysticism, and the tendency to view both the church and worldly life with no small measure of suspicion. Bengel, as the father of Württemberg Pietism, embodied all these features, and was able to become the father not
least of all due to the power of his personality, to the charismatic and magisterial image he was able to strike, an image that would later be honed and crafted in the decades following his death until he stood above all others as the patriarch of patriarchs in Württemberg.91

In the second-half of the nineteenth century Pietism in Swabia began to be marginalized from the mainstream of cultural life; the movement was in decline, at least with respect to its status among a new generation of university trained professionals and a rising middle class. Though respectful of his Pietist past and family, Hesse experienced Pietism as "rigid," "meager and transitory," an "outdated and almost extinct" form of religion,92 feelings indicative of general attitudes at the time. Far from holding a position of strength in influencing the cutting edge of German thought, politics, and culture, as it had in the previous two centuries, the Pietist movement was being pushed to the periphery of the industrializing, urbanizing, secularizing, fin de siècle society of Hesse's youth. The beginnings of this decline are to be found in the early decades of the century, as liberals and modernists attacked Pietism as backward, superstitious, and moralistic. In a famous case pointed to as an example of the errors of Pietist ways modernist forces ridiculed the claims of the Pietist faith healer Johann Christoph Blumhardt to have cast out the devil from a young woman. For a time, Pietists were able to ward off the attacks as the two camps jousted in various periodicals, but Pietist fortunes would inevitably dwindle.93 The attacks from liberals and modernists actually helped fuel a new revival movement, as Pietists founded numerous publishing houses, hospitals, orphanages, schools, and a worldwide mission, all in the name of The Kingdom of God. The missionary work of Hesse's family has its roots in the revivalist period, during which time there was a return to Spener's call for practical piety. By 1900, however, there were but a few areas and towns in Germany where there remained a
well defined Pietist culture and these were but a shadow of their former selves. Calw was one such area, but so great was turn-of-the-century secularization and dechristianization of society that many Pietists thought the millennium was at hand. Throughout the nineteenth century the gulf between the faith-world of Pietism and the themes informing cultural debate and the discoveries of modern science would increasingly widen. Hesse, coming as he did from a deeply religious family, experienced the full brunt of the powerful impact of modernity and industrialization on traditional religious life.

The young Hermann Hesse lived in two worlds, with one foot in the bounded, stable tradition of his family and Swabian Pietism, and another in the juggernaut of a secularizing, modern world. As he entered adolescence Hesse increasingly felt not only the pressure to pursue a vocation he did not want but pervasive ideological unrest; he was unable to resolve his Pietist background with either his desire to be a writer or the trajectory of modernity. The result was a loss of identity and a severe sense of displacement. Writing home to parents in the aftermath of the Maulbronn affair Hesse would lament: “I’ve lost everything: home, parents, love, faith, hope and myself.” Hesse’s writing would be the vehicle for recovering these losses, and the tradition of Swabian Pietism would figure prominently in his efforts.

Theory and Method

In framing an approach to a study of Hesse and Pietism I have followed the lead of several scholars, but the work of Giles Gunn on the relations between religion and literature and narrative theory has been especially helpful in formulating the theoretical approach of this study. In Gunn’s model, which is indebted to Clifford Geertz, religion and literature
possess a complementary relationship—they both employ symbols in an effort to gain some interpretive control or order over experience. Literature and religion consist "of the same material—namely, meanings, and serve the same experimental function—to help us understand and negotiate our relations with our environment through acts of symbolic intervention..." But Gunn also conceives this relationship as symbiotic, religion employing symbols "paradigmatically," clarifying and demonstrating order and significance, literature employing symbols heuristically, testing, extending, and criticizing the religious meanings ascribed to experience. "Literature, it might be said, employs meanings heuristically, to show where they lead by adumbrating the figurative or fictive if not actual consequences they possess; religion employs meanings more parabolically and paradigmatically, to show where they came from by clarifying the order and significance they entail."96 The conception of literature as a heuristic tool is for Gunn most applicable to the modern period, which is characterized by fractures in a religious perspective on experience. The literature of modernity variously reflects these fractures, helps create them, and works to mend them by presenting through imaginative fictions other forms of order. The artist selects and creatively reworks possibilities bequeathed to him or her by history, society, and blood, holding forth worlds for our reflection and assessment. The starting point for Gunn’s approach to religion and literature then is to recognize that a fundamental characteristic of many modernist, western novels is a thorough-going encounter with inherited and traditional forms of religion.97

The sociologist Peter Berger has described one of the differences between modern and pre-modern sensibilities in terms of the encounter "between discrepant worlds of meaning and experience." Individuals in pre-modern societies "lived in life-worlds that were
more or less unified," there existed a “sacred canopy” that structured and integrated personal and social life. Pietism functioned as such a sacred canopy in Hesse’s family and in Swabia in general. With the Pietistenreskript of 1743 Pietists began building connections to the Landeskirche and the Swabian Bürgertum—it had long found a following in rural areas, among farmers and laborers—and Pietism quickly became the dominant religious force in Swabia. “To this day no other German Landeskirche has been so molded by Pietism as Württemberg’s. Without question it is the largest of [Württemberg’s] church groups.”

Through the nineteenth century many of the central figures of eighteenth century Swabian Pietism were elevated to the status of patriarchal figures, largely through the publication of hagiographic literature. Bengel, Oetinger, Karl Heinrich Rieger (1726-1791), and others became the fathers of the church in Württemberg, and their Pietism took a lead role in molding Swabian culture.99

As Clifford Geertz defines it, culture is “an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men [sic] communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about an attitude toward life.” Religion is a micro system with a particular contribution to make to the creation and maintenance of culture. For Geertz, a fundamental characteristic of religion is to address problems of meaning, purpose, and direction to life. Religion involves a particular perspective on experience, this perspective springing from the “conviction that the values one holds are grounded in the inherent structure of reality, that between the way one ought to live and the way things really are there is an unbreakable inner connection.” A religious perspective on experience, then, consists of two elements that reinforce one another
and are consistent with one another—a worldview, or metaphysic, or philosophy of life on the one hand, and a code of conduct, style of life, or ethic on the other.¹⁰²

For nearly two centuries, albeit with certain changes and developments, Pietism provided this overarching religious perspective for the majority of individuals living in Swabia. But as Hesse came of age he was increasingly exposed to the secularizing effects of modernity, to Berger’s “discrepant worlds of meaning and experience.” The rise of plurality, mobility, and relativism are among those factors to contribute to the sense of freedom and openness characteristic of modern life, but this freedom may also be dizzying. Modernity, writes Berger, entails a “metaphysical loss of home... a deepening condition of homelessness.”¹⁰³ Such was Hesse’s experience as he broke with his inherited faith; literature became the prime instrument in Hesse’s efforts to reconstruct his religious life, and in so doing possibly contribute to the development of new forms of culture.

In an essay of 1926 Hesse articulated an understanding of the nature of the relationship between religion and literature strikingly similar to that developed by Giles Gunn. Hesse wrote of the cultural situation of his day, and the task set for him as a writer. The “triumph of industrialization” and the destruction of the Great War

announce[d] the death and destruction of that culture in which we older people were educated as children and which seemed to us at that time eternal and immutable. If physical man has not changed... the ideals and fictions, the dreams and wishful thoughts, the mythologies and theories that dominate our spiritual life have been transformed completely.... Demolished and lost for the larger part of the civilized world are, above all, the two foundations of all orderly living: culture and ethics, religion and morality.... In times like the present we see in general an impatience and disillusionment not only with the inherited religions but also with academic philosophies; there is huge demand for new formulations, new attributions of significance, new symbols, [and] new foundations.
Hesse saw artists and writers as responding to this “newly awakened metaphysical need” and their works as an example of the “passionate struggle for a new interpretation of the meaning of our lives.” Through his literature, Hesse sought to constructively respond to a fracture in the unity between a philosophy of life and a way of being in the world, between a worldview and an ideal of ethical action, the two fundamental domains of culture.

Hesse’s literature entails an auseinandersetzung, a coming to terms with, the faith of family and land; to be sure, this includes critique and rejection, but also appropriation and assimilation. Hesse would explore and borrow from other traditions in his efforts to rebuild that culture which he saw as having been destroyed. But an engagement with Pietist-Protestant Christianity would remain a focal point of Hesse’s literature, and it is a narrow view that explains this proclivity merely as the result of a life-long attempt to deal with painful childhood and adolescent memories. Pietism was not for Hesse merely a thorny knot of tangled emotions and psychological complexes that he was forever and a day struggling to abreact, a notion we find all too often in Hesse scholarship. Pietism was a heritage and a tradition in the sense that these terms are used in the hermeneutics of Paul Ricoeur and Hans-Georg Gadamer: “The idea of ‘heritage’... is one of the more appropriate expressions for the efficacy of the past [and] can be interpreted as the fusion of the ideas of a debt and a tradition.”

Hesse was a historical thinker, relating contemporary issues and themes to the traditions of the past. Again, Hesse’s was a “historically effected consciousness” which “rises above ... naïve comparisons and assimilations by letting itself experience tradition and by keeping itself open to the truth claims encountered in it.”
Given his view of the relations between religion and literature, a key methodological principle informing Gunn’s approach to the interpretation of literature is the “dramatization of ideas.” Gunn likens the religious to a deep “paradigm” that generally floats beneath the level of conscious awareness. Such paradigms (or worldviews) are made accessible through art. Works of art function to “help us to know what we feel about these paradigms, and feel what we know, by illuminating the implications of what they conceal as well as disclose, of what they disguise as well as express.” Another function of art is to demonstrate how and when religious paradigms no longer fit experience, and therefore fail to inform our actions, and to propose, in symbolic, imaginative forms, other possibilities. Works of art put religious paradigms to the test, whether for the purpose of strengthening, subverting, or displacing them. The literary critic “who works in this subterranean region of cultural interpretation is out in his own way to re-sew the fabric of assumptions from which specific beliefs take their rise…. At the very least, then, such criticism turns cultural history into a matter of ideas dramatized rather than ideas analyzed.” Hesse’s literature was a workshop for him to explore and shape his relationship to Pietism, and he variously strengthens, subverts, displaces, and augments elements of the Pietist tradition.

To write a cultural history in which ideas are “dramatized” and not merely analyzed is to set those ideas in conversation, tension, or conflict with one another. This necessitates consideration of biography and intellectual history, but also a social-historical approach. The need for social-historical context naturally follows from Gunn’s functional approach to religion. Understanding the cultural and religious functions of a particular work of literature requires an understanding of the situation out of which the
work draws its life, and to which it is addressed. Gunn’s method calls for locating the meaning and significance of a text as much outside of it as inside, reading the text in relation to the historical and cultural context in which it is situated. In this regard the work of Max Weber, Ernst Troeltsch, and Peter Berger—students of religion and modernity—offers valuable insights for understanding the place of Pietism in Hesse’s life and literature, and I will draw on the work of these theorists at various points in our study. Recent historical studies of Pietism and Pietist texts will also provide context for an analysis of Hesse’s use and handling of the Pietist tradition.

Gunn advocates “catholicity” in methodological matters, a “principled eclecticism in all questions of theory and method.” “All authentic humanistic research of an interdisciplinary sort is carried on for the sake of an enhanced understanding and appreciation of the subject under investigation, and this is achieved... by bringing to bear upon the subject itself anything that might shed further light on it, anything that might augment its meaningfulness.”110 One valuable body of work offering just such possibilities for Hesse’s literature is narrative theory.

The interests of a number of theorists working from various disciplinary perspectives have converged on the question of the role of narrative in providing for a sense of continuity of self over place and time. This demand for continuity of self seems to have been exacerbated and accelerated in the modern era, as increased mobility, social fragmentation, pluralism, and other challenges to traditional and local ways of life have hammered away on the links that bind a self to a place and to well defined, bounded religious and cultural traditions. The strong sense of physical and cultural displacement and atopia of the self that Hesse experienced in breaking with the religious tradition of
his land and family was resolved not by way of outright rejection and commitment to
some other tradition, but navigated through many autobiographical novels and stories,
which repeatedly deal with the place, people, and history of Swabia. The recollection of
historical narratives, of the events, places, individuals, and ideas that constitute the Pietist
tradition in Swabia that we find in Hesse’s literature is a means by which Hesse wards off
and restores the loss of identity accompanying his fracturing of the ties that bound him to
family, Swabia, and Pietism. A prime example of this dynamic is Hesse’s early novel

_Beneath the Wheel_, to which we now turn.

**NOTES TO THE INTRODUCTION**

1 Swabia, also known as Württemberg, is the region bounded by France to the west, Switzerland, Austria and Lake Constance to the south, upper Bavaria to the north and the valley of the upper Danube to the east. The Black Forest, the valley of the Neckar River, and part of the Jura mountain range are the main physical features. The name Swabia derives from the Suebi, a Germanic people who occupied the upper Rhine and Danube region in the third century. This historic, linguistic and geographical region is now part of the state of Baden-Württemberg, established in 1952. Swabia and Württemberg are frequently used to refer to the same region, a practice followed in this text.

2 Hesse was born July 2, 1877, in Calw, Germany and died August 9, 1962 in Montangola, Switzerland. He lived in Calw from 1877 to 1881, and then the family moved to Basel, another Pietist stronghold, where his parents worked in the Evangelische Gesellschaft für Stadtmission, which housed a major publishing operation and coordinated missionary activity both overseas and at home. Between 1886 and 1895 Hesse lived with his parents in Calw, between stints at various schools in the surrounding area.


4 For example, Hesse writes of “singing and music, the telling of fairy tales and reading of books, a flower garden, games in the evening, in which the entire family participated… family walks and joy of the countryside, trees and flowers, tastefully decorated rooms on holidays.” _Erinnerung an Hans_, in _Gesammelte Werke_, 12 vols. (Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp) 10: 213. References to the _Gesammelte Werke_ are hereafter cited as _Werke_. Unless otherwise noted, all English translations are the author’s.

Hermann Hesse, Kurzgefasster Lebenslauf (1924), Werke, 6: 393-394.


See Michael Lindberg, ed., Hermann Hesse's Siddhartha (Stuttgart, 2002), 7

Hermann Hesse, Mein Glaube (1931), Werke 10: 71.


There is a vast secondary literature on Hesse and the East. Key among these are: Gerhard Mayer, Die Begegnung des Christentums mit den asiatischen Religionen im Werk Hermann Hesses (Bonn, 1956); Adrian Hsia, Hesses Schriften über China (Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 1974); Ursula Chi, Die Weisheit Chinas und das Glasperlenspiel (Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 1976); Kyung Yang Cheong, Mystische Elemente aus West und Ost im Werk Hermann Hesses (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1991).


Mein Glaube, 72.


This is a chapter title from Joseph Mileck's, Hermann Hesse: Life and Art.

The image of Hesse as a transmitter of eastern wisdom to the west was created in part by the popularity of Siddhartha, and a marketing strategy that cultivated the image for a public hungry for things Buddhist and Eastern. The quote here is found on the back cover of many Bantam editions of Hesse's works published through the 1970s.

Mark Boulby, Hermann Hesse: His Mind and Art (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell UP, 1967), v. Tracing and unpacking these roots is not the aim of Boulby's study.

'Gerbersau' is Hesse's fictive name for his hometown of Calw. The setting for many of Hesse's short stories is Gerbersau (that is, Calw), and in 1949 these were collected and published as a separate volume. See Hermann Hesse, Gerbersau (Tübingen, 1949). For more on Hesse's literary relationship to Calw and his Gerbersau, see Siegfried Greiner, Hermann Hesse,—In Calw daheim: Briefwechsel und Begegnungen mit Calwer Bürgern und Freunden der Schwarzwaldstadt (Frankfurt: R.G. Fischer, 2002), 22. Greiner has collected primary source documents from Hesse's corpus—letters, stories, essays—that deal with Hesse's close connection to Calw and Swabia.

Mein Glaube, 72.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Mileck, Hermann Hesse: Life and Art, 48.


A theme to be pursued is the place and relevance of Pietism to Hesse’s “narrative identity,” a conceptual notion that Paul Ricoeur, among others, has given a good deal of attention. See, Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative* 3 vols. (Chicago: U Chicago P, 1985), especially vol. 3, 207-274; and, *Oneself as Another* (U Chicago P, 1995).

Hesse, *Life Story, Briefly Told*, 55.


These are generally recognized as: *Peter Camenzind* (1904), *Unterm Rad* (1906), *Demian* (1919), *Siddhartha* (1922), *Der Steppenwolf* (1927), *Narcissus und Goldmund* (1930), *Die Morgenlandfahrt* (1932), and *Das Glasperlenspiel* (1943).

In a retrospective from 1925 Hesse describes two major upheavals in his life: the Maulbronn affair and the First World War. “Once more I saw myself in conflict with a world with which I had until then been living in complete content.” See *Life Story, Briefly Told*, 51.

See Stelzig, 193-201.

Joseph Mileck, *Between the Perils of Politics and the Allure of the Orient* (New York: Peter Lang, 2003), 6. Mileck’s study, which appeared as this dissertation was in progress, examines Hesse’s interest in Asian religions and literatures and his social and political views, situating both of these in the context of Hesse’s Pietist roots. Mileck’s first claim—that Hesse’s family, owing to their missionary work in India, contributed to Hesse’s interest in Asian religion—is not new. His second argument, that Hesse’s social and political views were strongly shaped by the Pietism of his family, is more interesting, and in chapter 3 of this study I shall follow Mileck’s lead in relating Hesse’s social-political thought and work to his Pietist heritage. Mileck is one of the few Hesse scholars to give serious attention to Pietism. His claim that Pietism remained central to Hesse and that Hesse was “essentially a twentieth-century secularized Pietist,” (6) are the strongest claims to date regarding Hesse’s indebtedness to the Pietist tradition. This dissertation pushes even further in the direction taken by Mileck.


A keyword search of the extensive Hesse bibliography maintained by Jurgen Below using “Pietism” and “Pietismus” produced but three hits, and only one of these directly deals with Hesse’s fiction. In the vast secondary literature on Hesse there are but a handful of studies examining the question of Hesse and Pietism, and most of these deal solely with Hesse’s family. Below’s website is accessible at, http://www.hermann-hesse- sekundaerschrifttum.de (accessed Jan. 3, 2005). By way of contrast, Michael Limberg compiled a bibliography on Hesse and depth psychology that includes more than 80 entries. See, http://www.gss.ucsb.edu/projects/ hesse/publications/tiefenpsychologie.pdf.

Heta Baaten, *Die Pietische Tradition der Familien Gundert und Hesse* (Bochum Landendreer, 1934).


Hugo Ball, in his early intellectual biography of Hesse, was the first to give any sustained attention to Hesse’s family and the cultural background of Swabia, and their relevance for understanding and interpreting Hesse’s literature. He suggests, for example, that our interpretation of Hesse’s *Siddhartha* could be advanced by reading works published by Hesse’s family. See *Hermann Hesse, Sein Leben und sein Werk* (1927) (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1977), 127-128.

Hesse’s paternal grandfather, Dr. Karl Hermann Hesse (1802-1896) had a medical practice in Estonia, and was also a member of Pietist circles.


E.A.F. Lutzkendorf, *Hermann Hesse als religiöser Mensch in seinen Beziehungen zur Romantik und zum Osten* (Leipzig, 1932), was among the first scholars to discuss Indian and Hindu themes in Hesse’s writings, an interest that informs dozens of articles, dissertations, and books on Hesse. Hesse’s family and Pietism are usually not the focus of attention, but are often introduced to set up a narrative that explains how Hesse’s interest in the East was mediated. The second part of Mileck’s study, *Hermann Hesse: Between the Perils of Politics and the Allure of the Orient*, offers a fine overview and critique of scholarship dealing with Asian
influences on Hesse’s writing, a critique with which I am basically in agreement, and will rehearse in Chapter 3. As far as Pietism is concerned though, Mileck, at least in this second part of his study, simply points to Hesse’s interest in the east being stimulated by his family’s missionary activity, a fact that has long been known, and that tells us little about the impact of Pietism on Hesse’s literature.


46 Hugo Ball’s early study, *Hermann Hesse, Sein Leben und sein Werk*, has established itself as a model for much Hesse scholarship. Ball opens with three chapters detailing the family background, Hesse’s childhood, and the Maulbronn affair, and uses this background as a context for understanding the biographical foundations for Hesse’s literature. Lewis Tuskan, in his *Understanding Hermann Hesse: The Man, The Myth, His Metaphor* (Columbia, S.C., 1998) employs a similar strategy. The opening chapter is titled ‘Biography: Beginning and Forebodings,’ and recounts the difficult years of Hesse’s adolescent crisis and his break with the Pietism of his family.

47 Hesse was frank about the confessional and autobiographical nature of his literature. Eugene Stelzig’s *Hermann Hesse’s Fictions of the Self* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1988) is devoted to examining the autobiographical basis of Hesse’s fiction.


50 Lewis Tuskan, for example, writes that the result of Hesse’s flight from Maulbronn was persistent “guilt feelings” toward his parents (9).


52 One of the very few efforts in this direction is Bernhard Zeller’s short article, “Hermann Hesse und die Welt der Väter,” in *Suche nach Einheit: Hermann Hesse und die Religionen*, 10-24, ed. Wolfgang Boehme, (Frankfurt: Otto Lembeck Verlag, 1978). Zeller offers brief biographical information on the “Swabian fathers,” suggesting a few ways in which this inheritance manifests itself in Hesse’s thought and literature. I am indebted to Zeller’s article; this dissertation very much represents a continuation and extension of his efforts.

53 Stelzig, 95.


56 This point is made by Mileck, in *Hesse and His Critics*, 174-175.


59 The works I have consulted in developing my understanding of Pietism and especially of Pietism in Swabia are listed in the bibliography, under the heading ‘Pietism and Hesse’s Family.’

60 See, for example, Stelzig, who discusses Hesse’s literature in terms of the proclivity within Pietist Protestantism to “self-examination and the drive to self-knowledge …” 72. The tradition of intellectual biography and history has often approached the impact of Pietism on modernity from this angle. Wilhelm Dilthey, in *Leben Schleiermachers, Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Martin Redaker, vol.13:1-30 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1970), found the seeds of Schleiermacher’s emphasis on religious subjectivity, inwardness, and feeling (central themes and trajectories of religion in modernity) in his contact with the Pietist Herrnhut community founded by Zinzendorf. Ernst Troeltsch based his now famous typology of ‘church-sect-mysticism’ in part on his study of Pietism, and called attention to the ways in which a modernist conception of mystical experience as striving for the immediate, personal realization of God informs and derives from Pietist theology and practice; see, Ernst Troeltsch, *The Social Teachings of the Christian Churches*, vol. 2, translated by Olive Wyon (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1931), 714-721; 734-742.
There has been a great deal of ink spilled over the meaning and usefulness of the notion of secularization. As I use it, the term refers to the process by which individuals and entire groups are increasingly less bound to accepting (and thereby validating) the teachings of the church (or a church), less dependent on representatives of the church as sources of social and moral authority, and less prone to naturally accepting the church's teachings and practices simply by virtue of being born into a society in which the church has been (or is) a powerful social institution. A secularization narrative is one that assumes the process of secularization is indeed taking place, and further, that this process is natural and rational, thereby relegating the claims of particular religious groups and institutions to an inferior status.

Pietism was in part a reaction to a perceived sterility and banality in religious life, due to an overemphasis on doctrine and confessions of faith. But most Pietists, including Hesse's family, remained within the doctrinal and ecclesiastical bounds of Lutheran Orthodoxy. There is in Pietism, however, a tendency to be critical and even suspicious of the church, its practices, and its authority over the individual, a mindset that Hesse certainly inherited.


The term 'cultural memory' refers to those products of culture—books, buildings, monuments, rites, songs—that anchor the shared or collective memories of a given society. The term implies that collective understandings of the past are constructed, and that individuals learn collective memories through socialization, while possessing a certain amount of freedom to reconstruct the past in alternative ways.


Hermann Hesse, Journey to Nuremberg (1926), in Autobiographical Writings, 197; 211.

Joseph Mileck, Hermann Hesse: Life and Art, 105. Similarly, Sigfried Greiner, in Hermann Hesse, Jugend in Calw, comments that "Hesse was convinced that birth and early childhood gives form to one's entire life" and therefore he "cast glances time and again back to the early years of his life" (12). Greiner implicitly frames Hesse's interest in memory in psychoanalytic terms.

These terms can be roughly translated, respectively, as 'home,' 'heritage,' 'culture,' 'tradition,' 'memory,' and 'remembrance.'


Hermann Hesse, Der vierte Lebenslauf Josef Knechts (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1965), 122

The work of Hans-Georg Gadamer and Paul Ricoeur on the inter-related themes of tradition, reinterpretation, cultural memory, and narrative is well suited to framing Hesse's relationship to Pietism. For Gadamer, it is necessary to move from "historical consciousness," which aims at an objective reconstruction of the past to the "historical spirit," or a "historically effected consciousness," which "consists not in the restoration of the past but in thoughtful mediation with contemporary life." See Truth and Method (New York: Continuum, 2003), 168-169.


See Strom, "Problems and Promises of Pietism Research," 538. Much of the debate within Pietist studies has centered on definitional problems, as the term Pietism has been used to refer to a wide variety of phenomena in the intellectual, religious and social history of modern Europe. Many scholars working the field of Pietist studies recognize a wide and narrow usage of the term. See Lehmann's, Pietismus und weltliche Ordnung, 14-15.

At times this term is applied in a stricter sense to the religious revivals in Germany that began around 1830.
41

79 See Lehmann, Pietismus und weltliche Ordnung, 67.

80 In addition to the Pietism of Spener and Francke, often referred to as Halle Pietism, most Pietist scholars distinguish between Radical Pietism, Moravian Pietism, and Württemberg (Swabian) Pietism.


84 Hesse's grandfather Hermann Gundert was inspired by Oetinger's theology in his youth. See Heta Baaten, Die Pietistische Tradition, 13.


86 See Brown, 27.

87 Cited in Fulbrook, 146.


89 See Doerksen.

90 Hartmut Lehmann, Pietismus und weltliche Ordnung, 15.

91 This point is made by Martin Jung. See 'Ein Prophet bin ich nicht,' Johann Albrecht Bengel-Theologe, Lehrer, Pietist (Stuttgart, 2002), 115.

92 Hermann Hesse, My Belief, 177.

93 See Hartmut Lehmann, Pietismus und weltliche Ordnung, 209-210. It is to the Blumhardt retreat and healing center in Bad Boll that Hermann Hesse would be sent by his parents after he dropped out of Maulbronn seminary.

94 See Lehmann, Die neu Lage, 15-21.

95 Letter from Hermann Hesse to his parents, 1 September 1892, Kindheit und Jugend 1: 251.

96 Giles Gunn, Culture of Criticism, 180.

97 Among those writers of Hesse's generation are Thomas Mann, Marcel Proust, André Gide, Stefan Georg, T.S. Eliot, Virginia Woolf, Romain Rolland, Ezra Pound, Rainier Maria Rilke, George Bernard Shaw, William B. Yeats, James Joyce, Franz Kafka, E.M. Forster, and Gertrude Stein. Religious and philosophical questions are front and center in the literature of this era.

98 Peter Berger, Brigitte Berger, and Hansfried Kellner, The Homeless Mind: Modernization and Consciousness (New York: Vintage, 1974), 64. It was Berger who popularized the notion of religion as a "sacred canopy."


100 Clifford Geertz, The Interpretation of Cultures (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 89.

101 Cited in Gunn, The Interpretation of Otherness, 107. "Religious symbols," writes Geertz, "formulate a basic congruence between a particular style of life and a specific metaphysical, and in doing so sustain each with the borrowed authority of the other." The Interpretation of Cultures, 90.


103 Peter Berger, 82.

104 Hermann Hesse, Our Ages Yearning for a Philosophy of Life (1927), in My Belief, 136-137.

105 For Geertz the term "world view" refers to "the existential and cognitive aspects" of a culture, a people's "picture of the way things are in sheer actuality are, their concept of nature, of self, or society." A culture's ethos is composed of "the tone, character, and quality of [a people's] life, its moral and aesthetic style and mood." See The Interpretation of Cultures, 127.

106 Paul Ricoeur, Time and Narrative, 3:228.


108 Gunn, Culture of Criticism, 181.

109 Gunn, The Interpretation of Otherness, 116-117.

110 Gunn, The Interpretation of Otherness, 10.
In the summer of 1891, a young Hermann Hesse passed the state Landesexam, gaining himself entry into Maulbronn, one of four elite Protestant church schools in Württemberg. Out of 79 students, Hesse finished twentieth-eighth, and was precocious and talented enough to render the essay portion of the exam in free verse, a feat that Hesse would have the rebellious romantic Heinrich Heilner repeat in Beneath the Wheel, the fictionalized account of Hesse’s brief stint at Maulbronn which we will examine later in this chapter. By enrolling their son in the Latin school in Göppingen and later the monastery school at Maulbronn, Hesse’s parents set in motion the wheels that would establish for their gifted if at times obstinate child a career and position within the religious-social complex of Swabian Pietism.

Tradition, family desires, social and economic realities, and Hesse’s intellectual gifts made Maulbronn the natural choice. But after a relatively content six months in the school that was once home to Johannes Kepler, Friedrich Hölderlin, and Hesse’s grandfather Hermann Gundert, the young Hesse realized that he wanted to be a poet, not a preacher, that he had serious reservations with the theology and worldview of the Pietist milieu in which he had been raised, and that to follow the path set out for him by family and religious tradition was tantamount to spiritual suicide; that being the case, Hesse felt he may as well commit the real act, a threat made at least twice in the course of a bitter and protracted battle with family and school authorities. The wheels that had been set in motion by entering Maulbronn
became the grinding, crushing wheel of socialization to a career, worldview, and way of life that the young man had decided he did not want. Hesse had come “under the wheel” of a social institution and family expectations that threatened to do him in, and he reacted with all the vitriolic and polemical flair that his considerable literary and intellectual gifts afforded him. “I believe if I were a Pietist and not a human being, I could change every quality and inclination within me into its opposite, and harmonize with you. But I cannot and will not live thus any longer.” These words of Hesse’s are from one of many bitter letters home written during his confinement in Stetten, a sanatorium for the “retarded and emotionally disturbed,” to which he was sent following his rejection of the path through Maulbronn. During this period of adolescent crisis the relationship between Hesse and his family deteriorated to such an extent that Hesse, though living under the same roof, took to communicating with his father through letters to avoid the pain and difficulty of personal encounter.

From a psycho-social perspective, Hesse’s flight from Maulbronn to “the religion of art” bears the central features of what Erik Erikson terms an identity crisis, that period of “the life cycle when each youth must forge for himself some central perspective and direction, some working out of the effective remnants of his childhood and the hopes of his anticipated adulthood; he must detect some meaningful resemblance between what he has come to see in himself and what his sharpened awareness tells him others judge and expect him to be.” A tension between identity and role confusion is created when the ‘I’ begins to reconfigure the ‘me,’ trying out social roles, ideological positions, occupational options, and is eventually resolved through consolidating beliefs and values, generating plans and prospects for the future, and situating oneself in a societal and vocational niche. Erikson
defines identity in terms of the integration of “disparate roles, talents, proclivities, and social involvements into a patterned configuration of thought and activity that provides life with some sense of psychosocial unity and purpose.” Hesse filled the void created by the rejection of his family’s plans and the life of a Pietist as a source of identity and ideological and vocational commitment with the desire to become a poet and the spiritual-aesthetic world of German Romanticism. In the next chapter we examine the relationship of Pietism to Hesse’s romantic religiosity, and the reaction of Hesse’s family to his literary passions. Here, we turn our attention to that period in Hesse’s life that has so often drawn the attention of Hesse scholars—the flight from Maulbronn, and one of its early fictionalizations, Hesse’s polemical anti-school novel, Beneath the Wheel.

The formative years and events between Hesse’s arrival at Maulbronn seminary in September, 1891 and his taking up an apprenticeship as a book dealer in Tübingen in October, 1895, a move that began the slow process of establishing himself as a writer, have often been a focus of Hesse scholarship. Hesse’s break with his family and their plans for him was a heated, drawn out affair that left its mark on all involved—and on Hesse’s literature. “The break with family and tradition caused by [Hesse’s] vocational choice,” writes Hugo Ball, “left in Hesse a long-lasting wound. He was always aware that in the Maulbronn affair lay the fundamental decision of his life [and he] repeatedly endeavored to come to terms with the events of Maulbronn by depicting them [in his literature].” A recounting of the events of Maulbronn and the difficult transition from the world of Pietism to a member of the fin de siècle literati is standard fare in studies of Hesse’s life and work, and rightly so. Maulbronn is both the centerpiece of the most formative experience of Hesse’s life and the leitmotif of Hesse’s literary legacy. Ball describes the Maulbronn affair
as “the primary experience,” depicted over and over in Hesse’s novels; Mark Boulby uses the term “exemplary event,” “the wall which, real or imaginary, surrounds all of Hesse’s major characters is the wall around Kloster Maulbronn”; for Eugene Stelzig, Hesse’s departure from Maulbronn is the foundation for his “quasi-hagiographic gallery of fictional characters that go their own way.”

While agreeing that the Maulbronn affair is an exemplary event of Hesse’s literature, we will not adequately understand its fictionalization if our focus remains narrowly biographical. Our first task then will be to situate Hesse’s experience of Maulbronn in some social-historical context, with an eye to understanding the nature of the educational tradition into which Hesse was entering, and the kinds of criticisms of the educational system prevalent in Hesse’s day. Through his literature Hesse attempted to come to terms with the events of Maulbronn, but these events reflect more than family dynamics; Hesse’s fictionalizations of Maulbronn, by their very nature, demand to be set in a broad social-historical context. With this foundation under our feet, we will be in a position to approach Hesse’s adolescent revolt and crisis from some fresh angles and better understand the meaning of the fictive “Maulbronn” of Hesse’s literature. This social-historical background will be developed in the first section, ‘Mandarins and Pietists.’

In the next section, we turn to Hesse’s revolt and the aftermath of the Maulbronn affair. Hesse’s adolescent crisis has been described often enough by others, generally in great detail, and it would be redundant to yet again rehearse the long, drawn out affair. I will, therefore, only briefly sketch the course of events and Hesse’s falling out with his family. Typically, it is in discussions of the Maulbronn affair that we find psychological interpretations of the relationship between Hesse and his family, a generally negative
assessment of the handling of the affair by Hesse’s parents, and quite often stereotypical portrayals of Pietism. From our more social-historical perspective, Pietism becomes less a direct source of Hesse’s adolescent crisis than a personal factor exacerbating Hesse’s vocational desires and religious inclinations. Hesse, as a student of theology in a rapidly modernizing, secularizing world, a world in which religion was under attack from several fronts and his own tradition pushed to the far edges of mainstream, turn-of-the-century German society, was subject to a number of cultural and religious tensions that had for a half-century or more contributed to the development of a certain type in Swabia, that of the “neurotic young man who enters the seminary.” This suggestion, first made by Hugo Ball, has not been given the attention it deserves.

In the third section of this chapter, we take up the novel Beneath the Wheel, one of Hesse’s earliest and best known fictionalizations of his Maulbronn years. Often read as a critique of Pietism, in Beneath the Wheel Hesse actually introduces a sympathetic understanding of Pietism as a fragment or trace of a once powerful tradition that has been displaced by the concerns and trajectory of modern, bourgeois life, and replaced by a rationalized, spiritually sterile religion. Drawing on theories of the role of narrative in the process of self understanding, I will discuss how Pietism emerges in Beneath the Wheel as a fictive resource that Hesse utilizes in gaining perspective on his present, and as an important strand in Hesse’s narrative identity.
Mandarins and Pietists

In 1806, when the new kingdom of Württemberg was proclaimed by Friedrich I, Swabia possessed a rich intellectual tradition rooted in biblical study, hermetic philosophy and mysticism, and the classicism of Renaissance humanism. A number of cloister schools, among them Hesse's Maulbronn, funneled intellectually gifted young men on to Tübingen Stift, where they received advanced training in law, education, medicine, and theology. During the nineteenth century the universities played a major role in the social and political changes and upheavals experienced in Germany, as the modern nation state emerged after the collapse of the Holy Roman Empire. The elite schools established in Swabia (and throughout Germany) were given the task of producing an academic class of highly trained professionals. George Ringer calls those who passed through this system "the German mandarins," a "social and cultural elite which [owed] it status primarily to educational qualifications rather than to hereditary rights or wealth. The group [was] made up of doctors and lawyers, ministers, government officials, secondary school teachers, and university professors, all of them men with advanced academic degrees." Through the university system, an ambitious young man with a modicum of talent could be assured a position behind the lectern or the pulpit or an administrative desk, all three of which were supported and controlled by the state. Hesse himself would use this very image of a mandarin class in depicting the school system of the province of Castalia, home to the elite group of scholar-monks, players and preservers of the Glass Bead Game. Castalia is a fictionalized Swabia, the "pedagogical province" whose schools, "for brevity known as the elite schools, constitute a wise and flexible system by means of which the administration... draws
candidates from among the most gifted pupils... in order to supply new generations for the
Order and for all the important offices in the secondary school system and the universities ...
” The common people call them “in a half-derisive, half-respectful tone, ‘the mandarins.’”

Already in the eighteenth century this academic-bureaucratic class was the dominant
feature of German society and culture, and as Hesse came of age it was still the typical path
for someone of his middle class standing, family heritage, and natural talents. “It would seem
that, owing to family tradition, I would become a student, and moreover a student of
theology. Not only was this the wish of my family, it was also the least expensive; from the
age of 14 on there was free education for those theology students who successfully passed
the Landesexam.” The world of the German mandarins was well known to Hesse; many of
his essays and fiction, chief among the later Beneath the Wheel and The Glass Bead Game,
draw on not just Hesse’s personal experiences as an elite student, but on this broader tradition
of mandarin culture, and the criticism directed at it by avant-garde artists and the political
left during the Wilhelmine and Weimar periods of German history.

Hans Giebenrath, the hero of Beneath the Wheel, was, like Hesse, destined to become
a mandarin:

Teachers, principal, neighbours, pastor, fellow students and everyone readily admitted that he was an
exceptionally bright boy—something special. Thus his future was mapped out, for in all of Swabia
there existed but one narrow path for talented boys—that is, unless their parents were wealthy. After
passing the state examination, he could enter the theological academy at Maulbronn, then the seminary
at Tübingen, and then go on to either the minister’s pulpit or the scholar’s lectern. Year after year three
to four dozen boys took the first steps on this safe and tranquil path—thin, overworked, recently
confirmed boys who followed the course of studies in the humanities at the expense of the state, eight
or nine years later embarking on the second and longer period of their life when they were supposed to
repay the state for its munificence.
In his description of Hans Giebenrath’s path, Hesse points to something very important though often overlooked, namely, the close relationship between education and the state. As this passage suggests, Hesse, at least in hindsight, understood how the system worked: through the nineteenth century the state desired from the universities the training of an efficient and knowledgeable group of professionals, bureaucrats, and officials who could contribute to the military, political, and economic goals of the emerging German nation. The mandarins, for their part, “demand[ed] to be recognized as a sort of spiritual nobility, to be raised above the class of their origins by their learning. They [thought] of themselves as broadly cultured men, and their ideal of personal ‘cultivation’ affects their whole conception of learning.”

As an elite student, Hesse’s goal was the higher studies, while the others were destined to be hand workers or tradesmen—and now we began to learn this mysterious, ancient language [Greek], much older, more mysterious, and more distinguished than Latin, this language that one did not learn for the purpose of earning money or to be able to travel about in the world but simply to become acquainted with Socrates, Plato, and Homer. Certain features of that world were already known to me, for Greek scholarship had been familiar to my parents and grandparents, and in the Swabian Myths of the Classical World I had long since made the acquaintance of Odysseus and Polyphemus, of Phaëthon, Icarus, the Argonauts, and Tantalus. And in the reader which we had recently been using in school there was amid a crowd of most prosaic pieces, lonesome as a bird of paradise, a marvelous poem by Hölderlin which, to be sure, I only half understood, but which sounded infinitely sweet and seductive and whose secret connection with the world of Greece I dimly perceived.

In Hesse’s mind, there was something genuinely noble and spiritual about the halls of Maulbronn and Tübingen, but to build this world and to partake of it a deal had to be struck, as George Ringer explains:
[The mandarins] made a characteristic arrangement with their rulers, and it is this bargain which was substantially idealized in the concept of the cultured state. The terms of the settlement were that the bureaucratic monarchy would give unstinting support to learning, without demanding immediate practical returns, and without exercising too strict a control over the world of learning and geist.... the state.... would become a vehicle, a worldly agent or form for the preservation and dissemination of spiritual values. [In return] the state would earn the support of the learned elite, who would serve it not only as trained officials but also as theoretical sponsors and defenders.20

As Hesse sat down to write Beneath the Wheel in the winter of 1905 he clearly understood this dynamic: elite students received status, security and a life in pursuit of spiritual cultivation and ideals, but also had “to repay the state for its munificence.”

Hesse idealized the notion and tradition of Bildung, which “evokes the ancient mystical tradition according to which man [sic] carries in his soul the image of God, after whom he is fashioned, and which man must cultivate in himself,”21 and he idolized those stars in the German pantheon that reflected the ideal: Goethe and Schiller, Novalis and Hölderlin, Burkhardt and Nietzsche. It was the educational system that gave these individuals the tools they needed to carry out their life’s work, even if that included saying goodbye to academic life.22 Hesse was capable of writing eloquent and respectful recollections of those few superior teachers that stirred his soul to higher and nobler ideals. One of them was Rector Bauer, Hesse’s teacher at the Latin school in Göppingen:

Certain favored ones... like me [were] under the spell of the old catcher of souls and, just as I had been handed the boon of vocation, felt themselves initiates on the bottom step of the sanctuary. If I attempt to understand my youthful psyche, I find that the best and most productive part of it, despite many rebellions and many negations, was the ability to feel reverence, and that my soul prospered most and blossomed most beautifully when it could revere, adore, strive for that highest goal. This happiness, the beginnings of which my father had earlier recognized and cultivated in me... came into full flower, for the first and last time in my life, under Rector Bauer.23
Hesse's description of Hans Giebenrath's "thin, overworked" face, his suggestion of an uneasy bargain struck between intellectuals and the state, the "half-derisive, half-respectful tone" Hesse assigns to the "common people" when they speak of the mandarins—all this points to contemporaneous issues and anxieties in the system producing the mandarin class, but we also need to appreciate Hesse's immense respect for this intellectual and cultural elite, among whom he counted not just his father and grandfather but the fathers of Pietism in Swabia.

Johann Albrecht Bengel (1687-1752), the father of Württemberg Pietism, is also generally considered the father of modern biblical scholarship. Educated at Tübingen, his very first publication—a study of the letters of Cicero—reflects the neohumanist ethos of the famous Stift. Bengel, like many Pietists in Swabia, was fascinated with the mystical traditions, including the Cabbala.²⁴ Bengel tempered the chiliasm and separatist tendencies characteristic of the first wave of Pietism in Swabia by establishing close ties to both church and university. Bengel held no university post, but he was Preceptor of the evangelical monastery school in Denkdorf from 1712 to 1741. His rejection of radical Pietism, his lifelong work within the evangelical church and educational institutions, and his reputation as a scholar served to validate and elevate the model of the Pietist cleric-scholar into the hearts and minds of the swelling Swabian middle class. The generation of important Swabian Pietists following Bengel were either his students or greatly influenced by his work: Philip Friedrich Hiller (1698-1769), Friedrich Christoph Oetinger (1702-1782), Philip Ulrich Moser (1720-1792), Karl Heinrich Rieger (1726-1791), Magnus Friedrich Roos (1727-1803), Philip Matthias Hahn (1739-1790). While North German Pietists fought battles with Enlightenment rationalists, many of the Swabians (two of the most influential were Hahn and Oetinger)
sought to mediate between Christianity and the Enlightenment, and were fascinated with scientific theory and new technologies. While Francke and Julius Hecker established in Halle a universal, practical education geared toward the new technical and industrial age and the cultivation of Christian piety and morals, Württemberg Pietists retained and cultivated the humanist, classical, and elitist orientation native to Württemberg since the involvement of the humanist Johann Reuchlin (1455-1522) in establishing the University of Tübingen. They also retained and furthered the tenor of religious mysticism and romanticism and were closely associated with a highly learned, cultured literati. During the century between 1750 and 1850—the era, we recall, that Hesse felt he was spiritually closest to—"nearly every important Württemberg Pietist composed spiritual hymns," and the Pietist contribution to the intellectual and spiritual ethos of Swabia colored the romantic literature of Wieland, Hölderlin, Novalis, Mörike, Schiller, and Schelling, as well as the political liberalism espoused in the poetry and pamphlets of the "Swabian school," led by Justinus Kerner (1786-1862) and Ludwig Uhland (1787-1862). The figures associated with what has come to be called neo-Pietism or late Pietism—Johann Caspar Lavatar (1741-1801) and Heinrich Jung-Stillig (1740-1817)—had a significant impact on Johann Gottfried Herder and on Goethe. Jung-Stillig in particular was a major literary figure whose works influenced both Romantic and Pietist circles. His autobiographical works and allegorical novels are infused with a mystical piety shared by many who stood in opposition to the rationalism of Enlightenment philosophy.

Pietists were at the center of intellectual and cultural life in Swabia during the eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth century. A good deal of effort was expended to memorialize and promote the tradition of the Pietist fathers in Württemberg. Christian
Gottlob Barth, founder of the Calw publishing house that Hesse’s family would later run, published in 1828 his *Süddeutschen Originalien* (South German Originals), which contained selections of writings from key figures of Württemberg Pietism. This was followed in 1870 by Albert Knapp’s *Altwürttembergischen Characteren*, (Characters from old Württemberg), and in 1877 the Calw publishing house issued the first of the four volume “Württembergische Väter,” the aim of which was not scientific inquiry but to impress an enduring image of the great figures. The Swabian fathers, mandarins one and all, were to be venerated. Hesse often referred to this era of the Pietist fathers and he linked himself to it through his grandfather Hermann Gundert:

In this grandfather... I not only came to know a sage very knowledgeable in the ways of men despite his great learning, but in addition I encountered an echo, a survival—somewhat obscured by piety and service to God but still very much alive—of that marvelous Swabian world compounded of material stringency and intellectual grandeur which, in the Swabian Latin schools, in the evangelical monastery seminaries, and in the famous Tübingen training college, has persisted for almost two hundred years, constantly enriching and extending its precious tradition. This is not just the world of Swabian parsonages and schools, to which, however, men of great intellect like Bengel, Oetinger, [and] Blumhardt belonged, but it is also the world in which Hölderlin, Hegel, and Mörike became great.

In this world, just as in my grandfather’s apartment, there was a smell of pipe smoke and coffee, of old books and herbaria; and since this intellectual world, theologically colored but unwilling to exclude any tendency from pietism to radical free thought, year after year took into itself the elite of the Latin schools of the district, there developed, generation after generation, a throng of important, original, eccentric figures, each one of whom, if he was not himself a center and fixed star, belonged nevertheless to the circle of friends and associates of such a star, left behind him essays, correspondence, drawings, and in his turn introduced sons or students into this tradition. This has produced a wealth, a superfluity of more or less intellectually oriented lives amassed in a way that can scarcely be equaled in any other district of Germany.
Hesse would pay this “marvelous Swabian world” the highest compliment when he identified Bengel and Oetinger as the progenitors of the Glass Bead Game, which is described as a mode of playing with the total contents of our culture; it plays with them as, say, in the great age of the arts a painter might have played with the colors on his palette. All the insights, noble thoughts, and works of art that the human race has produced in its creative eras, all that subsequent periods of scholarly study have reduced to concepts and converted into intellectual property—on all this the immense body of intellectual values the Glass Bead Game player plays like the organist on an organ.\textsuperscript{34}

Indeed, it is one Bastin Perrot of Calw who is said to have constructed the first game, and the description of its workings is suggestive of Hahn’s and Oetinger’s fascination with the hermetic significances of mechanical devices.

As Hesse entered Maulbronn, this tradition of the Swabian fathers stood behind him, shaping his love for that quintessentially German phenomenon, \textit{Kultur}, with all its connotations of spiritual growth and maturation (\textit{Bildung}), and learning for the sake of the improvement of one’s soul (\textit{Erziehung}), rather than the acquisition of marketable knowledge and practical skills (\textit{Unterricht}). \textit{Kultur}, as Spengler described it in \textit{Decline of the West} meant “the ennoblement [\textit{Veredelung}] of man through the development of his ethical, artistic, and intellectual powers,” and its full meaning became more apparent by contrasting it to \textit{Zivilisation}: “Civilization is to culture as the external is to the internal, the artificially constructed to the naturally developed, the mechanical to the organic, means to ends.”\textsuperscript{35} As civilization (the modern era of instrumental reason, bureaucratization, and mechanization) ascends, culture declines—so claims Spengler, and so thought Hesse. That Hesse writes of this old Swabian world with a good deal of nostalgia—it survives in his grandfather as but an “echo” of a once former greatness—is indicative of the changes wrought by modernity, of
Pietism’s cultural marginalization beginning in the second half of the nineteenth century, and of increasing criticism being leveled at the mandarin class.

If Bengel and Oetinger represent the summit of Pietist learning in Swabia, the case of David Strauss (1808–1874) is a good example of Pietism’s declining stature within the scholarly community during the nineteenth century. Strauss was educated at Tübingen, taught for a short time in Maulbronn, where he instructed Hermann Gundert in Latin, History and Hebrew, and was later a lecturer at Tübingen when Hermann Gundert arrived, in 1831, as a 17 year old theological student. In 1835 Strauss published the *Life of Jesus, Critically Examined*, in which he argued that the gospel narratives are mythic: that is, the accounts of the birth and resurrection of Jesus are actually *stories*, valuable as symbols of ultimate realities, but not historically true. Strauss’s *Life of Jesus* hit like a bolt of lightning, stirring up a great deal of scholarly study and polemical attacks. The academic community was fascinated with this new direction in biblical study, and theology, long the best endowed subject of German universities, took off in the direction of higher criticism. Though Strauss would lose his position at Tübingen and never again receive a teaching post, theology in German universities was to move inexorably away from the speculative, mystical, and Biblical variety practiced by the Swabian fathers in the direction of the liberal, historical-critical, and systematic theology that defined cultural Protestantism. The rise of modern, liberal theology is a significant factor behind Hesse’s inability to survive at Maulbronn: the same institution that was training him to be a theologian and pastor was also supplying him with the tools and a worldview that produced severe challenges to the religious faith in which he was raised.
Strauss found few friends in Pietist circles. Eduard Mörike, whom Strauss knew personally, was one of them:

In my public role as a clergyman I have always believed that I could accept certain things traditionally as settled and factual and that I had to do this, partly according to the principle of the lack of sophistication of the people and partly because even the educated person prefers to tie his worship to forms and images which he has had from childhood... In the meantime, Strauss’s maxim that all research must be allowed freely to pursue its goals without hindrance cannot be called into question. He is a brave, fine spirit and it is a joy to hear him in the Streitschriften.\textsuperscript{39}

Others were less than enthusiastic. One of Strauss’s most vocal opponents was one Ernst Wilhelm Hengstenberg (1802-1869), a Pietist theologian from Berlin. Though the two men seemed to have mutual respect for one another, Hengstenberg’s criticisms ruffled the feathers of Strauss’s defenders, and they launched a full scale assault on Pietism, part and parcel of a growing tendency in academic circles to criticize, even ridicule Pietism as a backward, reactionary, and conservative position. Once the influential Friedrich Theodore Vischer threw his hat into the ring with a “rather heavy-handed attack on what he considered to be a Pietist plague on the land,” the game was all but over.\textsuperscript{40} Württemberg Pietists fought back, chief among them Albert Knapp and Ludwig Hofacker, but their pleas sounded strained and discordant to many. “It is obvious that two chief parties are coming to the fore, Christians and antichristians...Everyone must choose a side... either belief or disbelief, Pietist or Rationalist, enemy or friend of demagoguery... With each passing year the need to take a stand becomes more urgent.” Hofacker would take Knapp’s war-like imagery even further. Just as citizens must defend the fatherland by force of arms when under attack, so too must Christians stand ready to defend the Kingdom of God; they have a “Waffenpflicht,” a “military duty”: Christianity “is continually at a state of war; it is in the field [fighting]
against the Kingdom of Darkness." Strauss's book forced a decision on fundamental questions of faith, and Pietists decided against it.

The winds created by Strauss were felt in Calw and the Hesse-Gundert family. In a letter to his son written in 1866, Hermann Gundert recalled how Strauss "bewitched" his students, and lamented the fact that thirty years on his children still had to deal with the name of Strauss. (Hesse, too, would have to deal with him, if not by name, certainly with his legacy.) In a later letter, Gundert would go even further: "I abhor Strauss with my entire soul—not his talents, which are gifts from God and that I too possess... but the man. He is no more a bearer of God's words than Voltaire and his consorts..." Rejection of the revolution in theology that Strauss represented pushed Pietists to the edges of the academic community. Pietists had for some time been underrepresented in theological faculties, and their hostility to liberal theology and cultural Protestantism only served to further weaken their position in the community of mandarins. Hesse recollects that his grandfather's "speech, when it came to academic matters, was shaped by the vocabulary of the Tübingen Stift in the era of Hegel and particularly Schelling; resonance with Oetinger and Jacob Böhme was also present." But this era was in the past. Hesse's father, grandfather, and the fathers of Swabian Pietism were no longer exemplars of the academic elite, their theology and their faith no longer held widespread appeal. The Pietism of Spener, Francke, and the Swabian fathers was supported by pastors and scholars, pious middle class burghers and civil servants. In Halle, Francke was even able to gain the ear and support of the Prussian nobility. But through the nineteenth-century the support base of Pietism changed, especially in the south. Those influenced by Pietism were increasingly farmers and tradesmen and the poor, not businessmen, professors, and state officials. It is no accident that Pietism appears in Hesse's Beneath the Wheel in the
form of the shoemaker Flaig, a man of the countryside and manual labor, not the urban world
of bursting cities, cafes, and top hats. Flaig is a man of strong, if simple and antiquated faith;
to Hans Giebenrath and to his schoolmasters and the theologians Flaig’s Pietism is not so
much an anathema as simply irrelevant.

There is another aspect of Strauss’s life and work that needs to be emphasized.

Strauss wrote a second *Life of Jesus*, but this one specifically for “the German people.” In it
Strauss champions and develops the

typical worldview of the victorious bourgeoisie, not of the great aggressive bourgeoisie of the
eighteenth century, but of the positivistic materialistic bourgeoisie which had become victorious in the
nineteenth century, and which he represented. This is characterized by a calculating attitude toward the
world, a basic materialistic interpretation of reality, and moral rules derived from bourgeois
conventions.

Strauss, as Paul Tillich makes clear in the continuation of the passage cited above, eliminated
“the inbreaking of the divine into the finite.... The image of Christ which Strauss and many
later biographers produced was that of a domesticated divinity,” one suitable and adaptable to
the needs of the modern world, to the needs and attitudes of the bourgeois.\(^{45}\) One of chief
criticisms of the mandarin class (among whom are to be counted the proponents of liberal
theology and cultural Protestantism) in Germany during the Wilhelmine and Weimar eras
was that it was bourgeois and decadent, a major factor contributing to the Decline of the
West.\(^{46}\) It was Nietzsche who used and popularized the notion of decadence in his scathing
attacks on what he saw as a diseased, weary, stagnant culture—academics, with their idolatry
of science, were not far from the top of his hit list. Nietzsche’s calls for a “will to power” and
a “revaluation of values” were aimed at reinvigorating and elevating moral and intellectual
life to something higher.\textsuperscript{47} Similarly, intellectuals such as Max Weber and Thomas Mann, each in their own way, were concerned with the decline of the \textit{Bürgertum} to which they belonged. The German bourgeoisie, though economically powerful, was politically, morally, and socially weak, content with the pursuit of profits and titles, emulating the Junker nobility from which they descended. Mann and Weber were concerned to rebuild the moral and social stature of the middle class from which they descended through a renewed vision of the idea of “calling.” Weber’s studies of the role of the notion of calling in establishing and elevating earlier capitalist classes were part of an effort to rekindle and retool the notion of duty to a calling in order to reinvigorate a declining academic culture. Mann was attempting something very similar, but through the notion of the calling of the artist.\textsuperscript{48}

The paradox of the German university at the dawn of the twentieth century was that it was both at the height of its power as an institution of research and an emblem of idealism but morally decadent and corrupt, fueling the needs of a state bent on empire building. The temporal and material goals of imperial Germany were mirrored by the intellectual and spiritual goals of higher learning. The response of university professors to the rise of the social democratic movement and increasing criticism of the \textit{Kaiserreich} at the close of the nineteenth century was to rail against modernity, democracy, foreigners, and Jews; this only served to increase criticism of the educational system, and the high and mighty ivory towers dotting the German landscape fell into a period of decline and confusion.\textsuperscript{49} George Ringer develops the thesis that the mandarin class could remain influential in German society only under certain socio-economic conditions, namely, that period between an agrarian based system of production and full scale industrialization, a period during which the power of educational capital acquired by successful passage through the school system and entering
into the ranks of the mandarins was comparable to power of landed aristocracy (which was in decline), and the accumulation of capital and wealth by *nouveau riche* industrialists (which was increasing). In time, capitalist entrepreneurship would create an industry and market for artists and writers living and working outside of the university system,\(^5\) creating the distance and independence necessary for a critical perspective. Hesse arrived on the scene precisely as these changes were taking place, and his ambivalence toward the world of the mandarins was a reflection of its changing stature in German culture.

On one hand, Hesse valued the intellectual and spiritual grandeur of the tradition embodied and carried by Swabia’s elite schools and the Tübingen Stift; on the other, he was highly critical of the power of the school system to crush individuality and instinctual life, as well as the role it played in fueling the bourgeois and decadent culture he so despised.

Looking back on his time in the university city of Tübingen, where he apprenticed as a book dealer, Hesse would write:

> I was neither a university student nor did I ever have much sympathy with student life. Both the studious and the frivolous among the student body are aversions to me. I found university life on the whole rather silly, and I consider it a shame that such a large number of the younger generation finds attending university to be the only decent and acceptable choice of vocation.\(^5\)

Hesse’s fundamental conception of the historical and cultural situation of his day is that culture, in spite of material advances, is in decay, spiritually bankrupt, driven by nationalist impulses and empire building, and perversely decadent. The university, in Hesse’s eyes, was only contributing to the downward spiral.\(^5\) Joseph Mileck describes Hesse’s conception of turn-of-the-century Germany as a “sick and dying world, a culture of cheap values, without religion and with no ideals, an inhumanely mechanized age of tinsel, sham, and lies, a place
for politicians but not for human beings. Bourgeois society, the matrix and determinant of this culture...[was] a constant source of irritation for Hesse... Bourgeois culture was something that irritated nineteenth century Pietists too. Hermann Gundert’s abhorrence of Strauss the man was the abhorrence of the world of the bourgeois. Hesse:

Sometimes people came on Sunday to my parent’s house “to pay a call,” the men with high hats in their awkward hands encased in stiff, kid gloves, impressive, full of dignity, men embarrassed by the degree of their own dignity, lawyers and judges, ministers and teachers, directors and inspectors, with their timorous, browbeaten wives. They sat stiffly on chairs, one had to prompt them at every turn, be helpful to them at every move, while they were taking off their coats, entering the room, sitting down, asking questions and answering them, taking their leave. It was easy for me not to take this petty-bourgeois world as seriously as it demanded because my parents did not belong to it and they themselves found it comic.54

If approaching social and cultural questions from different camps, Hesse and his parents were in certain respects agreed upon the nature of the enemy.

Maulbronn, suggests Ralph Freedman, represents “a whole way of life [Hesse] did not want, a whole future that threatened him.”55 This may have been true when Hesse was 14, but Freedman’s rather typical comment of Hesse’s relationship to the world of Maulbronn is at best a half truth. The “Maulbronn” of Hesse’s literature is frequently symbolic of an institution and cultural ideal that loomed large over the character of intellectual and spiritual life in Swabia, a place and ideal that Hesse frequently, if nostalgically, recollects with sympathy, respect, and longing.
Revolt

Hesse arrived at Maulbronn seminary in the fall of 1891. Six of his eight short months there seem to have been relatively peaceful; the young lad even seemed happy and excited with his new home. A reply from Hesse’s Baltic grandfather is indicative of the good feelings surrounding Hesse’s successful handling of the pressure filled state exams and arrival at the seminary. “Your letter from Maulbronn arrived in my hand today and filled my heart with joy.... That you’ve had such a good reception in Maulbronn; that you are pleased with this beautiful and revered [institution], and that you’ve already made acquaintance with Ovid and Homer is for both of us a great joy.” Just three weeks before his flight, Hesse would write a very upbeat letter home:

I am happy, cheerful, content! There is an atmosphere in the seminary that really appeals to me. Best of all there is a close and open relationship between pupil and teacher, but also a good relationship among the pupils themselves... And then there is the magnificent monastery! To stand in one of the solemn cloisters and debate with others matters of language, religion, art, etc. has a quite special attraction... I’ll describe to you a few of my comrades; you are likely interested to know something about the people I’m keeping company with.

And then, on March 7, Johannes Hesse received a telegram stating that his son had been missing since the early afternoon; by ten o’clock, the boy had still not returned. Sometime in the early morning young Hermann Hesse, with the help of a hunter whom he happened upon, made his way back to Maulbronn after spending a cold, lonely night sleeping in a nearby haystack.

From here, things went from bad to worse. Hesse returned to Maulbronn following spring break, but his behavior was intractable, and in short order he was asked to leave for
good. Hesse’s parents sent him first to Bad Boll, a Pietist retreat and healing center founded and run by the Blumhardts, then to Stetten, an institution for mentally handicapped children and adolescents, then, at Hesse’s request, to the home of Pastor Pfister in Basel, who was Hesse’s housefather during his years in the mission school when the family lived in Basel. From Basel Hesse returned home for a few weeks before enrolling in the gymnasium at Cannstatt, where he managed to last the better part of a year, before dropping out of school for good. Along the way there were suicide attempts, threats on the lives of other boys, severe headaches, unrequited love, bouts of drunkenness, depression, vitriolic letters home, pleading and threats from the family, and plenty of tears, guilt, and remorse for all. Hesse would sum up the tumultuous years between 1892 and 1896: “For four years everything that was attempted with me went wrong; no school would keep me, in no course of instruction did I last for long. Every attempt to make a useful human being out of me ended in failure, several times in shame and scandal, in flight or expulsion.”

In hindsight, there were signs of what was to come. Hesse had been a difficult child to handle. The combination of intellect, obstinacy, and a dreamy, artistically inclined personality caused many problems for his parents, who even considered turning him over permanently to a foster home. Hesse’s grandfather Gundert had suspicions about whether the boy’s personality was suited for life at Maulbronn. Shortly after Hesse’s arrival he and others dabbled in hypnotism, and the student Hesse was more interested in Romantic literature and his own budding poetic talent than mastering the curriculum. Hesse himself said very little about his now famous “escape,” writing about it in more or less direct prose but a few times:

... I became a pupil in a theological seminary, learned to write the Hebrew alphabet, and was already on the point of grasping what a dagesh forte implicitum is, when suddenly from inside me storms arose
that led to flight from the monastery, punishment by strict imprisonment, and dismissal from the seminary.

I had committed a great misdeed; I had run away from my school, from the Maulbronn cloister.

I was not quite fifteen years old and as a scholar in the monastery at Maulbronn was on one of the bottom rungs of the ladder that was to lead to training college, to learning, to the ministry or to the Swabian Parnassus, when I went through the severest crisis of my school life and committed a sin, incredible, scarcely to be expiated, that brought disgrace on me and my most honorable family: I had run away, been searched for in the forest for a day and had been reported to the police, had almost caught my death by spending the night in the open fields in freezing weather, and now after my release from the sickroom had come home for vacation, not permanently dismissed and expelled from the seminary but nevertheless with my academic career almost hopelessly compromised.

What were these “storms” that broke over him? Answering this question has been of great interest to Hesse scholars, but the precise reasons for Hesse’s running away on the afternoon of March 7 are rather murky, and this no doubt due in part to Hesse’s repeated fictionalization of the “exemplary event.” In the absence of a single, traumatic event triggering a rather extreme reaction and persistent problems, lasting for several years, with family, school and authority, it is only reasonable to suggest that Hesse’s flight from Maulbronn was the product of a mix of psychological, sociological, familial, religious, and vocational factors. Hesse’s melancholic, sensitive, and obstinate temperament; the deep changes taking place within Wilhelmine Germany; an educational system increasingly under attack and in decline; social and family institutions grounded in a patriarchal value system that could be authoritarian, even brutal; a religious heritage that was being marginalized, seen by many as backwards and simple; a religious crisis involving rejection of his parent’s faith, to which they had a deep commitment; the desire to pursue a vocation as a poet and writer
without having any institutional and little family support—all these factors taken together formed a rather lethal mix.

The Pietist faith of Hesse’s family is often pointed to as the primary cause of Hesse’s troubles. Pietism is often portrayed in Hesse scholarship as a regressive, stern, oppressively dogmatic, and self-limiting form of Protestantism against which someone with the creative talent and open-mindedness of a Hermann Hesse must inevitably rebel and reject. Gisela Kleine, in her biographical study *Ninon und Hermann Hesse*, takes a psychological approach to Hesse’s relationship to his parents. Drawing on the essay by Ninon Hesse published as part of the *Kindheit und Jugend* letters, Kleine emphasizes that Hesse’s childhood was marked by the “‘pedagogical’ withholding of affection on the part of his parents.” Unable to control him at home, the six year old Hesse was placed in a boarding school in Basel for six months between January and June of 1884. For Ninon Hesse, this was representative of a family system that used the devices of shame, guilt, and punishment in order to exact desired behavior, and later, desired beliefs. Examples of such tactics can be found in the decisions taken and letters sent during the difficult period following Hesse’s dropping out of Maulbronn. The experiment with hypnotism in which Hesse and his friends engaged is a good example. The reaction of Hesse’s parents to the news that their son was hypnotized was swift and firm:

The affair with hypnosis has shocked us greatly. All these unseen things are anathema to me. Our body is a temple of the Holy Spirit and our soul a tool of His will. Intoxication or narcosis, whether by alcohol, morphine, or hypnosis, dirties and debases that which God created to serve Him, which he has saved and made Holy. Why did you have to participate in such an experiment?
It is such language that has led many commentators to label Pietism as severe and exacting, claiming that Pietism in Hesse literature is little more than a metaphor for “an oppressive masculine world.” After Hesse’s flight from Maulbronn the threats would become harsher:

... there is no time for such escapades. The main concern is this: how will things now proceed in Maulbronn? Is something similar in store? Can you come through this with any honor? Will God forgive you? ... Rest assured, when things like this happen, it comes before a court. There will be an investigation and questions. Everything—even hidden details—will be brought into the light. But this is a blessing as soon as one takes it seriously and accepts one’s failings with all humility, taking oneself to court more severely than others do... then it is a blessing.

Talk of “hidden details,” “taking oneself to court,” and accepting “one’s failings” are thought to be indicative of a psychologically manipulative and ultimately harmful Pietistic worldview.

When Hesse was finally asked to leave Maulbronn, his parents sent him to Bad Boll, a retreat center founded by the Pietist healer Johann Christoph Blumhardt. Blumhardt caused a stir throughout Württemberg in 1843 with his claim to have cured a young woman who had been possessed with the devil. Religious liberals and modernists took straight aim at this leading light of Württemberg Pietism; his work at casting out devils was taken as an indication of the backwardness of Pietism, whose members refused to adapt their beliefs to the advances and direction of the modern world. That Hesse’s parents would send their son to Bad Boll is taken as further evidence of their own backward and extreme views.

Following a suicide attempt (or threat) while at Bad Boll, Hesse was sent to Stetten, a home for mentally handicapped children and youth; once here the break between parents and son became acute. In letters home Hesse frequently refers to himself and his situation using
images of imprisonment, while rejecting all efforts to quiet and heal his tortured soul through recourse to Pietist beliefs:

What I wouldn’t give for death.... You are my jailers.... Let me die here.... This miserable life without inspiration, without education, without entertainment is befitting an animal.... You would stuff me with your Pietism.... They give me speeches: “Turn to God, to Christ, etc.,” I cannot see anything but delusion in this God and nothing in Christ but a human being, even if you curse me 100 times for it.

There is no hope, no belief, no love and no being loved, much less any kind of ideal, nothing beautiful, nothing aesthetic, no art, no sensitivity... there is, in one word, no spirit here.... Is it right to put a young person in an institution for the retarded and the epileptics when he is healthy enough except for slightly bad nerves, to rob him by force of his belief in love and justice and therefore in God?

Father is such a strange word; I don’t seem to understand it. It must mean someone whom one can love and who loves with his heart. How I would like to have such a person!68

Hesse’s psychological and emotional state throughout this period was understood by his parents as a religious crisis, and they made appeal after appeal to their son that he remain patient and steadfast in his faith—an approach that only worsened Hesse’s condition, so great were his doubts—while simultaneously distancing him by placing him under the care of others. In letters they would profess their love, yet Hesse felt at times that his removal to institutions was punishment for his behavior. Hesse would often write of the Pietist principle of ‘breaking the will,’ and his treatment at the hands of his parents during this difficult period is typically understood as embodying this principle—an unrelenting, psychologically manipulative, harsh willingness to “exorcise [evil] with all possible means for the sake of the soul’s salvation.”69 In Chapter 5 we will examine in greater detail Hesse’s use of the notion ‘breaking the will’ in his literature. Clearly, the years following the Maulbronn affair were extremely difficult for Hesse, and he carried the memories of estrangement from parents,
guilt feelings for having them let them down, and a hostility resulting from a sense of abandonment.\textsuperscript{70}

Periods of crisis in a person's life are rarely the result of a single factor, and though theories of the 'it-all-comes-down-to' variety can be deeply satisfying, they are also usually inadequate. The black and white tendency in Hesse scholarship to lay Hesse's adolescent crisis at his parents' feet and the supposed severity and backwardness of their faith needs to be replaced with thinking in color. Common depictions of Pietism in the secondary literature include such images as "puritanical," "severe," self-contained,"\textsuperscript{71} "self-righteous,"\textsuperscript{72} "absorbed in legalism," "narrow," "sectarian"\textsuperscript{73} "unholy,"\textsuperscript{74} and "dogmatic."\textsuperscript{75} These are stereotypical portraits, caricatures that have been perpetuated through several generations of scholarship. They are also discordant with many of Hesse's own descriptions of his family life and his parent's faith:

Many worlds, many quarters of the earth, extended arms, sent forth rays which met and intersected in our house.... Here people prayed and read the Bible, here they studied and practiced Hindu philology, here much good music was played, here there was a knowledge of Lao Tzu, guests came from many countries with the breath of strangeness and of foreignness on their clothes, with odd trunks of leather and of woven bark and the sound of strange tongues, the poor were fed here and holidays were celebrated, science and myth lived side by side.... Complex and not understood by everyone was the life of this house; the play of light here was many-colored, rich and multitudinous were the sounds of life. It was beautiful and it pleased me.... Magic was native to our house and to my life.\textsuperscript{76}

As the son and grandson of theologians I learned early that pious Christian's could hold completely different views regarding articles of faith and attitudes toward learning—in our Protestant-Pietist circle this was a matter of course.\textsuperscript{77}

It is a simple matter to create from Hesse's writings through a selective handling of sources either an entirely positive or completely negative impression of Hesse's family, and hence of
Pietism. The difficulties Hesse faced in extricating himself from a devotedly religious family once his doubts fully surfaced during his months at Maulbronn should not be underestimated. But it is incorrect to identify Pietism as the sole source of Hesse’s adolescent crisis, and it is unfair to depict Pietism, as embodied by Hesse’s family, as being shaped and governed by little more than the severe, heavy-handed world of the father. Consider Hesse’s recollection of having to face his grandfather for the first time after his expulsion from Maulbronn, walking up the steps to his study with great trepidation:

And so I entered the sanctuary in fear and trembling, smelled the scent of pipe smoke, papers, and ink, saw the sunlight playing on the table covered with books, magazines, manuscripts in many languages, and saw opposite me with his back to the sunlit window, seated on an old sofa in a sun-drenched cloud of pipe smoke, the sage, who slowly looked up from his writing. I greeted him in a low voice and gave him my hand, prepared for a hearing, a judgment, and conviction. He smiled, his mouth protruding from the wide, white beard, he smiled with those lips that were acquainted with so many languages, and he smiled even more with his bright, blue eyes, and the nervous tension inside me relaxed at once and I realized that not judgment and punishment awaited me here but understanding, the wisdom of the age, the patience of age together with a hint of sarcasm and roguery. And now he opened his mouth and said, “So it’s you, Hermann? I hear that you’ve just taken a little genius journey.”

If terms like “narrow,” “severe,” “self-righteous” and “dogmatic” are to be applied to the Pietism of Hesse’s family, they need to be used judiciously, lest we paint a false picture on the basis of a selective handling of the evidence. Hesse even recalls that upon returning home from Maulbronn he would have preferred to be “treated as a criminal and a foe” than have to deal with the “kindliness and embarrassed anxiety with which people tiptoed around me as though I were stricken by a mysterious and possibly contagious illness.” Hesse’s family, by this account, did not dole out punishment by the bucketful but were patient and kind to their wayward son, if also at a complete loss over what to do about the situation; it was perhaps
their unwillingness to be harsh with the boy that induced what feelings of guilt Hesse had toward his parents.

The details of Hesse’s Bad Boll and Stetten period reveal a complex situation. Hesse, it seems, was rather fond of Christoph Blumhardt and felt at peace in Bad Boll, though he was worried that here, unlike Maulbronn, his parents had to pay for his stay. Hesse shared with his parents some sermons of Blumhardt’s that he could rather well identify with: “If many pastors tell us ‘you are miserable sinners,’ etc! what does it matter?... I know that myself, that’s not the point of concern, if I have a license from God, a message of truth, I can be an adulterer, a Muslim and more worthy than all of Christendom.” Lewis Tuskan rightly cites this letter as an example of how Hesse’s “spirits improved surprisingly quickly” once he arrived at Bad Boll. But Tuskan prefaces his comments by saying that Blumhardt’s sermons must “have seemed like heresy to the Pietists.” Tuskan must be referring here to Hesse’s family, since Blumhardt was one of the leading lights of Württemberg Pietism; even if we make the odd assumption that Hesse’s parents deliberately sent him to Bad Boll knowing full well that he would be exposed to heretical teachings, this example nevertheless demonstrates that Pietism was not a monolithic entity; it entailed a diversity of views, and Hesse was exposed to them.

Theodore Ziolkowski writes that Hesse’s “parents turned him over to Christoph Blumhardt, a noted exorciser in Bad Boll, who tried to pray him back to health, with the perhaps not surprising result that the troubled youth tried to commit suicide...” That Hesse threatened suicide while at Bad Boll is certainly related to his falling in love during one of his many excursions to the nearby town of Cannstatt to visit his brother Theo. In Cannstatt, the fourteen year old aspiring romantic poet met and promptly fell in love with the twenty-
two year old Eugenie Kolb, the daughter of his brother’s landlady. When she rejected his advances, Hesse fled Bad Boll, purchased a revolver, and threatened suicide. Blumhardt’s reaction was to suggest that it was but a childish prank, though ought to be taken seriously as a sign of Hesse’s troubled soul:

Today your son ran away from here, leaving suicide threats behind. Before he left, he secretly borrowed some money and bought a revolver. He has returned. I look at the matter as a childish prank, but one that is so abnormal that I consider it urgent to consult with you. I recommend that he be taken for a time to [Dr.] Landerer in Göppingen. Could you be so kind, if possible, as to come yourself.82

Blumhardt’s reaction seems eminently calm and reasonable, not something we might expect from a severe and exacting Pietist, and it is difficult to make the case for Ziolkowski’s satirical remark that it was in effect Blumhardt’s prayers that prompted Hesse’s suicide threat.

Hesse’s mother arrived the following day, removed her son from Bad Boll, and took him to Stetten, where he stayed for three months. The level of bitterness and angst in the letters Hesse penned in Stetten are often taken as an indication of the harshness of the Pietism of his family against which he was rebelling, and they are standard fare in Hesse scholarship. But we would do well to listen to Marie and Johannes Hesse’s side of the matter, too; I quote at length a letter of 10 September 1892 from Hesse’s father:

My dear Hermann!
I wish you could see in my heart, see how it burns with love and sympathy for you. That would perhaps be a consolation for you in your time of deep suffering. To suffer alone and without understanding is painful. But listen: we feel your sorrow and [I] believe I can rightly say I understand you because similar moods, feelings and thoughts are not unknown to me. What you are lacking most and what I wish for you is patience and courage to bear life’s sorrows. Just don’t despair and throw everything away. Overnight a lot can change. One can be in hell for half a year or longer and yet a new
era begins, in which one has become a different person, and one’s former self is hardly recognizable. You think that we should explain to you why you should not be allowed to study. But such a conclusion has in no way been reached. No one is sorrier than us over your having to leave Maulbronn; the doctors said that your entrance into the gymnasium ought to be postponed until—through physical and mental rest—your condition is again normal. The abnormality is such that you are guided in your judgments, in your speech, and your actions solely from the pleasures and the aversions of your feelings rather than moral perspectives. These moral perspectives of which I speak are common: namely, consideration of what is best for you—that is, your own future—and consideration of others, love to your parents and siblings. That you can’t have the necessary rest in your parent’s home causes me great suffering. I made the effort—just as I have seen you make the effort to overcome yourself and live together with us in peace; that gave me hope.... If you would have liked me better, and if I would have had more patience and wisdom, especially if I wouldn’t have been so anxious myself, then it would work. But it didn’t work out that way. And you are not in Stetten to be punished, but only because we don’t or couldn’t find a place that would be better. Please believe in our love and good intentions. We can make mistakes; we are weak and erring people. But we are doing what we can, and as we see right. You said that from [your situation in] Stetten you did not want to ask for [our] forgiveness. I am not asking for it. Something like that has to come from your inner most conviction. But I ask you to forgive me for everything that in your view I have done wrong. Why should we quarrel with one another? It appears you think we are cursing you. No—this I have never learned. I can cry over you, I can wish you would be different, I can, like any true friend, warn you of dangers and tell you what you’ve done wrong—but that is not cursing. You do not learn cursing in the school I attended, and that I am still attending every day...

Hesse hated Stetten, and it is there that his relationship with his parents was torn in two. Was sending their young son to a mental institute cruel and unusual punishment? In hindsight, it certainly seems so. But a decision had to be made quickly following the suicide threat in Bad Boll, and it seems Johannes and Marie Hesse were at their wits end, not knowing which way to turn in dealing with a young man whose emotional and psychological state was so confused and erratic. If Hesse was indeed intending to kill himself, extreme measures had to be taken. As Johannes Hesse writes, Stetten was the best place could they find given the situation; under the circumstances it may be reasonable to give the benefit of the doubt to Hesse’s family.
In evaluating the role of Pietism in Hesse’s adolescent crisis we should also keep in mind that it was Hesse who suggested returning to Basel to stay with Pastor Pfister and his family. Pfister is someone Hesse remembered with a great deal of sympathy; it would seem his childhood experiences in Basel at the mission school were positive. Under Pfister’s care and support the teenager Hesse seems to have gotten his feet underneath him again, and made plans to return to school or pursue an apprenticeship. Similarly, Pastor Schall, the director of the institute at Stetten who supported the plans for Hesse to try his hand at the Gymnasium in Cannstatt, is “among those pedagogues who figured positively in young Hermann Hesse’s life.”

Rather than single out the Pietism of Hesse’s family as the determining cause of Hesse’s conflict-filled adolescence we would do well to situate the entire affair in a broader social-historical context. One Hesse scholar to have taken steps in this direction is Fritz Böttger. The Calw Verlagsverein, the publishing house run by Hesse’s family, Böttger argues, reflects a patriarchal, authoritarian family structure characteristic of the pre-capitalist period. The rise of capitalism “accelerated the decline of the established patriarchal structure” in Germany where the “traditional, almost idyllic bourgeois family situation was a relic of the past. The transition to capitalism “would inevitably lead to difficult tensions and conflicts” between the younger generation and the parental generation. From this perspective, Hesse’s conflict with his family was not so much the product of a narrow and backwards religious faith as with a much broader patriarchal structure existing within German society. In particular, the school system of Wilhelmine Germany was filled with an authoritarian atmosphere, as Hesse would often remind his readers:
They [his teachers] ascribed to me a misdeed, a quite unimportant one which had occurred in class and of which I was wholly innocent, and since they could not force me to confess that I was the culprit, the trivial matter was turned into an inquisition and the two tortured and beat out of me, not the desired confession, to be sure, but instead all belief in the decency of the teaching profession.\textsuperscript{87}

Though Hesse would admire several of his teachers, his school experiences instilled in him an animosity for and mistrust of authority.\textsuperscript{88} The experience of his younger brother Hans, who was beaten by a sadistic teacher,\textsuperscript{89} only served to reinforce Hesse's disdain for the authoritarian and patriarchal school system of his day.

Alongside these broad socio-economic changes and challenges to patriarchal family structure and institutions it is important to recognize that Hesse's adolescence was marked by a severe crisis of faith. As discussed above, one of the fundamental tensions within the religious sphere during the second half of the nineteenth century was that between liberal theology and evangelical faith. Few critics have given attention to this dynamic, although we encounter the theme in Hesse's letters, and in his fictionalizations of Maulbronn. The great paradox of Hesse's education is that it was the prescribed path for ministers and theologians yet exposed seminary students to theories, theologies, and methods of textual study that contained within them the seeds of doubt that could easily grow into pervasive and difficult challenges to traditional forms of faith. The great question of the day in theological schools was that bred by David Strauss, the relationship of the historical Jesus to the Christ of faith.

From the moment Hesse arrived at Maulbronn he was being exposed to a diverse range of views and challenges to the faith of his family:

I'll describe to you a few of my comrades; you are likely interested to know something about the people I'm keeping company with.... I come now to Zeller. He is big, broad, [and] frightfully strong. He's an enthusiast, likes philosophy, [and] is crazy about Herder. He calls Christ the friend, not the
Son of God; he sees the existence of the devil and other such evil forces as phenomena that cannot be proven. Moreover, he’s talented, has a good prose style, [and] writes occasional poetry... has a very good feeling for music.90

If his companions were provoking thought on historical Jesus and a modern skepticism of supernatural forces, so too were his required studies, which were a persistent topic of discussion with his parents. Hesse was able to write rather satirical letters home on the inanities of historical critical study, but beneath the mockery is an attitude that, when applied to Scripture, would be deeply corrosive to faith:

In the study of Luke’s gospel we have already reached the gratifying position of really knowing for certain that Luke actually wrote it. In history we are far enough along to know so much about Lycuigis that we actually know nothing of him.... With a 100 difficulties we are so far that we believe, if not know, that Homer probably (!) lived.91

In his reply to this letter, Johannes Hesse cuts right to the chase:

What you had to say about [historical] critical questions... has got me to thinking. These questions never concerned me much, because from early on I stood on the side of criticism; for example, already as a student at the mission school in Basel I was convinced that many biblical books of the Judeo-Christian tradition are [literally] false, but that has little impact on their religious value. Since Kant we are living in the age of criticism and we can’t undo what has been done. It hurts if in the process lovely illusions are destroyed or precious time appears wasted. But at bottom it is criticism that drives the truth-sense [Warheitsinn], the fundamental presupposition of all science and religiosity. The mistake in all this is that too often too much time and value is placed on single-minded historical and literary-historical questions.... Behind this is hidden an easily assumed indifference or hostility against truth. So shout many who hate the Nazarene: the documents are fake, [and] Christianity is finally surpassed! People speak of the deceit of the clergy and who knows what other monstrosities, simply to have a pretext for their own disbelief—it is not a question of historical dates but of moral truth and religious facts. As for Homer and similar questions: it is perfectly clear that one can be filled with enthusiasm
for him, whether [the books] derive from a single poet or more. But so too with the Bible: don’t let questions of its composition stunt the pleasure of its study...  

There is a good deal in this letter that challenges the presumption that Pietists were narrow-minded literalists, but in spite of the reasonableness of Johannes Hesse’s reply to his son’s questions and the new theology, the intellectual climate of Maulbronn was certainly a contributing factor to Hesse’s ultimate rejection of his parent’s faith. The quest for the historical Jesus had been the preoccupation of German intellectuals for more than a century; it was, in effect, “the search for new ways to understand reality, to validate morality, and to organize society, now that the old orthodoxy had been discredited.” Hesse, like so many, came to reject the view of “Jesus as the Logos and Cosmic Christ” in favor of establishing “the harmony between his message and the best of human wisdom” embodied in the world’s religious, literary, and philosophical cultures, and though Hesse’s family was not unsympathetic to such efforts, this was ultimately a point of departure between parents and son.

By the time he arrived in Stetten, Hesse was in full scale revolt from the faith world of his family, and the crux of the matter was his (and their) attitude toward the figure (or person) of Christ:

... If you wish to write me, please no more of your Christ. They make enough of a fuss about him here. ‘Christ and love, God and happiness’ etc., etc., are everywhere here, written in every nook and cranny—and all of it full of hate and enmity. I believe if the spirit of the deceased ‘Christ,’ the Jew Jesus, could see what he caused, he would cry.  

Implicit in this letter is Hesse’s acceptance of the historical Jesus—a great teacher who suffered a tragic death, someone who was, historically speaking, a Jew. Even in his more
conciliatory moments, the point of contention is clear: Hesse can not accept his parents’ faith in Christ: “You know that I don’t recognize this ‘He’ to whom I should cry out, but that need not separate us. What you see in that spirit, I see in your love, in all love.”

Hesse’s consciousness was characteristically modern; that is, his was a disenchanted consciousness, and his art the means by which to recreate and recover a lost faith.

What is so odd about the system of Latin and seminary schools Hesse attended is that theology was the best endowed of all the subjects, it held the status of queen of the sciences, the position of theologian and churchman was well respected, yet one had to in effect sell off their faith in order to become successful. The path through Maulbronn and Tübingen was virtually the only route to a middle class position, to social status and financial security, so young men training for the clergy and theology were systematically exposed, in ever increasing numbers, to a crisis of faith and conscience. Hesse’s father would counsel him:

...[it] has hurt us that you have hastily decided that you will not study Theology. Don’t make this decision lightly. Wait a bit. If you are pressed with doubts about Christian faith, put aside only that which you doubt, until you need or understand it; in the mean time hold fast to what is beyond doubt: the Ten Commandments.

But the experience of training as a theologian while simultaneously receiving the tools with which to question one’s faith led Hesse to a breaking point, and this had been a condition native to Swabian culture since the rise of the mandarin class in the eighteenth century. As Hugo Ball describes it, the oppositions between “Pietism and Rationalism... between Hegel, Strauss [and] Vischer on the one side and Protestant orthodoxy on the other” produced a characteristic type native to Swabia—the “neurotic young man who enters the seminary.”

German philosophy and Biblical criticism shook the faith of many aspiring theologians and
pastors to their core, and Hesse’s adolescent crisis was in many respects culturally scripted, as was his turning to literature as a vehicle through which to engage religion questions. 

Hesse’s short story, *Im Presselschen Sommerhaus*, a tale about three young students (and aspiring writers) of the theological school in Tübingen, Eduard Mörike, Wilhelm Waiblinger, and Friedrich Hölderlin, deals with precisely this theme, and we will return to it in the next chapter.

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*Beneath the Wheel*

In the spring of 1903 Hesse spent three weeks traveling in Italy, his second trip there, returning home to Basel to put the finishing touches on his breakthrough work, *Peter Camenzind*. Hesse had been working in Basel as a book dealer since 1899, but with the success of *Camenzind* he was able to commit himself full time to his writing and to an engagement with Maria Bernoulli. The couple would marry in August of 1904, settling into a new home in southern Swabia, on the shores of Lake Constance. Hesse spent the fall of 1903 and spring of 1904 in Calw, living with his father and sister. During this time he wrote *Beneath the Wheel*, a scathing attack on the Swabian educational system. The work was published in two parts in the spring of 1904 in the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, appearing as a book in 1906. *Beneath the Wheel* outsold *Camenzind*, more than 15,000 copies in its first printing, a success that established Hesse as more than a one work wonder, and associated him with the restlessness and anxiety of a segment of youth and youth oriented culture in Wilhelmine Germany.
Beneath the Wheel tells the story of the demise of Hans Giebenrath, an exceptionally gifted young man from a small Swabian town. The plot is simple, and Hesse's draws heavily on his experiences as an elite student. The novel is set at the close of the nineteenth century, and opens with Hans being pressured, prodded, and trained by his philistine father and insidiously ambitious teachers for the state Landesexam, which the boy passes with flying colors. Hans's success is followed by a summer filled with excitement over the fast approaching school year, the loss of simple, childhood pleasures like fishing and gardening to preparatory studies in Hebrew, Greek, and mathematics, and persistent headaches, omens of what is to come. Hans is then packed off to Hellas house (where Hesse himself had stayed) of Maulbronn seminary. The middle portion of the novel details student life at Maulbronn, where "it is common knowledge that one or more students will drop out during the course of their four years at the academy....At other times a boy will run away or be expelled.... Occasionally... it happens that a boy in despair will find an escape from his adolescent agonies by drowning or shooting himself." Drowning is to be the fate of Hans Giebenrath, while fellow student Heinrich Heilner, like Hesse, is the one who will run away.

At Maulbronn Hans is befriended by Heilner, the rebellious and artistic young man who—like the young Hesse—writes poetry, plays the violin, and runs away from the oppressive atmosphere of the school. Heilner possesses enough self-confidence and self-will to stand his ground against the external pressures of family and society, and simply leaves, never to be heard from again. Hans, in contrast, begins to feel the pressures of school life, suffering from headaches and other psychosomatic symptoms. In short time, the "overworked little horse lay by the wayside, no longer of any use," and Hans is sent home,
listless, exhausted, and depressed. The picture Hesse paints of Hans Giebenrath’s demise is stark:

No one... detected behind the slight boy’s smile the suffering of a drowning soul casting about desperately. Nor did it occur to any of them that a fragile creature had been reduced to this state by virtue of the school and the barbaric ambition of his father and his grammar-school teacher. Why was he forced to work until late at night during the most sensitive and precarious period of his life? Why purposely alienated from his friends in grammar school? Why deprived of needed rest and forbidden to go fishing? Why instilled with a shabby ambition? Why had they not even granted him his well-deserved vacation after the examination?100

Whereas Hesse threatened suicide, Hans is brought under the wheel, slipping beneath the dark, cold waters of the local river. The narrative does not offer any clear explanation of the precise causes of Hans’s rapid demise—perhaps a reflection of Hesse’s own lack of understanding as to what exactly triggered his severe crisis of adolescence—but clearly this polemical novel is a harsh critique of the educational system and middle class, patriarchal values.

Joseph Mileck describes the short novel as a “purging of painful memories”101, an image that has come to inform many readings of this early work.102 Hesse’s own later reflections, written in his seventies, on the origins and personal significance of Beneath the Wheel, seem to support reading the work as a therapeutic exercise:

In the story and figure of little Hans Giebenrath, to whom belongs his companion and opposite, his friend [Heinrich] Heilner, I sought to depict the typical crisis of adolescence and free myself from the memory of those years; in this effort I played the role of critic and accuser—a compensation for my lack of maturity and superiority—of those powers to which Giebenrath succumbed, and to which I nearly succumbed as well: school, theology, tradition, and authority.103
Having arrived on the literary scene and secured some measure of success, Hesse turned back to the memories and experiences of adolescence, to that period of bitter and painful protest, disorientation, and anxiety, and had his say. Clearly, Hesse's personal experiences are projected onto the characters of Hans Giebenrath and Heinrich Heilner, and the work can be read from an autobiographical and psychological perspective, long a favored approach of Hesse scholars. The pressures of preparing for the state exam, the descriptions of Maulbronn, Hans's psychosomatic symptoms and suicidal tendencies, Heilner's rebelliousness and artistic inclinations, the relationship between the willful and successful Heilner and the troubled Giebenrath\textsuperscript{104}—in all this there are echoes of Hesse's Maulbronn experience and home life.

But we need not read \textit{Beneath the Wheel} solely as a \textit{roman à clef} about Hesse's hometown, family, and his experiences as an elite student. Paul Mog has stressed that \textit{Beneath the Wheel} is a particular example of a popular genre in turn-of-the-century German literature, the anti-school novel. Placing \textit{Beneath the Wheel} alongside other similar works, argues Mog, changes how the work is read. Most readings emphasize the work's autobiographical elements, and thereby see Hesse writing a highly personal and unique account drawing on the memories of his troubled youth. But from a social-historical perspective, \textit{Beneath the Wheel} is rather "typical, a repetition and a variation of a standard pattern: an especially sensitive, often artistic and gifted child or adolescent is unable to contend with the pressure of school, family and environment and [in the process] is destroyed."\textsuperscript{105} The anti-school novels popular around 1900 were driven by the question whether "the German school system, with its quasimilitary ethos and discipline, its long school day, and its premium upon intellectual attainment and hard work, [did] not due
The novel then is rather typical of turn-of-the-century anti-school literature. What is atypical about it, and what is of interest for the purposes of this study, is that Pietism has a rather strong presence; moreover, Pietism is depicted in the novel not as contributing to those forces that undo Hans Giebenrath—an oppressive, vicious school system, the vices of ambition, intellectual pride, and bourgeois success, the decadence of romantic longing—but as a counter point to these forces. One of the novel’s interesting features is that Pietism receives a rather sympathetic treatment—a fact that has caused some commentators a good deal of consternation, a point to which we will return. Eugene Stelzig has commented that Beneath the Wheel, as a fictionalization of Hesse’s Maulbronn years, falls short as an analysis and explanation of “what went wrong with Hesse during and after the Maulbronn period,” especially if the work is compared with the “fascinating biographical record” found
in the *Kindheit und Jugend* letters. This is surely correct; but Stelzig’s interest in the autobiographical dimensions of Hesse’s fiction means that he approaches the work as an attempt on Hesse’s part to “liberate himself from a set of traumatic memories,” rather than as a work of cultural analysis and criticism. In the Introduction mention was made of Hesse’s conception of literature and the arts as heuristic tools with which to explore cultural and social issues of the day; Hesse considered the state of education to be an important topic and it was during the period from which *Beneath the Wheel* dates that Hesse became active as a editor and reviewer, even helping to found the periodical *März*, which addressed the political and cultural ethos of Wilhelmine Germany from a decidedly critical perspective.

If *Beneath the Wheel* had for Hesse a psychotherapeutic dimension, it was also the product of an expressed interest in contemporary cultural questions.

The postmodern present tends to be radically unhistorical, but Hesse was not; his approach to cultural questions is to frame and examine them with the aid of historical narratives. To gain perspective on his present, Hesse turned to the past; and the past and tradition he knew best and which for nearly two centuries had molded the intellectual and spiritual tenor of his land is world of Pietism and the Swabian fathers. Hesse utilizes Pietism in *Beneath the Wheel* as a narrative resource in relating the demise of Hans Giebenrath to the state of affairs within contemporary mandarin culture. The Swabian Pietism that Hesse was steeped in as a child was an object of critique but also a frame of reference that could be brought to bear on contemporary questions. It is important to emphasize this later observation in order to understand the interplay between Pietism as a cultural memory and the narration of historical processes that we find in *Beneath the Wheel*, and indeed much of Hesse’s fiction.
Hesse folds Pietism into his story of Hans Giebenrath in three different ways: first, and most obvious, is the character of Flaig, a humble Pietist shoemaker, who is a foil to Hans’s father, teachers and pastor; second, through brief but important mentions of the differences between contemporary biblical scholarship and the Pietist theology of the heart; and third, by depicting Pietism as an eclipsed tradition, absent to the world of the frock coats and valued only by the unsophisticated working and laboring classes. Let us examine each of these in greater detail.

Flaig is repeatedly and favorably compared to Hans’s nameless, self-preoccupied, insensitive teachers and pastors, who are prime examples of Nietzsche’s “cultured philistines,” driven by private ambition more than Hans’s wellbeing. Flaig is well known to Hans, the boy “used to spend a few hours each evening [at his house], though he had neglected him for some time now.”\textsuperscript{112} Whereas Flaig tries to reassure Hans that should he fail the pressure-filled Landesexam he need not worry, Hans’s teacher claims failure to be impossible:

“But what if I fail?” Hans suggested shyly.

“Fail?” The good man stopped short. Failing is absolutely out of the question. Completely impossible. What an idea!”

Flaig, anxiously thinking of the boy on the morning of the big exam, prays for his success.

“The entire family, including the journeymen and the two apprentices, stood in a circle around the table, and to the usual morning prayer Flaig added the words: ‘Oh Lord, protect Hans Giebenrath, who is taking the state examination today. Bless and strengthen him so that he will become a righteous and sturdy proclaimer of your name.’ The pastor, in contrast, ‘did not offer a prayer in his behalf,’” though did comment to his wife: “Little Giebenrath is just
about to start his exam. He’s going to become someone very important one day, and it won’t hurt that I helped him with his Latin.”¹¹³ After successfully passing the examination, it is Flaig who is critical of the pastor’s motives in having Hans get a head start on his fellow students by having him study through the summer, and it is Flaig who warns the young Giebenrath of the potential dangers to faith inherent in the kind of training he is about to receive. Upon his failure at Maulbronn and his return home, Hans’s former teacher and the pastor ignore him and are completely indifferent to his plight. They “would give him a friendly nod when they met him on the street, but Hans was no longer a concern of theirs. He was no longer a vessel which could be stuffed with all sorts of things, no longer fertile ground for a variety of seeds; he was no longer worth their time and effort.”¹¹⁴ Flaig, in contrast, makes an effort to address the boy’s needs, inviting him to help in the yearly making of apple cider. Here, in the outdoors and amidst the festivity of cider making, Hans begins to recover a sense of joy:

The crunching of the apples sounded harsh but appetizing. Anyone passing by who heard this sound could not help reaching for an apple and taking a bite. The sweet cider poured out of the pipes in a thick stream, reddish-yellow, sparkling in the sun.... taking a sip, and then just standing there... eyes moistened by a sense of well-being and sweetness.... This sweet cider filled the air far and wide with its delicious fragrance.¹¹⁵

It is also Flaig who understands that Hans’s problems are in part due to an emerging sexuality, going so far as to set Hans up with his young niece, Emma. Eugene Stelzig has observed, rightly, in my view, that

the ‘nervous’ disorders from which Hans suffers at Maulbronn, and which worsen to the point of a breakdown after Heilner’s dismissal, appear to be related not primarily to academic pressures, but to
the burgeoning sex drive that Hans is completely unprepared to handle, and which neither his father, teachers, nor the doctor who examines him are able to identify. Thus Hans—as was probably Hesse—is overwhelmed by feelings he is incapable of understanding...

Flaig, unlike the frock coats, is able to identify the forces at work in young Hans, if he is ultimately unable to help Hans understand them. Flaig's life is grounded in the rhythms of the seasons, in the mystical powers of a glass of cider, in his vigorous family life, in his work as a master craftsman and his training of apprentices, in the piety of the conventicles in which he participates, and in his Herzentheologie, his theology of the heart. It is Flaig who knows what the pedagogues have in store for Hans, and it is Flaig who, at the novel's end, takes some responsibility for Hans's suicide, even though he is the one adult figure to have attempted to forestall it:

'There's no understanding it,' sighed Herr Giebenrath. 'He was so talented and everything was going so well, the school, the examination—and then suddenly one misfortune after another.'

The shoemaker pointed after the frock coats disappearing through the churchyard gate.

'There you see a couple of gentlemen,' he said softly, 'who helped to put him where he is now.'

'What?' Giebenrath exclaimed and gave the shoemaker a dubious look. 'But, my God, how?'

'Take it easy, neighbor. I just mean the schoolmasters.'

'But how? What do you mean?'

'Oh nothing. Perhaps you and I failed the boy in a number of ways too, don't you think?'

Pietist shoemaker Flaig is without question the only redeeming adult figure in the story.

So far as Pietism is concerned, readers who emphasize the autobiographical context of Beneath the Wheel—Hesse's "escape" from Maulbronn—often view it as a heavy handed critique of the Pietism of Hesse's youth—or rather, they are confused as to why it is not. Consider, for example, Christoph Gellner's reading. Gellner argues that Hesse's early works, among them Beneath the Wheel, are fundamentally "therapeutic texts," but that they are
characterized by unconscious denials of just how harsh his parents and their “unholy
Christian religion” had been. Gellner admits that “the frightening and oppressive dark side of
his childhood is certainly not banished” from Hesse’s early works. But apart from “harsh,
accusatory words” directed at the school system, “self-censorship” prevented Hesse from
getting to the root of his troubles, which is the need to “come to grips with his unholy
Christian upbringing.” A prime example for Gellner is Beneath the Wheel, a work
characterized as a “fairly harmless” attempt to “settle the score with the authoritarian
teachers and priests who did everything in their power to suppress the personal development
of the individual…” In this story, argues Gellner, “church and religion are considered only
part of society’s repressive education system,” whereas in reality it was fundamentally the
“unholy Christianity” of Hesse’s parents that caused his adolescent crisis. Only as a result of
psychoanalysis was Hesse able to reach deep down into the “tangled mesh of spiritual,
intellectual and psychological compulsions” that his upbringing bred. Such an approach
and interpretation seems driven more by the need to save the phenomenon—a harsh,
 oppressively dogmatic, exacting Pietism—than by the actual text. Gellner’s reading of
Beneath the Wheel implicitly draws on stereotypes of Pietism, and when these stereotypes are
not found, he resorts to fancy interpretive footwork to derive his desired result.

Similarly, Franz Orlik admits that the Pietist Flaig is a very sympathetic character, but
has a great deal of trouble understanding how this could possibly be the case. Flaig “in no
way at all fits the pietistic milieu of Hesse’s family home.... In the person of Flaig Hesse
sketched for the first time a contrary image to the spirit of his family’s home.” Orlik goes on
to state that it is “amazing that this figure [Flaig] remained so strongly shaped by Pietism,”
and suggests that even though Hesse turned against Pietism he nevertheless felt a “duty” to
Again, the reasoning here is suspect, based on what has been taken as a foregone conclusion, namely, that the Pietism of Hesse’s home was narrow, backwards, stern, punishing, humorless, etc., and was so effective in instilling feelings of guilt that Hesse, even in his rejection and criticism, felt a “duty” to not be too hard on it. We have already made mention of Hesse’s descriptions of the openness, love, and magic that he experienced in his childhood home. If Flaig is not Hesse’s father, the character nevertheless represents aspects of Pietist thought and culture. Of course the character of Flaig is an idealization, but so too are the frockcoats; Hesse, we recall, remembered several of his teachers with a great deal of respect and warmth. And if we must locate Hesse’s depiction of Flaig in his family milieu, there is perhaps a good deal of Hesse’s Baltic grandfather in the character Flaig:

Dear, dear comrade! Son of my heart! You made me very happy with your song; I can still understand a joke and can still make them myself. So, I am sending a second edition of your wonderful songs and hope that you will straightaway compose a third for Christmas—Knittelverse. Ha! And why not? We are already finding the tact—

Suffering and joy in Maulbronn....

With greetings and a kiss, the grey Grandfather.

Dr. Hesse, who was known for his buoyant and jovial personality, exchanged several upbeat, playful letters such as this with his grandson, encouraging his poetry, and even sending little verses of his own—“And now to your good song, that you have sung to me, hear the echo from the North...” Flaig has something of the good humor and everydayness of Doctor Hermann Hesse:

Thank God! That was a good day: a lot of people in pain came to visit, Pauline Duglas sent me a plate of baked apples, a dear letter arrived from Reval—and we have eaten and can go to bed. Christmas is drawing closer, a package is on its way to Calw—what will it be?
If a psychological and autobiographical framework focused on questions of pathology remains our only means into Hesse's treatment of Pietism in his literature, we miss what else there is and that is a great deal.

Fritz Böttger rightly comments that the characterization of Flaig owes a great deal to the chiliast and mystical stream of Pietism, as exemplified in the thought of Gottfried Arnold and Jacob Böhme. Social criticism and speculative mysticism were the cornerstones of the rural, Pietist sensibility in Swabia, and Flaig is a late descendant of this tradition. Flaig, like his ancestor Böhme, is a simple, down to earth cobbler. Still, Böttger writes that Flaig is a "personality considerably different from the Pietists that Hesse came to know in his parents' household," a perception that is not entirely true. I've suggested there are affinities with Hesse's Baltic grandfather, and Hesse liked to link his grandfather Gundert to the tradition of Jacob Böhme and Friedrich Oetinger. Johannes Classen, who worked for Hesse's family in the publishing house, also stands in the tradition Hesse draws upon in sketching Flaig, and it may well be that Hesse's Flaig carries echoes of his memories of Classen. In a short recollection of Classen, Hesse recalls that his mother's piety was quite different from that of the "theosophist," but this was a sign to the young Hesse that Pietists could hold very different views on articles of faith and the meanings of various teachings. Johannes Hesse's theological leanings toward the church fathers and the mysticism of Tauler, Suso, and Eckhardt were points of contact between the two men, but his mistrust of the speculative theology of Böhme led to a certain wariness of Classen's theology. Classen was enough of a
mystery to the young Hesse that he would periodically leaf through Classen’s works in his
grandfather’s study. Classen was very likely the source of Hesse’s first exposure to the
speculative mystical tradition indigenous to Swabia. Another figure from Hesse’s youth,
Christoph Blumhardt, with whom the Hesse family was acquainted and apparently supportive
(given that they turned their son over to him in the wake of the Maulbronn affair) bears some
similarities to Flaig in that he was a social activist highly critical of the militarism and
haughtiness of Wilhelmine politics and culture; it is not entirely fair to conceive Flaig as
completely alien to Hesse’s upbringing—at the very least, the character of Flaig shares the
disdain with which Hesse’s parents viewed the bourgeois world of high culture and
officialdom.

If Hesse is able to create sympathy for Flaig, he is also at pains to make clear that
Flaig is a marginal figure within his community, and Hans, smitten with his role as child
prodigy, distances himself from Flaig:

Hans felt a bit queer whenever he was with Flaig. He respected him and his self-assured and
admirable way of life, but everyone made so much fun of the Pietists that Hans had joined in the
laughter, though frequently against his own better judgment. Besides, he felt ashamed of his
cowardice: he had been avoiding the shoemaker for some time, because he asked such pointed
questions. Since Hans had become the teacher’s pet and grown a bit conceited as a result, Master Flaig
had looked at him oddly, as if to humiliate him. Thus the well intentioned guide had gradually lost his
sway over the boy’s soul.... Hans was in the full bloom of boyish stubbornness and his antennae were
most sensitively attuned to any unloving interference with his image of himself. Now he walked by
Flaig’s side and listened to him, oblivious of how kindly and anxiously he was being regarded.

A smile came over [Hans’s] face when he compared the shoemaker with the pastor. He could not
understand how Flaig’s sturdy faith had grown through so many trying years. If Flaig was intelligent,
he was also an unimaginative, one-sided man whom many people mocked because of his evangelizing.
At meetings of the Pietists he performed the role of stern if brotherly judge, and as a formidable
exponent of Holy Scripture he also conducted inspirational sessions in the nearby villages, but otherwise he was just an ordinary craftsman with all the limitations of his kind. The pastor, on the other hand, was not only a clever and eloquent man and preacher but also an assiduous and careful scholar.123

Hans prefers the ethos of the modern scholar to Flaig’s faith and way of life, and this is an understandable reaction on his part. Social and family pressures, the carrot of success and status, a system that would give Hans the opportunity to better himself and become a leader in his community—all for free—could not be passed up. Yet the structure of the novel leads to the conclusion that this is precisely a contributing factor to Hans’s demise. There is not enough of Flaig’s faith and values in Hans Giebenrath’s life—in rejecting Flaig the boy loses something crucial to his survival; that Flaig loses sway over the boy’s soul to the cleverness and bourgeois elegance of the pastor is symptomatic of the decline of religion and culture in general. Lest the reader fail to understand this dynamic, Hesse reinforces it with somewhat intrusive commentaries on the state of religion and theology.

It was during conversations with Flaig that Hans’s “orthodox, unquestioning Christianity had awakened to a genuine personal involvement.”124 Pietism opposed the emphasis on dogma and confessions of faith with personal renewal and religious experience. The world represented by the pastor has lost touch with experiential and inwardly significant Christian piety—not to mention the emphasis on charity and neighbor love—favouring the intricacies of textual criticism and scholasticism. The teachers who prepare Hans for the Landesexam and encourage his summer studies prior to entering the seminary are not part of the old Swabian world from which Flaig descends, but of the modern, secularizing world. Hans may gaze with awe at the rows of books in the pastor’s study, but the narrator (Hesse’s
spokesman) knows that the ethos of this library is very different from what existed in Swabia not so long ago:

Hans stepped into the familiar study. It actually did not look like a pastor’s room. It neither smelled of the earth of potted plants nor of tobacco. The substantial library consisted mostly of new, freshly varnished and gilded spines, not of the worn, bent, worm-eaten or mildewed volumes you usually find in pastor’s libraries…. [a] modern spirit ruled here, different from that of the old-fashioned, honorable gentlemen of the previous generation. The esteemed showpieces of the pastor’s library, volumes by Bengel, Oetinger, Steinhofer, plus all the collections of devout songs which Mörike treats so affectionately in the *Turmhahn* were missing or lacked prominence among the mass of modern works.  

The mention of Mörike is certainly relevant to Hesse’s development of the notion of Pietism as an eclipsed tradition. In the long poem to which Hesse refers, *The Old Turmhahn*, Mörike depicts, with some nostalgia, a typical, *Altwürttemberg* town. It includes a description of the pastor’s library:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Da stehn in Pergament und Leder} & \quad \text{There stand in parchment and leather} \\
\text{Voran die frommen Schwabenväter:} & \quad \text{Before all the pious Swabian fathers:} \\
\text{Andreae, Bengel, Rieger zween,} & \quad \text{Andreae, Bengel, Rieger are seen} \\
\text{Samt Ötinger sind dazu zu sehn.} & \quad \text{There together with Oetinger.} \\
\text{Wie sie die goldnen Namen liest,} & \quad \text{As she reads these golden names,} \\
\text{Noch goldener ihr Mund sie küsst,} & \quad \text{They are like a golden kiss on her mouth} \\
\text{Wie sie rührt an Hillers Harfenspiel-} & \quad \text{As when she is stirred by Hiller’s harp} \\
\text{Horch! Klingt es nicht? So fehlt nicht viel.} & \quad \text{Listen! Do you hear it? It’s nearly perfect.}
\end{align*}
\]

Han’s Giebenrath’s pastor, not to mention his father, knows nothing of this world of the pious Swabian fathers.
The distance and difference between the religion of the pastor and that of the old Swabians is further reinforced though a discussion of changes in theology. In the pastor’s study “vague mysticism and premonition-filled longing were banned, as was the ‘theology of the heart,’ which goes out to the thirsting souls of the people with love and charity, crossing the gulf of science. Instead, Biblical criticism and a zealous search for the ‘historical Christ’ were pursued.”

The term “heart” (in German, herzen) is prominent in Pietist discourse, and it is often used to distinguish between a dry, rational belief and a living, inwardly regenerative faith, as when Francke wrote: “I kept my theology in my head and not in my heart, and it was much more a dead science than a living knowledge.”

Herzentheologie—the theology of the heart—refers to tendencies amongst Pietists to emphasize such themes as inwardness, regeneration, sanctification, illumination, and godliness. Often, as is the case in the short passage cited above from Francke, Herzentheologie is contrasted with science or rationalism. Hesse employs precisely this distinction in Beneath the Wheel.

The question of secularization and of loss of faith is also an important theme of Beneath the Wheel. In the previous section I emphasized the religious dimensions of Hesse’s adolescent crisis, conditioned in part by the paradox of training theologians and future clergy in methods and theories that present fundamental challenges to traditional forms of faith, a perspective on Hesse’s Maulbronn years that is reinforced in Beneath the Wheel. Flaig is at pains to warn Hans of the potential dangers to faith that his studies entail:

“You should know that the pastor is an unbeliever. He will try to tell you that the Scriptures are false, and once you’ve read through the New Testament with him you’ll have lost your faith and won’t know how.”

“But Master Flaig, it’s just a question of Greek. I’ll have to learn it anyway once I enter the academy.”
"That’s what you say. But it’s an entirely different matter if you study the Bible under devout and conscientious teachers than with someone who does not believe in God."

"Yes, but no one really knows, do they, whether he believes or doesn’t?"

"Oh yes, Hans, unfortunately we do know."

"But what should I do. It’s all arranged that I go see him."

"Then you’ll have to go, naturally. But when he says things like the Bible was written by human beings and not inspired by the Holy Ghost, then come see me and we’ll discuss it. Would you like that?"

"Yes, master Flaig, but I’m sure it won’t be as bad as all that."

"You’ll see. Remember what I said."128

Even Hans’s pastor realizes what advanced studies in religion leads to: the “academic introduction” to the New Testament, Hans is told, “will rob it of some of its magic.”129 Hans’s introduction to historical critical scholarship hits him like a revelation. He had heard “comments about the pastor and modern theology” similar to those made by Flaig “several times before.” But in the pastor’s study Hans became excited over his new found power to get to

the heart of old, great mysteries. In his early school years the questions of God’s immanence, the abode of human souls after the death of the body, and the nature of the devil and hell had driven him to fantastic speculations....Now he began to realize across how many mountains of work and knowledge the path to true science leads and he was prepared to hack his way through without taking any short cuts. Shoemaker Flaig, for the time being, slipped his mind.130

If seemingly providing answers to “great mysteries,” this new methodology brought with it the erosion of mystery, of faith, of magic. Hans’s amazement in Flaig’s ability to grow in his faith “through so many trying years” is a reflection of Hans’s (and Hesse’s) own doubt; doubt that was only reinforced through schooling. Weber coined the term “disenchantment” to describe the end product of the rationalization of religion during modernity.131 Hesse’s
life-long interest with “magical thinking” is related to the loss of a sense of magic within religious life, a loss that was bred by the training and theology learned at schools such as Maulbronn.

Hesse, we recall, wrote Beneath the Wheel as a “critic and accuser” of those powers that undo Hans Giebenrath, and against which Hesse struggled too—“school, theology, tradition, and authority.” This is an oft cited passage in Hesse scholarship, but it is not clear that the “theology” to which Hesse refers and is critical of is Pietist theology. The theology that Hesse takes issue with in Beneath the Wheel is the historical-critical variety, and unfavorably contrasted with Pietist Herzentheologie. “Many think that theology is a mere science or rhetoric,” wrote Johann Arndt, “whereas it is a living experience and practice. Everyone now endeavors to be eminent and distinguished in the world, but no one is willing to learn to be pious.” Following Arndt’s lead, Pietists repudiated scholastic orthodoxy and what they perceived as stale intellectualism and ambition in favor of personal, heart-felt religion. Hesse draws on this long tradition in criticizing the nature of theology and the theological training to which he (and Hans Giebenrath) was exposed. That this has not been emphasized in studies of Beneath the Wheel is perhaps due in part to the fact that the widely used English Bantam version of the novel from which I have been quoting omits a lengthy and important passage dealing precisely with questions of theology. Following the observations on the absence of the Pietist ethos to the pastor’s worldview, the narrator distinguishes between two kinds of theology:

There is a theology that is art [Kunst] and another that is science [Wissenschaft] or at least, it endeavors to be so.... The scientific approach has always neglected the old wine for new bottles, whereas the artist, unconcerned with a few surface follies has brought comfort and joy to many. It is the age old and unequal struggle between criticism and creation, science and art; the former may be
always right, but without gain to anybody; the later, however, continues to scatter the seeds of faith, love, comfort, and beauty and also the feeling of eternity, always searching out fertile ground. Life is stronger than death and faith more powerful than doubt.  

It is clear which of the two varieties Hesse prefers: the scientific theology of Hans’s pastor is associated with death and doubt, the mystical, *Herzentheologie* of Flaig and the Swabian fathers is associated with life and faith.

With *Beneath the Wheel* Pietism emerges as an important fictive resource informing Hesse’s literature and thought, and a central thread in Hesse’s narrative identity. As Ricoeur describes it, a fictive resource is simply an element of history or fiction that a narrator draws upon in telling a story. The one story that Hesse repeatedly tells is the flight from Maulbronn. In this story Pietism has a crucial presence—not simply because of Hesse’s Pietist family, but owing to the Pietist contribution to the ethos of the Swabian mandarins. The ‘Maulbronn’ of Hesse’s literature is a site of painful of adolescent memories, but it is also a cultural memory and symbol of the grandeur and importance of learning and *Bildung* to Swabian culture. *Beneath the Wheel* is ostensibly a story about Hans Giebenrath, but it also contains a broader historical narrative, one that describes the trajectory of religious and cultural life in Swabia in terms of a narrative of decline from the period of the great Swabian mandarins to the ambitious, bourgeois, stale intellectualism and rational religion shaping Hans’s education, social milieu, and inner life.

Central to Ricoeur’s conception of narrative is the notion of emplotment (or narrative configuration), the process by which the pieces or events of a life or story become contingencies in a plot, linked to one another so that they maintain unity and intelligibility. Narrative configuration entails drawing “a configuration out of a simple succession,” narrative configuration gives meaning, significance and necessity to events.  

Hesse’s
narrative weaves seemingly unrelated events (the marginalization and weakening of Pietism and the demise of Hans Giebenrath) into a meaningful whole. In favorably comparing Flaig with Hans’s teachers and pastor, in linking Hans’s demise to his rejection of Flaig and his infatuation with the ambition and cleverness of the adult world, in juxtaposing modern theology and historical-critical biblical study with the Pietist herzentheologie, by depicting the Swabian mandarins as an eclipsed tradition and lacking influence in training the present generation of Swabian mandarins, in presenting Flaig as an understanding, caring, and charitable figure—in all this Hesse is pointing to the relevance of Pietist culture to the contemporary situation, and the need to retrieve aspects of it in order to both understand and address ill-advised directions within contemporary religious and social life. The demise of Hans Giebenrath, the Decline of the West, and the decline of the mandarins are narrative threads that Hesse relates to another narrative: the marginalization of Pietism in fin de siècle Germany.¹³⁶

To approach Hesse’s literature from the perspective of the narrative self is to cast Hesse as a narrator who “never ceases to revise, reinterpret and clarify his own story—by relating himself in turn to the cathartic effects of those larger narratives, both historical and fictional, transmitted by our cultural memory.”¹³⁷ Good interpretations of Hesse’s literature in the context of Pietism require a sound understanding of the tradition and its historical place and development in Swabian society and culture—not simply in order to trace intellectual and thematic influences but also because Hesse draws upon and writes a history of Pietism into his narratives. Pietism, as a “sedimented tradition,” informs Hesse’s efforts to tackle the cultural problems of his day. Ricoeur speaks of a space of experience and a horizon of expectations. One’s space of experience is made of those past events (historical or
fictional) that one remembers. A horizon of expectations refers to the potential avenues, paths that one can take: “hope[s] and fear[s], what is wished for, what is chosen, rational calculation and curiosity... every private or public manifestation aimed at the future.... It is the future become present, turned toward the not yet,” as Ricoeur puts it. The two mutually influence one another; if you only remember a little, your horizon is narrowed. In gaining fresh perspective and purchase on the present, and in fashioning new horizons, Hesse often projects himself back into his Pietist heritage; Pietism is a space of experience, a fictive resource, upon which Hesse repeatedly draws. In his final work, *The Glass Bead Game*, Hesse will actively cast himself (and his protagonist, Joseph Knecht), back to the world of eighteenth-century Swabian Pietism in order to gather resources from which he can project a future.

During the depths of his adolescent crisis, Hesse would frequently use language such as “If I were a Pietist” and “You Christians.” His flight from Maulbronn reflected the loss of a sense of home and the death of the self: “I’ve lost everything: home, parents, love, faith, hope and myself.” But the “story of a life continues to be refigured by all the truthful or fictive stories a subject tells about himself or herself” and makes one’s life a “cloth woven of stories told.” For Ricoeur, our sense of self or identity derives not from a metaphysical truth system, a set or moral principles, or daily practices, but from our narrative location. “Subjects recognize themselves in the stories they tell about themselves.” *Beneath the Wheel,* like most of Hesse’s literature, is autobiographical fiction, and as such, Pietism is clearly an element of Hesse’s narrative identity, part of the story that Hesse tells of himself. If in his letters home from Bad Boll and Stetten Hesse was endeavoring to break free of the life-world in which he was raised, in much of his fiction he endeavors to mediate a
Ricoeur is adverse to one-sided reductions, and this includes his discussion of narrative identity. What makes for the unity of plot is “its incorporation of concordant and discordant elements,” an observation that Ricoeur extends to the “problematic of self identity.” Narrative identity is not univocal; it contains both harmony and dissonance. It mediates between discordance and concordance and brings about “discordant concordance” or “concordant discordance.” By linking the Pietist herzentheologie to an artistic theology, for example, Hesse was binding his work as an artist to a foundation of Pietist thought and practice; as Hesse would repeatedly tell his parents, there was not much of a difference between his conception of art and their faith, a central theme of our next chapter. One of the chief features of narrative is its ability to mediate or navigate aporias, paradoxes, or tensions between seemingly discordant elements. For example: an event that at one time in a person’s life seems to fracture relationships or connections to tradition can, when placed in a coherent story, become part of a larger pattern, a person’s sense of selfhood can be rejoined with that from which it had been once divorced. “It is precisely because of the elusive character of real life,” writes Ricoeur, “that we need the help of fiction to organize life retrospectively, after the fact, prepared to take as provisional and open to revision any figure of emplotment borrowed from fiction or from history.” It is with this thought that we will close this chapter.

The central event of Beneath the Wheel is actually two events—Heinrich Heilner’s defiant departure and Hans Giebenrath’s dismissal and eventual suicide. As suggested above, if we are to identify Hesse with either character, it is Heilner. And Heilner’s story, too, is emplotted within Hesse’s story of Pietism. Early in the novel Flaig tells Hans that failure “could happen to the best of us,” but that should he happen to fail his examination (or fail at
Maulbronn) “he ought to keep in mind that God has a master plan for each and every soul and leads it along a path of His choosing.” These are the very words that Hesse will put in the mouth of Friedrich Christoph Oetinger thirty years later, during the writing of *The Glass Bead Game*, in the context of that story’s hero, Joseph Knecht, who, like Heinrich Heilner, and like Hermann Hesse, leaves the world of Maulbronn. These words of Flaig’s can certainly be read having been written for Hesse’s parents, a subtle reminder, in the spirit of radical Pietism, that those considered to be heretics and outsiders are actually the authentic or “true” Christians, the ones that listen in good conscience to the voice of God within and do not fail to follow its directives. “I once had an ideal,” wrote Hesse to his parents, “but none of you recognized it or respected it, so I have lost it. I loved literature, poetry, pantheism, and beauty. It was better to have ideals different from yours than to have none at all. Wasn’t the pantheist, the dreamer, closer to you Christians than the atheist, the nihilist.” Heilner loves these things too, and Heilner is much closer to the spirit of Flaig than is Hans.

In his *The Sense of an Ending*, Frank Kermode observes that plots are like prophecy in that they “must appear to educe from the prime matter of the situation the forms of a future.” In *Beneath the Wheel*, Hesse’s most pessimistic work of fiction, the forms of a future are glimpsed in the Pietist *Herzentheologie* and the self-will of Heinrich Heilner, an early version of Joseph Knecht, who, when he takes leave of his Maulbronn, the pedagogical province of Castalia, calmly does so for all the right reasons, including the conviction that the only way to save his tradition is to leave it. Moreover, Joseph Knecht’s departure from Castalia is not without connection to his intimate historical understanding and awareness of the tradition of Swabian Pietism, an understanding that is lacking in the world of Hans Giebenrath. Perhaps it is no mere accident of writing that in a dream Hans Giebenrath sees
Flaig transform into Heilner: Heilner has something of Flaig’s Böhmist spirit. In Heilner’s flight from Maulbronn are the beginnings of Hesse’s rewriting of his own flight, in which it becomes not so much a break with the faith of his family and the great tradition of mandarin culture, but the act of a “true Protestant.” The elements of a plot are what draw us forward in our reading, “seeking in the unfolding of narrative a line of intention and a portent design that holds promise of progress toward meaning.” Seeds for the growth of this design with respect to Hesse’s relationship to Pietism, as it unfolds in the overall plot of Hesse’s corpus, are planted in Beneath the Wheel, and will come to full flower in his final work, The Glass Bead Game.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 1

1 Maulbronn was one of four church schools in Swabia, the others being located at Blaubeuren, Schöntal, and Urach.
2 See the letter of 27 July 1891 from Hermann Gundert to his son, in KJ, 1: 102, which reports on Hesse’s achievement. A copy of Hesse’s exam marks is to be found in Hermann Hesse, Sein Leben in Bildern und Texten, edited by Volker Michels (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1979), 46. Michels states here that Hesse finished second out of seventy-nine candidates, which is likely a confusion (or conflation) of Hermann Hesse with Hans Giebenrath, the hero of Hesse’s Beneath the Wheel, a work that draws heavily on Hesse’s recollection of his student days at Göppingen and Maulbronn.
3 Eugene Steizig has discussed self-will as a character trait and prized value of Hesse’s. From his early years Hesse seems to have been a difficult child to handle. For example, Hesse’s mother would write how “[l]ittle Hermann is developing very rapidly, immediately recognizes all pictures, be they of China, Africa, or India; is very clear and entertaining, but his self-will [Eigensinn] and obstinacy are downright extraordinary.” Cited in, Steizig, Hermann Hesse’s Fictions of the Self (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 57. Steizig comments that Hesse’s favorite virtue [Eigensinn] had a “vicious side insofar as it was not freely chosen, but has a compelled, even demonic aspect to it” (54). Hesse would later associate the compulsion to go his own way as a mark of his fundamentally Protestant character.
4 The more serious of the two attempts took place at Bad Boll, a healing center established by the Blumhardts, influential and somewhat controversial members of Pietist circles. Whether Hesse actually attempted suicide is a matter of some debate. Christian Immo Schneider claims that Hesse did indeed try to kill himself, but that the revolver he purchased malfunctioned. See his Hermann Hesse (Munich: Verlag C.H. Beck, 1991), 24. Schneider does not, however, cite any source for this claim. Richard Helt argues more convincingly, on the basis of Christoph Blumhardt’s letters, whose care Hesse was under the time of the attempt, that it was not an actual suicide attempt “[... A Poet or Nothing At All. ’The Tübingen and Basel Years of Hermann Hesse (Providence: Berghahn Books, 1996). 22-23].
6 Hesse uses this phrase in a letter to Helen Voigt-Diederichs, 27 August 1892, in KJ 2: 278. Helen Diederichs was an aspiring poet, two years older than Hesse, and struck up an epistolary relationship that would last for more than six decades.
7 Erik Erikson, Young Man Luther (New York, 1958), 14.


10 Ball, 46; Boulby, *Hermann Hesse*, 64; Steitzig, 44. Hesse’s third wife, Ninon Hesse, makes the same observation in KJ 1, 519.

11 Richard C. Helt offers the most concise, balanced, and reasonable account of Hesse’s adolescent crisis to be found in Hesse scholarship, and I am indebted to his discussion. See his ‘A Poet or Nothing at All,’ 1-40.

12 Ball, 48-49.


14 The term “die pädagogische Provinz” was first used by Goethe in his depiction of the educational system in his *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*.


18 Ringer, 8-9.


20 Ringer, 116.


22 The exception here is Goethe, who, as Nicholas Boyle has emphasized, owed nothing to the school system or the universities, his father being both wealthy and concerned to give him a solid education at home. See his *Goethe: The Poet and the Age*, vol. 1, *The Poetry of Desire* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1991), 24.


25 This is especially true of Oetinger and Hahn, both of whom were fascinated with the writings of Jacob Böhme and Emmanuel Swedenborg, and attempted to integrate Pietist theology with scientific theory, enlightenment philosophy, and also the working of such new technological devices as clocks, calculating machines, hydrostatic pumps, barometers, and scales. Oetinger and Hahn were fond of and respected the works of the enlightenment philosopher Christian Wolff. See Martin Brecht, *Der württembergische Pietismus*, 279. In contrast, the Pietists in Halle under Francke drove Christian Wolff out of the University in 1723.

26 As was the case in Göttingen, Tübingen experienced a neohumanist revival in 1734. It was precisely during this same period that Pietism established itself in Swabia.


28 Martin Brecht, *Der württembergische Pietismus*, 261.

29 See Doerksen, *passim*.

30 Johann Heinrich Jung, a Pietist from Westphalia, took the pen name Jung-Stilling. He is best known for his two volume *Heinrich Stillings Jugend* (1877), which Goethe had a hand in publishing, and the novel *Die Heimweh* (1794-97). The theme of longing for home (Heimweh) was a key Pietist motif, which we will further consider in the next chapter.

31 *Altwürttemberg* refers to the primarily Protestant geographical and political territory that existed prior to Friedrich I establishing the new kingdom of Württemberg in 1806, an act that brought new territories, many of which were catholic, into the kingdom. Even though the evangelical church in Württemberg remained dominate after 1806, in the minds of many the year marked a watershed, the beginning of a period of decline, and the dispersion of a Pietist “Eigenkultur” into a variety of (often competing) streams and branches.

32 Martin Brecht, *Der württembergische Pietismus*, 225.


35 Cited in Ringer, 89. Kathryn Tanner describes the difference this way: “Used by a non-noble German intelligentsia, *Kultur* commonly referred to the highest achievements of society. Those achievements were not, however, identified with civilization. Civilization referred to external behaviors embodied in political, social,
and economic institutions; culture referred to a society’s intellectual, artistic, and spiritual achievements.” See her Theories of Culture: A New Agenda for Theology (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1997), 9.

38 Strauss was born in Ludwigsberg, as were his friends and colleagues Eduard Mörike, Justinus Kerner, and Theodore Vischer, a trio that would have a significant impact on the literary, political and religious landscape in Württemberg, and indeed throughout Germany.

37 KJ, 1: 535.

38 Cultural Protestantism (Kulturprotestantismus in German) is that movement in Protestant theology—associated with individuals such as Albert Ritschl, Adolf von Harnack, Ernst Troeltsch, and Paul Tillich—that aimed to affirm cultural life and social institutions as continuous or coextensive with transcendent reality. Also known as liberal theology, cultural Protestantism called for a theology and Christian life that fully engaged with and mediated between the church and theology on one hand and social, political, economic, technological, and artistic domains on the other. Pietists generally rejected the direction of liberal and cultural Protestantism, and it is in their clashes during the mid nineteenth century that the origins of today’s ‘culture wars’ are to be found. See Mark D. Chapman, Ernst Troeltsch and Liberal Theology: Religion and Cultural Synthesis in Wilhelmine Germany (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001); and Delwin Brown, et. al., eds. Converging on Culture: Theologians in Dialogue with Cultural Analysis and Criticism (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

39 Letter from Mörike to Vischer, cited in Doerksen, 111.

40 Doerksen, 124. Doerksen comments that in his polemical attacks “Vischer resembled a latter-day decidedly unliberal Luther condemning the Anabaptists and peasants.” See Hartmut Lehmann, Pietismus und weltliche Ordnung, 207-209, for details on the Strauss affair.

41 Cited in Hartmut Lehmann, Pietismus und weltliche Ordnung, 208-209.

42 Letters from Hermann Gundert to his son, 14 March 1866, and March 1872, in KJ 1: 536.

43 “Beginning in the 18th century, Pietists suffered from the fact that they were underrepresented in theological faculties, having few professors to support their theological positions, while many theologians stood for what was in their eyes a modern, dangerous position” (Lehmann, Die Neu Lage; 24).

44 MATSUD 1: 282.


46 The terms ‘bourgeois’ and ‘decadence’ have various meanings. For Nieztsche, decadence implied disease and decay, due to a general moral weakness or failure of will. Decadence is often associated with cleverness, instrumental reason, a preoccupation with the trivial, the accruing of material wealth, and concern for status, self-indulgence, little sense of responsibility, and dilettantism. For Weber, the bourgeois are people of property and culture. As a group, the bourgeois are distinguished from the working class (proletariat) and from a more strictly bureaucratic and political class generally associated with nobility. In a German context, “bourgeois” means much the same as Ringer’s notion of the mandarin. Weber defines the bourgeoisie as “all personalities who possess academic culture [Bildung] and with it a certain status standard, a social prestige” and considers this rise of this class one of the defining features of the modern German experience. Cited in Harvey Goldman, Max Weber and Thomas Mann, Calling and the Shaping of the Self (Berkeley: U California P, 1988), 217-218. In Hesse, these understandings of the bourgeois and decadence coalesce. In his final novel, Hesse takes straight aim at what he saw as a decadent culture, with a lengthy and scathing attack on the “Age of the Feuilleton,” an “era emphatically ‘bourgeois’ and given over to an almost trammeled individualism.” See The Glass Bead Game, 18.

47 As Frederic Lilge observes: “It is not denied that there were occasionally teachers in German universities who urged clarification of individual purpose and criticism of social action, who cultivated appreciation of human values, and who encouraged rational thinking among their students. Yet the general impression is that universities were research centers and that teaching was incidental. The majority of professors in science and... in the humanities as well, were absorbed in the task of accumulating knowledge. This productivity, the results of which were visible enough, was what impressed the outside world, and in especially the United States colleges and universities began to rival it. The human void which yawned under that bustling productivity and moral default which were its price escaped those naïve admires.” See The Abuse of Learning: The Failure of the German University (New York: Octagon Books, 1975), 76-77

48 See Goldman, passim..

49 Ringer stresses the reactionary and conservative stance of academic mandarins, for example: “By 1890... the majority of German professors and scholars approved the traditional stratification of German society, tolerated the illiberal aspects of the existing political regime, and shared in he fear and hostility with which the ruling classes met the Social Democratic Movement” (128-129). See also Lilge, and Konrad Jarausch, Students,

50 Ringer, 7-10.

51 Letter to the writer Alfons Paquet, 20 March 1903, in Briefe, 1:99. The translation is taken from Helt, 3.

52 Hesse would write that in spite of being “occasionally drawn to the fountains of knowledge... the entire academic enterprise seems to me to be less than ideal, indeed rather narrow and incomplete...” (KJ, 2: 38).

53 Hesse’s former gymnasium teacher agreed: “Man must advise any sensible person these days not to go to university. Higher education is quite attainable without university study. These days knowledge is out there on the market, one just needs to know to shop for it” (KJ, 2:555). And Hesse did. During his time in Tübingen and Basel Hesse kept up a voracious reading program. His father was quite willing to recognize and encourage Hesse’s “privatstudien”; “I do believe that you are reading and learning more than many students” (KJ, 2:234). These letters were drawn to my attention by Richard Helt’s study, ‘A Poet or Nothing At All...’ The Tübingen and Basel Years of Hermann Hesse, from which these translations are taken.

54 Joseph Mileck, Hermann Hesse, 185.

55 Childhood of the Magician, 16.

56 Freedman, Hermann Hesse, Pilgrim of Crisis, 44.

57 Letter from Dr. Karl Hermann Hesse, 11 October, 1891, in KJ 1: 124.

58 Letter from Hermann Hesse to his parents, 14 February 1892, in KJ 1: 170-171.


60 Life Story, Briefly Told, 46-47.


62 About Grandfather, 40.

63 There has been some suggestion that Hesse’s troubles at Maulbronn were due to a homosexual encounter, perhaps with his violin instructor, but in the absence of any conclusive evidence, this is pure speculation. See Tuskan, Understanding Hermann Hesse, 19.

64 Gisela Kleine, Ninon und Hermann Hesse—Leben Als Dialog (Sigmaringen: Jan Thorbecke Verlag, 1982), 431.

65 Letter from Johannes Hesse, 30 October 1891, in KJ 1, 132.

66 Tuskan, 98.

67 Letter from Johannes Hesse, 9 March 1892, in KJ 1, 184-185.

68 See Lehmann, Pietismus unsweltliche Ordnung, 209-210, for more on the Blumhardt affair.

69 Letters from Hesse to his parents of the 1, 11 and 14 September 1892, in KJ 250-252, 262-263, 268.

70 This is Walter Sorell’s depiction, cited in the introduction. It is a typical perspective. Lewis Tuskan writes that Hesse’s mother “submitted to the Pietist denial-of-self doctrine. This, however, would not be the case for her son, for his spirit was not to be broken” (7).

71 Hesse parents are not, however, entirely to blame. Richard Helt observes that “the letters—and behavior—between son and parents through the 1890s consistently document [that] each side was skilled at arousing the feelings of sympathy, worry, and guilt in the other” (22). Hesse’s grandfather Gundert saw the suicide threats as extravagant attempts on Hesse’s part to gain sympathy: “In your last letter you write about revolvers and other stories that at first made me very unhappy. I don’t actually care to get mixed-up in your private affairs; but please do me a favor: Enough already with the revolver stories; You are making not just yourself unhappy, but everyone whose heart pounds for you” (KJ 1: 328).

72 These images are found in Joseph Mileck’s Between the Perils of Politics: “It was this unlikely blend of puritanical Pietism and exotic Indian lore that spawned Hesse’s lifelong preoccupation with the East” (p. iii). “Hesse was born and raised in a self-contained circle of Swabian Pietists, severe fundamentalists whose rejection of the things of this world was uncompromising.... This almost hermetically sealed socioreligious complex, with its uncompromising rejection of all that is of this world and its belief in the inherent sinfulness of man, by and large determined Hesse’s basically negative attitude actuality and humans as they are” (6-8).

73 Speaking of Hesse’s family Tuskan writes that “these pious and devoted Christians, for all their humility and goodwill, could not help but be puritanical and self-righteous because they believed so passionately that theirs was the only path to God” (9).

74 “Pietism, as Hesse perceived it in practice, had become absorbed in legalism and sectarian narrowness.” See Tuskan, 48.
Christoph Gellner, in “Ehrfurcht und Revolte, Hermann Hesse und die Doppelgesichtigkeit aller Religion,” in Hermann Hesse, Dichter der Suchenden, 75-88, eds. Jan Badewien and Hans Georg Schmidt-Bergmann (Karlsruhe: Evangelische Akademie Baden, 2003), launches into a full-blown diatribe against the “unholy,” “puritanical” and “moralistic” “Pietistic Christianity” of Hesse’s family and heritage.

Helt writes: “... the parent’s dogmatic faith [was a] primary cause of the conflict” (20).

About Grandfather, 41. I have slightly changed the translation to make it more faithful to the original. See Größväterliches, Werke 10: 309. About Grandfather., 40.

Letter from Hesse to his parents, 10 May 1892, KJ 1: 210.


Letter from Christoph Blumhardt to Marie Hesse, 20 June 1892, in KJ 1: 220.

Letter from Johannes Hesse, 10 September 1892, in KJ 1: 255-256.

As many letters written by Hesse’s teachers and caregivers during this period attest, Hesse’s personality and emotional state were extremely volatile. See for example, the letter of 11 arch 1892 from Professor W. Paulus to Johannes Hesse: “he lacks to a high degree the ability to control himself and to confine his spirit and disposition within those limits which are necessary for his age and for a successful education in a seminary ... He is filled with extravagant ideas and exaggerated emotions which he is only too inclined to give in to” (KJ: 1: 189).

Hesse also felt school to be rather banal. School “reeked of everlasting ordinariness.” “Although I had not run in to any trouble at school, everything had once more felt dreary, lifeless, and discouraging... forever we shall be small and powerless and remain under the rule of this stupid, stinking school, for years and years...” See, A Child’s Heart (1919), in Klingsor’s Last Summer, ed. and trans. by Richard and Clara Winston (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1970), 4-8. The response of Hesse’s father to this attitude was that of most parents—then or now: “You consider mathematics and Hebrew nothing but ballast. But maybe you require this ballast to give your ship the right depth so it doesn’t capsize...” Letter of 9 March 1892, in KJ 1, 185.

Hesse’s mother died on April 24, 1902.

Beneath the Wheel, 138-139.

Mileck, Hermann Hesse, 34.
For Lewis Tuskan Hesse’s return home to Calw to write Beneath the Wheel was no coincidence. “Calw was the site of adolescent failures and many battles of wills with his parents” and “old, burning memories had to be purged” (54).


Hesse admits that *Beneath the Wheel* is in part about his brother Hans, who suffered terribly at the hands of a sadistic teacher. As Mark Boulby comments, the “degree… to which Hans Giebenrath may be identified with his author… is highly limited, especially in the later chapters of the novel. Even in earlier chapters he may well be partly a projection of Hesse’s younger brother, also called Hans. See Boulby’s *Hermann Hesse*, 53-54, where he argues that when “Hans Giebenrath listens in worried half-comprehension to Hermann Heilner’s Romantic moans, it may well be that we have here the reconstruction of a scene set originally not in Maulbronn at all but at home in Calw.”


Fritz Böttger has emphasized the sociological contexts of Hesse’s “youth novel.” Has Giebenrath is a “sacrifice, and his death becomes an indictment of the oppression of youth by an inhumane educational system” (130).


Beneath the Wheel, 10.

Beneath the Wheel, 19-20.

Beneath the Wheel, 145.

Beneath the Wheel, 164.

Stelzig, 102.

Stelzig, 216.

Christoph Gellner, “Zwischen Ehrfurcht und Revolte.”


Letters of 25 November and 4 December 1891 from Dr. Hermann Hesse to his grandson, in KJ 1: 145, 149.

Cited in Ball, 12. Ball has emphasized the jovial nature of Hesse’s grandfather, and the importance of his spirit to Hesse’s life and works. Hesse, in a late letter (November, 1960) comments that his Baltic grandfather was a “daredevil, vigorous and happy, booyantly irascible, easily excited and easily placated” (MATSID, 281).


*Beneath the Wheel*, 10, 51.

*Beneath the Wheel*, 52.

*Beneath the Wheel*, 45.

Ibid. These observations appear in the text as though they are made by Hans, as his summing up of the situation after stepping into the pastor’s library to begin his summer studies. But they are those of the narrator, who reveals his relationship to the characters and the story in what was perhaps an unintentional slip on Hesse’s part. “Han’s Giebenrath,” we read, “was the only candidate our little town had decided to enter in the arduous competition.” This one phrase—“our little town”—places the narrator as a member of Han’s community, and one who understands its history and traditions, and their marginalization in modernity.

Cited in Brown,

*Beneath the Wheel*, 49-50. Hesse’s father encouraged his son to write home when his Maulbronn studies introduced challenges to his faith, and Flaig’s concerns echo those of Johannes Hesse; perhaps the two are not entirely different after all.

*Beneath the Wheel*, 46.

*Beneath the Wheel*, 52.

historic process in the development of religions, the elimination of magic from the world which had begun with
the old Hebrew prophets and, in conjunction with Hellenistic scientific thought, had repudiated all magical
means to salvation as superstition and sin, came here [in the Calvinist doctrine of predestination] to its logical
conclusion" (105). The English term *disenchantment* derives from Weber’s discussion of the “Entzauberung der
Welt”—literally, the demag/Ication of the world.

132 Mention is usually made of Hesse’s use of the term “breaking the will” as a description of the harsh process
of education through which Hans’s Giebenrath passes, linking this to other of Hesse’s writings where he speaks
of the Pietist principle of breaking the will. This theme will be discussed in detail in Chapter 5. Even if Hesse is
criticizing a certain element of Pietist theology in *Beneath the Wheel*, we ought to recognize that he also affirns
aspects of it.

133 Peter Erb, “Introduction” to Johann Arndt, *True Christianity*, trans. Peter Erb (New York: Paulist Press,
1979), 5.

134 Unterm Rad, in Werke 2: 43.


136 Hesse will use these basic narrative elements in *The Glass Bead Game*, though they will be fleshed out with
much greater detail than in *Beneath the Wheel*.


140 Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative* 3: 246.

141 Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, 247.


143 Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 162.

144 *Beneath the Wheel*, 10.


147 Peter Brooks, *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984),
  xiii.
As a child Hesse spent many hours in his grandfather’s library where alongside the shelves of “boring and dusty” theological works he discovered volume after volume of eighteenth-century German literature, works that stimulated his imagination and poetic inclinations. Following his failure at the gymnasium in Cannstatt, Hesse returned home to complete an apprenticeship as a machinist—his real interest, however, was with the family library. “In my sixteenth year, after my school career had ended in failure, I consciously and energetically began my own education, and it was good fortune and delight that in my father’s house was my grandfather’s huge library, a whole hall full of books, which contained among other things all of eighteenth-century German literature and philosophy.” That the family library contained both works of theology and literature is symbolic of a key feature of German culture, especially after the rise of Romanticism in the late eighteenth-century, namely, the intermingling of literature (or more broadly art) and religion. Romanticism and Pietism in the century leading up to Hesse’s birth were two worlds that existed in close proximity to one another, two streams whose waters regularly crossed and mixed in the lives of many individuals, including the Swabian fathers whom Hesse glorified, and members of Hesse’s family. Upon moving to the university city of Tübingen, where he would complete a second apprenticeship as a book dealer, Hesse continued with his in-depth study of German literature. During his post-Maulbronn years in Calw, Tübingen, and Basel Hesse began a prolific correspondence with former teachers, friends, and family; he also reached out to
individuals who could be of help in guiding and bringing to fruition his desire to become a writer. Hesse’s letters were a vehicle to assimilate his reading, to hone his writing, to explore new ideas, and to fashion a worldview and faith to replace the lost certainties of his Pietist upbringing.

Hesse’s turn to the German Romantics in the wake of the Maulbronn affair was in many respects a culturally scripted affair. Beginning in the middle of the eighteenth century, “clergy, their sons and young theologians generally... came into literature in shoals.”3 Like many before him who experienced a crisis of faith, the world of literature, especially Romantic literature, became for Hesse a spiritual home, an orienting center, in short, his new religion:

I have founded my ‘center’ on a belief in beauty, which is virtually the same thing as a belief in art.... This ‘center’ of mine has developed from a passing fancy, a mere plaything, into a religion... 4

Romanticism! It has all the mystery and youthfulness of the German heart, all its excess energy as well as its sickness, and above all a longing for intellectual heights, that gift for youthful, ingeniously speculative thought, which our age completely lacks. The religion of art: to me that is the essence of Romanticism at its most naïve and refined... 5

Working in Tübingen and Basel bookshops by day, Hesse enthusiastically embraced Romanticism by night, and under its influence Hesse would complete and publish his first works. A volume of poetry, Romantische Lieder (Romantic Poems), appeared in November of 1898 and a work of prose, Eine Stunde hinter Mitternacht (An Hour Behind Midnight) arrived in bookshops six months later. In 1900 Hesse published The Literary Remains of Hermann Lauscher, taking the pose of an editor of the literary estate of the poet and aesthete Lauscher.
Our aim in this chapter is to situate Hesse’s early Romanticism in the context of Pietism’s relationship to literary culture. Hesse’s “religion of art” was a bone of contention between the aspiring writer and his family, but it was also a means for Hesse to mediate a relationship to family and Christianity. As Hesse would write to his parents, “My ultimate goal is beauty, or ‘art,’ if you like; I don’t believe my path is any different from yours until one gets to the decisive turning point toward a specifically Protestant form of Christianity.... But let’s not go round and round in circles of words again; we are closer to one another’s truth than we realize.”6 This is not merely Hesse’s attempt at reconciliation: it also points to thematic connections between the Romantic literature Hesse fell in love with and aspects of Pietism, connections that were concretized in the lives and works of many of the great figures of German Romantic literature and thought.7

In the first section of this chapter, “Romantics and Pietists,” we develop the necessary social-historical context from which to base an understanding of Hesse’s youthful conversion from Pietism to the religion of art. The relationship between Pietism and Romanticism is one of dynamic tension. On one hand, aspects of Pietism influenced the emergence of what Ernst Troeltsch has called “romantic” or “spiritual religion.” Hesse’s religiosity is of this romantic variety or style, and both his Pietist heritage and his thorough-going encounter with Romantic literature were sources for it. On the other hand, we shall also have cause to examine the Pietist critique of literature and Kunst (art) in order to possess a framework in which to place the reaction of Hesse’s family to their son’s Romanticism. Too often, the negative reaction of Hesse’s parents to some of his early writings is simply portrayed as the product of a puritanical moralism, as though there were no reasons or logic behind their concerns. Furthermore, the critique that Hesse was to quickly muster against his early
Romantic phase bears many similarities to the Pietist critique of literature, and surely owes something to parental influence. In the second section, ‘The Religion of Art,’ we take up the reaction of Hesse’s family to his first published works, as well as highlight how Hesse’s Romanticism allowed him to mediate a relationship to his Pietist heritage, rather than simply serve as a replacement for a lost faith. Hesse’s first novel, Peter Camenzind is the topic of the final section. This work incorporates a number of Pietist-Romantic themes, and represents Hesse’s self-critique of his earlier romantic posturing and longing, echoing some of his parent’s concerns over his literature.

Romantics and Pietists

Romanticism, like Pietism, has proven notoriously difficult to define, but it is generally accepted that these two movements share some common features and that Pietism was one of the roots of Romanticism. During the late eighteenth and early decades of the nineteenth-century German culture was characterized by a reaction against Enlightenment rationalism, represented in philosophy by Kantian Idealism, in literature and the arts by Sentimentalism, Storm and Stress, and Romanticism, and in Christianity by those members of what Martin Brecht has called Spät Pietismus (late Pietism). These movements rebuked the flattening of spiritual life and the dichotomizing of life into disconnected domains: reason and faith, matter and spirit, civilization and nature, object and subject, the mechanistic and the organic. In the wake of the Enlightenment and secularization the task for Christian thinkers was to establish a form of Christianity which could remain a vital social and ethical
force, yet not limit itself through a restricted vision of truth or by placing excessive limits on newly found individual autonomy and freedoms. How to accept the historical nature of Christianity without succumbing to a nihilistic relativism and the complete loss of a sense of salvation history; how to affirm the transcendent status of religion without recourse to revelation and miracle, which scientific rationalism had undermined; how to actualize the universal claims of Christianity in a global, pluralistic world without succumbing to triumphalism—these were the questions of the day, and for many, Romanticism offered a solution.

_Spätpietismus_ or neo-Pietism was a broad movement within the history of the eighteenth and nineteenth-century German Lutheran church. It consisted of those members of Pietist circles who continued to promote the ideas and reforms of Spener and Francke, incorporating their emphasis on practical piety in societies and organizations such as the _Basel Christentumgesellschaft_, with which Hesse’s family was affiliated, and whose aims were to promote missions and cultivate piety, partly through the dissemination of devotional and biblical literature. Another aspect of neo-Pietism was the fusion of Romanticism, the early Pietism of Arndt and Spener, speculative mysticism and spiritualism, a fusion characteristic of the thought and work of such individuals as Friedrich Christoph Oetinger, Johann Heinrich Jung-Stillling, and Friedrich Schleiermacher. It is this mix of Romantic and Pietist elements that gave shape to what Ernst Troeltsch has termed “romantic religion.”

One of the basic assumptions behind Troeltsch’s _The Social Teachings of the Christian Churches and Groups_ is that variations in Christian thought are related to the social structures of the church. Troeltsch identified three such structures, three ideal types to describe these variations, his now famous ‘church-sect-mysticism’ typology. The ‘church’
type represents a more or less inclusive institution, generally accommodating to social and
cultural institutions and values, and grounded in the finished work of Christ and the church's
power to bestow grace and salvation. The 'sect' Troeltsch describes as a voluntary
community of reborn believers, whose aim is the living of an authentic life of Christian piety
and morality, whose goal is focused on the coming Kingdom, and whose attitude toward
worldly institutions and culture is generally critical. The third type, 'mysticism,' describes a
religious orientation that seeks the inward realization of God; the historical particularities of
Christianity are relativized to varying degrees, dogmatic formulations, creeds, and
confessions are replaced by religious experience, and God and Christ take on a timeless,
universal tenor, understood as the "divine seed" or "sacred spark" existing within all souls.
Troeltsch discusses Pietism in relation to these later two types. Pietists were more or less
accommodating toward the Church. But owing to their refusal to grant the church the status
of sole mediator and administrator of God's grace, their criticism of social institutions and
worldliness, and their tendencies to distinguish between true and nominal Christians, to
separatism, and to chiliasm, Pietists exhibited many of the characteristics of the sect type,
and for these reasons often drew the ire of the orthodoxy. Of interest to us here is Troeltsch's
notion of "spiritual" or "romantic religion" and his recognition of Pietism's role in shaping
this type, a conception and style of religion well-suited to emerging with vigor in the period
of modernity.

In general, Troeltsch sees Lutheranism predisposed to mysticism, owing to the young
Luther's appreciation of the Christian mystical tradition, his acceptance of the doctrine of
unio mystica, and his own emphasis on religious experience. One of the central features of
German mysticism is the "doctrine of the Divine Seed," in which
God remains the ground of the Soul, the seed and the spark even of the creature.... This 'seed' is the source of all religious longing for and awareness of God.... Here, all emphasis falls upon the present, immediate, interior religious movement of feeling and thought, in contrast to all external authority, all literalism in faith, to all theories which would make salvation dependent upon historical facts and upon the individual's knowledge and acceptance of these facts.

To the extent that Pietists embraced mysticism or "spiritual religion," they adopted and furthered some form of this doctrine of the divine seed, and Troeltsch finds aspects of it in the thought of Arndt, Spener, Francke, and the Moravians. Pietist interest in the divine seed encouraged an emphasis on inwardness, personal experience, and self-knowledge. Religious subjectivity was characteristic of Pietism; terms such as "personal, individualism, inwardness, heart, internalization, experience, feeling, emotions, mysticism, asceticism, separatism, and conversion point to subjectivism as one of the dominant themes and problems in the formulation of the theology of Pietism." While these subjectivist tendencies and an affinity for mysticism existed in the thought of Spener and Francke, they would come to fruition in the speculative and mystical traditions that found a special home in the Rhineland and Swabia.

Troeltsch argues that as individuals in the period of modernity became increasingly exposed to a plurality of religions and the "conception of universal world laws," "idealistic mysticism" and "spiritual religion" became the means to retain connections to Christianity, while resolving fundamental tensions in the new social-historical situation. Under the impact of historical criticism "the need for release from historical uncertainty led to the demand for the pure immediacy, present character, and inwardness of the evangelicum aeternum... in which each individual, out of the depths of his own life, independently and personally, and
yet essentially in agreement with others, gains his own knowledge of God.” If the essence of Christianity could no longer be found in an unshakable faith in historical events, person, and revelation, it could be found in the inner life of the soul. Troeltsch names Goethe, Lavater, Schleiermacher, Hegel, and Novalis, among others, as carriers of this Protestant mysticism into the age and works of Romanticism.

If the Romantics tended to share the Enlightenment ideologue’s hostility toward ecclesiastical Christianity, they nevertheless retained a notion of the ‘sacred’ or the ‘divine’ that had been all but completely rejected within the materialist and rationalist camps. The Romantics rediscovered God not in scholastic orthodoxy or confessions, but in the mystical, pantheistic, and speculative tradition which Pietism absorbed and cultivated. In the visions of a cosmic Christ and God consciousness, in feelings of absolute dependence, transcendental idealism, nature mysticism, and art, Romantics and Pietists could, and did, find points of contact and lines of communication. Goethe, for example, was well acquainted with the Herrnhuter community in Marienborn, and one of its members, Katharina von Klettenberg, exerted an influence on Goethe, remaining his confidant and counselor in temporal and spiritual matters until her death in 1774. It was Klettenberg who introduced Goethe to Gottfried Arnold’s *Impartial History of the Churches and Heretics*, as well as works of magic, alchemy, and Neoplatonic cosmogony.

Neo-Pietist mysticism and Romanticism were both built around such practices as the close examination of feelings, states of the soul, and intuitions, a regard for nature as a window or manifestation of the divine, a nostalgia for a lost world and expectant hope for a better one, and a longing for rest and quietude (*Stille*), symbolized most powerfully in the toilsome journey of the pilgrim or stranger back to their original home (*Heimat*). One of the
changes wrought by this “religious romanticism” was to unite a “fully developed religious ‘inwardness’ … with the aestheticism of individuality…. This religious mysticism… is the source [for] the modern German Protestant … understanding of religion in general. This is the secret religion of the educated classes.” Hesse, in attending the Latin school in Göppingen and the seminary at Maulbronn, was exposed to the worldview and ethos of this romantic religion, which was another factor exacerbating Hesse’s adolescent crisis, for while there were affinities between Romantic and Pietist sensibilities, there were also deep seated tensions.

The strong emotional and mystical content characteristic of Pietism was often channeled into literature. Devotional literature, in contrast to theological and exegetical works, was extremely important in Pietist circles. Gottfried Arnold classified literature according to content and effect; an edifying work should prepare the soul for a receptive state and produce a spiritually meaningful response. “For Pietists the emotional response of the reader was thus both the proof of divine grace as well as a sign of true poetry” a theme that would be taken over in sentimentalism and the Storm and Stress movement of the late seventeenth-century. The German mystic and Pietist Johann Heinrich Reitz’s (1655-1720) Historie der Wiedergeborenen (literally, History of the Reborn) was the first collection of Pietist autobiographies, and promised readers comforting self-affirmation by “reading the heart of someone unknown, in which they can... feel their own being; whoever is undergoing tribulation can find hope by reading the autobiographies of others.” Many prominent Pietists wrote autobiographies, or a Selbstbiographie, and their interest in life-story had a tremendous impact on the emergence of autobiographical literature and confessional writing as a genre. Pietist autobiography inspired the Bildungsroman, that characteristically
Romantic phenomenon, which Wilhelm Dilthey defined on the basis of his study of Goethe’s

*Wilhelm Meister’s Apprenticeship*:

A regulated development within the life of the individual is observed, each of its stages has its
own intrinsic value and is at the same time the basis for a higher stage. The dissonances and conflicts
of life appear as the necessary growth point through which the individual must pass on his way to
maturity and harmony.\(^\text{17}\)

The Pietist Jung-Stilling’s autobiography, *Heinrich Stilling’s Youth* (1777) was one of the
first of this new genre, and Pietists or those with Pietist roots were among the masters of the
craft.\(^\text{18}\)

The view of life as a developmental process with ups and down, points of crisis and
points of triumphs emerged as a narrative sensibility informing the *Bildungsroman*, and this
view was a fundamental feature of Pietist thought. Pietist literature is characterized by
attention to and the cultivation of anxiety over one’s own state of sin. Experientially and
theologically, forgiveness and grace require despair and recognition of sin, and Pietists
sought to induce such a consciousness.\(^\text{19}\) One of the means to do so was through the close
monitoring of the state of one’s soul through journals and diaries and, eventually, to resolve
and replace angst and anxiety with the experience of rebirth and a state of trust and grace.
The writing of an autobiography was a narrative consummation of this process and
experience, through which times of despair and trouble would come to be seen (and
narratively emploted in one’s life story) as instructive moments and events in the life of the
soul on its journey to rest and repose in God.
In their letters to their son during and after the Maulbronn affair, Marie and Johannes Hesse would often use the image of life as a school, and urge their son to view his troubles as “necessary growth points” on the way to faith:

Your last letter to your dear mother and me has again filled us with heartfelt sympathy. It is among the most difficult of things to feel life burdensome and empty, and always have the feeling that it would have been better not to have been born. But that simply belongs to our condition; that means, to the complete contradiction which we carry inside ourselves: to be focused on something whole and great and nevertheless absorbed by multiplicity and consumed by thousands of little things; to long for what is highest and be yoked to the lowest; to be destined for freedom and be dependent on different people and things, and so on. One can carry these and more contradictions, even overcome them—only if one believes that they belong to a necessary part of our education and that, so long one doesn’t walk out of the school, they will in the end dissolve into harmony. The inner voice calls us to this faith; [this faith] is exemplified by many noble individuals, by a purpose, a goal, an intention in nature and in the life of faith, by all that directs us to what is highest.

Hesse’s novels are dominated by spiritual action more than plot and physical events; they are, as he called them, “biographies of souls,” chronicles of the spirit, and deal not with “plot, complications and suspense,” but are fundamentally monologues in which a “mythical figure, a single person, is examined in his relationship to the world and to himself. These works are called ‘novels....’ [But they] are not novels at all, any more than their great models, holy in my eyes since my youth, Novalis’ Heinrich von Ofterdingen... or Hölderlin’s Hyperion, are novels.” Hesse’s confessional, autobiographical style has its roots in the proclivity amongst Pietists—a tendency that would be transmitted to the Storm and Stress and Romantic movements—to concentrate, at times to the point of anxiety, on “those inner motions, whether of dryness or abundance, of despair or of confident love of God, from which the individual may deduce the state of his immortal soul.” Hesse’s Peter Camenzind is written in the first person, in the tradition of the Bildungsroman, with Peter recounting his life story,
that of a young man with rural sensibilities and poetic talent and interests, who leaves home for the enchantments of city life, has some success as a poet and essayist, but is driven to wander before eventually and inevitably returning home. The work is at times little more than thinly veiled autobiography, and more important than the outward events that Peter recounts is the detailed attention to the state and movement of his soul—his hopes, fears, loves, longings, and lessons learned. Peter is called by that of which Hesse’s father writes in the letter cited above—by an “inner voice,” by “all that directs [one] to what is highest.”

Another area of religious and cultural life that Pietist inwardness impacted was hymnody and poetry. Hymnody was seen as a prime instrument through which could be induced consciousness of sin and an affective response to the indwelling of Christ in the heart. The master without peer was Bach, whose early cantata, “Weinen, Klagen, Sorgen, Zagen” (Weeping, Wailing, Grieving, Fearing) “is a particularly fine example of Pietist introspection.” Music and song, provided they were of the proper style and content, were understood to have a tremendous capacity to reach down and stir the heart and soul. Pietism helped promote a Renaissance of hymn writing and the widespread production of new hymnals, some of them even arranged according to emotional states. Zinzendorf was well known for his spontaneous compositions of hymns during services, even allowing for changes in the words of traditional hymns as was required by the needs of the individual and congregation. Under the influence of Pietism, Protestant hymnody moved further in the direction of subjectivity, as first person plural references to Christ, Jesus and God were increasingly replaced with the first person singular. Rather than promoting images of ‘Christ for us,’ Pietist hymnody tended toward the conception of ‘Christ in me,’ a change representative of the general movement toward religious subjectivity. In Pietist hymnody and
homiletics the vocabulary of “Jesus” superceded “Christ,” and, even more significant, “Savior,” replaced “Lord.” “Because of its stress upon personal and subjective fellowship of the soul with Jesus, Pietism, especially in its hymnody, developed a predilection for language of intense intimacy.”23 All this was not lost on the Romantics, who absorbed, while universalizing, Pietist intimacy with the indwelling Christ. Poetry and, more broadly, art, came to be seen as virtually a religion in their own right, so effective were they in evoking a sense of an undeniable presence within or beneath conscious life and the natural world. For many, Jesus became “the Poet of the Spirit,” or in Blake’s view, imagination itself, while the poet and artist took on the aura of visionary seer and prophet.24

The religious implications of Romanticism were most powerfully represented by Friedrich Schleiermacher. Schleiermacher’s central contribution to Romantic religion is his emphasis upon feeling; religion is to be located neither in theoretical knowledge or moral action but in the feeling of absolute dependence. This feeling is more than mere subjective emotion; it is cultivated in the depths of one’s soul, in the “sacred spark” through which one gains access to the infinite and overcomes the dichotomy between subjective and objective realms. Schleiermacher’s emphasis on feeling, inwardness, and the divine spark of the soul is generally attributed to his early encounter with Moravian Pietism, as Wilhelm Dilthey first emphasized in his biography. Schleiermacher “proclaimed… the ‘spiritual’ idea of a direct revelation of religious feeling…. The ‘spirit’ is not tied to the historic Christian community, but, reaching out beyond its borders, can allow religious feeling… to form ever new concrete groups. The prophets, seers, Christ himself included, are merely those who arouse and enkindle that spark of direct religious life which is the possession of every human being.”25 The divine seed can not be cultivated intellectually, or gained through assent to right
doctrine; it has to be ignited, and in art Schleiermacher saw the means through which this ignition could be achieved. Art is the means of “producing a sudden conversion... of enabling the individual to rise beyond the finite to a point at which his sense for the higher things emerges in a moment of sudden, blinding, luminous epiphany.” It was a short step from Schleiermacher to a full-fledged Romanticism—and the drawing of an analogy between God and his created world and the artist and his created work, a step that was too big for most Pietists to take.

That Pietism would exert a powerful influence on Romanticism is not at all obvious given the hostility that existed between early Pietists and artists. From the inception of Pietism there existed tensions between members of literary and artistic circles and proponents of Pietist theology and reforms—tensions that would last well into Hesse’s day and influence the relationship between the budding poet and his family. We need to better understand these tensions, since the concerns of Hesse’s family over their son’s romantic and poetic inclinations are generally understood to be simply the product of Pietist moralism, when in actuality they are part and parcel of a long tradition of theologically informed aesthetics.

In addition to spurning homiletics, early Pietists took aim at literature rooted in a refined and cultivated imagination, and which employed a lavish use of emblems and symbols. Both the aestheticization of language and the planned use of rhetoric to illustrate a point were seen as inferior to plain language, and to speaking and writing from the heart. For Johann Reitz “wordy prowess, artistry, and arrangements” were not representative of true, spiritual erudition. Simple language, a straightforward realism, an anti-rhetorical and anti-aesthetic stance were characteristic of Pietist aesthetics. Reitz: “My Poesy is not put on; how I feel, so I write. I don’t care to use elevated or deep words that are beyond my meaning.”
Similarly, Spener viewed the “flowery language” of “human imagination” as “powerless fantasy,” while Zinzendorf held that “freedom from flowery language is a criterion for the truth and authenticity of [one’s] testimony.” Literature was generally criticized on two grounds: it was neither true—it was fictional, subject to flights of fantasy and whim—nor edifying—and more often than not its contents transgressed common moral values. In their criticism of the arts and literature, Pietists perhaps shared something in common with Plato who, we recall, wished to banish the poets from his ideal state precisely for these reasons.

In general, art (Kunst) and beauty (das Schöne) took on pejorative meaning for Pietists. “It is a false principle,” claims Zinzendorf, “which holds that songs [hymns and poems] must be beautifully written; in that way nothing can enter the heart. Whoever believes that spiritual poesy needs to be beautiful doesn’t have the proper understanding.” Art and music as such have their place in the human religious economy; but when they are taken for or replace religion they obfuscate authentic spirituality. Pietist rejection of Kunst and Schöne had a political dimension, since it was typically associated with the baroque and haughty lifestyle and ethos to be found amongst the nobility. As an example, consider Isaiah Berlin’s comments on the Pietist influence on Johann Sebastian Bach:

Of course ... Bach... composed court music in Weimar, Cöthen and so on, and was delighted when the King invited him to Berlin... [But] the bulk of Bach’s compositions were composed in a pietistic atmosphere... there was a tradition of religious inwardness that by which the Germans insulated themselves to a large degree from the worldly superficialities, brilliance, search for world fame and general glitter of France and Italy.... Bach, like other Germans of his time, was modest in his ambitions, and that was an effect and a cause of the turning inwards which produced such immense spiritual results...
For Spener, “the first principle of Christian life is to renounce one’s self,” and Pietists viewed the rhetorical and artistic traditions as standing in opposition to this principle. Rather than promote humility (Demut) and contrition, the arts were seen to cultivate spiritual pride, honor, and the search for a kind of immortality in the work of art, in which the work reflects the genius (the inner daemon or soul) of the artist. The Romantic notion that the artist is a kind of visionary seer whose works stand in analogical relation to the creative power of God lacks an understanding of sin, and is ultimately driven by vanity.32

These concerns were not, of course, new; they exist within a long history of Christian thought, going back at least to Augustine’s concerns over the differences between rhetorical and redeemed language. Already in the early Christian church there existed a disdain for theatre and dance, which was associated with loose morals and a licentious life. Pietist moralists stood in this tradition, as represented by their efforts, for example, to ban theatrical performances and public dance. Theophilus Grossgebauer (d. 1661), a proto-Pietist preacher from Rostock, in his views on the relationship between music and worship, is representative of trends within early Pietism with respect to the relation between the arts and religion:

Unfortunately organists, cantors, town pipers, and musicians—for the most part unspiritual people—have control in the city churches. They play, sing, bow, and ring according to their pleasure. You hear the rushing, ringing, and roaring, but you don’t know what it is, whether you should arm yourself for battle or whether you should withdraw. One chases after the other in concertizing and some contend with one another over which can do it most skillfully or which can most subtly imitate a nightingale.

And just as the world now is not serious but frivolous and has lost the old quiet devotion, so songs have been sent to us in Germany from Italy in which the biblical texts are torn apart and chopped up into little pieces through the swift runs of the throat; those are the warblers who can stretch and break the voice like singing birds. Then it becomes an ambitious collective screaming to see who sings most like the birds.... There the organist sits, plays, and shows his art; in order that the art of one person be shown, the whole congregation of Jesus Christ is supposed to sit and hear the sound of pipes.33
Again, a chief concern within Pietist circles reflected in this passage is that musicians (and artists in general) are not devout. In Grossgebauer’s use of the image of the warblers are echoes of the caution issued in Amos 6:5: “Woe to those who lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches... who sing idle songs to the sound of the harp, and like David invent for themselves instruments of music.” Pietists contrasted seriousness and the devout life with gaiety and frivolity. Pietists were not necessarily against music and the arts as such, but concerned themselves with what they perceived to be a tendency within the arts to promote those vices detrimental to the cultivation of true piety: competition, ambition, and most of all, pride.

The passage from Amos just cited continues, “The Lord God has sworn by himself, ‘I abhor the pride of Jacob...’” Pride, especially spiritual pride, was anathema to Pietists, and there was no better example of it than confusing the products of the individual’s power to create beautiful language and art for religion, or worse, conceiving that power as analogous to the creative power of God. For Hesse’s parents, their son’s enthusiasm for a religion of schöne Kunst was a matter of no small concern.

The Religion of Art

Richard Helt argues that “Hesse’s exchange of the religious doctrines with which he had been reared for a surrogate belief system anchored in a vague but obviously compelling aesthetics was at least partially motivated by his desire to break free from the influences of
the family’s all-pervading Pietist faith."\textsuperscript{35} This is surely correct. Romanticism is characterized by either a conception of art as a surrogate religion or of art itself as religion. In his \textit{Romantic Poems, An Hour Behind Midnight, Hermann Lauscher}, and in his letters from this period, Hesse unabashedly proclaimed a religion of art and his "belief that this religion can deliver exaltations that do not take second place in purity and blessedness to those of the martyrs and saints."\textsuperscript{36} In his letters to his parents, Hesse would frequently compare religious and artistic individuals, arguing that the artist was in no way inferior to the saint or great figure from religious history. The image of Hesse “exchanging” a Pietistic world for a religion of art is accurate, and his romantic religion was certainly a sore spot for the relationship between Hesse and his family. We will return to this theme shortly. But it is also necessary to see that Hesse found in Romanticism a means to mediate a connection to his family and religious heritage.

As Hugo Ball, Hesse’s friend and biographer, rightly points out, neo-Pietism (like Romanticism) was a “widespread national movement that stood against the masters of calculation, [\textit{Rechenmeisters}] and knocked heads with their wooden reason."\textsuperscript{37} Many an influential writer from Hesse’s favorite temporal and spiritual era (1750-1850) was born into a Pietist family and milieu, as was the case for Johann Winckelmann (1717-1768), C.M. Wieland (1733-1813), Novalis (1772-1801), and Eduard Mörike (1804-1875), or influenced by Pietist thought and culture, as is true of Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803), Goethe (1749-1832), Friedrich Schiller (1759-1805), Friedrich Schleiermacher (1769-1834), and Friedrich Hölderlin (1770-1843). Johann Caspar Lavater and Johann Heinrich Jung-Stilling were central figures mediating between Pietist, romanticist and spiritualist circles. In an oft quoted passage, Hugo Ball referred to his friend as “the last knight in the shining train of
Romanticism,” but Hesse is also the last of a long line of German writers to have had his worldview and literature strongly shaped by both the Romantic and Pietist ethos.

In letters to his parents during his Tübingen and Basel period, Hesse both distanced himself from the faith of his family, primarily through criticism of the state of the church (a theme of our next chapter), while simultaneously trying out his romantic religion on his parents, “subconsciously hoping, perhaps, that they would view his intellectual and creative maturation as an acceptable substitute for those beliefs with which they had always striven to imbue their children.” This observation by Richard Helt is most perceptive; but in addition to Hesse’s Romanticism being a “substitute” it was also a parallel life world with significant points of contact to Pietism.

During his apprenticeship as a book dealer in Tübingen Hesse kept his parents up to date on his studies and ideas regarding the relationship between religion and art, and their replies were often encouraging:

In the evenings my colleagues flee into the pub for beer and cards; I flee from the outer world of books to the inner world, and pursue a well planned, extensive study of literary history and the humanities that I hope will pay dividends in the future. I’m occupied now with the ‘romantic school,’ the brilliant line from Fichte to Schleiermacher. . . . So far I have read Schleiermacher’s Life and his letters. I especially enjoy his ‘Talks’ and ‘Speeches.’

Dear Hermann, we are very interested in your studies. . . . It would really please me if you would tell me more about Novalis. I know a few of his poems; for a Catholic they are warm and evangelical: ‘I tell everybody that he lives,’ and ‘When I only have him,’ and others are dear to me. . . . [M]y most beautiful hours are those when I am alone with my Bible. When the time of our schooling in our worldly professions is behind us and we enter Heaven, which is our inheritance, there will be flowing streams of pure, exquisite perceptions and divine Poesy and music. . . . I believe that there every need of the soul and the spirit will be entirely fulfilled.”
Marie Hesse’s longing for flowing streams of divine poesy and music strikes Romantic
chords. She was not unacquainted with the archetypal Romantic, Novalis, even if she takes
him for a Catholic, a mistake that her son was undoubtedly happy to correct:

Dear parents!
Many thanks for mother's lovely, beautiful letter... Mom is mistaken if she takes Novalis to be
Catholic. He is the son of Pietists, born and died an evangelical; he was to be confirmed by the
Herrnhut community—something that never took place in the end. I'll gladly send a few notes on
him.\textsuperscript{41}

Hesse could identify with the Romantic spirit in part because, owing to his Pietist heritage,
he was already familiar with it, and Romanticism afforded him a means to mediate a
relationship to Pietism and family. That Hesse enjoyed Schleiermacher and loved Novalis
was partially a function of their Pietist backgrounds; Hesse could hold both up before his
parents as an exemplar and justification of his Romantic religion, and as evidence that his
own Romanticism was not completely foreign to Pietist circles.

Hesse would often explore connections and tensions between his own youthful
Romanticism and experience of the world and that of his Pietist heritage. Hesse’s late
recollection of his grandfather, for example, was stimulated by a poem Hermann Gundert had
written when he was 17, “composed in the most confused and imperiled period of his life,
shortly before this youth’s ‘conversion’ caused the enthusiastic pantheist to decide upon a
life henceforth devoted to missionary work in India.” Hermann Gundert fell under the spell
of Romanticism during his years at the Tübingen Stift, spending his free time writing poetry,
acting, and even composing a piano score based on Mozart’s \textit{The Magic Flute}. All this was
much to the chagrin of his Pietist parents, who had to remind him he “was not to mix wind
with spirit.”\textsuperscript{42} Years later the young seminarian Hermann Hesse would write to his
grandfather asking for his impressions of Friedrich Schiller. That the old man would not indulge his grandson's curiosity—"You would like my judgment of Schiller; I too consider him a very brilliant fellow; of course he is indebted to others, especially the Greeks. His ideals are often beyond my (seminary) horizon. It has been quite some time since I have occupied myself with him."—is a sign of the tension that existed between literary and Pietist culture, though Schiller himself, like many of the eighteenth and nineteenth-century German literati, was greatly influenced by Pietism. 43 Hesse was well pleased to learn that his grandfather, "the model Christian scholar... lived for a time in that dangerous climate" that stimulated Hesse's own struggles against the faith of his family; he too "once walked in the path of Hölderlin, Hegel, and Mörike, had copied out with a freshly cut goosefeather quill the piano arrangement of The Magic Flute, had written poems, and even on one occasion indulged in a temperamental journey."44

In his short story, In Pressel's Summerhouse (1913), Hesse would add a layer of historical and cultural depth to the connections and tensions between Pietist and Romantic worlds that so greatly influenced Hesse as a young man. The story takes place at the Tübingen Stift, in the days when the poets in waiting—Eduard Mörike, Friedrich Hölderlin, and Wilhelm Waiblinger—were theology students, and Hesse recounts an afternoon spent by the three taking a walk to a Chinese pavilion located on a nearby summit. The heart of the tale, and what no doubt moved Hesse to reflect on the lives of these three Swabians, is that "Hölderlin had been, just as had Mörike, a pupil of the Theological Institute and was to have become a parson, and he had resisted this, just as Mörike had the idea of resisting it."45 The central action in the story involves a dispute between Waiblinger and Mörike, with the former trying to persuade the latter to live up to his true calling, which was that of poet. In
this story Hesse situates his own experience of Maulbronn in a broader cultural and historical context of tensions between duty to orthodoxy, authority, and piety on one hand, and the spirit of the romantic rebel-poet on the other. Hölderlin and Waiblinger ended their days in madness, Mörike in an uneasy, melancholic compromise between his commitments to church and his poetic calling. These same tensions pulled on Hesse’s grandfather Gundert, prior to his final conversion and commitment to Pietism, and they weighed heavily on his grandson too. Hesse’s lifelong concern to explore the relationship between religion and art, usually in the form of affinities and frictions between the life of the saint and the life of the artist, owes its origins to Hesse’s exposure to the interrelated worlds of romantic creativity and Christian piety in the formative period of adolescence.

In the previous chapter I suggested that one of the factors exacerbating Hesse’s adolescent crisis was the nature of the training he received at Maulbronn. Hesse came to Maulbronn from a traditional, evangelical faith-world for preparation as a cleric and theologian, but the training he received in liberal theology and historical criticism was corrosive to the faith impressed on him by his family and social milieu. Similarly, Hesse was exposed in Maulbronn to the world of Romanticism, to “romantic religion.” To recall Troeltsch’s observation, romantic religion was “the secret religion of the educated classes,” the religion of the German mandarins during the last half of the nineteenth-century.

While at Maulbronn Hesse was active in drama and literature clubs, and, in spite of his heavy schedule of studies, managed to find time to read beyond the curriculum:

With a few friends I’ve started a small classics club; to date we have ten members. We are reading classical pieces by Schiller, dividing up the roles, reading some poetry, and try to give critical lectures,
etc.... Allow me please, dear parents, to read [Schiller's] 'Messiah.' I would relish the chance to do so.

Yesterday I held another gathering of our nice society.... The most beautiful and quiet evenings are when get together as if we were on the Acropolis. Too bad it is only possible to get together once a week.

I am finding much pleasure in the company of [fellow student] Theodor Rümlein, whose music is splendid. He plays Mozart and Beethoven, fantasizes a great deal and composes music.46

For Hesse's family, the young theological student's forays into the sights and sounds of literature, music, and the arts were observed with no small measure of discontent:

Now H.H. wants to write an essay on Goethe. He finds the time for all sorts of things. The pleasure of drama has also found its way into him; they are reading Schiller's plays.... And this youth club is constantly studying other plays.... Right guidance is clearly lacking.47

Already as a student in the Latin school in Göppingen Hesse was writing poems, and when he sent home a small, hand-made volume of them to his sister, grandfather Gundert's suspicion's were aroused: "He sent Adele a little book of his poetry. Now it begins."48 This 'it' to which Gundert refers is undoubtedly the storm and stress of Romanticism and the coming clash with the family's Pietist faith.49

There were two main (interrelated) reasons for the family's concerns over the young man's affection for Romanticism. Typically, parental reaction to Hesse's desire to be a poet is portrayed in Hesse scholarship as the product of Pietist moralism. To be sure, Hesse's parents reacted strongly, questioning the moral worth of some of his early literature; but so too did Hermann Hesse himself, as we shall see. Pietists, as discussed above, had their reasons for being wary of literature and the arts. Simply labeling Hesse's family (and
Pietism) as moralistic has a flattening effect in which tensions, contradictions, and perspectives other than those represented by Hesse and his literature are quietly dissolved into a historical narrative of progressive development away from a narrow and backward religious worldview. But aside from more or less well defined religious concerns, Hesse’s family and some of his teachers were also worried where romantic longing could lead. In particular, Hesse’s grandfather Gundert, perhaps owing to his own experience as a theological student, during which time there were a rash of suicides stimulated in part due to the excesses of Romantic decadence, was critical of the aspiring poet’s activities. Hesse’s advanced reading and poetic inclinations were often singled out by teachers as problematic; the young man (he was fourteen when he entered Maulbronn) was not mature enough to understand and assimilate the emotions and ideas contained in the literature to which he was drawn. The pitfalls of poetic enthusiasm, Romantic decadence, and the posture and style of the aesthete that German youth seemed especially prone to fall prey to were well known since the time of Goethe. This was precisely the message of Goethe’s *The Suffering of Young Werther* (1774), whose protagonist succumbs to his own decadence and weakness and commits suicide. The message was, however, lost on most youth, who were washing up in large numbers on riverbanks clutching a copy of Goethe’s novella in their cold, dead hands. The concern of Hesse’s family over his romantic streak had a larger cultural context than simply an assumed backward Pietist moralism.

Hesse’s *Romantic Poems* were written in Tübingen between January of 1897 and the spring of 1898, and appeared in print that fall; it was Hesse’s first volume of poetry and his first published book. During this time Hesse was under the influence of Chopin and Rossetti and his poetry betrayed overindulgence in the spirit of romantic pathos.
A lonely and aristocratic outlook indulges in melodramatic fantasies and melodic lament. He is morbidly preoccupied with love and death, strikes a suffering pose, and is fascinated by a romantic retreat of stormy seas and battlefields, temples and castles, and solitary kings and pale queens. Hesse could hardly have given his *Romantische Lieder* a more appropriate title.  

Such is Joseph Mileck’s judgment of the young man’s first poetic efforts—a harsh judgment shared by nearly every critic who has commented on this early phase of Hesse’s preoccupation with “mystery, loneliness, *Weltschmerz*, and longing for beauty.”  

The *Romantic Poems* are heavily stylized, conventional, and employ romantic tropes and clichés at every turn. The overwhelming sense is of a lonely and even self-pitying artist burdened with the pursuit of his craft in a world that can never hope to understand his suffering.  

The reaction of Hesse’s parents to their sons’ initial breakthrough into the world of the *fin de siècle* literati has frequently been commented on. A year before the *Romantic Poems* several of Hesse’s poems had been accepted for publication in the *Deutsches Dichterheim*, and Hesse’s parents answered this initial success with a thunderous silence. They were firmly convinced that the aestheticism their son had adopted had little moral, not to mention religious, worth—he was mixing wind with spirit. When Hesse’s poem *Chopins grande valse, eine Phantasie* appeared in September of 1897,  his mother again refused to comment, though did mention a new book of Swiss religious poetry, *Von Gott – zu Gott, Lieder einer Volksdichterin im Schweizerland*. Hesse’s father, in the same reply, thanks his son for “the issue of the *Dichterheim*,” but tellingly adds that “it contains nothing that I would be capable of appreciating.”  

The son, undoubtedly hurt by this parental rejection, could only react in kind:
God help art now that the Swiss are discovering female folk poetry. That is a flourishing industry. Not to mention religious poetry! That is the most ticklish and, on the whole, least artful genre I have ever come across. The more lyrical, the less pious—and vice versa! It was the Moravians who really slit the genre’s throat. Do forgive me! It’s just that there is something tragicomical from the outset about the religious and, more specifically, nonliturgical verse of Protestant Pietism—and the gems by Gerhardt and Claudius don’t necessarily gainsay this.... I understand why you have nothing to say about my Chopin poem. But what Wagner was for Nietzsche, so Chopin is for me.\(^55\)

This comparison is telling, for Nietzsche would come to see his love for Wagner as a sign of his own decadence and sickness. By the time he sits down to write *Peter Camenzind* Hesse would similarly approach romantic pining and longing from a point of view with considerable similarities to the Pietist critique of *schöne Kunst*. In the meantime, however, parents and son would continue their epistolary debate over the relative merits of religious and romantic poetry:

[Marie Hesse] Your judgment of pious lyrics is very hard; but I’m not upset, and doesn’t take away from me what I enjoyed and – thank God – what I will always thoroughly enjoy. These songs were not composed for the world to admire, but the mouth overflowed with the contents of the heart. These sounds, consecrated by God, are melodies from the homeland of those people that are here as pilgrims and visitors, and [also] for those who cannot be fulfilled by the world of art and wisdom.... I believe whole heartedly that Gerhardt’s and Tersteegen’s songs do a thousand times more good in this world than do the works of Goethe, Schiller and Shakespeare, even though I greatly appreciate them as gifts of God. In short, there are so many different needs that we can let everybody have their own tastes and pleasure.\(^56\)

[Hermann] I enjoyed and was moved by [reading] mother’s defence of Protestant poesy. Yes, my judgment was ‘hard,’ but I hold to it, with a few exceptions. But mother was right, though I really doubt that the religious poets Gerhardt, Spitter and others have done more good than Goethe and Shakespeare. And even if it were true, it is a fairly meaningless claim. For a long time I have been of the firm faith that for artists morality is replaced by aesthetics, and that art, especially poetic art is not to serve that which is morally good.\(^57\)
[Marie]... on Saturday I took every free moment to read in your book, and I found many beautiful
pieces. The form and language are nicely done; I only wish the content was more elevated. Don't take
this the wrong way; you should understand me. I would sooner have seen a few of your earlier poems
in this edition rather than those two or three that caused me pain, because they awakened in me the
suspicion that love is not always chaste and pure. As your mother I can talk openly with you, no? The
one title is, 'Because I love you,' the other is 'I know you are leaving.' You are still so young that
these dissonant sounds should be foreign to you.... In spite of all I've said I love many of your
romantic poems very much and I believe I have a deeper sympathy and deeper understanding than you
think.58

One letter of Marie Hesse's has often been cited and commented upon in the secondary
literature. The occasion was her reaction to the publication of An Hour Behind Midnight.
Unlike her son's Romantic Poems, many of which she enjoyed, the content of this follow-up
volume cut her to the quick:

Shun your 'fever muse' like a snake; she it is who crept into paradise and who today would still like to
poison thoroughly every paradise of love and of poetry.... Oh my child, flee from her, hate her, she is
impure and has no claim to you, for you belong to God.... Pray for grand thoughts and a pure heart....
Remain chaste.... There is a world of falsehood where the base, the animalistic, the impure is
considered beautiful. There is a realm of truth, of justice, of freedom, that shows us sin as sin and
teaches us to hate it and leads us to divine freedom. Man is called to the sublime, the eternal, the
wonderful—does he want to lick the dust? My dear child: God help you and bless you and save you
from this!59

The negative reaction of Hesse's parents to his early writings often receives comment in
Hesse scholarship. Joseph Mileck observes that Hesse was deeply hurt by his parent's
aversion to the romantic pathos and aestheticism of his first literary ventures. "Hesse's
parents, his father in particular, were severely moralistic. Both looked askance at belles-
lettres; literature was too much of this world." "Hesse," we read, "never forgot this painful
letter, and he was never able to quite forgive his parents for their perpetual prudish
moralizing.\textsuperscript{60} What Mileck overlooks here is that Pietists may have actually had reasons for being critical of romantic literature. Hesse scholars, as is to be expected, tend to criticize Hesse's early literature on literary grounds, while his parents took issue with it over the questions of its moral and religious worth, though one respected Hesse scholar, Bernhard Zeller, refers to Hesse's early aestheticism as "dangerous and perilous, and from the outset quite immature."\textsuperscript{61} Labeling Hesse's parent's as "prudish" and "moralizing" is to use words as weapons, implicitly rejecting their critical view of their sons' early literature without even attempting to understand the reasons they may have had; as it turns out, their reasons were more or less informed by the same worldview and set of values from which Hesse would muster his own critique of his early aestheticism.

Moreover, Mileck's handling of Marie Hesse's famous "fever muse" letter leaves something to be desired. The manner in which he cites this letter obscures the fact that the "fever muse" is the title of one of the chapters of Hesse's \textit{An Hour Behind Midnight}, leaving the impression that this is Marie Hesse's term for her son's poetic daemon. Furthermore, the contents of \textit{An Hour Behind Midnight} make Marie Hesse's shock understandable. The imagery in many of the pieces is highly erotic, and the weary narrator makes frequent, suggestive references to the similarities between the women he encounters and his mother. In the opening piece, "Island Dream," the narrator travels to an island peopled by all the women he has admired, and their "queen" reminds him of his "distant mother." The mother figure of these prose pieces is the poet's "fever muse."\textsuperscript{62} The "fever muse" letter has received much attention. Tuskan, for example, cites it as evidence of "the deep psychological cleft separating parents and son," but doesn't comment on the Oedipal nature of the work to which it refers.\textsuperscript{63} But if we consider this letter in light of the contents of \textit{An Hour Behind Midnight},
place it alongside other letters more receptive and appreciative of Hesse’s earlier works, and further situate the reaction of Hesse’s parents within the context of the theological aesthetics of Pietism, we gain a better understanding of the attitude of Hesse’s parents to his early romantic phase.

Clearly, Hesse’s family (and later, Hesse himself) felt that this early literature left something to be desired, but we understand little of their position if we simply discount it as moralistic. Certainly Hesse’s parents leveled criticism at Hesse’s early literature, but this should not be confused with (and implicitly denigrated as) narrowly moralistic, a term that promotes an image of Pietists as cultural boors or philistines, which is far from the truth of the matter. The favorite poems of Hesse’s father were those of Goethe’s *East-West Divan*, and one of Hesse’s most profound memories of his father was a summer day spent after passing the *Landesexam*, prior to heading off to Maulbronn:

During this vacation, my father read some of Goethe’s poems aloud to me for the first time. *Another Night Song* was his favorite.

One silver tinged evening, with a new moon above, we stood together on a wooded mountain. We were breathing heavily from the climb and fell silent after a solemn but affectionate exchange about the beauty of the quiet countryside, now bathed in moonlight.

My father sat down on a rock and surveyed the area all around us; he pulled me down upon his knee, wrapped his arm around me, then softly and solemnly recited that unfathomably wonderful verse:

Over the hill-tops
Is quiet now,
In all the tree-tops
Hearest thou
Hardly a breath;
The birds are asleep in the trees:
Wait, soon like these
Thou, too shalt rest.
I’ve heard, read, and recited those words a hundred times since…. Every time, I was overcome by a gentle melancholy that freed my heart, and every time, I bowed my head and sensed a strangely sorrowful yet contented feeling, as if the words came from my father’s mouth, as if he were leaning upon me with his arm around me, as if I were looking up at his broad, smooth forehead and were listening to his soft voice. 

In this scene of Hesse’s memory and narrative imagination, he and his father are brought together through a shared Romantic sensibility.

Peter Camenzind

The devilish thing about hypochondria is that it not only makes one ill, but conceited and shortsighted, almost to the point of arrogance. One regards oneself as a kind of dramatic character... bearing all the world’s sorrows and enigmas on one’s shoulders, as if there were not thousands of others suffering the same woes, as they wandered about lost in the same labyrinths.

- Hesse, Peter Camenzind

In a letter written in 1931 Hesse informs a reader that Demian and Siddhartha have little to do with “the attempt ‘to write novels in a beautiful language [schöne Sprache],’ as you believe; but rather lay the groundwork that can for a time help young people with life. You should take their words, just as you would the Bible or other efforts to formulate what is important, not as ‘schöne Sprache,’ but understand that [my works] are just as wordy as necessary, word for word exactly as I see it.” From its inception Hesse’s writing had been autobiographical, but in his early romantic works the confessional element had been aestheticized and stylized, buried beneath ornamental and clichéd language. In Tübingen and
Basel Hesse had been striking the pose of the suffering aesthete, just like the Swiss Peter Camenzind of his imagination, that “sour blend of poet and peasant” from the village of Nimikon who for a time regarded himself “as a kind of dramatic character.”

Peter Camenzind, Hesse’s first novel and his first sustained effort to write a narrative with a unified plot and developed characters, marks Hesse’s emancipation from the world of schöne Sprache and Kunst. From Camenzind onward, Hesse would never again identify beauty and art with religion, as he did in his early romantic phase. Rather, his literature would be characterized by a tension between the religious and artistic dimensions of life and, on the whole, a rather skeptical view of the notion that one could ever hope to find religious meaning or spiritual satisfaction through art. Peter Camenzind signaled Hesse’s refusal to let beauty and art run roughshod over the demands of authenticity and a speaking from the heart.

The story follows Peter from the rural village of Nimikon to the University of Zürich. Here he meets Richard, a music student who introduces Peter to the arts crowd and secretly launches Peter’s literary career by submitting one of his stories to a publisher. Peter falls in love with St. Francis, through whom he deepens his awareness of the sacral quality of nature, and who reinforces his own nagging disenchantment over living the life of an aesthete. Two failed love affairs, too much wine and socializing, and the death of Richard (likely a suicide) lead Peter to the depths of despair, from which he emerges through time spent with the family of a carpenter, and his caring for the crippled Boppi. Boppi’s death and the quality of the simple if hard life of the carpenter and his family arouse in Peter a renewed sense of what is ultimately important, and he returns to Nimikon to run his ailing father’s household, with the intention of taking over the town’s decrepit tavern, in order to retain and renew one of the
institutions that binds the villagers into a community. "...I have turned native once more and when I become old and grey I will take my father's place and humble share in village life, and no one will notice."  

The world of decadent aestheticism in which Hesse lived and thought during his Tübingen and Basel years, in which he places Peter during his time in Italy, Zürich, and Basel, is precisely the worldview that so bedeviled his parents, and which Pietists had been fighting a running engagement with for two hundred years. In the course of the novel, as in the course of its author's life, the young poet's worldview changes, especially with respect to his attitude toward aestheticism, which bears similarities to the Pietist critique of art and literature discussed above. One aim in our reading of Hesse's first novel is to draw out these similarities. A second aim is to highlight that several of the key themes of the work—nature mysticism, the pilgrim motif, the longing for home—are not simply romantic motifs and themes, as has been often recognized, but also central themes of Pietist thought and culture.

Love of nature, a persistent topic of Hesse's works, is front and center in Peter Camenzind. Dissatisfied with the world, with humanity, with his own self-indulgence, Peter finds relief only in nature, whose beauties and consolations are sounded on the opening page, as Peter recollects how the "mountains and streams... smooth blue-green water sparkling with tiny lights in the sunshine... steep mountain gulleys... filled with glistening snow in their topmost heights, tiny waterfalls, and at the foot, the bright, sloping meadows... inscribed their fine stirrings and deeds upon" the young boy's "poor little soul, so empty and still and expectant..." The trajectory of the novel moves from this initial participation mystique in the wonders of nature to Peter's corruption and decadence in the world, especially in the bohemian life he leads in the cities he attempts to make home, and finally to
a reconnection with that first naivety through an essentially pantheistic awareness of the
presence of the divine in the natural world. Just as Siddhartha will later listen to the voice of
the river speaking the eternal truth of life’s unity, so too Peter hears the voice of God in the
sound of the wind through the trees and the rushing of river waters. “I heard the wind singing
in the tree-tops, mountain-torrents roaring down the gorges and quiet streams purling across
the plains, and I knew that God was speaking in these sounds and that to gain an
understanding of that mysterious tongue with its primitive beauty would be to regain
paradise.”

Peter’s nature mysticism is influenced by his encounter with St. Francis, whose works
and life effect a deepening of Peter’s experience of nature. St. Francis included “the whole
earth, plants, animals, the heavenly bodies, winds and water in his love of God…. He deemed
all powers and natural phenomena his ‘dear brothers and sisters.’” Through the Franciscan
saint, a “personal love of nature began to grow in [Peter] as [he] listened to her voice as to a
friend and traveling companion who speaks in a foreign language.” As Hesse was writing
Camenzind he was working simultaneously on a highly stylized life of St. Francis, which was
completed in Calw and published in 1904. Hesse, like his character Peter, found in his
encounter with the Franciscan monk a challenge and potential solution to his own
dissatisfaction with aestheticism. Francis embodied the ideal of love and service that Hesse
associated with the Pietism of his family; Peter’s love and care of the cripple Boppi in the
later chapters of the novel represents Hesse’s fictional effort to affirm what he saw as a
central thread of Christian culture, namely, love of God and neighbor—the *praxis pietatis* of
Spener and Hesse’s parents. “Ties of affection bring sorrow in their train…. But then it is of
so little account whether you have many sorrows to bear or none, as long as one can live with
and for others and one is aware of the bond that binds all living creatures together... This very sentiment rests at the heart of Hesse’s first novel, and will also be the driving theme of his last, The Glass Bead Game; it is a characteristically Pietist sentiment.

As Hesse later recalled, in Peter’s “struggle to return from the world and society to nature, he repeats in miniature the half-courageous, half-sentimental revolt of Rousseau...”

In Peter Camenzind Hesse was at pains to teach a love of nature to a society driven by industrialization, with its accompanying alienation from the natural rhythms of life and the earth:

I wanted to teach the people to be conscious of the pulse of the earth and take part in the life of the universe; not to forget in the bustle of their petty lives that we are not self-created gods but children belonging to the earth and the cosmic whole. I wanted to remind them that, like the songs of the poets and our dreams, the rivers, oceans, drifting clouds and raging storms are symbols and bearers of our hopes which spread their wings between heaven and earth; whose ultimate goal is the confident certainty of the right of citizenship and immortality of all living creatures. Deep down within him every being is convinced of these rights and that he is a child of God who can sleep without fear in the bosom of eternity. Everything that is bad, the diseased, decadent element that we carry around with us, denies such thoughts and believes in death. But I was also eager to teach men to look for springs of joy and rivers of life in a brotherly love of nature. I wanted to preach the art of seeing, walking and enjoying life, of finding happiness in the present; to make it possible for mountains, seas and green islands to convey their message through their mighty and captivating tongues.... I wanted to make people feel a sense of shame that we should know more about foreign wars, fashion, gossip, literature and art than about Spring unfolding its vital force outside our towns and the river that flows beneath our bridges and forests, and the lovely meadows traversed by our railways.... All this I did not want to present in the form of hymns and pretentious songs but simply, truthfully, unadorned, with the same mixture of seriousness and humor with which the traveler on his return recounts his experiences of the outside world to his friends.
Peter's moral earnestness and his rejection of a pretentious aestheticism in favor of unadorned, simple, truthful language is a long way from his earlier romantic decadence, and reveals the Pietist sensibilities inherited by Hesse.

Mark Boulby writes that the pantheistic adoration of nature found in Peter Camenzind is "the essence of Romantic mysticism" and "the entire tradition of German subjectivism." But to what extent does Peter's love of nature, and his finding in the natural world the voice and presence of God reflect Pietist conceptions? Fritz Böttger comments in passing that the nature mysticism of Peter Camenzind reflects a "pietistic-religious" ethos, though he does not elaborate on this claim. This question will be pursued in greater detail in Chapter 4, where we favorably compare Hesse's mysticism to the speculative mystical tradition in Swabia as represented by the thought of Friedrich Oetinger. Here, we would note that Swabian mysticism, largely due to the influence of Jacob Böhme, held a positive conception of the relationship between nature and spirit. Böhme's theology seeks to unite "the natural realm and the spiritual realm" and in the hands of a thinker such as Friedrich Oetinger, Böhme's mystical theology would encourage a positive appreciation of the power of nature to reveal the divine. Nature in Oetinger's thought was neither tainted nor fallen, but redeemed through the pouring out of the blood of Christ as a "tincture" over the earth. Oetinger affirmed the power of the individual to apprehend God outside of the mediation of scripture, dogma, or sacraments, and he defended this position on the basis of the notion of the sensus communis, which he understood to be an "organ of the soul in every person which makes knowledge of God... through nature possible." The actions and working of nature, claims Peter Camenzind "proclaim loudly the uninterrupted message of God as it never came from the lips of man. Whoever has thus once heard it in childhood,
hears it for the rest of his life.... If one is a native of the mountains, one can study philosophy or natural history for years and do away with the God of old, and yet as one feels the Föhn approach once more or hears an avalanche break through the thicket, your heart throbs in your breast and your thoughts turn to God and death.\textsuperscript{81} If Oetinger would take issue with Hesse’s image of nature’s power to reveal God surpassing that of the “lips of man” or Biblical revelation, he would nevertheless affirm Hesse’s sense of a sacred natural world capable of revealing to the sensitive and patient observer God’s presence and love.

If in the mountains and forests Peter feels at peace and at home, in the cities he is a melancholic whose confused, languid state is mirrored and created by a confused and senseless world. Peter becomes “sick at heart... every aspect of life was repellent;” life’s course, as Peter painfully learns through the death of his close friend (Richard), is uncertain. “Richard’s boat was the gay, happy-go-lucky one on which my eyes had been fixed and which I confidently hoped would bear me along to my glorious destination. But with a short cry it had sunk, and now I, rudderless, was tossed around on waters that had all at once become dark.” If the shock of youthful death is the immediate cause of Peter’s tailspin, he also realizes that this is but part of a larger experience. “I had believed in friendship, in woman’s love and in youth. These things had abandoned me in turn. Why did I not trust in God and surrender myself to his stronger arms?”\textsuperscript{82} Hesse’s diction here bears similarities to Pietist autobiography and life story: he is now faced with the “hard test” of faith and his inability to “surrender” his will up to God is an obstacle to his achieving peace. He is a “rudderless” pilgrim on his “dark” journey. Fundamentally, Peter’s life story involves the education of desire and will, the overcoming and replacing of life’s vanities with a higher yearning; we would not be reaching too far in associating the education of Peter Camenzind
with the Pietist principle of ‘breaking the will’ that Hesse often writes about, and that we will consider further in Chapter 5.

Many scholars point to Hesse’s rejection of the notion of ‘breaking the will’ and the damage it inflicted on the young man. To be sure, Hesse had serious concerns about the tendency within Pietism to overzealously monitor and replace the instinctual life of “natural man” with a “new birth” in Christ. But Peter’s path in many respects resembles the taming of the will and ego that Pietists sought to achieve. With his first steps into the adult world Peter, like Hesse, achieves some measure of success with early poetic works and essays, and spends his time “enveloped” in the exquisite scent and taste of a glass of red wine or “dreaming of noble ladies, of knighthood and great honors.” Peter lived among those youth who in seeking a solution to their problems... considered it stupid to believe in God, but other teachings and names—Schopenhauer, Buddha, Zarathustra to quote a few—won wide acceptance. There were young anonymous poets who did their solemn devotions before statues and paintings in their modish houses. They would have been ashamed to bow before God but knelt before the Zeus of Otricoli.... There were artists who sought access to a more rarefied atmosphere through the medium of exquisite wallpapers, music, gastronomy, wines, perfumes and cigars.... Among all the posturing crowd of fashionable poets, artists and philosophers whom I was then delighted and dazzled to meet, not one achieved any real fame.... The poet indulged in pseudo-aesthetic conversations in the villas belonging to his patron among a bevy of female hangers-on, looked upon himself as a kind of misunderstood hero, and as a result of a continual overdose of Chopin and Pre-Raphaelite aestheticism, systematically destroyed his reason.... It was only later on that I perceived the dangers that lurked within such circles. At that stage it had been my highland peasant nature that came to my rescue and stopped me contending the lists.83

It is remarkable how quickly Hesse was able to engage in a scathing self-critique of his previous life; Camenzind was written in the two or three years following Hesse’s first success with his romantic poems and essays. Peter Camenzind arrives on the heels of these works with an unexpected sound and fury; it is a morality tale,84 as Hesse takes quick stock of his
life, and, finding it wanting, engages in self-criticism and endeavors to issue a warning to others enamored with aestheticism.\textsuperscript{85} The crux of Peter’s problems, in the last analysis, stems from his ambition, his pride, the ease with which he is enticed by worldly fame, the manner in which he wanders through the world gathering up experiences like souvenirs purchased and brought home as proof of one’s visit to exotic lands. But slowly, patiently, life works away on Peter until he “regained [his] humility and [his] pride was broken.” Life, reflects Peter, “let me play out my comedy of pride and priggishness and watched and waited for the truant child to find its mother again.”\textsuperscript{86} Life is for Peter the great school that Hesse’s parents so often wrote about, the school that everyone is forced to attend whether they want to or not, and its central lesson is disclosed by Peter in the closing pages of his life-story. The realization that one can bear life’s sorrows so long as “one can live for others” and become “aware of the close, living bond that unites all living creatures” constitutes, as Peter describes it, the “deep insight into all that is holy…. It is a bitter sorrow for eyes and heart, and [one’s] beautiful pride and self-conceit receive their share of stings, but afterwards one is so still, so humbled, so much more mature and is, in one’s innermost being, alive.”\textsuperscript{87} Peter’s journey involves a “dying to [his] old being”\textsuperscript{88} and, in his return home to Nimikon in the spring, the emergence of a new man. In the association of the death of the self with the recognition of the sins\textsuperscript{89} of pride and self-conceit, and in the creation of a new being worked by the mysterious power of love, Hesse is clearly drawing on the Pietist conception of the new birth (which we deal with in detail in Chapter 5), while at the same time stripping it of its Christological center.

Life as pilgrimage is a common motif of Pietist literature, and Peter explicitly conceives his life as a journey in which the soul is persistently educated in its restless
movement toward repose in God. "...once again I was overcome by the feeling that I was not born for the life of a perpetual stay-at-home among my fellow men in towns and houses, but for pilgrimages throughout foreign lands and journey's over the sea.... I know of no finer or more impressive symbol of man's yearning and pilgrimage than a ship dwindling in the distance and finally disappearing on the open sky-line." Peter's longing for the truant child to find its mother is analogical to the pilgrim's or stranger's journey back to their homeland, of which Hesse's mother speaks in the letter cited above. The longing for one's home (Heimat) is a recurring theme of Hesse's literature, and has roots in both Hesse's Pietist and Romanticist heritage.

The radical sense of displacement that we find in much of Hesse's literature is not simply due to his early break with family and religious tradition; indeed, this sense of displacement and longing for home is characteristic of Pietism, especially its radical variety. Radical Pietists in early modern Germany "had a migratory life experience accompanied by a deep experience of alienation and homelessness." They were literally and metaphorically on the road, restlessly awaiting "a millennial age of brotherly love." Hesse's own sense of homelessness has strong parallels to this tradition, as does Hesse's interest in mystical thought, his rejection of the institution of the church, his seeking out a like-minded community of fellow travelers in either actual persons or fictional characters, his emphasis on brotherly love and social service, and his utopian ideals, all of which will be further explored in the following pages. Many aspects of Pietist thought and culture, especially these radical and mystical currents, were absorbed and transmitted by the German Romantics and novelists.
The life course charted by a wiser, more mature Peter resembles the trajectories recounted in Pietist life stories; a turning away from God under the influence of egotistical pride, ambition, and worldly success; the scrupulous observation and analysis of the inner workings of the soul; and the path back to walking in the ways of the Lord. “Again I examined myself to see what sort of obstacle or daimon was causing my spirit to stagnate and to increasingly weigh me down. I was obsessed with the idea of myself as an outsider, an imperfectly developed human-being whose suffering no one knew, understood or shared.” But this idea, as Peter realizes, is motivated by arrogance, pride, and vanity. Specifically Pietist in tone is Peter’s denunciation of the world with its decadence, pride, and ambition, conceptions that Hesse was certainly exposed to in his social and home environment. Within the circles of the professors and the socialites with whom he kept company Peter would find only pretense, and an irritating proclivity to chit-chat: “what I found intolerable was having to move from one person to the next after a couple of minutes’ chat, to lavish compliments on the women, to try to divide my attention simultaneously between a cup of tea, a two-fold conversation, and a piano solo. I hated this discussion of literature and art and I realized that very little real thought was given them, and that most of what was said was insincere.” Like Eliot’s Prufrock, Peter Camenzind spent many an hour watching the ladies come and go, speaking of Michelangelo.

By the time Hesse had established himself in Tübingen he seems to have worked through his adolescent crisis, and the distance between this vibrant university city and his provincial hometown of Calw is reflected in Hesse’s ability to perceive his relationship to his family and religious heritage in a more objective light:
I am scanning the heavens again for the stars that represent my previous ideals, and I am trying through a form of poetic pantheism to uncover the secret to peace and health. Once again I feel that I can read the revelations of the poets better than those of the Bible. But I now know, even though no revelation has been vouchsafed me, that the Christian faith is not just a form of parable, it has a palpable, living presence; there exists no other power capable of creating and preserving such a holy sense of community and love.98

Hesse's recognition of the "holy sense of community and love" in which his parents' faith was grounded is also a lament. In the life world of Peter Camenzind the decadent, the "bridge between the individual and society is broken,"99 there is no community, and Peter is unable to extend his love of nature to a love of people. If Peter's encounter with St. Francis taught him a personalist love of the natural world, it also awakened in Peter the fundamental task of his life's journey: "But how from that stage [nature-love] was I to find the path that led to the love for human beings?"100 This movement is achieved in the final two chapters, which recount Peter's involvement with the cripple Boppi and his family, and his return home to care for his father.101

That Hesse would take direct aim in Camenzind102 at pride, vanity, and ambition, at the decadence of fancy wallpaper, perfume, and cigars, at the forced aestheticism of poetic diction and pretentious songs, at the idolization of false prophets while refusing to bow before God, that he would lament the absence of genuine community in the world of the aesthetes, that he would point to the necessity of Peter's acquiring humility, that Peter would remained unfulfilled so long as his love of beauty and nature did not translate into love of humanity and practical service in the world—all this surely derives from the piety of Hesse's family.

This is perhaps the most appropriate place in our study for some brief comments on Hesse’s 1930 novel, *Narcissus and Goldmund*. Hesse’s early evocation of the divine nature of art would be a recurring theme of his work, though a wholesale embrace of romantic religion was always held in check by the piety Hesse associated with his family, and with figures such as St. Francis. As quickly as Hesse granted art divine status in his early romantic works he questioned it in *Camenzind*: “Art, it seemed to me, has always been at great pains to find expression for true innate longing of the divine element in us. St. Francis expressed it in a more mature, yet more childlike way.” This persistent friction in Hesse’s thought between the path of the artist and that of the saint generated the heat that led to *Narcissus and Goldmund*.

Hesse was in the habit of framing his literature with reference to various genres. *Demian* is subtitled ‘The story of youth;’ *Beneath the Wheel* and *Peter Camenzind* are both identified as ‘novels;’ *Siddhartha* is an Indian ‘Dichtung’ (fiction). *Narcissus and Goldmund* is conceived as a tale (*Erzählung*). Every true story, writes Walter Benjamin, contains something useful, “in one case... a moral; in another... some practical advice; in a third, in a proverb or maxim. In every case the storyteller is a man who has counsel for his readers.” Hesse may have had something like this in mind in calling his work a ‘tale.’ And the moral, if there is indeed a moral embedded in the story, is to be found in the final scene, as the dying, questing sculptor Goldmund speaks to his friend, the spiritual monk Narcissus the famous words with which the story has come to be closely identified:
And now the sick man opened his eyes again and looked for a long while into his friend’s face. He said farewell with his eyes. And with a sudden movement, as though he were trying to shake his head, he whispered: “But how will you die when your time comes, Narcissus, since you have no mother? Without a mother, one cannot love. Without a mother, one cannot die.”

What he murmured after that could not be understood. Those last days Narcissus sat by his bed day and night, watching his life ebb away. Goldmund’s last words burned like fire in his heart.

The tradition of the tale or fable in German Romanticism was developed to present “those inner truths that resist direct autobiographical presentation.” A teaching, to be a teaching, must have an objective element to it, lest it have no practical value beyond the meaning it holds for the individual’s own life or Bildung. The difference between the novel and the story, again to cite Benjamin, is the difference between the “meaning of life” and “the moral of the story.” In Narcissus and Goldmund the moral and the meaning are conflated, for the work ends not with a maxim or a statement but a question: how will you die without a mother? Hesse’s question is meant as a teaching directed at a ‘masculine,’ ‘patriarchal,’ ‘logical,’ ‘rationalized’ society and culture that, in losing connection to the ‘mother’—which in Hesse’s works represents experiences of eternal harmony and home, feelings of oneness with the natural world and one’s own bodily functions and desires, experiences and feelings that have been broken by the dry rigidity of the ‘father-world’ of scientific and technological progress, and the moral-spiritual bankruptcy of materialism and military conquest—has stripped life of a relationship to those perennial human themes of how to love and how to die. But the question is also Hesse’s attempt at making a statement about the meaning of life, and of his life. Hesse’s “final novel of the 1920s is a paradigmatic redaction of the tensions between art and life, eros and logos, that help to define his outlook and literary career.”
Goldmund arrives as a young man at Mariabronn cloister filled with the intention of fulfilling his father’s desire that he lead the life of a monastic. At Mariabronn Goldmund falls under the sway of the older Narcissus, whose scholasticism and mysticism stands very much in contrast to the simple piety of the old Abbott Daniel. The two develop a close friendship, but in time, Goldmund’s wanderlust, sexual desire, and artistic impulses— inherited from his mother who left the family when Goldmund was a small child—leads him away from the monastery to a life on the road and to his true vocation as a sculptor. It is Narcissus who awakens in Goldmund memories of his mother, which press Goldmund to seek self-realization outside of the boundaries and structures offered by the monastery with its masculine values of spiritual asceticism.

For years Goldmund wanders the roads and inhabits the towns of medieval Swabia, at one point staying with a knight in order to help him write an account of his pilgrimage. In a short time he is sent packing, owing to the sexual attraction between Goldmund and the knight’s two daughters. Goldmund travels with the pilgrim Viktor, and experiences both the loneliness and the freedom of life on the road. In a state of anguish he finds relief confessing his sins before a statue of Mary, the power of which leads him to seek out its creator, and thus begins Goldmund’s long apprenticeship to Master Niklaus. In time, Goldmund is assigned the task of sculpting a saint, part of a larger work on the crucifixion commissioned of Niklaus. Goldmund works on and completes a statue of St. John, but its likeness is informed by Goldmund’s memory of Narcissus.

Goldmund’s work is so powerful that Niklaus arranges for a granting of a master’s certificate, and offers Goldmund the hand of his daughter Lisbeth. Goldmund, ever the wanderer, declines. He meets with a fellow traveler, Robert, and the two witness the horrors
of the plague. Goldmund cares for a young girl, Lene, and when a stranger attempts to rape her, Goldmund kills him in a fit of rage. Lene dies from the plague, and Goldmund is again alone. He returns to Niklaus, only to find he has also succumbed to the plague, and his daughter Lisbeth is near death. Goldmund has an affair with the mistress of Count Heinrich, who is running the city in the absence of the bishop. The count catches Goldmund in his home and, suspecting him a thief, the Count orders him to be hanged. At the final hour, Goldmund is rescued by Narcissus, who is now Abbott, and the two return to Mariabronn.

Goldmund is given a workshop and he again begins the work for which he was born, producing two major works to adorn the monastery and a nearby chapel. The first is a stairway and pulpit for the refectory, depicting the story of creation and the evangelists. The second work is a statue of Mary, into which Goldmund infuses the sensual qualities of the women he has known. Empty of himself Goldmund again leaves the monastery. He returns, close to death, just a few months later. The final scene is the death of Goldmund, whose final words to his friend, "But how will you die when your time comes, Narcissus, since you have no mother?" would forever "burn like fire in [Narcissus's] heart."}

The central theme of the novel is the relationship between art and religion, or, as it is variously unpacked in the course of Goldmund's wandering, between the masculine and the feminine, between the intellect and the senses, between spirit and soul, between the dry, pure, ascetic heights to which the mind can rise and the sensual desires that stir and agitate matter. At one level, Narcissus and Goldmund represents Hesse's attempt to resolve these metaphysical polarities in story form. The magnificent edifice of Mariabronn (a feminized version of Maulbronn) is located beside an equally magnificent chestnut tree; Goldmund carves both a statue of St. John and of Mary; Goldmund is drawn to the spiritual serenity and
mysticism of Narcissus, yet it is Narcissus, whose very name connotes inner self-reflection and absorption, who awakens Goldmund to his “mother-heritage” and sends him outward into the world; the novel itself is a work of art informed by metaphysical speculation.

But if *Narcissus and Goldmund* is one of Hesse’s least overtly autobiographical and most metaphysical works, the fractious relationship between Hesse the poet and his religious heritage remains a fundamental context, and the “opening chapters set in the monastery represent yet another fictional version of Hesse’s adolescent identity crisis.” If attempting a literary treatment of fundamental metaphysical questions, *Narcissus and Goldmund* is also informed by Hesse’s persistent need to revisit his flight from Maulbronn, and in so doing amplify and revision that exemplary event. The work is motivated by a number of complex, interrelated motivations and desires: it is an attempt at harmonious reconciliation with his family, an exercise in self-justification, and both a tribute to and a criticism of the piety of his family, especially his father.

The “preceptor Lohse in Gertrud,” another of Hesse’s *Künstlerromans* dating from 1910, “is none other than the writer’s father himself. [Johannes Hesse] was, completely independent of blood, the first friend and also the first mystic his son knew.” The character of Narcissus has a similar relationship to Johannes Hesse. Just as Lohse is a spiritual mentor and friend to Gertrud, so too is Narcissus to Goldmund. From “1916 on [Hesse] began working on the solution to [one of his] great themes, a theme that filled his childhood and adolescence: the solution to his relationship to his father.” Goldmund’s creation of his St. John (*Johannes* in German) is certainly a reference to Hesse’s father, and thus an interweaving of Johannes Hesse’s serene, ascetic, compassionate and saintly mysticism and friendship into the character of Narcissus. Goldmund’s statue is a manifestation of his love
and admiration for Narcissus, just as Hesse’s book is the product of his own admiration for
his father, and his desire for reconciliation. And in the words of Narcissus/Johannes is given
voice to an understanding of Hesse’s own Goldmund-like character and desires that the
author longed to have affirmed and supported by his own father and family:

Soon you’ll probably also realize that cloister life and striving for monkhood were a mistake for
you, an invention of your father’s. He wanted you to atone for your mother’s memory.... You’ll find
out where your road will lead you.... You have other gifts. You are more gifted than I, you are richer
and you are weaker, your road will be more beautiful and more difficult than mine. There were times
when you refused to understand me, you often kicked like a foal, it wasn’t always easy, I was often
forced to hurt you.... Listen, Goldmund! Our friendship has been good; it had a goal and the goal has
been reached; you’ve been awakened. I would not like it to be over; I would like it to renew itself
again and again, and lead to new goals.  

Here, Hesse achieves a literary reconciliation with the father, and Narcissus/Johannes acts,
alongside the mother impulse, as an inner friend and spiritual guide.  

Though the paths of Goldmund the artist and Narcissus the saint are both affirmed,
the story is also pervaded by a tragic sense of separation. Narcissus’s connection to the
mother, which he, paradoxically, stimulated in Goldmund, is broken, though hope is held out
that Goldmund’s words, burning as they do as a fire in Narcissus heart, may transmute him.
And Goldmund’s aesthetic path is shadowed by “dark doubts over the redemptive validity of
art. Goldmund broods over the relationship between the sphere of art and that of the soul.”

Both paths are equally striving for and equally incapable of reaching God. But Goldmund’s
brooding would lead Hesse to one last attempt at harmonizing the artist and the saint (and
thus his relationship to his Pietist heritage), his final novel, The Glass Bead Game.
NOTES TO CHAPTER 2

2 Hesse, *Life Story, Briefly Told*, 47.
4 Letter from Hesse to his brother Karl Isenberg, 12 June 1898, in *Soul of the Age*, 35.
5 Letter from Hesse to Helene Voigt-Diederichs, 27 August 1898, in *Soul of the Age*, 37.
6 Letter of 10 July 1900 to his parents, *Briefe* 1:74.
9 Neo-Pietism was widely influential, but Brecht (in “Der Spätspietismus”) emphasizes its importance in southern Germany—in the Rhineland, in Swabia, and in northern Switzerland.
12 Troeltsch, 791.
13 See Boyle, 75-76, and Burkhard Dohm, “Radikalpietismus und ‘schöne Seele’: Susanna Katharina von Klettenberg,” in *Goethe und der Pietismus*, 111-134, ed. Hans-Georg Kemper and Hans Schneider (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 2001). Hugo Ball also refers to Goethe’s contact with Pietism, hinting that this partly explains Hesse’s enormous interest in Goethe during his Tübingen years.
14 Troeltsch, 794.
15 William E. Petig, *Literary Antipietism in Germany during the first half of the eighteenth century* (New York: Peter Lang, 1984), 197.
16 Petig, 204. For an introduction to Reitz’s work, see Douglas H. Shantz, “Back to the Sources, Gottfried Arnold (1666-1714), Johann Heinrich Reitz (1655-1720) and the Distinctive Program and Practice of Pietist Historical Writing,” in *Commoners and Community: Essays in Honor of Werner O. Packull*, ed. C. Arnold Snyder (Pandora Press, 2002). The study of Pietist literature—historical writing, biography, life writing and autobiography—as compared to Pietist church history and theology, is in its infancy.
18 Goethe himself saw to it that Jung Stilling’s autobiography was published. Two of the influential, early *Bildungsromane* were written by the sons of Pietist families: Novalis’s (*Heinrich von Ofterdingen*) and C.M. Wieland’s (*Agathon*). In the Pietist archives in Herrnhut are thousands of life stories and autobiographies.
22 Boyle, 12. Boyle notes that it is only after Goethe opened himself up, through his contact with the Herrnhut community at Marienborn, to “that cult of interiority” that had become “by the middle of the eighteenth century the distinctive feature of the ‘official’ national culture,” that he was able to “achieve that generosity of sympathy with the yearnings and doings of his fellow-countrymen…” (76).
25 Troeltsch, 793.
27 Petig 197-198. Within literary circles there was a good deal of animosity toward Pietism. Pietists were regularly satirized and caricatured as in, for example, Jean Paul’s *Die unsichtbare Loge* (*The Invisible Lodge*, 1793), which pokes fun at the spirituality of the Herrnhuter community led by Zinzendorf.
29 Berning, 106.
The social-historical origins of Pietism cannot be underestimated in assessing Pietist criticism of Kunst. In the decades following the Thirty Years War, roughly one-fifth of the German population were beggars, and territorial rulers, who should have been devoting money to rebuilding the social infrastructure (agriculture, schools, churches, hospitals, etc.) spent lavishly on their court lifestyle. The inaction of the nobility and the in addressing the harsh social conditions faced by the German population coupled with the acquiesces of the clergy to state absolutism were instrumental causes of the demand for social, political, and religious reforms.


Berning, 107-109.


Pietists regularly contrasted the frivolity (frivolität) of the “world” with the piety (frommigkeit) of true Christianity.

Helt, 61-62.

Hesse, Hermann Lauscher, Werke 1: 321.

Ball, 70.

Richard C. Helt, ‘... A Poet or Nothing at All,’ 59.

Letter from Hermann Hesse, 2 October 1898, KJ 2: 286.

Letter from Marie Hesse, 19 November 1898, KJ 2: 299.

Letter from Hermann Hesse, 21 November 1898, KJ 2: 301.

See Ball, 47.

See McCordle, Friedrich Schiller and Swabian Pietism.

See About Grandfather, 34-42.

Hesse, Im Presselschen Gartenhaus (1913), Werke 4: 405-406.


Letter from Hermann Gundert to his son, 18 January 1892, KJ 1: 157. Concern over young Hermann’s ‘romantic’ tendencies is a regular theme of the family letters dating from Hesse’s brief stay at Maulbronn.

“Hermann Hesse reveals in his letters a quite deep interest in Latin poets and Homer. On one of his essays the tutor has written, ‘You have [the powers of] fantasy.’ I wish all this would be better regulated” (Letter of 7 December 1891 from Hermann Gundert to his son, KJ 1: 146). Hesse rather liked his tutors at Maulbronn, and they seemed to have encouraged his poetic and romantic interests.

Letter of 5 January 1891 from Herman Gundert to his son, KJ 1: 77.

A test or crisis of faith seems to have been a characteristic of many members of the Hesse-Gundert family during their adolescence, a point to which we will return in the next chapter.

See, for example, the letter of Professor W. Paulus, KJ 1: 180, and the letter from Pastor Pfister, KJ 1: 273.

Mileck, Hermann Hesse, 17-18.

Stelzig, Hermann Hesse’s Fictions of the Self, 81.

See the letter of 10 September 1897 from Hermann Hesse to his parents, in which he announces the forthcoming publication, and his intention to send them a copy, KJ 2: 203.

Letter of 21 September 1897 from Marie and Johannes Hesse, KJ 2: 204.

Letter of 25 September 1897 from Hesse to his parents, in Soul of the Age, 36.

Letter of 3 October from Marie Hesse to her son, KJ 2: 207.

Letter of 4 October 1897 from Hesse to his parents, KJ 2: 209.

Letter of 1 December 1898 from Marie Hesse to her son, KJ 2: 304.

Letter of 15 June 1899 from Marie Hesse to her son, KJ 2: 357-358. I have used the translation cited in Mileck, Hermann Hesse, 19f, in my translation of this letter.

Mileck, Hermann Hesse, 19f.

Bernhard Zeller, Hermann Hesse, mit Selbstzeugnissen und Bilddokumenten (Hamburg: RowohlTaschenbuch Verlag, 1963), 35.

Werke, 1: 165-180.

Tuskan, Understanding Hermann Hesse, 39.

Translated and cited in Helt, 35.


MATSID, 216.

Letter of 10 January 1904, Briefe 1: 115.
Hesse has not been at all well regarded by German professors or literary critics; his literature is generally considered to be a poor-man's Thomas Mann, lacking the sophistication, artistry, and subtlety of this master of German prose. But Hesse employs different criteria than the production of beautiful art. He demands confessional honesty; he understood the literature of his generation as “swinging desperately” between the “demands for candor, for confession, for complete self-revelation” and the demand for “beautiful expression” (Die Nurener Reise, Werke 7: 155). Hesse’s confessional impulse overrides his concern for style, an attitude that betrays his Pietist roots.

Peter Camenzind, 171.

Given the fusion of Romanticism and Pietism in Hesse’s intellectual, moral, spiritual development, it is extremely difficult to precisely locate the origins of these various themes, especially since romanticism and Pietism were themselves closely intertwined; but it is reasonable to read Peter Camenzind as being strongly informed by Hesse’s Pietistic milieu and heritage, given the larger number of parallels in theme and diction. Peter Camenzind, 5. I have slightly changed the translation to be more faithful to the original. Hesse’s description of young Peter’s soul as being “leer und Still und wartend” (“empty and still and expectant”) uses a characteristically Pietist diction. Pietists were known as “die Stille im Lande,” and Stille (quietude) is a very important term and image of Pietist literature. Quietude is a desired spiritual state, required to reach God, and a quiet soul or heart is often explicitly contrasted with the confusion of the world and worldly affairs; confusion produces an unreceptive heart. The Pietist use of the term Stille was taken over in much Sentimentalist and Romantic literature. In the thought of Winckelman (who was raised in a Pietist family) Stille was the constitutive moment of beauty, being requisite for those who create or appreciate art. See August Langen, Der Wortschatz des deutschen Pietismus (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1968), 177-183. Descriptions of a state of empty, receptive quietude are found throughout Hesse’s literature.

Peter Camenzind, 103.

104-105. Hesse himself was occupied with St. Francis, his life appeared shortly after the publication of Peter Camenzind.

Peter Camenzind, 158. The original German ‘Liebe,’ is best translated as ‘love,’ not ‘affection,’ as we repeatedly find in the English version.

Siegfried Unseld, Hermann Hesse, Werk; und Wirkungsgeschichte (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1985), 18

Peter Camenzind, 126-7.

Mark Boulby, Hermann Hesse, 17.


Cited in Peter Erb, “Classical Studies and the German Pietists,” in Christianity and the Classics, 149-159, ed. Wendy Helleman (Lanham, M.D.: U P America, 1994), 156. Oetinger’s is a radical position compared to Lutheran orthodoxy, for it effectively grants the means of grace to the individual.

Peter Camenzind, 13-14.

Peter Camenzind, 84.

Peter Camenzind, 73-75.

In a letter of 7 July 1920 to his sister Marulla, Hesse writes: “Your letter has really stirred my memories of mother. She was such a wonderful person! It is a shame—one of the great disappointments and depressing experiences of my youth was a letter of hers [undoubtedly the ‘fever muse’ letter] in which she discusses my early stories with prudery and moral sermonizing. If she could have read ‘Klein and Wagner’ [1920] she would have known that moralizing drove me along my path. But she never had the good fortune; her dear image belongs to the best of my life experience” (Briefe 1: 453-454). In Peter Camenzind Hesse also engages in a good deal of moralizing, very much in the spirit of his recently deceased mother, with whom, as this letter shows, he could readily identify with.

Peter Camenzind, 85.

Peter Camenzind, Werke 1: 481-482.

Ibid.

Shortly following the passage just cited, Peter returns home, where he listens to a neighbor taking his father to task for his evil ways. “Look, here’s Peter!” said the gray sinner and winked at me with his left eye.” But she
continued undeterred, with her sermon. I sat down on a chair and waited for her neighbor love to dry up, but found in her words a few chapters not altogether irrelevant to me' (Werke 1: 487).

90 Peter Camenzind, 81.

91 Andreas Kiryakakis has devoted a volume to the theme of Heimat in Hesse's works, *The Ideal of Heimat in the Works of Hermann Hesse* (New York: Peter Lang, 1988). Kiryakakis tends to locate Hesse's interest in this theme in his traumatic adolescent break with his family and in his interests in Romantic literature. But the theme also has a pervasive presence in Pietist literature and hymnody, a fact with which Kiryakakis does not deal. That Hesse was, as Kiryakakis notes composing little poems around the motif of Heimat as early as 1890 -a sure sign that Hesse's first absorbed the Pietistic conception of Heimath long before he encountered it through his readings in German Romanticism (1). The literature of Swabian Pietism frequently employs the pilgrimage motif. See Hayden-Roy, *A Foretaste of Heaven*, 156-158. The pilgrimage motif was also widely used in Pietist-Protestant hymnody. One of the most famous of these is Paul Gerhardt's (1607-1676) "Ich bin ein Gast auf Erden," usually transcribed as 'A Pilgrim and a Stranger." The English translation of this hymn was heavily influenced by Bunyan, and the German word for Pilgrim, 'Pilger,' is not to be found in the text. The sense of pilgrimage, however, is present; the individual is a wayfarer, or guest (Gast) on the earth, looking for their "proper home" [rechte Wohnstatt], their "home" [Heimat] the "heavenly throne" [Himmelsthron]. Along the way one encounters "trouble" [Muhe], "strife" [Not], "worries" [Sorgen], "suffering" [Weh], "fear" [Furcht], and "pain" [Schmerz]. In several of the letters of Hesse's parents quoted in this chapter they employ the motif of life as a pilgrimage and the longing associated with Heimat and Heimweh.

92 Consider, for example, the short poem "Dorfabend" ("Evening in the Village"), Werke 1: 9: "The Shepard with his sheep moves through the still streets, the houses want to sleep and are dimming and nodding off. I am within these walls, the only outsider at this hour; my heart drinks with sorrow from the bottom of the cup of longing. Wherever my path has lead a hearth glowed; but I have never known the feeling of home and fatherland." Hesse's allusion to the "Shepard," that is, to Christ, is both a way of sacralizing his writing, while simultaneously universalizing a core of Christianity beyond the bounds of a strict confessionalism. This method is often used by Hesse. In *Peter Camenzind*, Peter's healing takes places after he meets and spends time with the family of a local carpenter. We shall discuss Hesse's efforts to universalize what he saw as the heart of Christianity in greater detail in Chapter 4.

93 Douglas Shantz, "The Migration of Radical Pietists, their Writings and Ideas in Early Modern Europe," paper delivered at the conference, 'Pietism in Two Worlds,' Emory University, March 4-6, 2004.


95 Peter Camenzind, 95; 120

96 Peter Camenzind, 96.


98 Letter from September of 1896, in *Soul of the Age*, 34-35.

99 Böttger, 15

100 Peter Camenzind, 107.

101 That the worldly, educated Peter finds solace in a lower class family who live close to nature in a rural setting is a sure sign of Hesse's tendency to sentimentalism, and reflects the lack of social realism in Hesse's literature. On the other hand, the love Peter finds in himself for this carpenter's family reflects Hesse's desire to make a statement about the necessity for humility and the cynicism with which he viewed the life style of the bourgeois middle class.

102 Other early works, such as *Knilp* (1915) and the short story "Karl Eugene Eiselein" (1908), level similar charges at a life of aestheticism and decadence. Much of the material for *Knilp* was actually written before Peter Camenzind. See Unseld, 45.

103 For example, in his *The Posthumous Writings of Hermann Lauscher* (1901). Lauscher is a decadent poet for whom art is a religion capable of producing "exaltations that do not take second place in purity and blessedness to those of the martyrs and saints" (Werke 1:321).

104 Peter Camenzind, 104.

105 As is this case with so many themes and issues in Hesse literature, this tension was first discussed by Hugo Ball. See *Hermann Hesse: Sein Leben und sein Werk*, 81-82.


107 Stelzig, 222.
As Jack Zipes writes: "to a certain extent it is embarrassing to read Hesse's portrayal of women and their roles. Like many German writers of his generation, Hesse depicted women as either gentle muses who have a mysterious wisdom that men do not possess, or as strong and sensitive matrys who are in contact with the source of knowledge. When female characters appear in his tales—and very few have any substance—they are generally there to save the men from themselves." See "Hermann Hesse’s Fairy Tales and the Pursuit of Home," introduction to The Fairy Tales of Hermann Hesse, trans. and ed. by Jack Zipes (New York: Bantam Books, 1995), xxv.

Stelzig, 228.

Narcissus and Goldmund, 315.

Narcissus and Goldmund, 63.

See Stelzig, 228.

Stelzig, 229.

In the fragment Berthold, written in 1907, the hero attends a seminary for training as a priest and winds up killing his teacher "Johannes." By the late 1920s, Hesse was ready to find a calmer literary resolution of the legacy of Maulbronn, and even ready to praise the piety 'faith of the fathers.'

Ball, 128.

Ball, 13.

See Stelzig, 229.

Narcissus and Goldmund, 63-65.

On this point Stelzig has provided astute insight: "if Goldmund resembles the adolescent Hesse, Narcissus is the model student Hesse should have been in order to fulfill the expectations of his parents. As his name suggests, Narcissus qua Johannes may be an idealized version of the understanding father (as friend and mentor) that Hesse wishes he might have had—one who instead of forcing him into an adolescent pedagogical straight jacket would have shown sympathetic understanding and fostered his self-will, even if it led in directions diametrically opposed to those of parental hopes and plans. Such a wishful revision of the past constitutes, to be sure, an implicit critique of Johannes Hesse, but it is as much a loving tribute to what was best and most admirable about that much-maligned and now belatedly honored figure of a father" (229).

Boulby, 231.
CHAPTER 3
HESSE'S CHILIASTIC VISION

I don’t really believe that life can be improved, that social conditions in Germany and in Europe can be transformed; I believe that the rotten leaf will have to fall of its own accord to make way for the new.... I don’t believe that anybody living in Germany today will be around to witness the new epoch. I think there will be a long interlude of desolation and barbarism between the breakdown of our way of life and the advent of the new spring.

- Hesse, in a letter of 1896

Hesse’s first two novels reflected his early conception of cultural decline, a prominent theme of European thought at the turn of twentieth century, famously voiced in Oswald Spengler’s The Decline of the West. The Pietism Hesse grew up in had, Hesse felt, become “rigid,” “meager and transitory,” an “outdated and almost extinct” form of religion; the world of elite Latin schools and universities, home to the German mandarins, was increasingly under attack for its abusive authoritarianism and complicity with German nationalism and imperialism; avant-garde artists were awash in narcissism and decadence, making “solemn devotions before statues and paintings in their modish houses” but “ashamed to bow before God.” In spite of the criticism Hesse heaped on these three potential life-worlds—Pietist, scholar, or artist—he nevertheless managed a certain degree of compromise with bourgeois society. Living on the shores of Lake Constance with his new wife and young family in the years leading up to the First World War Hesse had the feeling of having arrived: “... I had become a poet... my relations and friends, who had previously been in despair about me, now smiled encouragingly. I had triumphed... I was greatly
charmed by myself... the warm breeze of recognition did me good and I began to be a contented man.”

But then “came the summer of 1914, and suddenly everything looked different, inwardly and outwardly.” In rapid succession war, the death of his father, and the dissolution of his marriage signaled the “coincidence of inward and outward suffering” and so began Hesse’s “initiation into life.” European society and culture were not merely in decline and faced with many social and cultural problems—it was entering a conflagration. Simultaneously—and not, in Hesse’s view, coincidentally—his father’s death marked the end of an era and a way of life, his personal life was in disarray, and what was left of Hesse’s aestheticism after Peter Camenzind came under the most severe self-criticism: “the poet was hardly to be distinguished from a writer of cheap fiction.”5 The outer world and Hesse’s inner world were simultaneously coming to an end. Yet in the midst of this chaos, Hesse would detect the seeds of a new birth, intimations of something new struggling to emerge. As Hesse would write in Demian (1919), the fictional product of war, marital strife, the loss of his father, and intensive psychoanalysis, “deep down, underneath, something was taking shape. For I could see many men,” recalls the novel’s protagonist Emil Sinclair, reflecting on his participation in the battle of Flanders Fields, whose “bloody task was merely an irradiation of the soul, of the soul divided within itself,” filling them “with the lust to rage and kill, annihilate and die so that they might be born anew.”6

In his study of the central themes and structures of Hesse’s novels, Theodore Ziolkowski argues that “chiliastic vision is an integral part of Hesse’s thought and works.” Hesse himself recognized this. In his 1932 essay, ‘A Bit of Theology,’ Hesse abstracted from his works a three phased developmental pattern of individuation, a “triadic rhythm of the sort
ideally represented by the Christian conception of an original state of grace, followed first by the fall into sin and despair and, finally, the ultimate redemption. From the standpoint of a humanity enmeshed in the despair of the second stage, the millennium represents the chiliastic dream of ultimate redemption." In his conception of this tripartite individual and historical development Hesse was drawing on both his Pietist and Romantic roots. M.H. Abrams has shown that the narrative structure of many Romantic works, such as Hölderlin’s Hyperion, is a secularized version of Christian salvation history. Mediating this Christian eschatological narrative to German Romanticism during the eighteenth century were the writings of Jacob Böhme, as well as and many Pietists, such as Johann Albrecht Bengel, whose theology was fueled by chiliastic and speculative thought.

Chiliasm is a recurring motif of Hesse’s fiction, but it is most pronounced in those works to emerge during the First World War. Mark Boulby associates the chiliastic worldview of Demian with German Expressionism, but Joseph Mileck is certainly correct in identifying Pietism as the historically deeper influence on this aspect of Hesse’s thought. “Pietism’s chiliastic belief became Hesse’s diverse dreams of better possibility.” But Hesse’s chiliasm includes much more than simply the hope for better times, and my aim in this chapter is to flesh out Hesse’s chiliasm with respect to its Pietist roots, pointing out broader affinities and critical differences. Hesse’s “dreams of better possibility” are entangled in a number of other related issues: his faith in spiritual elites, his apocalyptic conception of European decline, his understanding of Christ, his disdain for the church and ecclesiastical religion, and his rejection of nationalism—all these are part of Hesse’s chiliasm.
Demian is Hesse’s most chiliastic work of fiction. We begin with a brief introduction to Demian, and then move on to a discussion of the central chiliastic elements informing the work, linking them to their counterparts in Swabian Pietism, while also pointing out how Hesse overturns traditional chiliastic thinking. In the third section, we take up questions of interpretation and criticism, especially with respect to the tension between the Jungian and Biblical elements in Demian. In the final section, we briefly examine the impact of Pietism on Hesse’s antinationalist, antiwar stance.

**Demian**

Demian was written in 1917 and appeared in print two years later. The work evokes a sense of new beginnings from the ashes of war, a future world to be built not on collectivities of any sort, but on the destined struggle of select individuals to realize themselves. Demian is a work rich in Biblical symbolism, strongly influenced by Jungian psychology, intones a Nietzschean will to power, is laced with apocalyptic imagery, and postulates social renewal on the basis of individual spiritual attainment. There are two fundamental influences at work in Demian. The first is a Nietzschean (and Jungian) notion of the revaluation of values, establishing an understanding and approach to life and culture that is beyond the dualism of good and evil, a task for which only a small elite is destined. The Jungian influence is present throughout, in the form of obvious Jungian symbolism, intense religious imagery, and the task imposed from within on Emil Sinclair: to resolve the dualism of good and evil inherent in the traditional God-image, a resolution represented by the Gnostic God Abraxas, a symbol
of wholeness and totality, to which Emil Sinclair is drawn. The second prominent feature of
the novel is Hesse's thorough use of Biblical stories, patterns, language, and imagery. As
Ziolkowski sums up these influences: “An essentially Nietzschean [and, I would emphasize,
Jungian] doctrine is promulgated in a novel whose structure, language, images, and impulses
are basically religious [that is, Christian].”

A chiliastic eschatology is especially
prominent—but, to be clear, a Christian-derived apocalyptic narrative is absorbed into a
Nietzschean and Jungian framework.

Emil Sinclair grows up in a pious household, a world of light; yet another world, a
world of darkness, exists in close proximity: a world of “policeman and tramps, drunkards
who beat their wives, droves of young girls pouring out of factories at night, old women who
put the hex on you so you fall ill, thieves hiding in the forest, arsonists nabbed by the county
police—everywhere this second vigorous world erupted and gave off its scent”—
everywhere, that is, except for Sinclair's home. The world of Sinclair's family is a realm
where “peace and orderliness, quiet and a good conscience, forgiveness and love, ruled…”
As is the case with all of Hesse's literature, Demian contains a good deal of autobiographical
context. Hesse makes many references to his family in Demian. The world of light in which
Sinclair is raised is none other than Hesse's remembered childhood home. In Demian we find
some of Hesse's most moving (if perhaps somewhat idealized) recollections of the
sweetness, innocence, and happiness of his early years. Sinclair is drawn out of this world of
light by his own transgression. To impress a burly schoolmate, Kromer, Sinclair lies about
stealing some apples, an obvious allusion to Genesis and Augustine's Confessions. In the
fantasized theft Sinclair enacts his desire to rebel against the father.
to blackmail Sinclair into giving him money—Sinclair is afraid to admit having lied, lest he lose face—and so begins Sinclair’s “fall” from grace.

The book proceeds by following Sinclair’s stages of individuation, the “progressive integration of the ‘light’ and ‘dark’ realms of Sinclair’s divided self.” Sinclair is led on his journey of psychic integration by figures more Jungian symbols than characters, psychopomps who appear at various points in the course of Sinclair’s individuation. Sinclair first encounters Demian (his own inner daemon or self), who releases him from the grip of Kromer, then Beatrice (an anima figure), who draws him out of a prolonged period of drunkenness and debauchery, Pistorius (the wise old man), who deepens Sinclair’s understanding of himself and the new God Abraxas to which he was first introduced by Demian, and finally Demian’s mother, Frau Eva (the great mother), who represents the fusion of symbol and reality, the fulfillment of Sinclair’s deepest dreams and ideals. The book closes with Demian and Sinclair going off to war, which is portrayed as an apocalyptic purging of a corrupt humanity. Demian is killed. Sinclair is wounded, but lives, carrying with him the mark of Cain—he is one of the enlightened vanguards of a new humanity and a new culture.

The central problem of the novel is the tension between the worlds of light and dark, established in the first chapter, titled “The Two Realms.” As Ziolkowski rightly suggests, the two worlds described by Sinclair (the novel is written in the first person as Sinclair’s account of his Bildung) approximates “the traditional Christian dichotomy of good and evil.” But the apocalyptic narrative that Hesse employs is not one of final, ultimate victory of the world of light over darkness, but of a descent into destruction being driven precisely by this dualistic worldview; the new birth of which Demian speaks will involve the integration of
these two worlds, not the decisive victory of one over the other. Here, the novel betrays its Jungian influences. The integration of evil (or darkness or the shadow) into the image of the Godhead was, in Jung’s view, the fundamental psychological and spiritual task of the Age of Aquarius, and this is a prominent theme of *Demian*. The “God of both Old and New Testament is certainly an extraordinary figure but not what he purports to represent,” Demian explains to Sinclair. “He is all that is good, noble, fatherly, beautiful, elevated, sentimental—true! But the world consists of something else besides. And what is left over is ascribed to the devil, this entire slice of world, this entire half is suppressed and hushed up.” Clearly, Hesse was incorporating a Jungian worldview into *Demian*—a worldview in which he was deeply immersed through both Jungian analysis and reading of Jung’s works.

One of the central symbols of the novel is the Gnostic God Abraxas, which is associated with a painting of Sinclair’s depicting a sparrow-hawk emerging from its egg. “The bird fights its way out of the egg. The egg is the world. Who would be born must first destroy the world. The bird flies to God. That God’s name is Abraxas.” The bird here refers to Sinclair’s soul (or Self) breaking through the enclosed world of convention, the dualistic worldview of his family and society. That the bird flies to this neo-Gnostic Jungian God of totality is in keeping with Jung’s notion that psychic (and religious) development proceeds through and is reflected in God images, which are themselves collective symbols representing various stages of psychological and spiritual development.

In his well known essay titled “The Brothers Karamazov, or The Decline of Europe,” written in 1919, Hesse expresses in a rather clear prose the “new ideal” that is more cryptically presented in *Demian*: 

[The] “new ideal... threaten[ing] the [old] European spirit at root, appears to be an amoral way of
thinking and feeling, an ability to perceive the divine, the necessary, the fated, even in what is most
wicked and ugly, and also to pay it reverence and worship in this guise... The Russian Man, the
Karamazov, is at once murderer and judge, ruffian and sensitive soul... the complete egoist and a hero
of total self-sacrifice. We cannot get at him from a fixed, moralistic, ethical, dogmatic—in a word, a
European standpoint. In him good and evil, outer and inner, God and Satan are cheek and jowl.

This is the reason that from time to time these Karamazovs seem to need a supreme symbol
adequate to their souls, a god who is at the same time the devil. Through that symbol, Dostoevsky’s
Russian man is transcribed. The god who also the devil is the primeval demiurge; he is the one who
existed before the beginning; he, the only one, stands before the opposites, knows neither day nor
night, neither good nor evil.18

This is a characteristically Jungian doctrine. In Demian, it finds expression through the
teachings of Demian and Pistorius..

Ziolkowski has argued that Demian is a Christ figure, Sinclair his disciple, and the
entire novel a kind of gospel. “If the novel is indeed a gospel in form, then the tone of the
entire work, with its visionary and messianic zeal as well as its structure of prefiguration, is
perfectly in keeping with the Biblical tradition.”19 Well, perhaps not “perfectly.” Hesse does
more than use a Biblical framework to the link together in the character of Demian a Christ
figure with Nietzsche’s Übermensch, as Ziolkowski suggests. If Demian is a Christ figure, he
is a Jungian Christ figure—that is, he represents integration of the repressed dark side of the
psyche into the soul, a darkness that had been, for centuries, associated with the devil. In
other words, Demian is every bit as much a devil-figure as a Christ-figure.

Were his name not enough, there are repeated allusions and even explicit statements
linking Demian to the devil, or, perhaps more accurately, to a Goethean-like Mephistopheles.
When Sinclair first meets Demian (they are boys) he “seemed strange and mature, like a
man, or rather, like a gentleman.... He seemed too superior, too detached, his manner too
provocatively confident and his eyes gave him an adult expression... faintly sad, with flashes
of sarcasm.... His manner and bearing was that of a prince disguised among farm boys."

"Let’s assume," says Demian to Sinclair, “that I don’t mean to do you any harm," meaning, of course, that he does. Demian helps free Sinclair from Kromer, and Sinclair, the Prodigal Son, returns home, “back to the lost paradise that was opening up again now;” to repent and confess his sin. (As has oft been pointed out, from an autobiographical perspective, the realm of light depicted in Demian corresponds to the family home and atmosphere of Hesse’s childhood and youth. The motif of the Prodigal Son is one that Hesse most certainly took to heart, yet another layer to Hesse’s ambivalent relationship to his Pietist past, his “back and forth between veneration and revolt,” his playing the role of rebel, yet also remaining the “missionary’s son.” It is precisely this ambivalence or love-hate relationship that makes any clear cut interpretation of Demian most difficult, a point to which we will return later.) But Demian haunts Sinclair’s dreams; Sinclair calls him “a tempter,” part of the “evil world with which [he] no longer wanted to have anything to do.” Sinclair’s family home is an “Edenic world. [But] this was not Demian’s world, and [Demian] would never have been able to fit into it.”

This sarcastic, confident, gentlemanly prince had been cast out of the world of light; Sinclair (like Hesse) is caught in an ambivalent relationship to this world, cast out of it, yet trying to make his way back. Demian refers to Sinclair as Faust, implying he himself is Mephistopheles. And Sinclair’s father, after his son asks his opinion of the heretical interpretation of the story of Cain and Abel to which he had been introduced by Demian, replies that this is “a mad doctrine... merely an attempt on the part of the devil to destroy our faith.” And so on.

This is a crucial point: the tension between the two worlds of light and dark, between Demian as Christ and Demian as the devil, between Abraxas as God and Abraxas as Satan,
between good and evil—it is this tension that gives the work its strong chiliastic tone.

Demian is not the devil (the repressed, dark world) simply from the perspective of Sinclair’s father. Within the world of the story, Demian really is the devil (if also Christ, as Ziolkowski argues). Hesse is at pains to affirm that Demian is indeed a devil or Mephistolean-like figure who will draw Sinclair out of the world of light and do him harm; this is a given, not a matter of perspective. So obvious is Demian’s devilry that it is surprising it has not been given more attention in critical studies. The point (or, at least, one reading) of the work is that the dualistic thinking of light and dark, good and evil, Christ and devil is a contributing factor to the decline of Europe. Demian, as a “Russian man,” a “Karamazov,” “a god who is at the same time the devil,” represents the way back from decline. Sinclair’s Bildung, his moral and intellectual development, is not located in his struggle between good and evil as such, but in his struggle between seeing the world in this traditional chiliastic manner on the one hand, and through Demian’s radical amoralism on the other.

For Jung, the emergence of Christ as a collective symbol at the onset of the Christian era marks a profound change in the psychic situation in late antiquity and a monumental step in the evolutionary development of the God-image (and hence the self). “Christ,” claims Jung, “exemplifies the archetype of the self.” That is, the complex nature of the archetype of the Self first manifests itself historically through projection at the beginning of the Christian era. The withdrawal and integration of projections is the path of psychological development. The ongoing “assimilation and integration of Christ into the human psyche”—which includes overcoming the Christ-Antichrist antithesis found in early Christian symbolism and dogma—“results in the growth of the personality and the development of consciousness.” This later process (the psychological overcoming of the
Christ-Antichrist antithesis), for which the stage had been set two thousand years ago in the projection of an originally whole God image into two radically differentiated realms (Christ and Antichrist, the ‘two-realms-worldview’ of Sinclair’s family), is the path of individuation upon which Demian and others lead Emil Sinclair.

The other central feature of the novel is its Biblicism. Seven of the eight chapter headings are references to Biblical material. The stories of Cain and Abel, the two thieves, and the Prodigal Son figure heavily in the construction of the plot, as does the fall from grace in the Garden of Eden depicted in Genesis, and the story of Jacob wrestling with the angel. The overarching pattern of the novel draws on a Christian-derived eschatological narrative of humanity’s relationship to God beginning in a paradisiacal state of innocence in a garden, an ending in an apocalypse, as a prelude to a new birth. Throughout the work, the “language is lavishly spiced with Christian and Biblical overtones.” As Ziolkowski has shown in his fine analysis of Demian, Hesse utilizes the technique of prefiguration, implicitly or explicitly referring to Biblical material, though offering radical reinterpretations of this material.

Cain, for example, as Demian explains to Sinclair, is marked not because he is a murderer, but owing to his otherness—his superior intellectual powers, his moral courage. Rather than admitting they feared him because he was not one of them, the masses invented the story of the murder in order to mask their own inadequacies. Those that carry the mark of Cain are actually spiritually and morally above the herd, and will always be despised by the herd. “We who wore the sign might justly be considered ‘odd’ by the world; yes, even crazy, and dangerous.... We, who were marked, believed that we represented the will of Nature to something new, to the individualism of the future, the others sought to perpetuate the status quo.” This marking then becomes a recurring image throughout the novel; the mark of Cain
is metaphorically imprinted on the novel itself, since the heretical (or, at the very least, unusual) reinterpretations of Biblical material were sure to strike many contemporary readers as confused and dangerous, the work of the devil leading one away from true faith, just as Sinclair’s father warns. The Nietzschean and Jungian themes on the one hand and the Biblical symbolism on the other create a dynamic tension that drives the novel forward; the interweaving of these two foundations is one of the central factors on which interpretation and criticism of the novel must be based.

The reinterpretation of Biblical material in a Nietzschean and Jungian key is also an example of Hesse’s chiliasm. The (often radical) interpretation of Biblical revelation, the Bible as a skeleton key to decipher and understand the movements of history, was the bread and butter of Pietist chiliasm in Swabia: it is no accident that Hesse’s apocalyptic story written during the Great War is intimately concerned with the exegesis and interpretation of the Bible.

Chiliastic Elements in Demian

The term chiliasm refers to the notion of the second coming of Christ and the establishment of a thousand year kingdom, the millennium. The prophetic books and the Revelation of John are key chiliastic texts. Chiliasm is part of the tradition of eschatological thought in Judaism and Christianity. In Judaism, a protology dealing with ultimate beginnings (of history, humanity, the Jewish people) is also accompanied by an eschatology, a forward looking discourse on future fulfillment or ultimate endings. This ultimate ending,
the *eschaton*, is given various names—the Resurrection, Day of Judgment, Kingdom of God—and is said will be ushered in by a saving figure, a Messiah. This linear, forward looking understanding of history was taken up by early Christians, and though the tradition believed the savior to have come and salvation to have been achieved, complete fulfillment of ultimate ends is also imagined only at some future point, in the second coming of Christ. Chiliasm is thus associated with apocalyptic thought and literature, such as the Book of Daniel, and, of course, the Apocalypse of John. Apocalyptic literature is characterized by revelations given to select persons in the form of secret knowledge, is replete with allegory and numerical symbolism, contains an elaborate angelology, structures history into a number of periods or eras culminating the messianic era of redemption, conceives history as a drama or battleground of good against evil, and announces the coming of tribulations on a catastrophic scale, though also an ideal or redeemed future. In “scripture, evil as such is no independent metaphysical entity (but a question of the moral choice that confronts man [sic] in his daily behavior)…. Ontologically speaking, the scriptural world is monistic. In apocalypticism, on the other hand, we find a clear dualistic outlook.” Apocalyptic literature postulates a momentous struggle between these two forces, a struggle that necessarily entails great suffering and consequence, but “images of disaster and the [peaceful, glorious] millennium are inseparably linked, so that catastrophe without redemption is almost unthinkable.”

Swabian Pietism is characterized by a long history of chiliasm and separatism, complementary and mutually affirming theological and sociological positions or realities that waxed and waned according to the spirit of the age. Individuals drawn to chiliasm were also attracted to speculative and mystical literature. Chiliastic and mystical currents remained
present in Swabia even after the *Pietistenreskript* of 1743, an act that effectively brought Pietist conventicles in Swabia into a relationship with the established church. Swabian chiliasm developed in roughly three phases: an early (1680-1710), radically apocalyptic phase of separatism, coupled with a thorough criticism of church and state; a second, more theologically and intellectually oriented chiliasm, coupled with political quietism, as exemplified in the thought of Johann Albrecht Bengel; and a third phase, associated with the *Erweckungsbewegung* of the 1820s and 1830s, which was characterized by a simplified theology and the active promotion of the kingdom of God through charitable activity and mission work. The religiosity of Hesse’s family was strongly shaped by this later phase, but a thorough understanding of Hesse’s chiliasm must also take into account the themes and dynamics of these earlier periods.

The first separatist conventicle in Württemberg was established in 1684 under the pastor Ludwig Brunnquell, who was influenced by the thought of Jacob Böhme. Göppingen, Calw, and Stuttgart were centers for separatist conventicles in these years, which regularly came under the censorship of the church. The area in and around Calw, it seems, was fertile ground for chiliastic speculation and excitement. Just why many late seventeenth century Pietists enthusiastically embraced and promoted an expectation for the millennium and the arrival of the kingdom of God is a matter of some debate in Pietist scholarship, but certainly chiliastic fervor was heightened by the same factor that bred the chiliasm of Hesse’s *Demian*—the smell of death was in the air. The Thirty Years War had a devastating impact in Württemberg; and just four decades after the Peace of Westphalia (1648) the duchy of Württemberg fought a series of protracted wars with France (in 1688, 1692-1693), and the population suffered terribly during the Spanish Wars of Succession in 1703 and 1707. Johann
Albrecht Bengel, who was born in Winnendon (near Stuttgart) in 1687, was greatly affected by the events of these wars,\textsuperscript{32} which were very likely contributing factors informing his chiliastic theology and eschatology. The climate was ripe for visions of the end, but among some it also encouraged hope for better times, and the call for practical, charitable service to those in dire need.

Prior to the wars with France, there were actually few separatist and chiliast conventicles in Swabia. But those that were operating, in and around Stuttgart and Calw, had sown the seeds for an awareness of the significance of the ‘Zeichen der Zeiten,’ the ‘signs of the times.’ When war broke out, it was not uncommon to relate the ensuing death and destruction to the eschatological notion of the end of the world. Apocalyptic foreboding bred separatism, sectarianism, and a sense of elitism among those who were withdrawing from the chaos of a world mired in war to await the arrival of the kingdom of God. Others emphasized millennial optimism, the other half of the apocalyptic conception of history, following Spener’s conception of hope for better times for the church. Whereas Luther’s apocalypticism expected the end of the world and God’s final judgment, Spener cultivated an ethos of expectant hope. Spener’s position was a mild form of ‘postmillennialism,’ since expectancy over Christ’s imminent return to usher in the kingdom was replaced by a longing for a future glory of the church, followed by the return of Christ at some distant future. To this longing or hope Spener infused a sense of \textit{praxis pietatis} and mission; the kingdom, in other words, was to be built not awaited. There was a diversity of views amongst Pietists as to the meaning of the millennium. Some Pietists (such as Bengel) held a quite literal view of the second coming; for others, such as Spener, chiliasm was more of a metaphorical and pedagogical tool.\textsuperscript{33} In either case, there was within Pietist circles a tendency to connect
millennialism with an optimistic and practical approach to the kingdom of God; by the 1820s and 1830s, the Pietist *Erweckungsbewegung* associated the idea of the kingdom of God most closely with a sense of mission in the world, not with a coming apocalypse.

Johann Albrecht Bengel is a foundational figure in the spread of chiliasm in Württemberg. Bengel remained within and defended the established church, while simultaneously developing a highly speculative, chiliastic Biblicism. Though Bengel did not advocate separatism, he was fascinated with chiliastic thought. Bengel was first exposed to chiliastic ideas through David Wendelin Spindel, under whose care Bengel was placed following the death of his father. Spindler was brought before the consistory on several occasions and questioned regarding his advocacy of Böhme and Arnold, and his refusal to take communion. Spindler was eventually stripped of his teaching post, and driven from Württemberg, treatment that perhaps engendered in Bengel an awareness of the dangers of publicly professed separatism and chiliasm. Nevertheless, Bengel continued to explore chiliasm as a theological and biblical orientation. In contrast to the North German Pietism of Francke in Halle, who viewed the Bible more as a handbook for practical, moral living, Bengel was intent on using Biblical exegesis to unlock the mysteries of history and God’s plan of salvation. As he proceeded with his detailed study of the New Testament, Bengel was increasingly drawn to the Book of Revelation, which he conceived as the “Magna Charta of Chiliasm.” It goes without saying that the Bible was the primary textual source for chiliastic thought, and Hesse’s extensive use of Biblical material in *Demian* is part and parcel of his chiliasm.

Bengel’s chiliastic theology and eschatology were significantly influenced by his reading of Johann Coccejus. Coccejus’s “Federal Theology” was based on the idea of God
entering into repeated covenants throughout history, from Adam to the New Testament revelation in Christ to the last judgment; all in all, Coccejus would identify seven stages in the unfolding of the kingdom of God upon earth. Coccejus had a tremendous influence on radical Pietists, providing "the pattern and model which they followed in their pursuit of chiliastm."[38] Coccejus provided Pietist chiliastm with its central features: the vision and expectant hope of the coming kingdom of God and the spirit of mission and service in the world. Under the influence of Coccejus, Bengel perceived history itself as Heilgeschichte, a history of salvation enacted through God's intervention in historical events. Bengel famously (or infamously) went so far as to predict the return of Christ in the year 1836, an event that would usher in the beginning of the thousand year reign of God's Kingdom. Bengel's millennialism cultivated a keen awareness of history. This awareness included a sense of an 'end time' and new beginnings, yoked to processes of revelation, or, in its more secularized version, to the spiritual evolution of humanity. Enlightenment faith in progress and chiliast optimism regarding the millennium are not unrelated phenomena in late eighteenth and nineteenth-century Germany. Bengel's adoption of Coccejus federal theology and his success in "grounding his speculative, apocalyptic thought in a 'scientific' framework" had a significant impact on Swabian Pietist thought.[39]

Hesse's depiction in Demian of the First World War as an apocalyptic event is an outgrowth of the chiliastm in his religious and cultural heritage.[40] As Demian declares:

"The world wants to renew itself. There's a smell of death in the air. Nothing can be born without first dying. But it is far more terrible than I had thought."

I [Sinclair] stared at him [Demian] aghast.[41]
Volker Michels writes, precisely with respect to this passage, that the destruction of the world intoned in *Demian* derives from Hesse’s favorite Hindu God, Shiva, and his “period ecstatic dance of destruction that… makes possible the renewal of the world.” But such an association is a large leap, especially given the biblical framing and diction of the novel. The last chapter, titled, ‘The End Begins,’ recapitulates the narrative of the previous chapters, and the entire novel is enfolded inside of a biblical-derived, apocalyptic narrative. At the close of the story, Emil Sinclair, who had been living for some time with the elect group of seekers at the home of Demian’s mother, Frau Eva, spends a peaceful summer “in [her] garden by the river.” His life is “an enchanted existence among beautiful and agreeable surroundings.” But he is soon to be expelled from the garden; war is at hand. Demian’s prophetic dream of the imminent collapse of the old world is about to be fulfilled:

I felt that something was about to happen. I was mortally exhausted but I was ready to behold Eva step into the room, radiant and ecstatic.

The clattering of hooves could be heard approaching along the street. It sounded near and metallic, then suddenly stopped. I leaped to the window and saw Demian dismounting below. I ran down.

“What is it, Demian?”
He paid no attention to my words. He was very pale and sweat poured down his cheeks.

This is a clear reference to Revelations—Demian as the pale rider who announces the coming apocalypse. Demian in particular is filled with apocalyptic excitement. Speaking of the coming war, he declares: “People will love it. Even now they can hardly wait for the killing to begin…. This is only the beginning. Perhaps it will be a very big war, a war on a gigantic scale. But that, too, will only be a beginning. The new world has begun and the new world will be terrible for those who cling to the old.”
The apocalyptic eschatology of *Demian* is only part of Hesse's chiliasm. Another significant theme with close parallels to Pietist chiliasm is *elitism*. Sinclair and Demian are among those who gather into a small community at Frau Eva's house, waiting, watching, and interpreting the outward signs as "omens" of the coming end. Demian "spoke about the spirit of Europe and the signs of the times." Society and church are seen as being built on "false communion." Nations, churches, fraternities are understood to "be inwardly rotten, outworn, [and] close to collapsing." The ideas and language used by this community whose members bear the mark (*Zeichen*) of Cain are prophetic and moralistic. "For a hundred years or more Europe has done nothing but study and build factories. They know exactly how many ounces of powder it takes to kill a man but they don't know how to pray to God.... The world, as it is now, wants to die, wants to perish—and it will." The task of this community of seekers and watchers that gathers at Frau Eva's house was to "represent an island in the world, a prototype, perhaps, or at least a prospect for a different way of life." Demian calls Sinclair out from the "herd," away from the "masses," terms that are used throughout the novel. More than just incorporating an apocalyptic narrative, Hesse draws upon the sectarianism and spiritual elitism associated with chiliastic thought and activity in Swabia down through the years.

Swabian interest in mystical and speculative writers from Germany, Holland, and France—among them Böhme, Gottfried Arnold, Jean de Labadie, and the radical Pietist couple Johann and Johanna Petersen—encouraged chiliastic tendencies. The separatist stream in Swabia found in the chiliasm and apocalyptic speculations of these writers three things: confirmation of their own notion of the end of world; distrust and disdain for the spiritual quality of the established church; and affirmation of their quietistic religiosity of
withdrawal from the world of politics and affairs of state. Around 1700 a radically chiliastic sect known as ‘The Inspired,’ was formed by a large number of separatists in Halle, Berlin, and Swabia. The Swabians were led by Johann Friedrich Rock. The name, ‘The Inspired,’ referred to their belief that certain individuals were ‘awakened’ with the divine spirit, instruments of the Holy Spirit in the founding of a new society. Most of their teachings related to prophetic and apocalyptic themes, and the call for repentance, conversion, and a life of practical Christian service and love.

The presence of such chiliastic groups in Swabia reflects a persistent theme in Swabian culture—namely, that God’s revelation proceeded through pious (or elite) individuals. This was implicit in Coccejus’s conception of the true church, and in Arnold’s reconsideration of the status of so-called heretics. Bengel too, in his biblical hermeneutics, holds that correct exegesis is predicated upon the spiritual enlightenment or special grace of the reader. The “heavenly gift of grace” is granted to the few; for the “masses... prophetic Scripture is ‘sealed.’” The conviction that some individuals are granted the spiritual illumination required to correctly interpret Scripture is a fundamental characteristic of radical Pietism. A persistent bone of contention between Orthodoxy and Pietism was the tendency within Pietism toward spiritual elitism, an elitism that challenged the church’s status as sole administrator of God’s grace by appeal to the inner light of the individual. Bengel’s chiliasm and his tendency to spiritual elitism were tolerated by the Württemberg Consistory because he did not advocate militant action of any kind, but adopted a position of “watching and waiting.” Individuals were indeed the functionaries of God’s progressive revelation, but his quietistic approach to social and political affairs meant that his chiliasm posed little threat to
the established order in Swabia. Still, a radical individualism and affirmation of “personal religious salvation” is a perennial theme of Württemberg Pietism.

Eitel Timm has discussed how German literati absorbed in their writing the elitism and model of the heretic found in mystical, chiliastic and separatist currents of thought associated with Gottfried Arnold. Many German writers found in Arnold (or related thinkers) justification for their own personal, anti-church, essentially romantic religion. Through Arnold, German writers could consider the degree to which their views of Christianity were rejected by Orthodoxy as a measure of their correctness and a vindication of these views. Hesse employs this technique in Demian. Sinclair’s father is “much taken aback” by the interpretation of Cain and Abel that his son inquires about, and he “explained that this was an interpretation entirely lacking in originality... that it had been taught by a number of sects, one of which was called the ‘Cainites.’ But of course this mad doctrine was merely an attempt on the part of the devil to destroy our faith.... However, this heresy had long since disappeared from the face of the earth.... He warned me most seriously against harboring such ideas.” For readers cognizant of Arnold’s revaluation of heresy, the reproach of Sinclair’s father could easily be taken as a sign of the truth of Demian’s worldview.

Theological radicalism was part of Hesse’s religious milieu. In response to a letter that took issue with Hesse’s unorthodox use and reformulation of Christian imagery and terminology, a reformulation that Hesse’s correspondent, a church vicar, found at odds with the Protestant church, Hesse had this to say:

That there is, as your letter suggests, a Protestant Church, a shared Protestant Confession of faith, and an authoritative [Protestant] theology, is something unknown to me. As a child I got to know Calvinists, Lutherans, and members of the Reformed church. The Württemberg Landeskirche that I was confirmed in was a cross between Lutheran and Reformed, and I also had spiritual and personal
contact with Pietist circles and the Herrnhut community—nowhere was there talk of a [single]
“Church,” or the pretentious notion of there being a single Protestant home and dogma. This “Church”
freely existed as an ideal or hope, in a manner similar to Arnold’s *History of Heresy*. I have never
encountered this church and theology endowed with ultimate authority and fully realized of which you
speak. I take care to not hastily build my poetry around a confession but to stay my course, a course
that perhaps in the end makes a Christian of me.\(^{57}\)

Hesse was fond of thinking of himself as a “true Protestant.” “It was not by accident alone
that I was born the son of pious Protestants; I am a Protestant by temperament and nature as
well (to which my deep antipathy to the present Protestant denominations is no contradiction
whatsoever). For the true Protestant is in opposition to his own church just as he is to every
other, since his nature constrains him to affirm becoming above being.”\(^{58}\) Hesse’s ‘true
church’ is an ideal, a hope, and he evokes it in his repeated imaginings of a community of the
spirit, his Cains, the Immortals of *Steppenwolf*, the Castalians of *The Glass Bead Game*. But
underneath these imagined communities of spiritual elites is Hesse’s radical, sectarian
Protestant heritage.\(^{59}\)

The outbreak of the First World War stripped Hesse to the bone, and drove home to
him the inadequacy of not just his aesthetic view of life and the world, but also the
inadequacy of the conventional worldview and values of the German *Bürgertum*, who, on the
whole, enthusiastically embraced the outbreak of hostilities. The war required from Hesse not
just a moral response but an intellectual one. If artists were to be society’s conscience, a
notion to which Hesse subscribed, they were also given the burden of making sense of what
was going on. Pietist chiliasm offered Hesse a narrative structure and pattern of meaning for
thinking about and understanding this most momentous historical event. War was not simply
random chaos, but meaningful, a sign of fateful happenings. One of the recurring tropes in
Demian is simply the suggestion that something is afoot. In Sinclair’s intense psychological, spiritual, and moral quandaries, in his bouts of drunkenness and ill behavior, in his dreams, in his paintings, in the omens that signaled the coming devastation of war—some deep process was at work. Hesse avails himself of Pietism’s chiliastic eschatology; he borrows chiliastic language, images, themes, and narrative pattern, but appropriates them for his own purposes and to his own worldview, folding them inside of a Jungian-derived view of psychic and spiritual evolution.

Whatever debt Hesse owed to chiliastic thinking in Swabian culture, Demian may nevertheless be read as signaling Hesse’s desire to overturn a central feature of it. It is not quite correct to regard Hesse’s chiliasm, at least as it is represented in Demian, as a secularized form of Pietist chiliasm. As Stelzig points out, Hesse, in his use in Demian of the motif of fall and redemption “wields elements of the Biblical tradition to subvert Christian orthodoxies from a radical protestant perspective.” Christian apocalyptic thought retains the notion of two realms, of a world divided into good and evil, forces pitted against one another in a final, decisive struggle; the expectant hope, the hope for better times that Pietists placed their faith in, was the faith that good and love would ultimately prevail.

Johann Jakob Moser, for example, an influential member of Pietist circles in Swabia, promoted a radically dualistic worldview. The worldview and lived life of one who was reborn, wrote Moser, was based on “discerning the [difference between] the kingdom of God and that of the devil.” Moser, like Karl Heinrich Rieger and other early eighteenth century Swabian Pietists, retained the “memory of the earlier Pietist generation” with its conception of a “battle for the kingdom of God… a battle against the devil that every single Christian… was called to do his best in.” While this view declined through the later part of the
eighteenth century in favor of a more moderate, culturally accommodating theology and political quietism, it would surface again. In the decades following 1820, Württemberg Pietism developed a strong social-political and spiritual strength. A young, new generation of theologians, led by Ludwig Hofacker (1798-1828), held to and preached a simplified theology of sin and grace, a world of light and world of darkness, a world of life and a world of death. God had granted individuals a limited amount of time to decide which kingdom they were for. Hofacker did not have much interest in social-political questions, but his chiliastic inspired theology laid the ground work for a solid, if simplified faith and renewed interest in establishing the kingdom of God in Württemberg. Hesse’s family was very much shaped by this ‘two worlds’ theology.

A secularized version of this eschatology would view the temporal world as something of a battleground between virtuous souls and forces that would enslave them. But Hesse is not secularizing this eschatology; he is suggesting a radical alternative to it, an alternative represented by the fusion of light and dark in the character of Demian, through a typological identification of Demian with both Christ and the devil. Though Hesse may write in Demian of “rebirth” and “awakening,” it is not the traditional kingdom of God that he is evoking. This notion of the kingdom is grounded in the dualistic thinking of two worlds struggling against one another, a dualism that Hesse was intent on calling into question. Though Hesse uses an apocalyptic framework he presents a radically unorthodox conception of a God that is at one and the same time a devil. The real battle, claims Hesse in Demian—or at least, in one possible interpretive reading, I shall suggest another below—is to pass over to the peace that comes through abandoning thinking in terms of battles, to push through all seemingly objective moral canons to an amoral standpoint beyond good and evil.
Similarly, the elitism present in *Demian* is different from that found in Württemberg Pietism. Bengel, as a representative of mainline Swabian Pietism, held a radical Pietist hermeneutic in which true understanding of Scripture was granted to those select few who were spiritually enlightened, but his elitism was nevertheless constrained by his relationship to the church. Bengel worked on an inner church model, where the reborn or spiritual elite worked inside of the church for its improvement. This contained elitism limited the tendency to engage in self-celebration, such as we find in *Demian*; the elite of Württemberg Pietism were those who had died to themselves (not discovered themselves) and were reborn in Christ, which meant they modeled their life on an *imitatio Christi*, on *praxis pietatis*, and condescended to participating within the limitations and inadequacies of the church, in the hopes that it could be improved, that the kingdom could be established. The point of contact with God was the moral order, not in the radical amoralism espoused by Demian and Pistorius. In *Demian*, the figure of Christ is appropriated as an exemplar of the great task that is now being imposed from within and from without on individuals like Sinclair. “In each individual the spirit has become flesh, in each man the creation suffers, within each one a redeemer is nailed to the cross.” Württemberg Pietists retained a more orthodox Christological center.

When Hesse scholars attempt to define Hesse’s relationship to his Pietist heritage, they frequently employ the notion of secularization. With respect to the theme of this chapter, Hesse’s chiliasm, they point out the parallels between Hesse and his Pietist-Protestant roots—the notions of death and rebirth, hope for better times, the apocalyptic framework of *Demian*. As discussed in the Introduction, a secularization narrative presents Hesse’s relationship to Pietism as a teleological development away from a narrow, limited
confessionalism to a more universal religion. In keeping with this notion, it is often suggested (we will look at specific examples below) that the traditionally chiliastic worldview of two realms, with its emphasis on sin and grace, a clear distinction between good and evil, God and the devil, is a limited, psychologically harmful, and spiritually inadequate position that Hesse inherited from his family and that he had to overcome and transcend en route to a more mature, more enlightened, more universal religiosity. But a considerable tension exists between the chiliastic vision of Demian and the more traditional view adopted by Württemberg Pietists. From a New Historicism perspective, we find in Demian a competing worldview or ideology to the Pietism of Hesse’s family, one to which Hesse was introduced through his experiences and readings in Jungian psychology, and one which Hesse himself, as I shall argue below, regarded with a great deal of ambivalence and very quickly rejected.

**Interpretation and Criticism**

From an interpretive point of view, Demian is a most difficult work. This is less likely due to any deliberate attempt on Hesse’s part to be obscure, or to inherent complexities within the novel. Rather, the work is a product of its times—and the times were chaotic. The First World War roused Hesse from his aesthetic slumber. With a thunderous, murderous call the war “announce[d] the death and destruction of that culture in which we older people were educated as children and which seemed to us at that time eternal and immutable.” There was no longer any center to hold on to: “culture and ethics, religion and morality,” the “two
foundations of all orderly living” had been demolished. Johannes Hesse’s death in 1916 only added to Hesse’s inner turmoil, a visceral symbol of the end of an era and way of life.

*Demian* is not about the war but *of* the war—the product of a “huge demand for new formulations, new attributions of significance, new symbols, [and] new foundations.” And in *Demian* Hesse offers his readers not so much a coherent answer to this demand as an example of what it was like to be caught up in a half-crazed attempt to find an answer to a completely crazed situation. Eugene Stelzig has noted that the creed of *Demian* seems to be ‘I can connect everything with everything.’ “Caught up in its visionary momentum, Hesse seems to have believed that the book was not only a totalizing trope of his, but also of humanity’s—or at least Europe’s—psyche.”

Demian is a bricolage of symbolism and allusions; and if we add to this a recognition of Hesse’s penchant for irony and the suggestions of parody and satire at various points in the work, *Demian* becomes highly elusive, an all but interpretively impenetrable novel. Our considerations here will be addressed to the Nietzschean/Jungian worldview of Demian and to the rather commonly made claim that *Demian* represents Hesse’s emancipation from the (supposedly) debilitating Pietistic worldview of his family.

The Jungian context behind *Demian* is well known, and has frequently been commented upon. Demian is filled with Jungian and psychoanalytic symbolism. *Demian*, Hesse wrote in 1923, “stresses the process of individuation,” an explicit reference to the centerpiece of Jung’s psychology. A full treatment of Hesse’s interest in the thought of Freud and Jung is beyond the scope of this dissertation. What I wish to suggest, however, is that *Demian* is not so much strictly the product of Hesse’s encounter with psychoanalysis and Jungian psychology as it is a psychological and intellectual ‘snapshot’ of Hesse’s wrestling
with a worldview and conception of God that was diametrically opposed to the Pietistic worldview of Hesse's family and religious heritage. Most critics would agree with this assessment, but many of them take a further step in arguing that Hesse affirmed the superiority of the Jungian worldview embodied in Demian. I am more inclined to highlight the ambivalence inherent in Demian. Just as Sinclair, like Jacob, wrestles with the two angels, Hesse wrestles in Demian with two very different worldviews.

Typically, Emil Sinclair's movement, under the influence of Demian, away from dualistic thought, away from conceiving the world in terms of "two realms," is equated to Hesse's own forward looking religious and psychological development. One of the strongest proponents of such a reading is Christoph Gellner. It is only during the First World War and through his writing of Demian, Gellner argues, that Hesse managed to free himself from the "traumatic imprint" of the " unholy" religion of his family. "What Hesse's Christian education tore apart in good and evil, forbidden and permitted, guilt and innocence, God and devil—the Pietistic-Christian morality of sin of his parent's home—became the tear in [Hesse's] soul." Psychotherapy involved the healing of this tear, and the "God-problem in Demian is the literary outcome of Hesse's psychotherapeutic experience." In other words, Emil Sinclair's integration of the two realms reflects Hesse's rejection of a dualistic worldview built on good and evil. This is a typical view. Just as Demian emancipates Sinclair from the religion and sexual morals of his parent's house, so too did therapy liberate Hesse. The wound Hesse healed in writing Demian was that left by the "Pietistic spirit of [Hesse's] parent's house." "Emil Sinclair," writes Ralph Freedman, "learned how to overcome the guilt and shame of his childhood... with the help of his school friend Demian." Mark Boulby suggests something similar. "The Kromer episode is by far the most vivid part of the
novel, because... it clearly draws strongly for its atmosphere on Hesse's own childhood memories; and this atmosphere is in some degree one of Pietistic conscience, of struggle with the debilitating notion of sin. But is Hesse struggling in *Demian* to rid himself of this "debilitating notion"—just why it is necessarily debilitating Boulby does not say—or is the work much more ambivalent with respect to overcoming a "two worlds" worldview? The answer to such a question depends in part on recognition of Hesse's frequent use of irony, satire, and parody; and *Demian* is ambivalent enough, and its apparent message discordant enough with Hesse's actual view of things, that any easy reading of *Demian* as a Jungian gospel that rejects Hesse's " unholy" religious heritage faces severe challenges.

Boulby has already made the important observation: The "attempt to equate the self-discovery of the individual with the destruction of old Europe undeniably involves Hesse in the jargon of the neo-Nietzschean [and Jungian] evolutionists... with whose baneful preoccupations he was in reality so little in sympathy." Hesse never disavowed *Demian*, but his comments on the work suggest that it is best understood as a phase in his thinking and development that was quickly superseded by a turning back to Christianity. "Demian," Hesse wrote in a letter 1923, "stresses the process of individuation.... *Siddhartha* [stresses] the overcoming of the personality and our being pervaded by God." In a letter of 1935 Hesse wrote to a reader that, following *Demian*, "I gradually began to reacquaint myself with the belief I was raised in.... I found myself driven to make a new effort to get to know the Protestant form of Christianity.... [and today] I consider myself almost a Christian." The experimentation in *Demian* with Jungian influenced God-images of totality was short lived.

"Experimental" is perhaps the best adjective to describe the novel. *Demian* was a groping attempt on Hesse's part to make sense not just of the war, but of the 'decline of
Europe,' the loss of his father, the dissolution of his marriage, and his own inner turmoil and 
depression. In this attempt Hesse was very much a product of his time; the mystical, 
individualistic spirituality and prophetic tone of Demian is part of a larger cultural 
phenomenon. *Fin de siècle* modernism was fascinated with the inner world of subject, its 
anxieties, hopes, fears, and especially the felt estrangement from the social world of 
convention, standards, and norms. The social world is often depicted in modernist literature 
and art as a mask or deception. The “burning question” informing Demian, writes Hesse in a 
letter “was not the State, society or church, but rather the individual person, personality, the 
unique, not the normative individual.” This is a half-truth, for the vitality of the latter 
deeps on the perceived banality and hopelessness of the former.

Max Weber emphasized the paradoxical status of turn-of-the-century European 
culture. On one hand there was impressive material progress driven by scientific discovery 
and technical innovation; on the other hand, Weber observed a society in spiritual and social 
decay. Individuals were trapped in an iron cage of professionalism and bourgeois values, and 
the social world was losing its traditional modes of legitimacy. The ‘world,’ in spite of 
whatever important forward steps it had taken, was spiritually stagnant, and hence the sharp 
rise in the appearance of “*neue propheten,*” new prophets seeking to reform European society 
and religion. The “odd,” “crazy,” “dangerous” group that had gathered at Frau Eva’s home 
“included astrologers and cabalists, also a disciple of Count Tolstoi, and all kinds of delicate, 
shy, and vulnerable creatures, followers of new sects, devotees of Indian asceticism, 
vegetarians, and so forth…. Our circle included believers, adherents of certain hopes and 
healing faiths. There were Buddhists who sought to convert Europe, a disciple of Tolstoi who 
preached nonresistance to evil, as well as other sects.” Sinclair’s fellow students consider
him to be a "theosophist." Demian, in preaching his Jungian gospel, could be taken as a fictionalization of Jung, an idea that deserves some attention.

At one point, Sinclair visits Demian in his room, where he had set up a "chemical laboratory," no doubt a reference to Jung's interest in alchemy. Such a reading is corroborated by the prescient dream which Demian then relates to Sinclair: "I dreamed I was climbing up a ladder placed against a tree trunk or tower. When I reached the top I saw the whole landscape ablaze—a vast plain with innumerable towns and villages." Sinclair's response is a question:

"Do you feel that the dream concerns you personally?"

"Of course.... But it doesn't concern me only.... I differentiate between dreams that reveal movements within my own soul and the other, far rarer dreams in which the fate of all mankind suggests itself.... I know for sure that I have dreamed something that doesn't concern me alone.... These are the dreams, Sinclair, that fill me with the forebodings I've spoken of to you.... At first these were weak and remote intimations but they have become increasingly stronger and more distinct. I still know nothing except that something is going to happen on a vast scale, something dreadful in which I myself will be involved." 81

Demian's dreams, fired in his alchemical laboratory, resemble Jung's account of his prophetic dreams of the First World War. 82 These dreams were first mentioned by Jung in the privately printed and circulated Septem Sermones ad Mortuos, which dates from 1916, the same time that Hesse entered Jungian therapy, including several sessions with Jung himself. It is a near certainty that Hesse read Jung's Sermones. 83 Jung refers, for example, to the god Abraxas. "Abraxas is the sun, and at the same time the eternally sucking gorge of the void, the belittling and dismembering devil." 84 And the message enshrined in Demian, that the "only duty and destiny we acknowledged was that each one of us should become..."
completely himself... utterly faithful to the active seed which Nature planted within him,"^85
is standard Jungian fare: "At bottom, therefore, there is only one striving, namely, the
striving after your own being."^86

But if Hesse dabbled in Jungian Gnosticism, he would not find what he was looking
for in the demiurge Abraxas. The God of Hesse's mature vision is a transcendent deity, an
All or Oneness that is variously refracted in the world's great religions, yet tinged, as
evidenced by Hesse's repeated emphasis on love, service, and grace, with the Pietistic
atmosphere of his family and religious heritage. Hesse ultimately rejected the biocentric
values and conception of God that we find in Jung—what Boulby (as was cited above)
correctly refers to as the ideology of "neo-Nietzschean evolutionists,"—in favor of
logocentric values, a realm of eternal truths and a transcendent God. Hesse was indeed a
seeker who strived after his own being; but this was always held in tension with the spirit of
love and compassion that turned one away from self-centered preoccupation with
individuation to a unio mystica that manifests itself in saintliness. "Take no models!"^87 rings
the Nietzschean and Jungian voice inside Hesse—but take them he did. One of the recurring
tensions in Hesse's work is that between the artist and the saint, and Hesse's affirmation of
becoming oneself (the path of the artist) is contained by the notion that the highest example
of this becoming is the giving up of oneself to the other (the path of the saint). Rather than
view Demian as an unequivocal expression of a Jungian worldview, we would do better to
view Sinclair as more representative of Hesse himself, as one who was mixed up in the world
of cabbalists and theosophists and Jungians, but remaining somewhat aloof, suspicious, and
ambivalent toward these erstwhile prophets. Following his encounter with Jungian
psychology, we should keep in mind, Hesse was often critical of Jung's views,^88 just as he
cast a rather critical glance on theosophists and orientalists. And there are plenty of hints in *Demian* that Hesse harbored reservations about the worldview that Demian espouses and to which Sinclair is attracted.

A key feature of *Demian* that has drawn the attention of some critics is the "prophetic linking of Sinclair's individual problems with the crisis of Europe on the eve of World War I," coupled with the notion that "the mass destruction of war is... [a] necessary prelude to the renewal of a corrupt culture." But this is more Demian's (that is, Jung's) view of things than Sinclair's (that is, Hesse's). And whether Sinclair's fall from grace is a "step that is necessary for [Sinclair's] own self-realization," is not so readily answered in *Demian*. The ambivalence inherent in the work suggests Hesse had not resolved the fundamental driving tension on which the novel is based: the interplay between Biblical material (with its prefigured Christian eschatology, the struggle between good and evil) and Demian's radical Jungian inspired reinterpretations of this material.

John Neubauer is one of the few to emphasize the ambivalence of the novel. While many critics view Demian as leading Sinclair to salvation, Neubauer argues that any conception of the novel in terms of a "neat progression" through the three fold developmental process described in 'A Bit of Theology,' "overlooks the problematic of war, which is a problematic of the self." The ending of *Demian* suggests that there is no final "culminating synthesis" of opposites, "let alone a humanization of Sinclair." Is Demian's death the death of his ideal, the death of an "elitist pursuit of selfhood" and attempts to unify God and devil, or is it meant to suggest the internalization of this ideal in Sinclair? Neubauer suggests that Sinclair's concern for the men with whom he is fighting indicates "alienation from rather than an internalization of Demian's radical individualism." The harsh reality of
war cuts through all Sinclair’s efforts and concerns to individuate. In this final scene, we might add, Demian kisses Sinclair on the forehead, though given Demian’s dual nature (Christ-devil) and the pervasive Biblical references throughout the novel it is unclear whether this is a beatific act or that of a Judas.

Then there is the problem of the prologue. Though constituting the first pages of the novel, it is written with the benefit of hindsight, an introductory post-reflection on the events to be recalled. Sinclair writes: “I am still a seeker, but I have ceased to question the stars and books; I have begun to listen to the teachings my blood whispers to me…” Is this blood that of Demian, who, on the novel’s last page, explains, “I will have to go away…. You’ll have to listen within yourself, then you will notice that I am within you”? Or is this blood that of Sinclair’s family and heritage, whose teachings he has again begun to listen to, just as Hesse, following the writing of Demian, would begin to reacquaint himself with the faith in which he was raised?

Throughout the novel Sinclair expresses uncertainty over the path he is on, especially with respect to the teachings of Demian. “Perhaps I would reach this goal [of Demian’s], but it would turn out to be an evil, dangerous, horrible one?” “But there are forbidden and ugly things in the world!” Sinclair shouts at Demian, who is trying to convince Sinclair otherwise. Demian’s ‘mark of Cain’ interpretation leads Sinclair “to imagine that this was not a mark of shame and that because of my evil and misfortune I stood higher than my father and the pious, the righteous…. Why does he [Demian] speak so contemptuously of the ‘others,’ of the timid [Sinclair’s/Hesse’s family] who actually are the pious, the chosen ones of the Lord.” Max Demian holds Sinclair in his “sway like a foul disease.” And, near the
end of the story, when Sinclair receives the revelation of Demian's/Jung's prophetic, apocalyptic dream, he can only but stand "aghast."

"I knew from my childhood the reality of a devout life, as my parents led it," reflects Sinclair in what is clearly an autobiographical passage for Hesse:

and I knew also that this was neither unworthy nor hypocritical. On the contrary, I stood in deepest awe of the religious. Demian, however, had accustomed me to regard and interpret religious stories and dogma more freely.... And once during confirmation class he startled me with a [reinterpretation of] Golgotha.... The Biblical account of the suffering and death of the Savior had made a deep impression on me since the earliest days of my childhood. Sometimes, as a little boy, on Good Friday, for instance, deeply moved by my father's reading of the Passion to us, I would live in this sorrowful yet beautiful, ghostly, pale, yet immensely alive world, in Gethsemane and on Golgotha, and when I heard Bach's St. Matthew Passion the dark mighty glow of suffering in this mysterious world filled me with a mystical sense of trembling. Even today I find in this music and in this Actus Tragicus the essence of all poetry.99

This last sentence can be read as Sinclair's (and, ultimately, Hesse's) emancipation from the teaching of Demian—the work is a retrospective account, and periodically we receive hints of Sinclair's present day position. For a time, Demian enticed Sinclair into thinking differently, but even then "Demian's new concept [of the meaning of Golgotha]100 seemed vaguely sinister and threatened to topple beliefs on whose continued existence I felt simply had to exist."101 They threatened to topple them, but they didn't.

Demian, like much of Hesse's literature, is built around Hesse's own life experiences. Joseph Mileck has demonstrated how closely Sinclair's Bildung parallels Hesse's life.102 In crafting the character of Pistorius, Hesse was drawing heavily on his experience of Jungian psychotherapy with Dr. Josef Lang. Under the tutelage of Pistorius, whom Sinclair happens upon in the midst of a suicidal depression (Hesse's winter of 1916-1917), Sinclair's
understanding of himself and the Gnostic God Abraxas is deepened. Hesse acknowledges through the character of Pistorius, the tremendous debt he owed Dr. Lang: "... his counsel, the comfort he had brought me, his proximity had been a vital experience during the most important months of my adolescence.... He had given me faith in myself." But just as Sinclair develops a skepticism and resistance to the doctrine and worldview of Pistorius, so did Hesse ultimately reject a Jungian worldview:

There was too much didacticism in what he said.... He was holding forth about mysteries and forms of religion, which he was studying, and whose potentialities for the future preoccupied him. All this seemed to me odd and eclectic and not of vital importance; there was something vaguely pedagogical about it; it sounded like tedious research among the ruins of former worlds. And all at once I felt a repugnance for his whole manner, for this cult of mythologies, this game of mosaics he was playing with secondhand modes of belief.  

One of the confusions in Demian, I believe, and one that is present in critical study of the work, is the lack of separation between psychoanalytic technique and what I have been referring to as a Jungian worldview.

Freud's original breakthrough was his discovery of repression, the contents of which could be relieved through free association and other related techniques. The therapeutic rule was that one was not allowed to suppress whatever images or thoughts that came to mind; one was not to judge the contents of one's unconscious going out the gate. The judgments of the super-ego, which could be harsh, were to be, at least for a time, suspended. What we find however in Jung's thought is the elevation of this technique—a technique that undoubtedly served Hesse well in understanding his own psychological and emotional life—into a worldview. The amoralism required in uncovering complexes and repressed contents—say, for example, the urge to kill someone—in order to understand what was causing them, in the
hopes that reason could control and manage them, find outlets for them so that they would not manifest in psychosomatic symptoms or full-blown outward destructiveness, is a very different matter from a completely amoral worldview. “You aren’t allowed to be afraid of anything, you can’t consider prohibited anything that the soul desires,” teaches Pistorius/Lang/Jung. “Startled I countered: ‘But you can’t do everything that comes to your mind! You can’t kill someone because you detest him.’ He moved closer to me. ‘Under certain circumstances, even that.’” Hesse would never ascribe to such a view, and Sinclair’s resistance to and frequent shock over the teachings of Demian and Pistorius derive from Hesse’s refusal to assimilate Jungian psychology lock, stock, and barrel.

Very likely, though this would take space and time beyond the scope of this dissertation to fully explore, Hesse’s therapy had a considerable amount to do with his sexuality. This is, of course, a complex question. Lewis Tuskan suggests that Hesse’s flight from Maulbronn may have been due to a homosexual encounter with Hesse’s violin instructor. Certainly Hesse’s literature is filled with homoerotic themes, and Freudian psychology should not be discounted in interpreting oedipal themes in Hesse’s work. Sinclair’s sexuality—his continence, his depravity, his idolization of Beatrice, the erotic language and imagery utilized in the depiction of Frau Eva, Sinclair’s mother—is a prominent theme in Demian. Demian was “intimate with girls” and “knew everything.” And Kromer asks Sinclair to introduce him to his sister and, after “he had left, something of the nature of his request suddenly dawned on me. I was still quite ignorant in these matters but I knew from hearsay that boys and girls when they grew older were able to do certain mysterious, repulsive, forbidden things together. And now I was supposed to—it suddenly flashed on me how monstrous his request was…”
It may well be that Hesse’s Pietist upbringing was a contributing factor to whatever sexual neuroses Hesse struggled with. But if in Hesse’s Pietist milieu certain sexual impulses were forbidden, if there was an unhealthy banishment of sexual life and imagination to a dark, repressed world, this was, if we are to take Freud’s revelations as accurate, but part of a much broader cultural phenomenon. If Pietism is to be given a failing grade for its failure to adequately understand and promote a healthy, instinctual and sexual life, we must also realize that in addition to a psychological unconscious there is a social unconscious, and it was Pietists, not psychoanalysts and artists, who were mining its depths through their work building and working in orphanages, hospitals, and schools for the poor.

Part of the problem with a “two realms” thinking is that it is too abstract, too ethereal, and does not readily distinguish between various contents of the ‘dark world.’ The argument in the secondary literature seems to be that: 1) the two realms worldview described in the opening chapter of Demian reflects Hesse’s Pietist background; 2) this background is regressive and backwards, psychologically harmful and religiously narrow; and, therefore, 3) that Hesse’s encounter with Jungian psychology allowed him to arrive at a more adequate understanding of the true nature of the self and of God. At issue is whether the dualistic world view presented in the opening chapter of the novel, the worldview of Sinclair’s (and Hesse’s) family, of what Hesse refers to in his essay on Dostoevsky as “old Europe,” is really in need of a radical transvaluation, in need of a god who is God but also the devil, in need of passing beyond either the affirmation or the condemnation of drunkards who beat their wives and young girls worked to the bone in the factories of nouveau riche industrialists—though Hesse suggests as much in Demian, it is a highly ambivalent suggestion, one that Hesse struggled with, and one that he ultimately rejected.
War, Church, and State

To know who I am is a species of knowing where I stand. My identity is defined by the commitments and identifications which provide a frame or horizon within which I can try to determine from case to case what is good, or valuable, or what ought to be done, or what I endorse or oppose.

- Charles Taylor, Sources of the Self

Hesse denounced both World Wars. In his essays written during the First World War (most of which were published in newspapers and other periodicals) Hesse was critical from the outset of German patriotism, nationalism, and militarism—a position that led “official Germany” to view Hesse as a “suspicious and essentially undesirable character, worthy at best to be tolerated.” Hesse’s disgust with German nationalism led him to renounce his German citizenship; he became a Swiss citizen in 1923. During the era of the National Socialists and the Second World War, Hesse more or less withdrew from public pronouncements on political events. Hesse’s political writings during the Great War, his “censure of wayward artists and intellectuals, short-sighted politicians, and narrow-minded generals had been an exercise in futility, and his subsequent advocacy of social reforms, pacifism, and internationalism had been much less than rewarding.” Hesse was denounced in Germany as a traitor, and when Hitler rose to power, Hesse withdrew from public life, though he “remained in close touch with current events... and continued in his many private letters... to give candid expression to his decided political views.”

Hesse’s view of the Nazis was clear enough: he detested the “race and blood blather of the Nazis,” the “poison gas” emanating from the speeches of Hitler and his ministers;
Hitler was a mad demagogue, the Nazis a political inanity, and Hesse clearly saw the writing of another war on the wall. Hesse’s main act of political resistance to the Nazis through the 1930s (he was in his fifties) was to review the works of Jewish authors in German and Swiss periodicals, an act which drew an insidious and widespread reaction from the Nazi controlled and ideologically dominated press. By the end of 1935 Hesse’s reviews were no longer being accepted for publication. Aside from being a small thorn in the side of Nazi ideology, Hesse and his wife Ninon (Doblin) Hesse used their home and position in neutral Switzerland to ferry a large number of political refugees from Germany (among them Bertold Brecht and Thomas Mann) on to safe havens.

In a foreword to a collected edition of political and wartime writings published in 1946 Hesse muses: “Since I am an utterly unpolitical man, I myself have been astonished at the reliability of my reaction, and I have often pondered about the sources of this moral instinct, about the teachers and guides who, despite my lack of systematic concern with politics, so molded me that I have always been sure of my judgment and offered more than average resistance to mass psychoses and psychological infections of every kind.” Lest we think this is mere self-congratulation, Mark Boulby, for one, comments that the “extraordinary consistency of [Hesse’s] opposition to the political course of his country from 1914 to 1945—in which the total attitude is not gradually evolved but stands there clear and whole from the outset—is an impressive (and rare enough) phenomenon in German intellectual life of this period.” As for the source behind this moral instinct and attitude, the Pietism of Hesse’s family played no minor role. Hesse answers the question he poses with reference to three profound formative influences:
A man ought to stand by what has educated, imprinted, and molded him, and so, after much consideration of the question, I must say: three strong influences, at work throughout my life, have made me what I am. These are the Christian and almost totally unnationalistic spirit of the home in which I grew up, the reading of the great Chinese thinkers, and last not least, the work of the one historian to whom I have ever been devoted in confidence, veneration, and grateful emulation: Jakob Burkhardt.  

Surprisingly, however, the impact of Pietism on Hesse’s moral and political views has received little attention. Joseph Mileck, in his most recent study of Hesse, which appeared as this dissertation was in progress, sets out to rectify this situation.

Mileck turns his attention to Hesse’s social-political views and writings, arguing that “to account for Hesse’s apolitical person, for his many sociopolitical involvements notwithstanding, and for his deep-seated need to serve, attention has to be focused on his family background.” Mileck pursues a line of inquiry which I originally planned to follow in this dissertation. Mileck’s intent is to “examine [Hesse’s] sociopolitical involvements in terms of his family background.” His conclusions, which I am in basic agreement with—that the family’s “envisaged Kingdom of God” is Hesse’s “struggle for a better world,” that “their disregard for politics his aversion to [the] political world, and their passion for service his need to serve”—represent the result of the first sustained effort to demonstrate Hesse’s debt to his Pietist heritage. I can do little more than add to Mileck’s work in this area by situating the discussion in a broader social-historical context, and further developing a few of the themes he raises.

A long dispute between Pietists and members of the established church and Consistory characterized the first phase of Pietism in Swabia. Eventually, differences were resolved in the Pietistenreskript of 1743, which in effect absorbed Pietist conventicles into
the church. Chiliasts and separatists were more or less marginalized, and their ideas went underground, or into the countryside, retaining a presence in Swabian thought and culture in the form of a fondness for speculative and mystical literature, and the odd chiliast revival, organized around a prophetic figure. Criticism of state absolutism and the baroque culture of the court, a key feature of early Swabian Pietism, waned; the era of the Swabian fathers—most them highly educated sons of pastors, teachers, or professors who sought a mediating relationship to the established church—arrived. In spite of the resolution of differences between church Pietists and their orthodox brethren, chiliast and separatist groups, which were highly critical of political absolutism, continued to operate, though in small and politically ineffectual numbers.\textsuperscript{119}

As modernization and industrialization ramped up, as biblical theology gave way to systematic theology and cultural Protestantism, chiliast thinking, along with Pietism itself, became a marginalized phenomenon in intellectual and cultural life.\textsuperscript{120} Surprisingly, however, the theological revolution represented by Strauss' \textit{Life of Jesus} and the secularizing tendencies of a rapidly industrializing and modernizing Germany turned out to be contributing factors to a Pietist revival beginning around 1820. During this period the emphasis on chiliast eschatology found in the Swabian fathers declined in favor of the practical establishment of the kingdom of God through charitable service and mission work. From their embattled position, Pietist communities were infused with a renewed piety embodying a sense of righteousness, and practical concern for those whom the industrial revolution was leaving in its wake.

In a return to Spener's emphasis on \textit{praxis pietatis} and conventicle life, Pietists retreated (as they were simultaneously being driven) from the mainstream of intellectual life.
in Germany to become closely involved with missionary work not just abroad—there had long been a concern to convert pagans—but at home, through the so-called “inner missions,” a sign that German society was, at least in the mind’s of most Pietists, becoming secularized and denuded of its Christian basis.  

The theological and intellectual tradition that dominated eighteenth century Swabian Pietism was replaced by an ethos of social service: Pietists were not mandarins, they were servants of God. The operative catchphrase throughout Pietist Swabia during the nineteenth-century was “The Kingdom of God in Württemberg,” an attitude that manifested itself through charitable work with the poor and the sick, a greater concern for moral (sittlich) rather than religious questions, and the cultivation of piety, in part through the publication and dissemination of evangelical literature, hymnals, and textbooks. 

Pietist communities also began to re-establish themselves. The Moravians, who had failed under Zinzendorf to make in-roads in Württemberg, established a community in Korntal (near Stuttgart) in 1819. Hesse’s father was an active member of the Korntal community in his later years. Under the leadership of Johann Christoph Blumhardt (1806-1880) and his son Christoph Blumhardt (1842-1910) the Swabian town of Bad Boll (to which Hesse was sent by his parents) became a center of Pietist activity. The younger Blumhardt was an active supporter of the new Social Democratic Party, a liberal, socialist movement that opposed the war aims of the Kaiserreich. In the 1830s Christian Gottlob Barth established the Pietist publishing house in Calw that Hesse’s parents and grandfather Gundert would later operate, and close connections were built with Pietist groups, missionary centers, and tract societies in England and Basel. Barth was himself a missionary, well known for composing mission hymns, and alongside the publishing house Barth founded a home for
orphaned and neglected children. To understand the faith and morality of Hesse’s family it is
to this Pietist revival of the nineteenth century that we must turn.

We misunderstand the impact of this Erweckungsbewegung and sectarian Pietist
communities on Hesse if we only see them as “almost hermetically sealed socioreligious
complexes,” especially if we want to understand Hesse’s chiliasm, and its relationship to
his moral and political stance during the war. Though Pietism in Swabia had always more or
less remained with the structure of the Lutheran church, the nineteenth century would see a
resurgence of separatism, with many radical Pietists separating or distancing themselves from
the church to found their own communities. The activity and mindset in these more isolated
and withdrawn Pietist communities with which Hesse was associated as a child and young
man in many respects looked back to the ethos of early Swabian Pietism: many Pietists
(including Hesse’s family) viewed social and church life with a good deal of suspicion, as
did Hesse; owing to rampant secularization, many Pietists thought the millennium was at
hand, the Pietist equivalent of Hesse ‘decline of Europe’; Pietists such as Hesse’s parents
looked askance at bourgeois life, preferring instead “der schamle Weg,” the narrow path to
God, and their son was similarly disappointed with the banality of bourgeois culture. Several
prominent Pietists, among them Christoph Blumhardt, were strident critics of the
conservative politics and militarism of the Kaiserreich, as was Hesse. These kinds of
sentiments were cultivated within some Pietist communities which in their own way
represented the sectarian mindset and desire that Hesse fictionalized in Demian: to be “an
island in the world, a prototype, perhaps, or at least a prospect for a different way of life.”

A persistent question in Pietist studies has been the relationship between Pietism and
German nationalism, conservatism, militarism, and absolutism. In his Pietism and the
Making of Eighteenth Century Prussia Richard Gawthrop demonstrates the contribution of Halle Pietism under Francke to Prussian absolutism. A linking of Pietism to the rise of German nationalism and absolutism has become a rather common perspective. Consider, for example, a passage from Nicholas Boyle's intellectual biography of Goethe:

The particular feature of Pietism which makes it of interest to us is its natural affinity for state absolutism... such a religion was tailor-made for a state system in which all, regardless of rank, were to be equally servants of the one purpose; in which antiquated rights and differentiae were to be abolished; and in which ecclesiastical opposition was particularly unwelcome, whether it came from assertive prelates or from vociferous enthusiasts unable to keep their religious lives to themselves. It was not by chance that both Spener and Francke gravitated toward Prussia, the most energetic and revolutionary of the new absolutisms, and the most hostile to the Imperial order; and that under Frederick William I (King from 1713 to 1740) Pietism became in practice the Prussian state religion.

As Boyle suggests, one of the reasons Goethe distanced himself from Pietism, was because of its implicit support for German nationalism and patriotic fervor. In his well known essay of 1914, "O Friends, not These Tones," Hesse contrasts German nationalist sympathies and provincialism precisely with the internationalist and cosmopolitan outlook of Goethe.

The general conclusion to emerge from historical studies of Pietism is that "if the Pietist awakening [of the 1820s and 1830s] began open, ecumenical and internationalist, it ended in Christian conservatism... against all liberal and socialist tendencies... in confessional and German-national isolation." This may lead us to believe that Hesse's rejection of nationalism and absolutism had actually little to do with his Pietist heritage, but we have to be careful lest we paint all Pietism with the same colored brush. Boyle goes on to note that though Spener's reforms were popular in Halle and North Germany; on "Frankfurt, however, Spener left little mark—he was disappointed with the town, his flock retired into
privacy, no Pietist was given his post again, and the Lutheran clergy remained rigidly orthodox until the late eighteenth century.” While Frankfurt is not Swabia, Boyle’s observation perhaps points to some regional differences within German Pietism that need to be taken into account.

Pietism in Swabia has a long history of social-political involvement, and a significant, though by no means overwhelming, portion of it was both on the political ‘left’ and dedicated to charitable service. In Calw Johannes Valentinus Andreae (1586-1654) founded the Christliche Gottliebende Gesellschaft, a forerunner of Pietist societies and conventicles, whose aim was to reform school and social institutions, and rebuild the town following its destruction during the Thirty Years War. Many of the early Pietists in Swabia were harsh critics of the baroque culture of the court, and staunch defenders of the interest of the estates against the ‘enlightened absolutism’ of the Duke of Württemberg. In the tumultuous political climate of the 1830s and 1840s several Swabian Pietists were vocal proponents of liberalization and democratization. The Swabian school of poets, most of whom were either influenced by or members of Pietist circles, promoted political liberalism and democratic reforms. “It has been an irony of historiography, both literary and political, that these... Swabians would be characterized as politically backward and conservative, when the evidence shows that they can lay claim to having espoused perhaps the most liberal and democratic political thinking and action in the Germanies of the Restoration period.” Though Pietists and liberals often wound up at odds with one another, it also needs to be emphasized that many Swabian Pietists made serious attempts to mediate between the tradition of faith and the new Enlightenment and political philosophies and, further, that the deep sense of salvation history within Swabian culture that was promoted by Pietists such as Bengel
promoted the “forward looking and basically optimistic spirit... which underlies the liberalism of Württemberg in its early development.”

Following the failed Revolution of 1848 however Pietists increasingly migrated to the right, to accommodation with the established church and in support of an increasingly imperialistic and militaristic Germany. By 1871, when King Wilhelm of Prussia was proclaimed emperor of Germany, most Württemberg Pietists were pulled along by Church support of the new order and its social and political aims. During the First World War most Pietists, Swabians included, “identified the war aims of the German Reich in continuity with Godly matters.” Pietists had traditionally used the term ‘Vaterland,’ (Fatherland) in two distinct senses. The terms could refer to either kingdom of Württemberg (or Prussia, etc.) or to the kingdom of God. The traditional Pietist and Lutheran view was to distinguish, not conflate, the two usages. Religious patriots during the Kaiserreich borrowed the language of ‘Vaterland,’ from Pietist and Christian eschatology and transformed them into immanent categories, to refer to the German people and the German nation. Pietists had long viewed the secular order with a measure of disdain, but as Germany moved towards the turn of the twentieth century, political, national, and religious languages and themes came to be intertwined.

If Pietism after 1871 generally became increasingly nationalist and conservative, in Hesse’s milieu there were counter tendencies at work. First, there was a “sedimented tradition” of political activism and social critique in the chiliastic and separatist stream of Württemberg Pietism. Hesse, who was naturally drawn to the radical elements in his Pietist heritage, found there affirmation for his decidedly negative attitude towards society at large, and a sense of the kingdom of God that refused accommodation to the political agenda of
those that would use this kingdom for political purposes. Second, Hesse’s parents, as active participants in foreign missions, developed a sense of internationalism and tolerance. Home missions, in contrast, tended to be more influenced by local and national politics. Those in Hesse’s Pietist milieu did not conflate the political and religious use of ‘Reich,’ or ‘Vaterland,’ as Hesse explained in a letter:

Well, it was easier for me to not be nationalistic than for others. Our family was international [in its outlook], something that fit with missionary work, and I was exposed, along with the spirit of Luther and Bengel, to India. People like my grandfather and father actually did not agree with nationalism, but it needed another generation to clarify their position.

Hesse’s internationalism was further bred by the diverse ethnic backgrounds of his family. Third, in addition to their internationalism and relative political quietism, Hesse’s family was well acquainted with the Blumhards. In 1895 Christoph Blumhardt joined the Social Democratic Party and movement, emphasizing “Christ’s solidarity with the poor and the working class,” a position strongly criticized by most Pietist leaders. That Hesse’s family would place their son under Blumhardt’s care can be taken as some measure of their political sympathies. Hesse himself, in spite of his bitter experiences in Bad Boll (following his flight from Maulbronn) would remember Christoph Blumhardt with a good deal of sympathy. In a letter to one Leonhard Ragaz, the author of an early study on Blumhardt, Der Kampf um das Reich Gottes in Blumhardt (Blumhardt’s Struggle for the Kingdom of God, 1923) Hesse writes: “I have no doubt that your book on Blumhardt would speak volumes to me, and I look forward to soon reading it.” Hesse complains that his initial encounter with Christoph Blumhardt in Bad Boll left a somewhat bad taste, but now sees these times in
better perspective: “for both Blumhardts I now have nothing but reverence. Blumhardt the elder was a friend of grandfather and his predecessor, Dr. Barth, in Calw.”

Hesse’s family, as Mileck has shown, was relatively apolitical. “Theirs was a world of religion and not politics” and they had little interest “in affairs of state.”

Though Hesse’s Pietist forbears were not taken with this world, belief committed them to its service. That the Christian’s principal concern was life’s timeless good and evil and not the self-serving and misleading factional persuasions of politics, and that it was ultimately the will of God and not of political man that determined the human lot, was reason enough to forgo political but not social service.... Hesse’s family... were by and large given to religion and to practical service callings, Pietist doctors, pastors, missionaries and teachers dedicated to the service of God and His children.

Hesse very much inherited his family’s distaste for politics and their commitment to service. Hesse repeatedly mentions his admiration of his family’s piety, a piety that was in Hesse’s recollection grounded in praxis pietatis and a vision of the kingdom inspired by Pietist chiliasm: “the lives of my parents and grandparents were entirely controlled by the kingdom of God and stood in its service. That men should see their lives as a loan from God, and try to live them not on egoistic impulse but as service and sacrifice to God, this chief experience and inheritance of my childhood has strongly influenced my life.”

Mileck demonstrates that Hesse’s Grandfather Gundert was mildly adverse to talk of liberalism and socialism, even though as a young man he sympathized with the ideals that gave rise to the 1848 Revolution, and “was even something of a revolutionary as a student, dreamed of a freer Germany, and even wrote a few political essays.” Gundert “was no admirer of the monarchy,” and if he showed very little interest in political affairs, he did keep abreast of the life of the royal family. The attitude of Hesse’s parents was similar; they were apolitical, but Marie Hesse in particular often commented in letters and diaries on the coming
and goings of the royal court. Service to the kingdom of God did not mean engaging in political debate, certainly not in revolution, but in the patient service directed to those in need, and in the spreading of God's word. The son followed in the footsteps of his parents and grandparents. In his early published writings there is virtually no political commentary, even when he was launching his full blown assault of the school system in *Beneath the Wheel*. Hesse was associated between 1896 and 1909 with two leftist periodicals that promoted internationalism and pacifism, as well as typically printing harsh criticism of the church and the politics of Kaiser Wilhelm II. Hesse's contribution to these journals was in the form of book reviews for the literary sections. As Mileck notes: "Hesse's association with *Simplicissimus* and *März* did undoubtedly leave him more aware and more informed politically, but did not... politicize him..." It would take the shock of all out war to awaken Hesse's political interests, and Hesse's attitude and response to the First World War was actually less political activism than moral condemnation informed by the spirit of his Pietist heritage.

Hesse inherited the political quietism of the Swabian mandarins and his family, but when it came down to war, a moral, even prophetic core broke through his accommodation to worldly affairs. In a 1917 essay titled "The Refuge" (*Die Zuflucht*), Hesse cites the famous lines written by the "Swabian pastor" Eduard Mörike, "Lass o Welt, o lass mich sein!" — "Leave me, oh World, Oh leave me be!" In the midst of war Hesse's reaction was to withdraw from the insanity, to be a non-participant, knowing full well that there was little he could do as an individual to alter the course of world events. His was a political quietism indigenous to Swabian Pietism. Yet amidst the rhetoric and polemic of politicians, theologians, and churchman that saw the advance of the kingdom of God in the advance of
the kingdom of Germany, Hesse would remind his readers of a different “end” in which individuals could take “refuge” from the chaos:

a saying that I happened across while leafing through a book, an old saying, a word out of the Bible and one that I had known for many years. But today it was new, today it sounded inwardly: ‘The kingdom of God dwells within you.’ Again I have something to yield to, to lead me, to offer my blood. It is no wish and no dream, it is an end. This end is refuge. Not a cave, not a ship. I search for and desire a refuge that dwells within me, a space or a point, where only I am, where the world cannot reach.... Oh deep refuge! No storm can reach you, no fire can burn you, no war can destroy you.... You are my end.144

If Hesse evoked and advocated the inwardness of God’s kingdom as a response to “mass psychoses and psychological infections of every kind”145 he also took a moral stance to the war that is discordant with the amoralism espoused in Demian: “That the masses [Völker] apparently revel in the war is of no matter to me. The masses have always been stupid. They had the choice between Jesus and murder, and with great zeal they voted for Barrabas.146 In his open letter, “To a Cabinet Minister” (1917) Hesse repeatedly cites the injunction, “Thou shalt not kill.” Your “speech,” Hesse writes, keeps me awake, although I have read many similar speeches with the same dreary conclusion, and slept soundly afterwards... [T]he fault as I am now certain, lies with Beethoven’s sonata and with that ancient book in which I afterwards read, that book which contains the wonderful commandments of Mount Sinai and the luminous words of the Savior.... And then suddenly, Herr Minister, it came to me that your speech and the speeches of your governing colleagues in both camps do not flow from that spring....I wish that one of these days in a quiet moment you would read a parable of Jesus, a line of Goethe, or saying of Lao Tzu.147

Hesse could moralize with the best of them, and did not fail to impress upon his reader how far German nationalism and enthusiasm for war transgressed religious values.
Hesse was critical of the role of clergy and the church during the war. Owing to his preference for romantic religion, Hesse was already predisposed toward criticism of the church. The sociological consequences of religious subjectivity and an aesthetic, literary, romantic religion were that both church and conventicle lost significance for Hesse. As Troeltsch explains in his account of the rise of romantic religion in modernity, “public worship became entirely unnecessary, and without any meaning for religion.”

Hesse felt, stood in the way of true religion, was too confined by dogma, and too inclined to reject out of hand the insights of other religions. The enthusiastic response to war by the German churches would only serve to reinforce Hesse’s already decided views on the poor state of the church:

The last vestige of religion we possessed in our impoverished souls and so impoverished, soul-less churches was lost. Has anyone stopped to consider, and to wonder at the fact, that in those four years of war our theologians buried their own religion, their own Christianity? Committed to the service of love, they preached hatred.... They proved with guile and many words that war and Christianity were perfectly compatible, that a man could be the best of Christians and yet shoot and stab to perfection. But that is not true, and if our national Churches had not been national churches in the service of the throne and Army, but Churches of God, they would have given us during the war what we so bitterly lacked: a haven of humanity, a sanctuary for our orphaned soul, a perpetual admonition to moderation, wisdom, and brotherly love; in short, they would have offered divine services.

The place of true religion, holds Hesse, is not the institutional church, but in the great literary and religious works of history, and, most crucially, in the kingdom of heaven that dwells within, the inner-god that awakens the heart. Hesse would consistently reject all attempts at positive social or political reforms, insisting on the necessity that individuals do the hard work of enlightening themselves. Without such a revolution in the state of individual souls, there could be no significant outward change.
Hesse's religiosity was radically individualistic, located in the 'divine seed' of God implanted in one's heart. But Hesse's response to war and his repeatedly valorizing the piety of his family rooted as it was in the kingdom of God, in love and charitable service, also "proves that identity cannot be located within some bodily or spiritual inner sanctum [alone], but that it must be found in our relation to a world of other people, and the frameworks, practice and so on that form our lives." Hesse's relationship to Pietism was not in the form of confessions or religious practices, but cultivated through memories and narratives, commitment to the ideal of love, and a rejection of the building of political kingdoms in favor of the "inner peace" that derives from knowledge of the "One God [who] lives in all of us." One sleepless night, recalls Hesse, after learning of "horrors perpetrated under Hitler, "I wrote a poem in which I tried, in defiance of my horror, to profess my faith. The last lines of my poem are as follows:

Therefore to us erring brothers  
Love is possible even in discord.  
Not judgment or hatred  
But patient love  
And loving patience lead  
Us closer to the goal.  

The poem to which Hesse refers is "Besinnung," written in November of 1933, the same period during which Hesse began work on The Glass Bead Game. The title of the poem means, literally, reflection, but it also carries the connotation of self-recollection. Hesse, in a letter, refers to the poem as a "confession" in which he "sought to represent with the greatest accuracy possible the foundation" of his belief, a poem, Hesse concludes, that is a "reflection on my heritage, which is Christian."
Charles Taylor, in his *Sources of the Self*, comments that there are four components to selfhood: “our notions of the good... our understandings of the self... the kinds of narrative in which we make sense of our lives and... [our] conceptions of society.” The ability to make moral decisions, to take a stand on a social or political issue, argues Taylor, is “enframed in a social understanding of great temporal depth, in fact, in a tradition.”

As I have argued throughout these chapters, the Pietist tradition had a formative impact on Hesse’s narrative identity and sense of self. Hesse frequently links himself through memory and narrative to the tradition in which he was raised, and Swabian Pietism is very much a part of Hesse’s moral space. Hesse’s references to his stance taken during the two World Wars are repeatedly framed with respect to his Christian upbringing and background: “During the war my [political] views changed from opinions to experiences to confessions, and are basically Christian. In the depths of my soul I have never been a Nordic hero or giant, nor an ancient wise man... but a Christian, namely, as to [my] spiritual and moral position, not in terms of the contents of my creed.”

We know who we are, suggests Taylor, in “knowing where [we] stand.” Hesse stood very much in the moral world of his Pietist heritage.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 3

3 *Peter Camenzind*, 75-75.
4 In many of the poems, dream journals, and letters written in the years following his father’s death Hesse enfolds the destruction of the war with the end of his father’s life, and this as a marker of the end of a “sacred canopy” that had provided over-arching structures of meaning, value, and purpose to Swabian culture. [See *Materialien zu Hermann Hesse ‘Demian,’* ed. Volker Michels (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1993), 59-85; hereafter cited as *MATDEM*.]
5 *Life Story, Briefly Told*, 49-52.
7 Ziolkowski, *The Novels*, 35.
M.H. Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature* (New York: Norton, 1971), 158-164. 'A Bit of Theology,' clearly owes a debt to this tradition, as Hesse readily admitted: “The path of human development begins with innocence (paradise, childhood, the irresponsible first stage). From there it leads to guilt, to the knowledge of good and evil, to the demand for culture, for morality, for religions, for human ideals. For everyone who passes through this stage seriously and as a differentiated individual it ends unfailingly in disillusionment, that is, with the insight that no perfect virtue, no complete obedience, no adequate service exists, that righteousness is unreachable, that consistent goodness is unattainable. Now this despair leads either to defeat or to a third realm of the spirit, to... an advance into grace and release to a new, higher kind of irresponsibility, or to put it briefly: to faith.” Hesse’s second stage entails awareness and the experience of the inadequacy of the will. Self-will, as long as it was associated to any degree with the hubris of self-striving for virtue, obedience, service, righteousness, goodness, could not lead one out of the experience of despair, guilt, and sin. Though Hesse believes this to be a universal religious understanding, he is also aware that he has expressed his theological anthropology in “European, almost Christian fashion” (‘A Bit of Theology,’ in *My Belief*, 189-190).


Stelzig, *Hermann Hesse’s Fictions of the Self*, 144.

Ziolkowski, 106.

Demian, 6-7.

There is little doubt that Hesse consciously employing psychoanalytic motifs in the narrative.

Ziolkowski, 118.

Demian, 62.

As Ball notes, 121, Hesse had read several of the works of Freud, Jung, Steckel, and other thinkers from the psychoanalytic camp, as early as 1909. Hesse had roughly sixty analytical sessions with Dr. Josef Lang (and several with Jung himself) between May of 1916 and the end of 1917.

Demian, 94.

Hesse, “The Brother’ Karamazov, or The Decline of Europe” (1919); in *My Belief*, 72-73.

Ziolkowski, 140-141.

Demian, 26.

Demian, 44.

Demian, 44-45.

Demian, 46.


Aion, 23.

Aion, 221.

Ziolkowski, 105.

Demian, 149.


See Brown, *Understanding Pietism*, 84-86.

Nikolaus Ludwig Graf von Zinzendorf, leader of the Moravian Pietist community, traveled throughout Württemberg in the 1730s, preaching a radically separatist form of Pietism. Zinzendorf’s legacy was the founding of a new Pietist community, the Moravians, and his presence and success in Swabia again raised the threat of separatism. Bengel took a stand against Zinzendorf, and was able to swing church Pietists to the side of orthodoxy, denouncing Zinzendorf’s teachings, and his desire to establish communities in Swabia. It was Bengel’s work in warding off Moravian influence in Swabia that paved the way from the resolution of differences between Pietists and the church Consistory in the *Pietistenreskript*. For more on Zinzendorf’s contribution to Pietist culture and institutions see, Douglas Shantz, “A Church Ahead of its Time: the 18th Century Moravian Community on Gender, Worship and Ecumenism,” *The Hinge: A Journal of Christian Thought for the Moravian Church* 12:1 (Spring 2005): 2-18.
In contrast to Pietism in Halle, the Bible was viewed by Bengel less as a handbook for edification and as more of a means to saving knowledge" (Lehmann, 70).

Bengel studied under Johann Wolfgang Jäger in Tübingen. Jäger was a student of Coccejus, and introduced Bengel to his work. See Lehmann, 69-70.


Unlike Spener, Francke, and Zinzendorf, Bengel was not a leader of Pietist communities. He was a member in good standing of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, an exemplar of inner church Pietism, and a model of the Swabian mandarin scholar. Bengel’s Pietism is associated more with the hermeneutical, speculative and chiliast trajectories in his thinking, than with his institutional involvements. The Pietist physician and author Johann Heinrich Jung-Stilling drew heavily on Bengel in writing his well known *Heimweh*, an allegorical novel infused with apocalyptic and chiliast themes, predicting the establishing of the kingdom of God on earth by a select group of true believers. The projected location of the coming of the millennium—central Asia—led entire communities of Pietists, around 1817, to leave Württemberg for Russia, an interesting example of life imitating art.

The understanding of periods of war in the context of chiliasm and millennialism is a repeated phenomenon in German culture, from the Thirty Years War right up to Hesse’s *Demian*.

One of Coccejus’s prominent ideas was that Christ’s goal on earth was to establish the true church (*wahre Gemeinde*), a notion that resonated with Swabian interest in Gottfried Arnold.


See Lehmann, 31.

The group to which Sinclair belongs is elitist, but similarly quietistic; *Demian* and Sinclair do not even question their participation in the war.

Lehmann, 31.

For more on Rock and the radical and separatist stream of early Swabian Pietism, see Lehmann, 66-68, and Martin Brecht, “Der württembergische Pietismus,” 230-237.

One of Coccejus’s prominent ideas was that Christ’s goal on earth was to establish the true church (*wahre Gemeinde*), a notion that resonated with Swabian interest in Gottfried Arnold.

Lehmann, 31.

Eitel Timm, *Ketzer und Dichter: Lessing, Goethe, Thomas Mann und die Postmoderne in der Tradition des Haresiegedankens* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1989). Hesse is another who fits into this tradition of appropriating the notion of heresy to validate his critique of the church and his radically individualist faith.

Lehmann, 31.

As the son and grandson of theologians I learned early that pious Christians could hold completely different views regarding articles of faith and attitudes toward learning—in our Protestant-Pietist circle this was a matter of course” (“Herr Classen,” *Werke* 10, 180).


*Life Story, Briefly Told*, 55.

Consider these illuminating reflections, from Hesse’s journal during the years 1920-1921. It is during this period that Hesse began a conscious reconsideration of his Protestant-Pietist heritage, and it is clear from this journal entry that he identified with the radical, sectarian element informing the religious milieu of Swabia: “Of course the old, clear, simple path would have certainly been better even for me, the artist.... The immediate and reckless renunciation of the empirical I: the imitation of Christ. Why I don’t take this simple way, why it is
blocked for me, whether for just now or forever, I do not know. My life could not be any more difficult, any more painful and problematic than it is now; nevertheless this path is not open to me, or at least not yet. And yet I see: it is the only way that leads to the divine, and that is the strongest and most enticing image for me. If I would have been growing up in a decent religious tradition, like a Catholic, I likely would have stayed with it for the rest of my life. But it belongs to my heritage and destiny that I came from an intensely religious but thoroughly Protestant, sectarian tradition. And that is no coincidence, I wanted it. This heritage, this faith, this burden of the sectarian, reforming spirit—I chose it or, chose to make things difficult for myself. And just as at the hour of my birth Saturn and Mars, Jupiter and the moon stood at a certain location, and were allowed to be nowhere else, so stood ready for me my devout Pietist father and the Protestant baptismal font. It wasn’t meant for me, it wasn’t in my plan to have the comfort and pleasure of a stable, good, beautiful and healthy religion. It was necessary for me to grow up in a rebellious, overheated, unhappy, short-term and self-destructive religion, which with the first awakening of my own thoughts I had to destroy. Yes, I wanted that: my body, my homeland, my language, my flaws and gifts, these were loaded on my back” (“Tagebuch 1920/21,” in MATSID, 14-15)

This is Mileck’s view, Between the Perils of Politics, 8.

Stelzig, 146-147.

Lehmann, 81-82.

See Lehmann, 188-211.

Hölderlin’s Hyperion, is a good example of such a secularized chiliism. See Hayden-Roy, 205.

Pride, a central theme of Peter Camenzind, is also present in Demian. Considering himself one of the elite, Sinclair becomes puffed-up, prideful, and self-righteous: “Yes, at that moment, I who was Cain and bore the mark, had imagined that this sign was not a mark of shame and that because of my evil and misfortune I stood higher than my father, and the pious, the righteous” (32).

Demian, 2. There are many such references to Jesus and Christ in Demian, the aim of which is humanize Jesus as a great teacher or hero. “... Christ is not a person for me but a hero, a myth, an extraordinary shadow image in which humanity has painted itself on the wall of eternity” (114).

Stelzig, 145.

Ziołkowski was one of the first critics to draw attention to Hesse’s fondness for irony (The Novels, 64-65).

Between May of 1916 and the end of 1917 Hesse had over sixty analytical sessions with the Jungian Dr. Joseph Lang, as well as several sessions with Jung himself (Bouly, Hermann Hesse, 85). Ziołkowski claims (89) that Demian, “written in a few months in 1917,” was a “direct product of Hesse’s psychoanalysis and subsequent reexamination of his beliefs.”


So concludes Fritz Böttger, 251.


Bouly, 96

Bouly, 119. As Walter Kaufmann has made clear, Nietzsche’s appropriation by the Nazis was only possible due to a piecemeal reading and poor understanding of his philosophy. See his Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1974), especially Chapter 10, The Master Race. The “Nietzschean” or “neo-Nietzschean” ethos of Demian is better described as “Jungian.”

Briefe 2:48

Schriften 7:587.

Unseld, Werkgeschichte, 20.


Demian, 150.

Demian, 159-160.


Jung, Memories, Dreams, Reflections, 383.

Demian, 151.

Jung, Memories, Dreams, Reflections, 382.

¨Ein Stück Tagebuch” (1918), in Schriften 7: 147.
Mileck (*Hermann Hesse, Life and Art*, 100-105) discusses Hesse’s reception of Freudian and Jungian version of psychoanalysis, claiming that “Jung’s primacy seems to have been short lived” and that Hesse, in the end, had a far greater appreciation for Freud’s work.

See, for example, Hesse’s letter of January 1924, (*Brief* 2: 74-78) in which he criticizes German interest in theosophy and the orientalism of Count Keyserling. Interestingly, in this same letter, Hesse advises his correspondent to make less of a fuss about theosophy and take note of the resurgence of the Catholicism stimulated by Cardinal Newman, the vigorous cultural and religious debates within Protestant circles, and the work of Martin Buber.

Stelzig, 150.


This conception of the novel was first popularized by Ziolkowski (*The Novels*, 144), who argues that Sinclair’s development takes place in three stages: from “childhood innocence” to “a world of doubt and torment” to the “ultimate synthesis of these conflicting worlds within himself.” Ziolkowski then links this reading of *Demian* to Hesse’s essay ‘A Bit of Theology.’ This model is repeatedly used in interpretations of Hesse literature. See, for example, Kyung Yang Cheong’s *Mystische Elemente aus West und Ost im Werk Hermann Hesse* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1991) who claims that *Demian*, *Siddhartha*, and *Steppenwolf* follow this model.


*Demian*, 78.

*Demian*, 64.

*Demian*, 33.

*Demian*, 70.

*Demian*, 60. Hesse frequently recalls experiences and memories of listening to Bach’s passions and cantatas, typically at Easter and Christmas, and further, he often connects the piety of the music to the piety of his family. See for example, “Beschwörung” (*Werke* 10) and “Notzblätter um Osten” (*Werke* 10). It is no accident that Sinclair, in suicidal despair, is saved by hearing Pistorius playing Bach. That this happens while walking by a church, that the name Pistorius derives from the Latin *pistis* (faith), and that Sinclair knows his hearing the music did not happen by chance, is perhaps enough to see the workings of grace in Sinclair’s life.

Again, *Demian*’s reinterpretation (61) is a very Jungian one. Both Christ and Anitchrist, writes Jung (*Aion*, 44) are “Christian symbols, and they have the same meaning as the image of the Savior crucified between two thieves. This great symbol tells us that the progressive development and differentiation of consciousness leads to an ever more menacing awareness of the conflict and involves nothing less than a crucifixion of the ego, its agonizing suspension between irreconcilable opposites.”

*Demian*, 61-62.


*Demian*, 127-128.

In his war writings, written during the same period of *Demian*, Hesse would frequently admonish generals and politicians with Biblical injunctions against killing. One of his essays was even titled “Thou Shalt Not Kill.”


*Demian*, 33-37.

Eugene Stelzig and Doris Gelencser are two Hesse critics to apply a psychoanalytic framework to the reading of Hesse’s literature. Hesse studies would be greatly advanced through a thorough application of psychoanalytic and gender theory to the Hesse corpus. As Stelzig has shown, *Demian* in particular can be fruitfully read in terms of oedipal dynamics, from Sinclair’s fantasy of a “murderous assault” on his father to Frau Eva, the great mother, as a libido object, union with whom “constitutes Hesse’s vision of paradise regained” (150).

Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 27.

A concise yet thorough account of Hesse’s political positions and reaction from 1914-1945 can be found in Mileck, *Between the Perils of Politics*, 17-44.

Hesse, “Preface to the 1946 Edition,” in *If the War Goes On ...,* 4-5.

Mileck, *Between the Perils of Politics*, 34. Many Pietists saw in Hitler’s promise of a new era for Germany the opportunity to regain a national position for the church, but were confused and irritated when the Nazi’s cracked down on the church and questioned the biblical message

*MATGBG*, 293-296,
See Milek, Between the Perils of Politics, 34.

114 This is true except for the Neue Rundschau, which was published by S. Fischer Verlag, the publisher of Hesse’s works. Samuel Fischer died in 1934. In 1935 the Ministry of Propaganda ordered the Fischers to relinquish control and direction of the publishing house, which was then run by Peter Suhrkamp until his arrest by the Gestapo in the spring of 1944. Hesse was able to publish his reviews in a Swedish journal, but this too received vicious commentary in German periodicals.


116 Bouly, Hermann Hesse, 83.


118 Mileck, Between the Perils of Politics, 6.

119 Calw, Göppingen, and Stuttgart remained home to chiliastic groups during the eighteenth-century. One of these groups was “The Inspired,” led by Friedrich Rock. See Lehmann, Pietismus und weltliche Ordnung in Württemberg, 67.

120 Oetinger was the one of the last Pietists to seriously and enthusiastically to attempt a synthesis of social and cultural questions (such as the proper role of Enlightenment philosophy) with theology. With the rise of modernization and secularization, Württemberg Pietists became increasingly reactionary and conservative. See Lehmann, “Die neue Lage,” 19. This was likely one reason Hesse was so attracted to Oetinger.


122 Lehmann offers a comprehensive discussion of the importance of “Gottes Reich in Württemberg” for nineteenth-century Pietist (Pietismus und weltliche Ordnung in Württemberg, 188-211).

123 Mileck, Between the Perils of Politics, 8.

124 Hesse’s grandfather Gundert, while not discrediting the role the church and sacraments as mediators of God’s grace and will, nevertheless emphasized the importance of personal or inner conversion rather than the sacraments of baptism and conversion. Gundert also carried with him, in good Pietist fashion, a certain disappointment with the spiritual life of the church. See Heta Baaten, 22.


126 Boyle, 12-13.

127 “O Freunde, Nicht diese Töne” (1914), in If the War Goes On, 9-14.


129 Boyle, 13.

130 See Doerksen, xv-xvi, 6-11.


134 Letter of Nov. 3, 1945, Schriften 7: 646-647.


137 Mileck, Between the Perils of Politics, 9-14.

138 “My Belief,” 177-178.

139 Mileck, Between the Perils of Politics, 9.

140 Mileck, 9-11.

141 Hesse explained his role in these journals to his father in a letter of 6 March 1910: “That I was able despite all the worldliness of my life to have kept a deep respect for true piety is only because as a child I saw and knew true piety. If it were possible to bring this kind of faith to the world I would be last one to wish it otherwise. But with each passing year I’ve seen how few truly pious individuals there are. This true, completely pure and selfless way of being is found in all higher religions, whereas official Christianity as it exists and rules in its degenerate form appears to me a direct enemy of culture. Because of this I take part in, if only as a quiet colleague, a widespread and serious work of cultural renewal, which in part is against the church not against the faith. My connection to Mä rz stems from this work. For me personally, and you know this, that is not enough to satisfy the religious need, and so I listen to the Bible, to legends, to the Koran, and many other doors to paradise (Briefe 1:174).

142 Mileck, Between the Perils of Politics, 13.

143 This line is from Mörke’s poem, “Verborgenheit.”
Hesse, “Die Zuflucht” (1917), in Werke 10:32. The reference is to Luke 17:21, which in Luther’s Bible reads “Das Reich Gottes ist inwendig in euch.” The English NRSV has this passage as, “the kingdom of God is in the midst of you,” which gives the passage a less individualistic ring.

This is a common theme of the essays and letters written during the war: “The essence of love, beauty, and holiness does not reside in Christianity or in antiquity or in Goethe or Tolstoy—it resides in you, in you and me, in each one of us. This is the one eternal and forever identical doctrine, our one eternal truth. It is the doctrine of ‘The Kingdom of Heaven’ that we bear in ourselves” (If the War Goes On, 32).

Letter of 3 January 1917, in MATDEM, 87. This was a typical, dualistic view of the matter: “You can be trained and educated as a soldier and set across from some enemy. If you shoot your enemy you will have your Church and your Fatherland on your side. But in so doing you will have gone against the prohibition against killing. Then it becomes a matter of conscience as to whether you should follow the commandments of God or those of the Church and Fatherland. Presumably you grant the priests and country more authority than God” (MATDEM, back cover).

“To a Cabinet Minister” (1917), in If the War Goes On, 15-18.

Troeltsch, 795.

“Letter to a Young German,” (1919), in If the War Goes On, 119. Hesse’s criticism of the complicity of the Church with German nationalism and imperialism was based on a sound judgment of the course of the church. Following 1871 Germany embarked on its program of colonialism and imperialism; in spite of this agenda, “from the ranks of pious Christians hardly a critical sound was heard.... [Pietists] applauded colonial politics just as they did military rearmament. National strength appeared to them compatible with the basic values of Christianity...” (Lehmann, “Die neue Lage,” 13).

This aspect of Hesse’s thought, his rejection of the notion of improving the world in favor of improving oneself, has frequently been commented on. It is related to Hesse’s rejection of the missionary work of his family. Two short stories, ‘The World Reformer’ and ‘Robert Aghion,’ both written in 1911 as the outcome of Hesse’s five month trip to India, entail critiques of mission work and the missionizing spirit, and implicitly link missionary work to colonialism. This linkage was not however a given. The Württemberg theologian and missionary Albert Ostertag (1810-1871) criticized industry as a “total war against the poor,” and, like Marx, wrote commentaries on the opium wars in China. Ostertag recognized the complicity of imperialism and colonization with the dehumanizing and alienating effects of modern industrialization, and he saw the struggle for worker’s rights and economic reforms and restraints as part of the work of the missionary. See Karl Rennstich, “Geschichte der protestantischen Mission in Deutschland,” in Der Pietismus im neunzehnten und zwanzigsten Jahrhundert, 309-310.

Taylor, Sources, 128.

“Speech after Midnight” (1946), in If the War Goes On, 145-147.

Schriften 7: 588-589.

Taylor, Sources, 105.

Letter of 18 August 1929, Briefe 2, 225.

Taylor, Sources, 48.
In Chapter 2 we noted that Hesse’s religiosity in his post-Maulbronn years was significantly determined by the tendency among educated Germans to adopt what Ernst Troeltsch termed romantic or spiritual religion, whose roots Troeltsch found in the thought of the German mystical tradition assimilated by Luther and, later, the Pietist and Romantic movements. Here, we pick up this thread in our study of Pietist influence on Hesse’s mysticism, as exemplified in his well known novel Siddhartha. Siddhartha is often assumed to be the outcome of Hesse’s interest in Asian religions; the approach taken here emphasizes the similarities between the central themes of Siddhartha and the speculative mystical tradition native to Swabia, represented by Friedrich Christoph Oetinger (1702-1782).

Eugene Steizig observes that Hesse’s “pronouncements over the years about his intentions” and the religious influences informing Siddhartha “are not always helpful, for they can furnish… support for radically differing viewpoints and interpretations.” In spite of this fact, scholars have historically been more prone to consider Siddhartha in the context of Asian religions (Hinduism, Buddhism, and Taoism) than in terms of Hesse’s Pietist heritage. Joseph Mileck has provided a detailed and valuable summation of scholarship dealing with Hesse, Siddhartha and the East. Mileck states that since the Second World War roughly twenty-eight dissertations and forty articles have focused on Hesse and the East. Mileck also notes that scholarship dealing with Siddhartha has tended to divide along East-West lines, with westerners finding in Siddhartha a more or less western worldview, while their Asian counterparts tend to view the work as representative of Eastern influences and
views. Mileck further takes Hesse scholars to task, writing that “both Western and Eastern scholars have... displayed a touch or more of chauvinism and inadequate acquaintance with the culture of the other.” While many scholars have argued that *Siddhartha* embodies a more or less Western or European outlook (which was Hesse’s own view), almost no attention has been given to explicating the work in terms of potential Christian sources.

There are good reasons to seek to better understand the Protestant influence on Hesse’s *Siddhartha*: a better understanding the novel’s social-historical-religious contexts and sources can add to our appreciation and understanding of the work. An approach that examines its Protestant features and themes can heighten what Robert Jauss terms the “aesthetic value” of the novel. Finally, a better understanding of the novel’s Pietist-Protestant features can help correct or counter-balance stereotypes and caricatures of Pietism that often found in the secondary literature on Hesse. On top of these benefits, reading the Protestant heritage behind *Siddhartha* casts new light on the squabbles found in the secondary literature over whether the ethos and worldview expressed in *Siddhartha* is fundamentally eastern, western, or a synthesis of the two. In part, these debates are battles over academic and other kinds of turf; but rarely do they push through to a critical analysis of the fundamental assumptions about the universality of mystical experience and the idea of a common religious core that informs not just Hesse’s writing but Hesse scholarship as well.

By uncritically highlighting Hesse’s ecumenical pluralism Hesse scholars have forgotten that this very position is culturally informed and has consequences for Western understandings of Eastern traditions. One aim here then is to attempt to substantiate the claim that *Siddhartha* carries a predominantly Western outlook, by reading the novel against a specific theological tradition, namely the speculative mysticism of Oetinger. The monistic vision of unity,
harmony, and love that we find in Hesse’s *Siddhartha* has a close to affinity to the speculative, mystical wing of Pietism in Swabia. Methodologically, it is easier to assess how *Siddhartha* may have been influenced by Pietist culture by comparing it with a clear example or specific form of Pietism. Another aim in this chapter is to revisit much-discussed issues regarding Hesse’s syncretism and pluralistic outlook.

**Approaching Siddhartha**

*Siddhartha* is the principal reason that Hesse has received the posthumous status of “the western man most in touch with the religions of the east.” Hesse’s religious development is often portrayed in both popular and scholarly literature as a departure from a supposedly narrow, exclusive, and sectarian Pietism to an encounter and affirmation of the mystical vision of the East. In the introduction to the new Shambala edition and translation of *Siddhartha* (2000), for example, we read, that Hesse “had chosen India as his backdrop since he was unable to address the concept of an all-pervading unity within the context of his own European Protestant heritage.” But Hesse called *Siddhartha* a very “European book.” His Protestant heritage is a fundamental context for the vision of all pervading unity Hesse was attempting to express; yet the association of Hesse, and specifically his *Siddhartha*, with the ‘East’ remains strong.

In 2002, the Swiss National Museum in Zürich hosted a special Hermann Hesse exhibit, one of the many events comprising ‘Hermann Hesse Jahr,’ a year long, international celebration of the author’s life and work, marking the occasion of the 125th anniversary of
Hesse’s birth. The Zürich exhibit was titled ‘Hölleinreise durch mich selbst,’ (literally, ‘Hell Journey through Myself’) and emphasized two of Hesse’s novels—Siddhartha and Steppenwolf—by devoting a separate room to each work. The Siddhartha room was a simple, unadorned space, roughly seven meters square. Exhibit goers were instructed to enter the room alone, and to stand on the raised black platform located in the middle of the room, in order to meditate on the experience or understanding of reality that lay at the heart of the novel. On each wall was a large, black, slightly reflective panel. Hidden speakers produced a low droning hum. After standing in this room for several minutes, viewers exited out a passage where they unexpectedly encountered a seven or eight meter high bronze seated Buddha.

In utilizing Buddhist statuary, the exhibit planners appealed to the widespread association of Hesse, and Siddhartha in particular, with Asian religions and mystical experience. The exhibit reproduced the iconographic cover designs of the many editions of Siddhartha that have appeared over the years, which typically include a solitary Buddha image. The cover art and design used in many editions of Siddhartha creates an association to Buddhism from the very first glance, conditioning the reader’s reception and interpretation of the book. The museum exhibit (itself an interpretation of the novel) took the inverse route, closing with Buddhist iconography, an act of interpretive closure which ‘tells’ the participant what their experience ought to have been, while simultaneously interpreting the novel for them. In the Zürich exhibit, museum space and book space mirrored one another; the Siddhartha exhibit told museum goers what they already knew, namely, that Siddhartha is a book about Buddhism.
Siddhartha was first published in 1922. For more than eighty years now, institutions (publishers, museums, television, film and radio, academia) have created a horizon of expectations that informs the reading of Siddhartha. For example, as we read on the back cover of the popular Bantam editions of Hesse's works: "Why has one European writer, Hermann Hesse, captured the imagination and loyalty of a whole generation of Americans? Because he is a vital spiritual force, the Western man most profoundly in touch with the wisdom of the East, its mysticism, its culture, its sacred visions." While publishers have used Hesse's interest in Eastern religions as a marketing strategy, scholarship has also pursued the relationship between Hesse’s literature and the religions of Asia. Gerhardt Mayer, one of the few scholars to give attention to the question of mysticism in Hesse’s literature, states that a "mystical vision of unity" is the "center piece of Hesse’s faith" and, further, that this vision "springs from eastern sources." Others take a more nuanced view, arguing that Hesse has assimilated a variety of religious traditions in arriving at his own personal faith, but that the religions of Asia were of fundamental importance to Hesse.

If one examines Hesse’s comments on Siddhartha, it is fairly clear (keeping in mind Stelzig’s caveat, cited above) that Hesse was intent on bringing readers and critics to an appreciation of the Christian, rather than the Buddhist or Hindu influences on the book. "Demian," Hesse wrote in a letter in 1923 (already cited in the previous chapter), "stresses the process of individuation.... Siddhartha [stresses] the overcoming of the personality and our being pervaded by God." For all the eastern influences on Siddhartha, it remains a very "European book," as Hesse wrote (in a letter of 1925) to the author of an early dissertation on his literature:
The direction that you want to see in the development of my writings is on the whole correct, but you give too much significance to the Indian and the [theme of] renunciation in [your treatment of] Siddhartha. Siddhartha is a very European book, despite its milieu, and the teaching of Siddhartha is strongly informed by the principal of individuality, taking it far more seriously than any Asian teaching. I would put forth, in opposition to your view, that Siddhartha is the result of my liberation from Indian thought.15

In a brief bit of reception criticism within his essay My Belief, which dates from 1931, Hesse commented that his book Siddhartha “has been frequently studied and discussed by students of India and Japanese priests but not by their Christian colleagues.... That my Siddhartha places not knowledge but love ahead of everything, that he rejects dogma and makes the experience of unity the central point, may be interpreted as a swinging back toward Christianity, yes, as a truly Protestant characteristic.”16 In a letter of 1935 Hesse wrote to a reader that following Demian (that is, in the period during which he wrote Siddhartha) “I gradually began to reacquaint myself with the belief I was raised in.... I found myself driven to make a new effort to get to know the Protestant form of Christianity.... [and today] I consider myself almost a Christian.”17 And in a letter of 1937 Hesse would write that “early on” his ever evolving, highly personal faith “looked very Indian but moved closer to Christianity. This [development] is depicted in Siddhartha.”18 If Hesse rebelled from his Pietist heritage in favor of Romanticism and a mystical Orient, he also found himself drawn back into the orbit of Christian thought and piety, a movement well represented by his efforts in writing Siddhartha.

To be sure, Hesse understood himself to be in search of what all faiths held in common, in quest of the essential core of religion that was refracted or, closer to Hesse’s belief, obscured by positivistic forms of religion—Hindu, Buddhist, or Christian. We shall take up this question in greater detail in the final portion of this chapter, in the context of
secularization and the widespread interest in religious experience (especially mysticism) that helped shape the study of comparative religions and the reception of non-western religious tradition in the west. But it is incorrect to suggest that Hesse found the essence of his faith in his encounter with the religions of India; at best, we can agree that Hesse found confirmation of his individualistic mysticism of unity and love in his readings of the texts of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Taoism, a mystical vision that Hesse thought was similarly embodied in Christian thought and culture; and it may well be that Hesse, in his turn to the East, simply found what he was already looking for. In the drive to articulate a vision of divine unity Hesse never discounted his Christian heritage; he was simply so wary (as discussed in the previous chapter) of what he perceived as a tendency within Christianity towards triumphalism and exclusivism that he granted other religions the insights and understandings that he felt to comprise the core of Christian thought and culture:

...I believe in nothing in the world so deeply, no conception is so holy to me, as unity, the conviction that everything in the world forms a divine whole, that the 'I' takes itself too seriously.... It had never been easy for me, no one could have less talent for the holy than I; nevertheless, again and again I had encountered that miracle to which the Christian theologians have given the name of 'grace,' that divine experience of reconciliation, of ceasing to rebel, of willing agreement, which is indeed nothing other than the Christian surrender of the 'I' and the Hindu realization of unity. 19

Scholars often point to Hesse’s eclectic, syncretistic assimilation of world religions in his writings. But is Hesse’s mysticism, as embodied by Siddhartha, the result of synthesis, the outcome of a thorough-going encounter with various religious traditions? Or is the “mystical religiosity” of Siddhartha, as Joseph Mileck suggests, “less a synthesis of Western and Eastern mysticism ... than Western mysticism colored by its Eastern counterpart.” 20 I am inclined to take this later view.
Mileck’s image of Hesse’s mysticism being “colored” by the East is apt. It is an image Hesse himself often uses. *Siddhartha* is “indisch gekleidet,” indisch gefärbtes; the essence of the vision presented in *Siddhartha* is “clothed” [gekleidet] or “colored”[gefärbtes] in the images and ambiance of India, but this does not make its worldview necessarily Indian or Buddhist:

> Back then, having wearied of Europe and fled to India, I found only the lure of the exotic over there. The materialistic exoticism did not lead me to the spirit of India, which I had already encountered before and was seeking again; it separated me from it. Well, I have now been able to repay part of my debt to India in *Siddhartha*, and I believe I may never need to have recourse again to this Eastern guise.23

Where and when is this “before?” Where did Hesse previously encounter the spirit of India, an early encounter which his later travels to the actual country and his observations of religious practice and life ‘on the ground’ could never measure up against?24 If India proper did not lead Hesse to the “spirit of India,” where did he, in fact, locate this spirit? Clearly, Hesse is referring here to the missionary background of his parents and his grandfather Hermann Gundert. Hesse was immersed as a child in two spiritual worlds: that of his devout Pietist family and, through them, in the spirit of India. But it is a difficult matter to take such claims at face value. That Hesse’s family had a great knowledge and “feel” for the religions of India is not in question; but that they mediated to him the “spirit of India”—even if we grant that such a ‘spirit’ even exists—is a leap too large to take. Rather, “India” represents for Hesse, “the magic of the East... an image of a lost and irrecoverable paradise [that] exerts an ineluctable attraction upon his mind and imagination, and he returns to it again and again.”25 A significant layer of Hesse’s interest in India is related to the “lost and
irrecoverable paradise" of childhood, contact with which was irrevocably shattered following the Maulbronn affair. Hesse's loss of faith, his loss of a sense of home, his adolescent battles with his family—these losses are represented by the lost magic of the "India" of Hesse's childhood.  

I do not mean to suggest that Hesse was naïve about a magical India. Hesse wrote rather scathing critiques about the western tendency to associate India with the "primitive" and the "exotic"—criticism of Western fascination over exotica is a persistent theme in Hesse's literature. Nor do I mean to imply that Hesse naively assimilated Indian religious traditions. Hesse approached other traditions with the same critical and skeptical eyes through which he viewed his own, and he knew that he could look upon Asian religions with a certain innocent freshness precisely because he did not grow up in one of them—just as his Indian colleagues viewed the Christian faith in which he was immersed through rose colored glasses.  

But Hesse's turn to the East in *Siddhartha* needs to be understood in terms of the turn back to Christianity which the novel represented for Hesse. A point of entry for Hesse's reconsideration of his Protestant Pietist heritage was "India," the India of his childhood, of the curios and statuary in the family's library, the strange foreign languages and visitors that regularly passed through the family home. The "spirit of India" that Hesse "had encountered before and was seeking again" was the spirit of home, of *Heimat*, and this spirit was bathed in Hesse's primary experience of trust, love, mystery, and magic that he found in his family home—this is what Hesse's family first mediated, the first stage of Hesse's tripartite "path of human development." (His family also mediated, as we shall see, a great respect for other religious traditions, an ecumenical perspective, and a desire to seek out unifying points of contact between and among different religions; whether this desire itself is actually a shared
religious sensibility or a “truly Protestant characteristic” is a question worth further consideration.) The last stage—the “advance into grace and release to a new, higher kind of irresponsibility, or to put it briefly: to faith”—involves Hesse’s recognition of what he saw as the centerpiece of Christian life, the unio mystica, the mystical experience of Oneness with God that manifests itself in love, service, and even an ecumenical spirit. That Hesse would, following Siddhartha, “never need to have recourse again to this Eastern guise” is precisely due to his new found respect and ability to affirm a perceived central core in Christian culture and life. Hesse came to his affirmation of Christian mysticism and, implicitly, the faith of the Swabian fathers, through the back door, so to speak, through the “guise” of an “Indian tale.” It is a faith he held all along, exposed to it as a child and later through his immersion in the world of Romanticism.

Our approach to Siddhartha then is not from the East, but from the West. Siddhartha is the only one of Hesse’s major novels not set in his native surroundings—in Swabia, in Switzerland, or northern Italy. But its location—and, in reality, the setting of Siddhartha is no more India than is the setting of Narcissus and Goldmund medieval Germany—should not be confused with its content or ethos. The claim that Siddhartha has a Protestant sensibility has been made by several scholars, though often with little elaboration or argument. George W. Field sees Siddhartha as an essentially Protestant allegory about the highly personal struggle to attain a true sense of Christian love or caritas and freedom from sin through divine grace. Hesse’s emphasis on “love” (a central theme in Siddhartha) is located by Hans Küng specifically in Hesse’s Pietist-Protestant past, rather than in a more general Protestant or Lutheran background. Stelzig argues that “even though the ‘Eastern’ influence is important, the book as a whole expresses a fundamentally western outlook,” and
that one of "the wonderful ironies of Siddhartha’s enthusiastic reception by the American
counterculture and student generation of the 1960s is that in the guise of Eastern religion
these young readers were taking in, unbeknownst to them, an essentially western creed." In
spite of these general observations associating Siddhartha with a Protestant, Pietist, or
Western creed, little effort has been expended to substantiate the claim. When acknowledged
at all, the Pietist contribution to Hesse’s mysticism is generally framed in terms of Pietist
emphasis on religious experience and inwardness. Kyung Yang Cheong, for example,
devotes a few pages to the Pietist background informing Hesse’s thought, stating that
Hesse’s reference to his affinity for Christian mysticism implicitly “points to the distinct
mystical character of Pietism.” But Cheong’s unpacking of this distinctiveness leaves
something to be desired. He mentions that “in Pietism religious experience is more
important that dogma,” that the “real meaning of Pietism for intellectual history rests with its
refinement and deepening of the life of the soul,” and that Hesse inherited from his family a
conception of religion founded upon “service and love,” in which “life is more important
than preaching and teachings.” Cheong backs up this description of Pietism with ample
citations from Hesse’s corpus. Cheong devotes the remainder of the space allotted to Pietism
to a discussion of Hesse’s rejection of confessional, church-based Christianity, a fine
element of how a secularization narrative informs scholarly understandings of Hesse’s
relationship to Pietism; Hesse absorbed and transmitted from Pietism its living (lebendig)
qualities while discarding its confessional basis.

There are close affinities between the central themes of Siddhartha and one of the
prominent wings of Pietism in Swabia, the speculative and mystical stream well represented
by the thought of Friedrich Oetinger. Oetinger was born in 1702 and died in 1782, and he is
a figure for whom Hesse had a great deal of respect and interest. “Oetinger lived in an age in which the realms of spirit and matter were increasingly being torn apart”, a result of the success of the idealism and rationalism of Leibniz and Wolff. The foundation stone of Oetinger’s solution to this problem is his notion of the ‘sensus communis,’ and there are many thematic parallels between it and Hesse’s Siddhartha. The choice of Oetinger as a comparative template on the basis of which to emphasize the intellectual and thematic parallels between Siddhartha and Pietist mysticism is not arbitrary, and the similarities suggested point not merely to analogy also to influence. The question of influence is always a tricky one, but several factors support considering Oetinger a key influence on Hesse’s thought.

Hesse was familiar with Oetinger from his youth; he read him in school, and the name of Oetinger was also part of Hesse’s Pietist milieu. Virtually unknown in the English speaking world, Oetinger was “by most estimates... the most original theologian of the eighteenth century in Württemberg, and perhaps in all of Germany.” Oetinger’s life and thought had a deep and lasting influence in Swabian culture, and were the foundation stones on which the neo-Pietist mysticism of the eighteenth century was built. Oetinger’s Böhmist inspired theology is a specific example of Troeltsch’s more general “doctrine of the divine seed” which Hesse thoroughly absorbed in his romantic phase. As mentioned in Chapter One, Hesse associated his grandfather with the spiritual-intellectual world of Oetinger. Herr Classen, who worked, we recall, in the Calw publishing house, was a theosophist in the tradition of Böhme and Oetinger. Hesse’s father, in his study of Lao Tzu—Hesse was first introduced to the Tao Te Ching through his father’s work—implicitly draws on Oetinger in his discussion of the Tao Te Ching in terms of the sensus communis. Oetinger had a rather
ubiquitous presence in Swabian thought, and Hesse had many opportunities to either directly or indirectly encounter Oetinger's thought and work. It makes sense to consider Hesse's thought in the context of this most important figure in the tradition of Swabian Pietism.

*Siddhartha* and Speculative Mysticism

*Siddhartha* was written in Montagnola in southern Switzerland over a period of three years (1919-1922), appearing in its complete and final form in October of 1922. Structurally, the novel consists of eight chapters, divided into two equal parts. The journey of Siddhartha, the young Brahmin's son, however, proceeds in three distinct phases. We are introduced to Siddhartha as a young man whose discontent and "dissatisfaction" with "the wise Brahmins" who had "already shared with him the better part of their wisdom," leads him to renounce the path that tradition had laid before him in order to discover his "in-most self, the indestructible essence within everyone." This decision leads Siddhartha to a radically ascetic life among the shramanas, from whom the restless Siddhartha, after mastering their teachings, promptly takes his leave. Siddhartha and Govinda, his childhood friend and "shadow" (Govinda leaves home and religious tradition to follow Siddhartha in his quest), then encounter the Buddha. Govinda converts to Buddhism, while Siddhartha continues on his highly individual quest for enlightenment. Thus concludes the first stage of Siddhartha's journey.

Siddhartha leaves the grove of the Buddha, desiring to learn about the mystery of the self from no teacher but from himself: "I will learn about myself, about the mystery of
Siddhartha, who had been following a path of radical instinctual renunciation, now crosses the river to enter a life of the senses and a life among the people. He meets and lives with the courtesan Kamala, and learns the ways of business with the Kamaswami. The third stage of Siddhartha’s path takes him back to the river. Siddhartha is in despair; for too long he has neglected the inner voice that called him out of his father’s home, away from the shramanas, and even away from the Buddha in search of his own truth. Siddhartha encounters his old friend Govinda, and eventually meets the same ferryman who had taken him across the river from his life of spiritual seeking to his immersion in the everyday affairs of people. From here on, Siddhartha will no longer live on one side or the other but, under tutelage of Vasudeva, will live on the river itself.** Siddhartha confront the Buddha, telling him that liberation from death “came to you as a result of your own seeking on your own path, through thought, through meditation, through realization, through enlightenment. It did not come to you through any [one’s] teaching!”**

Hesse implicitly sides with Oetinger who affirmed the power of the individual to apprehend God outside of the mediation of scripture, dogma, or sacraments. Oetinger defended this position on the basis of the notion of the *sensus communis*, which he understood to be an “organ of the soul in every person which makes knowledge of God... through nature possible.”** “[I]n nature there still lies something good,” Oetinger writes. “[T]he eternal,” he continues, “is to be found in the hearts of people, and they don’t need to seek it outside themselves. So turn back from outer to inner, to those things that people don’t see, and yet are so certain when seen. Search for God, feel and find him.... When I find my heart there shines for me the presence of God. Note well: this intuitive realization of the heart is life itself... it is love.”**
Oetinger’s high esteem for the sensus communis, which he describes as the “wisdom
of the streets,”⁴⁵ is a radical position compared to Lutheran orthodoxy, for it effectively
grants the means of grace to the individual.⁴⁶ This is undoubtedly one of the reasons Hesse
was drawn to Oetinger, and why he held Oetinger in high regard already in his youth.
Whereas “trials” or “tests” within Lutheran piety typically refer to those trials “through
which God tests and purifies his people,” for “Oetinger... it is mainly he himself who ‘tests,’
namely, his judgments, his standards, and decisions.” Oetinger, like Siddhartha, and Hesse,
was a restless, Faustian figure “always on a quest”⁴⁷ for certainty, saving knowledge, and
truth.⁴⁸ Pietism emerged in part as a response to a perceived rationalization of religion
accompanying the emphasis within Lutheran Orthodoxy upon dogma and confessions of
faith. Pietists were often charged with an excessive individualism that was believed to
inevitably undermine the authority of the church. Though many endeavored to maintain an
attitude of mediation between individual soteriology and grace bestowed through church and
sacraments, between a theology of justification and one of regeneration, tensions between
individual and church were part and parcel of Pietist culture.

The distinction in Siddhartha between religious teachings and doctrine on one hand
and immediate, personal experience and knowledge on the other evidences Hesse’s Pietist
roots. “Much is taught in the doctrine of the enlightened Buddha, much taught in it—to live
in an honest and upright way, to avoid evil. But there is one thing that this so clear and
venerable teaching does not contain; it does not contain the mystery of what the Exalted One
himself experienced.”⁴⁹ And so Siddhartha leaves behind all teachings. This questioning of
the value of religious teachings and doctrine is a persistent theme of Siddhartha: “The
Yogaveda will teach me no longer, nor the Atharvaveda, nor the ascetics, nor any other
teaching. I will learn from myself, be my own student. I will learn about myself, about the mystery of Siddhartha." This valuation of the individual’s potential to realize religious truth outside the bounds of positive religion is typical of Pietism, especially radical Pietism, and is inherent in Oetinger’s conception of the sensus communis. The sensus communis is the “self-confidence, the inner-awareness, and contemplative-being that all people possess by virtue of being human.”

What the sensus communis promises or allows for is the apprehension of life’s unity and life’s Geistlieblichkeit—the spirit present in all things. In his early works, Oetinger devotes a great deal of attention to the Zentralschau or Zentralerkenntnis, a vision of divine totality, to which Oetinger was introduced by a simple farmer—a situation not unlike Siddhartha’s encounter with Vasudeva, who is a simple ferryman. The Zentralschau is the perception of the origin and unity of all things, through which occurs, writes Oetinger, “a renovation, reformation, anointing, and transformation of the nature of both knower and known.” The experience of divine totality transforms the beholder into the object beheld. “All images fall away, and one perceives only the generative center of all things; for an instant the human mind perceives as the mind of God.” Such an experience is depicted in Siddhartha. The narrative moves inexorably toward Siddhartha’s realization of what constitutes knowledge and wisdom, namely, “the readiness of the soul...at every moment in the midst of life to think the thought of unity, to feel and breathe unity.” Siddhartha’s realization of unity occurs in the penultimate chapter, titled ‘Om,’ during his contemplation of the river and his experience with Vasudeva: the images of his father, his self, his son, Kamala, and Govinda fall away, and flow into one another to become the river itself. As Ziolkowski has emphasized, the river is an important structural principle and symbol in
Siddhartha, but it is not, as in Buddhist thought and symbolism, an obstacle that must be
crossed, but “a natural border between the realms of spirit and sense in which Siddhartha
attempts to live before he achieves the synthesis upon its very banks.”

If Hesse’s river does not embody a Buddhist sensibility, it does carry distinct echoes
of Jacob Böhme—whose thought had a decisive influence on Oetinger. “The eternal word,
according to Jacob Böhme,” writes Oetinger in his autobiography, “is not Being as such, in
which all that is and was rests, quiet and still, like in a womb, as though it were a reflective
monad, as I once thought.... The eternal word is much more a pure act of the Divine, insofar
as it presents itself to itself... [the divine word] is an eternal manifestation of itself, and
always in activity towards itself.” What Oetinger found in Böhme was a “totally different
way to ‘think about God and the world’” For Oetinger, “God and the world are not
understood as being in a certain state, but rather as being grasped in a process.”
Siddhartha
comes to love the river, to listen to it and learn from it. “Among the mysteries of the river
today, however, he saw only one that gripped his soul. He saw that the river flowed and
flowed, flowed ever onward, and yet was always there, was always the same yet every
moment new! Oh if one could grasp that, understand that!”

“Often the two [Siddhartha and
Vasudeva] sat in the evening on the tree trunk on the bank and listened in silence to the river,
which for them was not a river but the voice of life, the voice of what is, eternal becoming.”
Here, Hesse is coming very close to Oetinger’s Bôhmist description of God as that “Mystery
which moves deliberately and constantly toward self-understanding through progressive self-
actualization, God as the unity of the natural realm and the spiritual realm.”

This unity,
however, is not necessarily one of synthesis but of holding together in a dynamic tension
life’s polarities. Ziolkowski maintains that the river in Siddhartha is symbolic of the
synthesis of opposites. I would argue, in contrast, that Hesse’s river is symbolically closer to its precise physical sense: the river is in between the two riverbanks (the symbolic realms of spirit and sense) both joining them together and separating them; the river unites the two poles, but does not synthesize them.  

The central realization or experience of the sensus communis is love. Oetinger describes love as one of the three sources that move or stir the self to awakening.  

Hans-Georg Gadamer argues that the German philosophical tradition failed to absorb the social context of the sensus communis found in Vico’s thought; the exception, states Gadamer, were the Pietists, and he specifically points to Oetinger in this regard. Central to the Pietist tradition is praxis pietatis, which consists of love of God and neighbor. Love is a key theme (perhaps the key theme) in Siddhartha. The desire for wisdom and peace drives Siddhartha’s initial departure from home and the questioning of his inherited religious tradition, but love becomes the central problematic of Siddhartha’s quest. It is during his time ‘Among the People’ that Siddhartha comes to understand, through the courtesan Kamala, of his inability to love. “... you do not love me. You love no one, is that not so?’ says Kamala. ‘That may well be,’ Siddhartha said tiredly. ‘I am like you. You too do not love.... People of our type are perhaps incapable of love.’” It is this experience and understanding that launches Siddhartha into ‘Samsara,’ the next chapter of his life and the book. In Siddhartha Hesse affirms the regenerative power of love. “In this river Siddhartha had wanted to drown himself; in it today, the old, tired, despairing Siddhartha had drowned. But the new Siddhartha felt a profound love toward this flowing stream and resolved not to leave it soon.” And when pressed by Govinda, in the concluding chapter, for a teaching, for a doctrine, Siddhartha can only reply: “The only thing of importance to me is being able to
love the world, without looking down on it, without hating it and myself—being able to regard it and myself and all beings with love, admiration, and reverence.\textsuperscript{67}

Related to Hesse’s concern to sing the praises of love is the time devoted to developing Siddhartha’s attitude toward cleverness. In those passages of \textit{Siddhartha} in which we find the evocation of love, there is typically mention made of Siddhartha’s attachment to cleverness and arrogance. “Now Siddhartha also knew why, as a Brahmin and an ascetic, his fight against this ego had been futile. Too much knowledge had held him back, too many sacred verses, too many ritual rules, too much denial, too much doing and striving. He had been full of arrogance…” “Now he looked at people differently than he had before—less cleverly, with less pride, yet more warmly, with more curiosity and caring.” Gotama’s early warning to Siddhartha is against being too clever. “You are clever shramana…. You know how to speak cleverly, my friend. Beware of too much cleverness.”\textsuperscript{68}

It is not unreasonable to read the contrast between cleverness and arrogance on the one hand and love on the other in the context of Oetinger’s debate with Orthodoxy and Enlightenment thought.\textsuperscript{69} In Siddhartha’s discussion with Buddha, he affirms the Buddha’s teachings—his rational, positivistic religion—but finds fault with it on the basis that the teachings leave no room for anything to break through from the outside into human life and affairs—in other words, they leave no room for grace, a notion to which Hesse was committed. Similarly, Oetinger sought to defend the element of freedom in creation, and the presence of God’s grace in the world against the rationalism and determinism of Wolff.\textsuperscript{70} This connection makes even more sense given Hesse’s later comments, written in the context of his study of Swabian theologians in preparation for writing \textit{The Glass Bead Game}: “I was most pleased to see how these stubborn Swabian Christians took a stand against all the polish
and cleverness [Glätte und Vernünftigkeit] of the Enlightenment; they are the only theologians of this era that one can still benefit from reading.\textsuperscript{71}

Hesse and Oetinger share an epistemology anchored in the generativity of sensate knowledge. Through the \textit{sensus communis} one knows via the senses and an inner sense, rather than through reason—simultaneously and intuitively, rather than through analysis and logic. The \textit{sensus communis} is the faculty of feeling and emotion in the soul; it gives credence to inner experience, to aesthetic knowledge. “With the \textit{sensus communis} Oetinger meant not something [derived] from healthy, [rational], human understanding, but rather a kind if irrational intuitive power that is the center point of the spiritual being in people…”\textsuperscript{72}

The heart is for Oetinger an organ of perception and understanding, the “innermost kernel of human being. So too is the \textit{sensus communis} concealed, it is the still feeling [stilles Gefühl].”\textsuperscript{73} Oetinger, as Gadamer notes, translates \textit{sensus communis} as “heart”\textsuperscript{74} and gives this hermeneutical application—we do not know through rational reflection on sense impressions but through the intuition and feeling of the heart.\textsuperscript{75} The epistemological assumptions found in \textit{Siddhartha} are in basic agreement with Oetinger.\textsuperscript{76} Only once Siddhartha is capable of love is he able to perceive the divine unity and manifestation of the divine.

The last shared theme I’ll mention is the ecumenical, pluralist thrust of Oetinger’s \textit{sensus communis} and Hesse’s \textit{Siddhartha}. Of the various social forces to emerge in the modern era (rationalization, technical production, bureaucracy) perhaps the most difficult challenge for religious traditions has been what Peter Berger calls the pluralization of life-worlds. Under conditions of plurality, “the creation of any over-arching symbolic universe becomes increasingly more difficult. Different realities are defined and legitimated in quite
discrepant ways, and the construction of an overarching world view that will embrace all of them becomes highly problematic." Oetinger lived during the onset of modernization, an age in which "people had become melancholy over the lost unity of social truth, and their own lives due to growing differentiation and relativization." Oetinger’s response to this situation of increasing plurality was to remain open to incorporating as wide a breadth of ideas as possible into his theological vision. Oetinger’s thought, like Hesse’s (who had to deal with an even greater complexity of religious pluralism than did Oetinger), is very open and eclectic. In his writings he counts as witnesses to the sensus communis the Old Testament authors, Archimedes, Democritus, Pythagoras, Hesiod, Hippocrates, Socrates, Cicero, Marcus Aurelius, and Paul— but also, Newton, Leibniz, and Wolff. For Oetinger, the sensus communis is available to all people, and evidence of it is to be found in all people. Oetinger was "thoroughly aware of the shifting philosophical winds of his time, [and] he saw quite clearly... that it was no longer possible for Protestants to seal off their religious affirmations from insights gained by means of other perspectives on reality." Oetinger engaged with classical authors and modern science, the Cabalistic and alchemical traditions, trying to incorporate diverse schools and traditions of knowledge into his theology. The "philosophical winds" blowing in Hesse’s time necessitated the development of an even more eclectic vision. Whereas Oetinger wanted to affirm and integrate classical authors, rationalism, speculative mysticism and the contemporary science of the day into his theology, Hesse sought to affirm and integrate insights from both Asian and European religious traditions in his writing.

Hesse commented that in writing Siddhartha he “sought to discover what all faiths and all forms of human piety have in common, what stands above all national differences,
what from each race and from each individual can be believed and revered." This stance is very much in keeping with Oetinger’s openness and pluralism. It is also characteristic of Hesse’s family. Hesse’s family is often portrayed as narrow, but an ecumenical sensibility was shared by Hesse’s grandfather and father. Hesse was first introduced to Lao Tzu through his father’s work. In his volume on Lao Tzu Hesse’s father writes: “Much can be learned... if we read his [Lao Tzu’s] book in the light of the Bible, and, to turn it around, we read the Bible in the light of the Tao Te Ching. In this way it has again become clear to me that, despite the opposition of the new theology, there is indeed a ‘natural religion,’ a general human feeling for the divine and the ethical, a consensus gentium (general consensus) a sensus communis (common sense)...” Christoph Geilner argues that in Siddhartha Hesse made a “radical departure from the exclusivist-absolutist Christianity of his parent’s house in Calw”, in favour of an “ecumenical, universalist monism...” But Hesse’s affirmation of Asian religions is, like his father’s, very much in the spirit of Oetinger’s thought. “My father was a pious Christian his whole life, but he remained a seeker and was never tied down by dogma; in his last years he was intensively occupied with [the work of] Lao Tzu, whom he often compared with Jesus.” Hesse came by his eclecticism and pluralistic outlook honestly.

Hesse’s Pluralism, Critically Considered

In the previous chapter I emphasized that the concern of the New Historicism to view culture in terms of negotiations, tensions, and competing discourses is relevant to a critical
reception of Hesse’s negative pronouncements on the life of the church, and his proclivity to romantic religion; it is also relevant to the critical analysis of Hesse’s mysticism, and its elucidation in Hesse scholarship. Hesse’s mysticism is a version of Troeltsch’s doctrine of the divine seed. The “innermost I” of which Hesse writes parallels Oetinger’s notion of the sensus communis as the inner organ of the soul (or heart) through which is perceived God. Hesse’s inner ‘I’ is equivalent to Atman, to Tao, to Buddha-nature, to God. So far as Hesse’s mysticism is concerned, the overriding question in Hesse scholarship has not been cultural criticism of Hesse’s romantic, mystical religion, but discussions of influence. Mileck, in the most recent summary of scholarship on Hesse and the East, devotes a good deal of space to the question of whether Hesse’s mysticism is a religious synthesis or more or less a western, neoplatonic mysticism with Eastern coloration, favoring the later position, as do I. He does not, however, reach to the even more fundamental question of religious essentialism promoted by Hesse’s literature. In short, Hesse scholars tacitly accept Hesse’s solution to the problem of pluralism: the power and legitimacy of religious institutions and positivistic forms of religion are viewed as backward and regressive; an eclectic, tolerant synthesis of religious traditions that conceives each as but historically and culturally inflected versions of a transcendent Ur-religion is affirmed. Mileck, who argues that Hesse’s mysticism is basically western in its orientation, does not take the next step to inquire into its cultural impact. If Hesse’s mysticism is not so much synthesis as assimilation of other religious traditions to a fundamentally Neoplatonic or Christian derived version of the doctrine of the divine seed, then his popular reception in the west is not simply “ironic,” as Stelzig suggests, but problematic.
The problematic of 'East and West' in *Siddhartha* is given to us by Hesse in the final chapter. Following Siddhartha’s exposition to Govinda of his doctrine of love there is the following exchange: “[Love] I understand,” said Govinda. “But this is just what the Exalted One recognized as deception.” And he goes on to question Siddhartha’s views on love since they are antithetical to the teachings of Gotama. Then, Siddhartha’s (and Hesse’s) reply: “I know,” said Siddhartha; his smile was glowing like gold. “I know, Govinda…. I cannot deny that my words about love contradict, or seemingly contradict, Gotama’s words…. [but] I know this contradiction is an illusion. I know that I am in agreement with Gotama.”

Hesse thought himself to be fundamentally of Protestant character and his Buddha and Buddhism turn out to be Protestant as well. “And now it appears to me more and more that Buddhism is a kind of Indian reformation equivalent to (or just like) the Christian one”—this from one of Hesse’s letters, and there are many such examples of this view. To invoke sameness, requires that differences be de-emphasized or neglected, in contrast to the repeated stress in post colonial and critical theory upon difference.

Mileck writes that “all forms of mysticism, Eastern and Western—as Hesse himself repeatedly noted in his letters and essays—embrace the idea of reality’s ultimate Oneness, and Hesse was exposed earlier and more to Christianity’s than to the Orient’s form of mysticism.” Here we need tread carefully. The question is not simply whether Hesse was exposed to a western inflected version of a more general religious truth and experience, but whether this notion has modernist, western roots. Its Protestant version has had a tremendous influence on popular conceptions of religion as well as the discipline of religious studies. Richard King, for one, has argued that the western study of Asian religions has privileged the study of religious experience and mysticism, and that that study that been built on the
“essentialist fallacy that the phenomena included in the category of religions (for instance) must have something in common to be meaningfully classified as religious.” Essentialist views of religion and mystical experience have become suspect on methodological grounds, to which has been added a layer of cultural criticism: the very notion of the search for a religious essence emerges out of a Protestant context, where there has been the tendency to count as authentically religious only those phenomena that have something in common; in Hesse’s case, he discounts what has traditionally been central to Buddhism—teachings, doctrine, community, ritual practice, Buddha, Dharma, Sangha (just as he rejects the religious types of ‘church’ and ‘sect’ with which Pietism is associated)—as incidental features of a deeper, universal truth.

In one sense of the term, Hesse embraced pluralism, since he believed, like Oetinger and like his father, that truth could be found in a variety of religious traditions, that all people partake of the sensus communis, and that diversity ought to be celebrated. But in another sense, one that would emphasize pluralism as a process of diversity in which communities maintain an autonomous participation in and development of their traditional culture or special interests, Hesse comes up short. In the end it is not Govinda, Buddhist monk of thirty years, who is closest to the heart of what Gotama realized, taught and practiced, but Siddhartha; and when dominant culture (Siddhartha, the Protestant westerner) is able to supplant the indigenous individual (Govinda) in the area of their own religion and spirituality (Buddhism), then conceptual colonization is complete.

Hesse’s missionary parents and grandparents sought to convert individuals to the Protestant faith; Hesse, in writing Siddhartha, whether intentionally or not, has helped to convert the complex religious tradition of Buddhism into Protestantism. When Hesse wrote
to his sister that “despite all [his] rebelling [he] nevertheless remain[s] the missionary’s
son,” he was perhaps more correct than even he realized.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 4

1 Stelzig, Hermann Hesse’s Fictions of the Self, 175-176.
2 This tendency is especially true of the reading public, whose association of Hesse with the ‘mystical East’ is a fine example of the power of institutions (academia, museums, television and radio, publishers) to shape the reception and interpretation of literature.
3 Mileck, Between the Perils of Politics, 88; 108; 124.
4 As mentioned in the introduction, the study of Hesse has been shaped by scholarly and popular interests, and the kinds of detailed inquiry into the Christian contexts and roots of Hesse literature has not received the same attention as has Hesse’s Asian influences.
5 Reception theory, to which Hans Robert Jauss [Toward an Aesthetic of Reception (U Minnesota P, 1982)] has greatly contributed, is concerned with how a reader actualizes a text. Drawing on the German hermeneutical tradition, Jauss stresses that a reader brings with them a horizon of expectations against which or through which a text is read. For Jauss, the aesthetic value of a text is a measure of how a text first structures such (normative) expectations and then proceeds to disrupt or destroy them. Literary critics and institutions also have a role to play in this process; while they can not change the text, they can alter a reader’s horizon of expectations, which may then lead to a reconsideration of the text. A text’s aesthetic value may change for a reader on the basis of critical interpretations of that text to which they have been exposed. That Siddhartha embodies a fundamentally Protestant ethos is a notion that can disrupt the horizon of expectations that readers and institutions alike have created around Hesse.
6 This passage is to be found on many of the back covers of the widely read Bantam Books editions of Hesse’s works published during the 1970s. Steppenwolf went through 24 printings in the 10 years from 1969 to 1979. Bantam Books did 22 printings of Siddhartha between July 1971 and August 1976—a hot seller indeed. The Buddhist iconography that informs cover designs of Siddhartha, coupled with back cover statements about Hesse’s eastern influences, even on works such as Steppenwolf that have virtually nothing to do with eastern religions, have a powerful impact on the public reception of Hesse in North America.
7 Siddhartha, xii.
10 This is especially true of English language versions of Siddhartha, which tend to use Buddhist imagery in the cover designs.
11 Reference was made to this marketing strategy in the Introduction.
12 On display at the Hermann Hesse Museum in Calw are the cover designs of the various international editions of Hesse’s works. It is principally American published English editions of Siddhartha that use Buddhist iconography in the book design.
14 Briefe 2:48
15 Hesse expressed this view in a letter of 18.1.1925 to Hans Rudolf Schmidt, on the topic of Schmidt’s dissertation (Briefe 2: 96).
16 Hesse, My Belief (1931), 177-179.
17 Schriften 7:587.
Letter of 26 June 1937, MATSID, 229.

'A Guest at the Spa' (1924), in Autobiographical Writings, 121-122. This semi-autobiographical work, which dates from just after the writing of Siddhartha, is a further example of Hesse's desire to reconsider his relationship to (and reaffirm a continuity with) his Christian heritage.

Letter of 27 November to Stefan Zweig, MATSID, 180. In this letter Hesse affirms that the wisdom of Siddhartha is “closer to that of Lao Tse than to Gotama.” The greatest religious influences on Siddhartha are Taoism, the “romantic religion” of the “divine seed” (to which mystical Pietism contributed), and the Pietist inspired emphasis on love.

MATSID, 226.

Letter of 6 April 1923 to Romain Rolland, Soul of the Age, 122.

See Mileck, 136-138, for a discussion of Hesse's 'Abortive Trip to the East.'

MATSID, 226.

Letter of 6 April 1923 to Romain Rolland, Soul of the Age, 122.

As late as 1959 Hesse would recall his childhood days playing in the curio cabinets of the family library. Hesse grandfather had not only “Indian books and writings, but also glass cupboards full of exotic wonders... wooden and bronze gods and animals, silk paintings and a whole closet full of Indian cloths and garments, in a variety of materials and colors. We children too delight in these colorful clothes. We would fight over who got to wear what when we put on our costumes and played our charades” (MATSID, 270). Hesse’s clothing of the religiosity expressed in Siddhartha in the images and ambiance of Indian has deep roots indeed.

"While I don’t feel that Indian wisdom is superior to what Christianity has to offer, I find it somewhat more spiritual, less intolerant, broader, and freer. The Christian truth was forced upon me in my youth in an inadequate form. The Indian Sundar Singh had quite the opposite experience: having been force-fed with Indian doctrines, he came to believe that the splendid old Indian religion had been corrupted, just as I had felt about Christianity. And so he choose Christianity, or rather didn’t choose it but simply became convinced, captivated, and overwhelmed by Jesus’ message of love as I was by the Indian idea of Unity. Other people will find other paths leading to God and the center of the world.” See letter of 5 February 1923, in Soul of the Age, 120.


Küng, "Nahezu ein Christ," 194.

Stelzig, 176.


Stoeffler, German Pietism During the Eighteenth Century, 110. Oetinger’s solution to the split between spirit and matter was suggested to him through his reading of Jacob Böhme. In Böhme Oetinger found “the idea of evolution... the total process of becoming is described by Böhme as a movement toward ultimate harmony.” Oetinger’s struggle to overcome the divide between rationalism and Christian piety, between science and religion, is a key theme of his life’s work. Though he was relentless in his critique of Enlightenment rationalism, he also affirmed elements of it. “It is always important,” Oetinger writes in his autobiography, “to use logic and metaphysics alongside the teachings of the Holy Scriptures; these two go together: Holy Scripture and common sense” (Oetinger, Selbstbiographie, 76-77).

Stoeffler, 107.

See, for example, Heinz Otto Bürger, Die Gedankenwelt der grossen Schwaben; and Ernest Stoeffler, 169-171, who discusses Oetinger’s chief role in assimilating and transmitting the thought of Jacob Böhme, of whom Swabian Pietists were generally fond.

“Herr Classen," 174-198. It was through Classen that Hesse was first exposed to the tradition of speculative thought.

Siddhartha, 5.

Ibid. 32.
Ziolokowski has emphasized the unity of structure and theme in Hesse’s use of the river, whose various crossings represent stages in Siddhartha’s journey, and which symbolically represents Hesse’s unified vision of “simultaneity and totality” (The Novels, 157-170).

Siddhartha, 28.

Erb, “Classical Studies and the German Pietists,” 156.


Oetinger’s thought retained scriptural and Christological foundations, but his positive assessment of the power of reason and the human capacity to perceive truth led to difficulties with orthodoxy. Related to Oetinger’s theorizing the sensus communis as a general, universal human faculty was his advocacy of the heterodox teaching of restoration of all things (apokatastasis panton)—the universal salvation of all humanity and creation, the perfect manifestation of God in corporeal form. Oetinger even proclaimed a theology of restoration from the pulpit. See Weyer-Menkhoff, Christus, das Heil der Natur 199-204. This restoration theology is in direct conflict with the Augsburg Confession, article XVII, which explicitly opposes universalism with a doctrine of the final judgment and separation of those eternally damned and saved. Hesse scholars have not been nuanced enough in their conception of Pietism, which is typically portrayed as being narrow and exclusivist, and have thereby underestimated its influence on Hesse’s ecumenical vision.

Weyer-Menkhoff, “Friedrich Christoph Oetinger,” 242-245.

In the final chapter, we shall go beyond merely considering parallels between the speculative thought of Swabia as represented by Oetinger to consider how Hesse’s utilizes Oetinger as an element in his narrative identity.

Siddhartha, 28.

Siddhartha, 31-32. The theme of leaving behind teachings for the immediacy of one’s own experience is introduced early in the novel, and persists throughout. “And where was Atman to be found, where did it dwell, where did its eternal heart beat? Where else but in one’s own inmost self?” (5). “No teacher could have saved him” (77).


Another parallel is to be found in Hesse’s use of the language of illumination to evoke the vision of total unity. For Oetinger, ‘Herrlichkeit’ (magnificence, splendor, glory) signifies the “interpenetration and reconciliation of spirit and flesh, the ideal of ‘Geistleiblichkeit’ manifested perfectly in Christ” (Hayden-Roy, ‘A Foretaste of Heaven,’ 225). It is generally true in Hesse’s literature that moments of profound realization are bathed in the language of radiance and illumination: “I am going into the forest, I am going into the unity,” said Vasudeva, beaming [strahlend]. Beaming he went away” (106). Siddhartha saw his “countenance aglow, it hovered, glowing.... Bright shone Vasudeva’s smile as he gazed at his friend” (105).

“Vergestaltung, Überformung, Salbung und Verwandlung der Natur des Erkennenden in die Natur des Erkannten...” (Oetinger, cited in Hayden-Roy, 48). Oetinger would later subsume the notion of a Zentralschau, as a special case of power of sensus communis, see Weyer-Menhoff, Christus: Heil der Natur, 109). The themes or motifs of totality [Ganzheit] and unity (or oneness) [Einheit] are, as Heinz Otto Bürger has shown, central to the tradition of speculative thought in Swabia. The strong dualisms or sets of tensions in Hesse’s thought are often commented upon. Hans Jürg Lüti’s Hermann Hesse, Natur und Geist (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1970) is devoted to tracing the “problematic of Nature and Spirit” in Hesse’s work (8), certainly a key themes of Hesse’s corpus. But aside from brief comparisons with the thought of Novalis, Lüti does not situate this problematic in the context of Swabian thought. Granted, his aim was not to unpack social-historical influences on Hesse’s thought; rather, he was concerned to point out a central, unifying structural theme in Hesse’s fiction. But if we take that backward step, we find that the theme of ‘Natur und Geist’ has, for centuries, been central to religious and intellectual culture in Swabia, including Swabian Pietism; see Bürger, 20.

Hayden-Roy, 49.

Siddhartha, 101.
Ziolkoski, 161. Ziolkowski presents a strong argument against reading the work as being indebted to a Buddhist worldview; he further rejects the attempt to see in the work's structural features—two sections of four chapters—any commitment any Hesse's part to affirming the Four Nobel Truths and the Eightfold path of Buddhist teachings. The “highest lesson of the novel” that everyone “must find their own way in life, that no [one’s] path can be prescribed” is a direct contradiction of Buddhism (176). It is difficult to argue that a work which in principle rejects the three jewels of Buddha, Dharma, Sangha can be in any way identified as a Buddhist work, though Hesse would like to have us believe that in principle and in essence there is no difference between the fundamentals of the world’s religions.

Oetinger, 37. For Oetinger, God is the “source of life working in all and perceptible in all” (Erb 135). Oetinger is fond of the notion of “all in all” that is found in the Pauline letters (I Cor. 15:28; Eph. 1:23; Col. 1:11), and his adoption and dissemination of Böhmist ideas got him into trouble with orthodoxy and the Württemberg Consistory, especially following his publication of translations of excerpts of Swedenborg’s Arcana coelestia. The Consistory ordered copies confiscated and that all future writings be submitted and subject to censure before being published. Oetinger generally got around this by publishing under a pseudonym and outside of Swabia.


Oetinger affirmed that God could be known through nature (Erb, 155; Schäfer, 236) and in Siddhartha the river is the locus of whatever wisdom or truth Siddhartha achieves.

Oetinger rejected Leibniz’s notion of the monad as something completely simple. His thought, under the influence of Böhme, emphasizes the continuous “streit” (strife or dynamic tension) between mutually opposing tendencies or forces. Unity for Böhme did not entail bringing opposites together, but holding them in tension. Tension or ‘streit’ is the driving force of God as becoming.


Truth and Method, 27.

Siddhartha, 85. The theme of silence is prevalent in the novel, and is related to the Pietist evocation of Stille—quietude. When Hesse writes that Siddhartha learned from the river “how to listen, how to listen with a still heart, with an expectant, open soul, without passion, without desire, without judgment, without opinion,” he employs a characteristically Pietist diction (Siddhartha, 83). The Pietist tone of this passage is clearer in the original German: “Vor allem lernte er [Siddhartha] von ihm [Vasudeva] das Zuhören, das Lauschen mit sillem Herzen, mit wartender, geöffneter Seele, ohne Leidenschaft, ohne Wunsch, ohne Urteil, ohne Meinung” (Siddhartha, Werke, 5: 436). Of course, Pietism is not the only influence at work in the book. Just a few pages later we read how the “soft is stronger than hard, water stronger than rock, love stronger than force.” This is a clear reference to Lao Tzu’s Tao Te Ching, but with an added touch of Pietistic love.

Stoefferle 110. Oetinger affirmed that God could be known through nature (Erb, 155; Schäfer, 236) and in Siddhartha the river is the locus of whatever wisdom or truth Siddhartha achieves.

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The question of spiritual pride, as we have seen, is prominent in Peter Camenzind, and among Hans Giebenrath’s afflictions is his succumbing to the vice of ambition. The cobbler Flaig, we recall, instructs Hans to be wary of the frock coat’s cleverness, which he felt had replaced their faith in God. The sins of spiritual pride and arrogance were common concerns within Pietist culture, and can be found in works as varied as Francke’s autobiography and Arnold’s History of the Churches and Heretics.

See Weyer-Menkhoff, 42.


Bürgers, 153.

Oetinger, cited in Weyer-Menkhoff, 138. Pietists, in their efforts to revivify inner, spiritual life, were concerned with cultivating a receptive soul. As mentioned in Chapter Two, the most common description of this state is “Stille,” or quietude. Pietists were known as “stilten im lande,” and typical of Pietist literature is the contrast between the quietude of the soul and the confusion of the world. Siddhartha’s realization of unity takes place in a state of “Stille.” He and Vasudeva are sitting quietly together, listening; the stopping of thinking, the unmoving listener is emphasized. Vasudeva listens “with his face still” Siddhartha realizes the “power of Vasudeva’s listening.” Vasudeva repeatedly tells him to listen again to river. “Siddhartha listened. He was now
all listener, completely one with listening, completely empty, completely receptive” (105). And what he hears and sees is total unity, which Hesse elsewhere described as “being pervaded by God” (Briefe 2:48).


“The sensus communis is an intuitive grasp of the whole and requires before its exercise no analytic or rationalistic acts. Reason only follows it.” See Erb, 156.

Another close epistemological parallel between Oetinger and Hesse is found in their respective interests in music. Oetinger derived a theory of language based on musical harmony, whose principles correspond to various forces in the human soul (see Hayden-Roy, 47). Hesse often employs the image of musical harmony in his writing, and even deliberately tried to write his narratives as musical scores whose melodies and harmonies integrate or hold together various tensions.


“Oetinger counted the authors of classical antiquity as witnesses to the sensus communis. Schäfer notes that “as Christian theologian he could build their testimony into his system.” Cicero was correct, claims Oetinger, “when he... writes that all people have wisdom written in their hearts” (Schäfer, 235-236).

Stoeffler, 112.


Hesse, *Werke* 11: 50


*MATSID*, 207. Hugo Ball, writing in 1933, stated his hope that Hesse scholars would take to heart the works of Hesse’s father in their interpretations of *Siddhartha*: “…the writings of [Hesse’s] father.... contain a good bit of the genesis and background to *Siddhartha*” (128). While it has been recognized that Hesse’s interest in Lao Tzu was stimulated by his father, I have yet to find an interpretation of *Siddhartha* that draws on Johannes Hesse’s study of Lao Tzu, *Lao Tsze: Ein vorchristlicher Wahrheitzeuge* (Basel: Basler Missionbuchhandlung, 1914).


*MATSID*, 340

As discussed in the previous chapter, Troeltsch’s typology is often understood as representing a teleological development in which doctrinal boundaries are transcended in favor of universal principle; the former position is understood to be narrow and backward, the later living and progressive. This is relevant not just to just Hesse’s criticism of the church, but to his mysticism as well. For all the similarities between Oetinger’s sensus communis and Hesse “innermost I,” it should be recognized that Oetinger retains Christological and scriptural foundations to his theology. Even though Hesse is indebted to the doctrine of the divine seed, he is also concerned to overturn those versions of it that retain a confessional basis, and Hesse scholars have overwhelmingly affirmed Hesse’s rejection of dogmatic, historically specific religion, implicitly justifying this affirmation with an evolutionary conception of religion toward universalism.

*Mileck*, *Between the Perils of Politics*, 89-107

*Siddhartha*, 113-114.

*MATSID*, 16.

“...I was often called a ‘Buddhist.’ At this I could only laugh, for at bottom I knew there was no religion from which I was further removed. And yet there is something accurate, a grain of truth hidden in this, which I first recognized somewhat later.... It was not by accident alone that I was born the son of pious Protestants; I am a Protestant by temperament and nature as well (to which my deep antipathy to the present Protestant
denominations is no contradiction whatsoever). For the true Protestant is in opposition to his own church just as he is to every other, since his nature constrains him to affirm becoming above being. And in this Buddha, too, was certainly a Protestant" (Life Story, Briefly Told, 55).

92 It is, for example, a rather large leap to equate Buddhist notions of impermanence, emptiness, and no-self to Hesse's *unio mystica* of One God with One Soul.

93 Mileck, Between the Perils of Politics, 117. A unity beyond the plurality of world religions was certainly Hesse's view, and *Siddhartha* is, as Hesse writes, "the confession of man of Christian heritage and education, who early on left the church and endeavored to understand other religions, especially the Indian and Chinese faith-worlds. I searched to get to the bottom of what all confessions and all human forms of piety have in common, what stands above all national differences, for what can be believed and venerated by every race and each individual" (Werke 11, 50). Statements of Hesse's belief in one transcendent deity and one transcendent *ur-religion* are scattered throughout his collected works and letters. In "Indian Brahmanism," in "Vedic Yoga," in the "Buddhist conception of Nirvana," in the "symbolism of Lao Tzu,"—"gradually and with pauses of years and decades" Hesse "found the same interpretation of human life among the Hindus, the Chinese, and the Christians.... Nothing [is] so valuable and comforting as the realization that beneath the division in race, color, language, and culture there lies a unity, that there are not various peoples and minds but only One Humanity, only One Spirit" (A Bit of Theology, 191). Two other examples: "There is, of course, only one God, one truth, but each people, each age, and each individual perceive it differently, and there are new forms evolving constantly to express that truth. One of the most beautiful and purest forms is undoubtedly the New Testament—i.e., the Gospels and, to a lesser extent, the Pauline Epistles. There are some proverbs in the New Testament and also in Lao-tse, Buddha, and the Upanishads which rank among the truest, most concise and lively insights that man has ever recognized and articulated" (Soul of the Age, 120). "That which Jesus named the Kingdom of God, what the Chinese name Tao... expresses the notion of the secret unity of all life. This notion or idea is given shape and venerated in many different images, it has many names, one of which is the name: God" (MATSID, 220).


95 Some examples: "What man is and could be, the manner in which one can acquire meaning and sanctify life, all religions have sought this..." (MATSID, 227). "I continue... as always to have faith in the living God and remain convinced of his existence, because he appeared not once and [not just in a uniquely particular] place, but rather a hundreds of times in hundreds of forms, images and languages" (MATSID, 245). You are Christian in the sense that you believe in the uniqueness of Christianity, and that it alone has a claim to true faith. For you the faithful of other religions are to be pitied because they have no Savior and Redeemer. But such claims, at least in my view and on the basis of my experience, are in error. The Japanese Buddhist monk or the Hindu who puts faith in Krishna lives and dies with his beliefs with as much piety, trust, and security as does a Christian.... One can love Jesus and still count as valid the other ways to blessedness that God has shown to humanity (MATSID, 255).


97 MATSID, 212.
CHAPTER 5
‘BREAKING THE WILL’

[Though by nature a lamb and as docile as a soap bubble, I have always behaved rebelliously toward commandments of every sort, especially during my youth.
- Hermann Hesse, Life Story, Briefly Told]

A leitmotif of Hesse’s corpus is his affirmation of the virtue of self-will (Eigensinn).

“Self-will is Hesse’s chief article of faith, his ethical touchstone for value and integrity in all areas of human life... [and] the core of whatever teachings he wished to impart in his writings.”

The intellectual history of early twentieth-century Europe was shaped by consideration of the relationship between the creative individual and what was increasingly coming to be seen as a flat, one dimensional society. Hesse’s literary oeuvre is informed by

the necessity of the individual to remain true to one’s self, rather than succumb to the intense pressures of socialization enforced by church, state, and modern industry and bureaucratization. In an era dominated by violent collectivities Eigensinn was the basis of Hesse’s moral stance.

The foundation on which the architecture of Hesse’s self-will was to be built was the

inner voice, the still point within amidst the sound and fury of a crazed world that would provide the individual contact with spiritual and moral forces. The “self-willed man... values only one thing, the mysterious power in himself which bids him live and helps him to grow.... His only living destiny is the silent, ungainsayable law in his own heart, which comfortable habits make it so hard to obey but which to the self-willed man is destiny and godhead.”

Nietzsche’s influence on Hesse’s virtue of self-will is unmistakable. In
“Zarathustra’s Return,” written in 1919, Hesse explicitly invoked the name of Nietzsche as an exemplar of “a German spirit, a German courage, [and] a German manhood” that had been all but completely lost to the “uproar of the herd” and the “mass enthusiasm” for war.⁵

One path into understanding and interpreting Hesse’s affirmation of radical individualism would be to highlight such influences as the intellectual legacy of Nietzsche, the turn-of-the-century sense of cultural decline, and concern over the values of the ‘mass’ or ‘herd’ society, associated with industrialization, rationalization, and bureaucratization. But this is not the route we will follow. Hesse’s persistent emphasis on self-will has another important context. “Hesse’s celebrated extolment of the individual and self-willedness (Eigensinn) was but a contrary response to Pietism’s self-effacement and suppression of the will.”¹⁶ The counterpart to Hesse’s advocacy of self-will is his frequent criticism of the Pietist notion of ‘breaking the will,’ a notion that supplies the theme of this chapter.

While reference to ‘breaking the will’ can be found in many of Hesse’s writings, he seems to have been most preoccupied with understanding its impact on his life during the mid 1920s, following the completion of Siddhartha. In his post-Siddhartha period, Hesse’s writings took a radically confessionalist turn, as Hesse poured his inner life into autobiographical essays and therapeutic fiction. Steppenwolf is one of Hesse’s most widely read and esteemed works, and is strongly autobiographical. The theme of ‘breaking the will’ is central to the novel, and our aim in this chapter is to better understand Hesse’s efforts to deal with that element of the Pietist world in which he was raised that he felt had done him great harm. If Hesse’s “turning back to Christianity” informed his writing of Siddhartha, reflection on his Pietist heritage was no less a concern in his next major novel. In the first section, background to what Hesse calls the “Pietist principle” of “breaking the will” is
developed by way of a brief look at Pietist theology, anthropology, and narrative. In the
second section we examine the suspicion of self-will in Hesse’s family and several of
Hesse’s references to ‘breaking the will.’ In the third section, we focus specifically on the
theme of ‘breaking the will’ in *Steppenwolf* (1927), the product of, as Hesse described it, the
“journey through the hell of myself.”

**Natural Will and Divine Will**

Pietists generally stood firmly in the Lutheran theological tradition of justification by
grace through faith, with its inherent conception of humanity being in a state of sin. But as
Martin Schmidt first argued, one of the chief theological innovations of the Pietist movement
was its emphasis on an experiential based theology of *regeneration* or *rebirth*. In their
efforts to revivify the church and Christian life, Pietists such as Philip Jacob Spener took an
interest in subjective experience. Whereas Orthodoxy granted that simple faith in the
promises of Christ effected salvation, Pietists sought to cultivate the actual experience of
salvation, which was variously associated with notions such as ‘rebirth,’ the ‘new man in
Christ,’ or ‘conversion’:

If one subject of our Christianity is necessary it is certainly the one of the new birth, in which our
conversion, justification, and the beginning of our sanctification likewise come to us. It is also the
cause of all remaining sanctification or the fountain out of which must necessarily flow everything that
in our entire lives is good or which happens to us.
The language used here by Spener, that the experience of “new birth” is the “cause” of “justification,” and “sanctification” is representative of persistent tensions between Pietist and Orthodox camps; for it can be read as implying that without having had this religious experience one is cut off from God’s grace. Spener’s position is likely best understood not as a deliberate undermining of Orthodox Lutheran theology but as the attempt to infuse faith with the vitality of living experience; the experience of rebirth was seen to be a motivating source from which would spring the living of a Christian life of love and practical charity.\textsuperscript{10}

The theme of rebirth found a home among many prominent Swabian Pietists.\textsuperscript{11} Magnus Friedrich Roos (1727-1803)\textsuperscript{12}, for example, wrote: “The kingdom of God requires new hearts, new people, [and] new creatures. Who desires to see it and enter it has to become a new person through rebirth. Who desires to stay in it must preserve the spiritual life that he received through rebirth.”\textsuperscript{13} An important aspect of Spener’s understanding of rebirth, and one that is implicit in this short passage from Roos, is that a ‘new order’ or a ‘new nature’ is created within the believer. More than merely effecting forgiveness of sin, “the New Birth provides for the restoration of the Imago Dei.”\textsuperscript{14} This was different from Luther’s forensic theology in which all people are sinners, judged guilty of sin in the eyes of God, but made righteous through God’s forgiving grace. For Luther, “the faithful Christian is ‘simultaneously sinner and just’—‘simul peccator et iustus.’”\textsuperscript{15} Justification meant God’s declaration of acceptance or forgiveness because of Christ’s righteousness, but not the inherent transformation of the individual being. For Pietists, rebirth modified—or, at the very least, assuaged—this dualistic position, holding forth the possibility of the transformation of a tainted human nature. Rebirth initiates a process of sanctification whereby the believer is continuously renovated (inwardly and outwardly) in the image of Christ.\textsuperscript{16}
This emphasis on rebirth infused Pietism with a subjective, experiential intensity. For grace to have any real theological meaning, the presence of sin is required. Similarly, the experience of forgiveness could only be fully realized from the perspective of near total despair. Though awareness of sin has been “an indispensable element in Christian devotion and spirituality from the beginning,” Pietist culture emphasized the importance of the experience of one’s own sin. Hymnody, worship, journals and diaries, and the enclosed circle of the conventicle were means by which to induce an awareness of sin as angst and despair over the state of one’s soul; in this cultivation of the sense of one’s own sinful state we are approaching the relevance and meaning within Pietist circles of ‘breaking the will.’

For the “new man in Christ” to be born, for one’s Christian nature to emerge, the depravity of the human will (or the ‘natural man’), mired in original sin, must first be recognized, broken, and regenerated in Christ. In Pietist autobiographies (such as J.H. Reitz’s History of the Reborn) there is frequent mention made of one’s sin and (or ungodliness) as an inborn condition against which one must struggle on the way to God and a truly devout life. August Hermann Francke (1663-1727) frequently referred to himself as a “miserable worm,” and was “insistent... concerning the utter depravity of the soul.” While the notion of the soul’s “depravity” did not in its formal sense refer to actual sinful acts but rather to “the inability to institute a relation with God on the basis of human activity,” it nevertheless came to be associated with particular kinds of activities and, further, with the stubborn refusal to see in these activities the workings of one’s own sin.

The tenor of German Pietism was strongly shaped by Calvinism. From the Reformed tradition Pietism inherited an emphasis on moral earnestness, and a literature focusing on the detailed observation of states of “conscience, the scrutinization of daily life, and the
formulation of rules of living.” Much of this Reformed influence was first mediated to German Pietists through English Puritanism. Puritan works such as Lewis Bayly’s *Praxis Pietatis* (1611), Thomas Taylor’s *A Man in Christ or a New Creature* (1629), and William Law’s *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life* (1728) were models for Pietist literature, theology, and moral life. While German Lutherans tended to have a quietistic attitude towards the social and political realm, within the Reformed churches “there was a profound sense of the need for reordering the total life of the community into a truly Christian society.” Francke would bring his vision of a Christian society with him to Halle, and the starting point was education. The historical origin and context of Hesse’s references to ‘breaking the will’ or the ‘natural man’ are most likely to be found in the pedagogical reforms of Francke, which had a widespread influence throughout Germany.

Francke designed his schools and pedagogy around the conviction that “breaking the child’s ‘natural will’ as quickly as possible was the necessary first step in leading him or her away from the snares of the world toward the goal of subordination to the divine will.” To achieve this, children were sequestered in boarding schools to isolate them from the ill effects of worldly immoralities; they were exposed to Pietist spirituality through intensive Biblical study, religious instruction, and catechism; they were exhorted to practice ascetic self-denial and charity toward others; they were instructed only by born again Christian teachers, and when necessary, subjected to corporal punishment to correct ill behavior; they were forbidden to participate in “free wheeling bodily sport or exercise” and also “prohibited [from] such diversions as dancing, attending plays, reading unedifying books, and writing secret letters.” Certainly Hesse’s schooling in Württemberg was different from that in eighteenth-century Halle. But Francke’s commitment to ‘breaking the will’ and his
suspicious rejection of the “snares of the world” (sport, games, theatre, dance, poetry) 
nevertheless reflects more generalized Pietist attitudes towards sin. “Although the Pietists of 
old Württemberg made a significant contribution to literature and the sciences, they 
condemned all other facets of culture as amusements and wastes of time. Music, architecture, 
painting, sculpture and dance were in their eyes to be scorned as part of the kingdom of Satan...”31 In particular, throughout Pietist Württemberg, as in other Pietist centers such as 
Halle, dancing and theater were understood to condone and promote a licentious life style,32 
and Pietists made a concerted effort to ban both theatre and dance. It is precisely this ethos 
that Hesse reacted against in his adolescence, and that he felt did him severe harm.

In addition to identifying and ridding oneself of the desire to partake of sinful kinds 
of activities, rebirth required a further step—for what was at stake was not merely the leading 
of a morally sound life, but recognition of the presence of sin itself. For Francke it was 
necessary to distinguish between “mere Morality and true Religion; betwixt the moral honest 
Man and the found Believer, who, from a deep conviction of the Depravity of his Nature and 
the Errors of his Life, has learned to hate Sin from his Heart, and lives by the Faith of the Son 
of God.”33 The living of an otherwise morally upright life, in other words, was still 
insufficient: one must recognize the “depravity” of one’s fundamental nature, and the 
inability to do anything about this save through accepting both God’s condemning judgment 
and the loving grace bestowed through faith in the Son of God; without this final act of faith 
the ‘natural will’ could not be regenerated in the image of God.

‘Breaking the will’ and ‘rebirth’ were not only theological and anthropological 
foundations of Pietist thought—they are part of a narrative script or scenario around which 
lives were fashioned. Within Pietist culture trouble, angst, and doubt were understood to be
instructive, providing the opportunity for the believer to better oneself and deepen their faith through trial by fire. The course of one’s life was often inscribed within the overarching pattern discerned within the Biblical narrative; a falling away from God and a loss of faith, awareness of sin and guilt, followed by restoration of the divine image in one’s soul and reunion with God and loved ones. The birth of a new being in Christ required an ‘old self’ that was to be transformed—the natural, human self corrupted by sin. The Biblical images of God as both the kindly father providing guidance and love in times of need and the chastising father capable of using the rod to correct the direction of errant souls are prominent in Pietist literature. Life was typically conceived as entailing the schooling of the soul; the motif of pilgrimage coupled with narratives such as that of the Prodigal Son (one of Hesse’s favorite storylines) provided a powerful interpretive and moral framework from which to understand the course of one’s life and the experiences of struggle with sin, repentance, and grace.

In this highly literary religious culture, with strong autobiographical and confessional impulses, ‘breaking the will’ was a fundamental component of a life ‘scenario’ around which Pietists fashioned self-reflection and life stories. ‘Scenario’ is a term drawn from Italian drama, where actors are given not a fixed script but rather improvise around a stock plot, or scenario. Metaphorically applied to a culture or to a person’s life, ‘scenario’ refers to those more or less structured sequences of events through which the individual passes; in the process one’s character, values, and worldview are formed, interaction with the social environment takes place, one’s destiny is worked out. Different kinds of scenarios can be identified: a biological scenario, for example, may include the movement from infancy to
childhood, adolescence, adult maturity, old age, and death; a ritual scenario may include baptism, confirmation, marriage, and funeral.

Within Hesse’s Pietist religious culture, ‘breaking the will’ was an element of life story, part of the spiritual scenario forming the movement from the old, natural, instinctual self to the ‘new man in Christ’: a period of willful rebelliousness against parents and authority (and, by extension, against God) through which one must pass en route to full conversion and full participation in Pietist life and community. Typically, this phase in the spiritual scenario corresponded to the period of adolescence or young adulthood in the biological scenario, the entrance into advanced schooling within the cultural scenario, and the entrance into Christian community marked in the ritual scenario with the rite of confirmation. Christoph Friedrich Oetinger, for example, in his Selbstbiographie (1762), describes his tumultuous passage through school, his hesitancy and reluctance to serve the church as a pastor, and his doubt over matters of faith. In the end, Oetinger experiences “conversion,” which he connects to an early mystical experience in childhood, symbolizing the reunion of the soul with God in its state of innocence.37 We will look at Oetinger’s autobiography in detail in the next chapter, as it is one Hesse was drawn to, and which he utilized in crafting his story of Joseph Knecht, Master of The Glass Bead Game. Joseph Knecht’s (and Hesse’s) religious life story follows the same basic pattern as that of Oetinger, minus the experience of full conversion. Similarly, Hesse’s short story on the troubled seminary students Friedrich Hölderlin, Eduard Mörike and Wilhelm Waiblinger is built around the tension between religious and culturally accepted scenarios and the desires of these aspiring poets. Though Hesse would reject the doctrine of ‘breaking the will’ it would nevertheless provide him with a fundamental motif of his thought and literature; ‘breaking the will’ was the nodal point
around which Hesse’s repeated fictionalizations of the exemplary event of Maulbronn would be fashioned.

In his literature Hesse would both criticize and assimilate various elements of the Pietist conception of breaking the ‘natural man.’ As self-will was not a personality trait extolled in Hesse’s cultural and religious milieu, Hesse turned elsewhere to ground this ideal. Eigensinn is “a truth [Hesse] found exemplified in different ways in Eastern religion and in Jungian psychology.”38 Ultimately, however, Hesse’s narrative journey would lead him to the attempt to harmonize his own virtue of self-will with the Pietist conception of giving up the self—a desire for harmonization informed by Hesse’s persistent need to justify himself and validate his radically individualistic and aesthetic path before parental imagoes. Hesse’s writings of the 1930s, the focus of our final chapter, were informed by precisely such desires. But before such reconciliation could take place, Hesse would have to pass through the fire of Steppenwolf.

Hesse did not need to leave the circle of his family to find examples of the struggle with self-will. Hesse’s uncle, Paul Gundert, attended Maulbronn and hated it, as he wrote in a letter home to his father: “It would be curious if God wanted something from me since I have said no to him for so long. I can not do otherwise; to lie to you, and say that things are good here, I cannot do; I prefer to tell you straightaway that I am a beast and therefore lost.”39 Paul Gundert’s language, that he is a “beast,” reflects the distinction in Pietist circles between the ‘natural’ self and the Christian self. In the end Paul Gundert took his place as an active member of the Pietist community, but this required the overcoming of his ‘beastliness.’40

As part of his recollections of childhood and the world of his family, Hesse documented the stories of his family’s battles with self-will, and through his pen and
imagination they became foreshadowings of the struggles that would be visited on the Prodigal Son who, cast out of the family business and faith, was forever trying to find his way back home. The model Pietist scholar Hermann Gundert, Hesse recalls, “lived for a time in that dangerous climate” of self-will; he too “once walked in the path of Hölderlin, Hegel, and Mörike, had copied out with a freshly cut goosefeather quill the piano arrangement of *The Magic Flute*, had written poems, and even on one occasion indulged in a temperamental journey.”\(^1\) Within Pietist culture, willful rebelliousness was understood as part of one’s spiritual development, but it was to be ultimately overcome through the experience of rebirth or conversion. Hermann Gundert’s romantic phase was “the most confused and imperiled period of his life, shortly before this youth’s ‘conversion’ caused the enthusiastic pantheist to decide upon a life henceforth devoted to missionary work in India.”\(^2\) Clearly, Hesse saw in his grandfather’s Romantic streak the biological and spiritual seeds of his own artistic self-will. In his late recollection “Beschwörungen” (1954), Hesse writes of the irruption of self-will in his mother during her adolescence, and its harsh suppression: “she had... been for some time full of obstinacy and rebellion toward the establishment and lived through a period of worldliness, revolt and spiritual haughtiness for which she was soon punished and humiliated to the point of danger.”\(^3\) In recollecting these periods of rebelliousness in the lives of his grandfather and mother, Hesse was able to forge links to their spirits, and simultaneously identify the point of departure between family and son; and, in the case of his mother, he would also suggest the implicit dangers to the soul inherent in the harshness with which Pietist culture treated any signs of “worldliness, revolt and spiritual haughtiness.”
A Ruined Life

Hesse, it seems, was cursed and blessed with the combination of a keen intellect, poetic talent, and obstinate temperament: the later two gifts would inevitably bring him into conflict with the Pietist ethos of his family. When he was just two years old, Marie Hesse would write how “little Hermann is developing very rapidly, immediately recognizes all pictures, be they of China, Africa, or India; is very clever and entertaining, but his self-will [Eigensinn] and obstinacy are downright extraordinary.” Marie Hesse’s observations of her child’s abilities and temperament, as Stelzig has emphasized, reveal an “admixture of anxiety about and love for this problem child.” Young Hermann was full of energy and there were frequent battles of wills:

Hermann is going to kindergarten; his excitable temperament is giving us much trouble. But he is often so cute and so tender and dear, that he is close to my heart.

[T]here’s a remarkable struggling and battling with the boy. The day before yesterday I had to pray with him two extra times during the day that our dear Savior will still make him ‘terribly sweet.’ Immediately after this he beat and bit his patient little Adele, and when I spoke to him about it, he said, ‘Ha, then let God make me terribly sweet, I don’t seem to have the knack for it.’ True, I can recall similar feelings from my childhood.

[To her husband Johannes] pray with me for little Hermann, and pray for me, that I gain the strength to raise him. It seems to me as if even my physical strength weren’t sufficient; the lad has a life, a giant’s strength, a mighty will, and really an amazing understanding for his four years. Where will it lead? It really eats away at my life, this inner struggle against his high, tyrant’s spirit, his impassioned raging and pushing... God has to take this proud will in hand, then something noble and splendid can come of it; but I shudder to think what a false or weak education could make of this passionate human being.

Evening. Finally Hermann is sleeping, after I had to use the rod for his jumping out of bed. He lies there like a tired hero.... He is barely awake in the morning and everything excites him; and even if he has taken long walks and done who-knows-what, he always has energy to spare.
Today I took real pleasure in the children, who played together so sweetly and quietly... Such peaceful hours are truly refreshing and allow me to hope that my wild imp is still capable of being tamed.  

Marie Hesse’s use of the term “Eigensinn” to describe her son’s character refers to more than mere ‘obstinacy.’ Within Pietist culture, “Eigensinn” was representative of the natural will that must be broken if one is to live a Christian life, hence Marie Hesse’s foreboding (“where will it lead?”) and her hope that the “wild imp” can be “tamed.” Hesse’s father, in his Lebenslauf, makes it clear that self-will was something to be overcome. Johannes Hesse speaks directly of “Eigensinn” and “eigenwilligkeit” as vices standing in opposition to the “entindividualisierten Menschen,” the “de-individualized persons” who find their total being and concern in God.  

Hesse’s childhood, as he often recalled, was filled with warmth and love. But as he came of age, Hesse entered, like his uncle, his grandfather, and mother, like Oetinger, Hölderlin and Mörike, into that “dangerous climate” of conflict between one’s own hopes and dreams for themselves and the scenarios and paths established by tradition and family expectations. Hesse’s self-will was further complicated by the fact that it was calling him to a vocation as a poet, into the very aesthetic realm which in Pietist circles was understood to be the epitome of self-will and the locus of sin: the inner demand to be a poet and the family’s demand to serve God in the proper fashion were on a collision course, and they would meet in the wreck of Maulbronn.  

The causes of Hesse’s flight from Maulbronn and the sources of the subsequently strained relationship between son and family are complex, but an important context is the clash between Hesse’s poetic inclinations and the family’s ‘reading’ of and response to their son’s rebellious behavior. For his family, the Maulbronn affair and its aftermath were very much framed within the narrative and the theology of ‘breaking the will.’ The crafty
grandfather Gundert saw the writing on the wall, when he wrote to his son that Hermann had “sent Adele a little book of his poetry. Now it begins.” The “it” Hermann Gundert refers to is his grandson’s fascination for the same Romanticism that he too experienced before his final conversion to Pietism. Gundert’s forebodings were certainly informed by his awareness of previous difficulties in harnessing the boy’s intellect and wild energy; but it also reflects his understanding of the natural course of spiritual development in the life of a Pietist: his own will had to be broken, as did that of his sons and daughter; and not surprisingly, given his impishness and Romantic inclinations, Hesse, too, would go through it.

Gundert’s laconic comment to his wayward grandson following the flight from Maulbronn—“I hear that you’ve just taken a little genius journey”—also carries a tone of gentle condescension. The term genius implies the sense of the unique individual; one’s genius includes the gifts and aptitudes that distinguish the individual from others, that which sets one apart from the merely normal. But in Hesse’s Pietist milieu, as his father wrote, there was the requirement that one’s “I [ich] disappear in a corporate community.” In the period of late Pietism a prominent pedagogical and evangelical theme was the distinction between “der breit Weg” and “der schmale Weg”—the wide and the narrow path. The Biblical source for the distinction is Matthew 7:13-14: “Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is easy, that leads to destruction, and those who enter it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard, that leads to life, and those that find it are few.” The narrow gate, the narrow path, was associated with the giving up of one’s ‘I,’ with the stubborn insistence on “going one’s own way” [um eigene Wege zu gehen], as Johannes Hesse explained in a letter to his stepson Karl Isenberg. The letter dates from the period after Hermann had left Stetten and was attempting to complete the gymnasium in Cannstatt:
I have never thrown you or Theodor or Hermann aside because of your refusal to believe in this or that; but what pained me in my innermost soul is the manner in which you, in part with intent, in part with recklessness and indifference, emancipated yourselves from us parents and grandparents in order to go your own way. This lacked love, trust, [and the] faith that we truly mean the best for you, that God gave us to you, and that you need us. At the moment we need yours and Theodor’s [love, trust, and faith] with regard to your other siblings, especially Hermann. If you would join us in begging God to grant the poor boy a good turn, if you would [help] us prove to him that there is only one way to good fortune, namely, the narrow [schmaled] way, then I would be able to pray and hope for him with greater confidence.49

Johannes Hesse’s missives paid off; two weeks later Hesse’s brother Theodor sent a letter urging him to take the narrow path and return to the fold. It was his own “pessimism” toward life, Theo explained, that “in the end lead me back to the main and root idea of Christianity: to the giving up of the self [zum Selbstaufgeben], just as it did Karl.”50

During the period between Hesse’s premature departure from Maulbronn and his first success as a writer there were repeated attempts on the part of his family to encourage repentance and a return to God’s grace. The response of Hesse’s parents to their son’s aberrant and assertive behavior was to combine harsh judgments and threats with loving concern:

... there is no time for such escapades. The main concern is this: how will things now proceed in Maulbronn? Is something similar in store? Can you come through this with any honor? Will God forgive you?... Rest assured, when things like this happen, it comes before a court. There will be an investigation and questions. Everything—even hidden details—will be brought into the light. But this is a blessing as soon as one takes it seriously and accepts one’s failings with all humility, taking oneself to court more severely than others do... then it is a blessing.51

I hope and wish from the heart that you feel better there [in Stetten]. It is a new beginning that you are making and through God’s grace everything can be set right. Like you I bear life heavily and constantly feel the most painful abyss between ideality and reality; but so far I have found repeatedly confirmed: ‘He who gives clouds, air and winds their path, course, and road, will also find ways that
my (your) feet can go.' I hope you also come to have this experience. God hears the cries of those in distress and will not leave us in everlasting anxiety.\textsuperscript{52}

There is a sense in which Hesse's exhibition of adolescent self-will was understood within the family as a necessary phase of spiritual life. The child, tainted with original sin (manifestly present in his tremendous \textit{Eigensinn}), must pass through a period of distress, and, through steadfast faith (that "God... will not leave us in everlasting anxiety") and an attitude of repentance ("accept[ing] one's failings with all humility, taking oneself to court more severely than others do") a "new beginning" would result: the entire affair, in fact, is a "blessing." Hesse's responses to the pleas of his family ranged from bitter defiance to acquiescence and guilt for having let them down:

Poor mother, forgive me, forgive your fallen son; forgive me, if you love me, if you believe that there's a divine spark in me yet. These roads, these meadows where I once played as a child, seem to be reproaching me, now that I'm no longer a child or even a son. I'm just a miserable being who rails against man and fate and cannot and will not ever love himself. Please, mother, don't mention the letter to anybody, especially not Grandfather, or the people in Basel. You alone may forgive me. Walking along the great, flowing Rhine, I have often imagined how wonderful it would be to perish in these dear, familiar waves. My life and my sins would vanish into oblivion. But best of mothers, I can still find some respite, a haven, in your heart. If anybody understands me, it is you.... I realize now how sick I am, not just physically, but in the core of my being, in my very heart.\textsuperscript{53}

Like Francke, Hesse was a "miserable worm." The feeling of being rotten to the core, sick in one's very heart, yet aware of the presence of the "divine spark" capable of regenerating the corrupt soul is standard Pietist fare.

Hesse would assimilate much of the Pietist worldview concerning the sin of spiritual pride associated with self-will. In \textit{Peter Camenzind}, one of the central elements of Camenzind's development is his recognition and rejection of spiritual pride and worldly ambition. Hesse even uses Pietist diction in describing Peter's life journey: there is a "dying
to [Peter’s] old being” and “rebirth” upon returning to Nimikon in the spring. The themes of ambition and spiritual pride are recurring motifs in Hesse’s literature, and a fundamental issue in Hesse’s own development and relationship to his Pietist heritage concerned the struggle with his prideful sense of superiority. But ultimately Hesse could not, for what were undoubtedly complex reasons, pass through the central experience of despair, anguish, and guilt—the feeling of being “sick... in the core of [his] being”—to the final release in to God’s grace, to the experience of rebirth—at least, not within the confines of Pietist thinking and culture. In *Beneath the Wheel* Hesse would claim that “everyone must find his own way and be his own savior,” a suggestion that surely struck his father as the essence of all that was dangerous and deceitful in the human will.

Hesse’s criticism of the ‘doctrine of breaking the will’ revolves around the damage he felt it did to instinctual life, which included sexual drives, but also to one’s inner sense of calling and intrinsic self-worth. One of Hesse’s most explicit condemnations is found in *Beneath the Wheel*:

> In youth there is something wild, something ungovernable, uncultured that first has to be tamed, a dangerous flame that must be extinguished and stamped out. The human being, as nature created him, has something unpredictable, opaque, dangerous. He is a torrent pouring forth from unknown mountains; a jungle without direction and order.... School must break this natural man...”

Though it is the institution of school that brings Hans Giebenrath “under the wheel” Hesse has merely transferred an implicitly Pietistic view of the instincts and the ‘natural man’ to a secular context. In his “Recollections of Hans,” written in 1937, Hesse refers to the strict upbringing that he and his siblings received. It was not that Marie and Johannes Hesse were “strict and hard, but rather the Principle. This was the Pietistic-Christian Principle that the natural human will is in principle evil, and that this will must first be broken before the
person could secure God's love and the salvation of the Christian community.' As Hesse makes clear in this insightful essay, his parents were not physically hard on the children; on the contrary, Hesse describes in glorious detail the love and joy that filled the family home. Hesse closely associated *Beneath the Wheel* with the experience of his brother Hans, who was beaten by a sadistic teacher. Hesse's family was shocked at such treatment, if also constrained by a certain bourgeois propriety against speaking out against it. Hermann Gundert would write to his son, "I hope that our dear Hans will soon be saved from his teacher; he takes him for 'damned cattle' and the other afternoon evened-up his bad calculating with ten blows. He is scared, and asks his mother to pray with him." The German school system could be brutal, as Hesse well knew, and the work heaped on elite students, coupled with intense social and familial pressures, could lead to overexertion and anxiety of a most dangerous kind. On the surface, *Beneath the Wheel* is a straightforward critique of the institution of school.

But the allusion to the breaking of the "natural man," reveals that there was a deeper concern that in 1906 Hesse was not yet able to completely face. The Pietist "Principle" of which Hesse writes in his remembrance of his brother Hans worked at a deeper psychological and spiritual level. In spite of the "cheerfulness" of the family home, one lived "under the law." We "lived under a stern law that viewed young people, their natural inclinations, talents, desires, and development with great mistrust; our inborn gifts, talents, and uniqueness were not encouraged; nor were they [Hesse's family] prepared to praise our gifts." It is this negative or suspicious view and suppression of instinctual life, unique gifts, and innate desires that Hesse felt did him irreparable harm. The unwillingness of his parents to support his poetic talents and desires left Hesse feeling animosity towards his family, while
simultaneously feeling guilty for having let his parents down. "For years [following the Maulbronn affair Hesse] would feel a sense of guilt... for his desertion. He especially felt a sense of guilt toward those who loved him and wanted to save him from himself.... He continued to harbour guilt feelings toward his parents, especially his father, which would continue to haunt him long after Johannes Hesse’s death in 1916." 61 It is always a difficult matter to explain the origins of complex emotions and ideas such as guilt, but it is reasonable to suggest that Hesse’s pervasive guilt feelings were born, at least in part, from the worldview expressed in the Pietist notion of ‘breaking the will.’ In a Rousseau-like image the narrator of Beneath the Wheel interjects Hesse’s own view of the outcome of ‘breaking the will’:

When a tree is polled it will sprout new shoots nearer its roots. A soul that is ruined in the bud will frequently return to the springtime of its beginnings and its promise-filled childhood, as thought it could discover new hopes there and retie the broken threads of life. The shoots grow rapidly and eagerly, but it is only a sham life that will never be a genuine tree. 62

The Pietist notion of rebirth entailed the deliberate breeding of a sense of one’s sinfulness, as well as a rather clear conception of sinful kinds of acts and inherently sinful aspects of culture, such as music and dance. At a macro level, the Lutheran theology of justification that informed Hesse’s Pietist milieu deemed human character itself to be sinful, and as such deserving of punishment. Such punishment, however, is not forthcoming; the criminal, through the redeeming acts of Christ, is let off the hook or noose—and here we approach a possible origin of Hesse’s sense of guilt. Christ was blameless, innocent, without sin; He did not deserve punishment, humanity did, and guilt is born from this sense of not having suffered for oneself the pain that has been suffered by another on our account.
Hesse was raised to be suspicious of his love of art; Hesse’s love of poetry exacerbated the strong tension that existed between the Pietist and aesthetic cultures of Hesse’s childhood. It is a relatively simple matter for systems of authority—family, school, church—to inculcate in children the sense of right and wrong, good and bad, the holy and the sinful. Hesse internalized this parental ‘voice’ with respect to his artistic vocation, and it was a harsh judge. The intensity of Hesse’s guilt, however, is not really understandable without appreciating Hesse’s repeated praise for his parents’ piety, coupled with his sense of their having suffered for his transgressions. It is sometimes said that in sending their son to Bad Boll and Stetten, Hesse’s parents were punishing their child, and in so doing trying to exact from him the desired behavior. I argued in Chapter 1 that such an understanding of the Maulbronn affair is simplistic. It is important to keep in mind that the punishment and recriminations Hesse expected to receive for his “genius journey” never materialized; Hesse was, as he recalls, treated with kid gloves.

In his short story, “A Child’s Soul” (1919), Hesse fictionalizes the events of Maulbronn through the story of a young boy’s theft of figs from his father’s study. Clearly informed by his understanding of psychoanalysis, this story is one of Hesse’s first attempts to resolve the severe sense of guilt he carried with him as a result of the falling out with his family:

I realized that from the moment I had entered the house I had been filled with one intense, consuming desire. I had thought, wished, longed for nothing but that the thunderstorm would crash down upon me at once, that the judgment would descend, that the terror would become a reality and my frightful fear of it cease. I was prepared for anything, could have withstood anything. I wanted to be punished, beaten, locked up. I wanted Father to make me go hungry. I wanted him to curse and reject me. If only the dread and the suspense would end. Instead, here I lay, had enjoyed love and care, was being gently spared and not called to account for my sin and had to go on waiting and fearing still longer.... It would go doubly hard when it [the theft] came to light. Perhaps, as they had once
threatened in the past, they would send me to a reformatory where I would have only stale bread to
eat... where there were dormitories with monitors who would beat me with a cane and wake me at four
o’clock in the morning with cold water.  

In the fiction and in the reality behind it, the wayward son was “not called to account for
[his] sin,” and herein we may find the roots of Hesse’s guilt. “A Child’s Soul” is not so much
criticism of his parents as it is a lament over how much pain two well meaning people can
actually cause one another. Still, Hesse would continue to ruminate and brood over the
damaging effects of the stern worldview of his parents.

“In your letter,” Hesse wrote to his sister Adele in 1926,

you write the following about the time around Papa’s funeral: ‘There was not just a wonderful
atmosphere, but real force.’ Now, listen, dear Adisle, I cannot go along with you there, with all those
subtle distinctions that remind me a little of our parents. Papa or Mama often spoke very appreciatively
about a poem or piece of music, with a rather revealing smile, only to add that all of this was, of
course, ‘only’ atmosphere, ‘only’ beauty, ‘only’ art, and, fundamentally, wasn’t anywhere near as
valuable as morality, character, will, ethics, etc. This doctrine has ruined my life, and I shall not return
to it, not even in the kind, gentle form manifested in your letter.

These last words are demonstrative of the depth of Hesse’s resentment and anger towards the
Pietist ethos of his childhood. That they were written precisely as Hesse began work on
Steppenwolf is no accident. The tortured psyche of the novel’s protagonist Harry Haller, who
is Hermann Hesse in every way but name, is predicated upon Harry’s Pietist “upbringing,
which had as its foundation [the principle of] ‘breaking the will.” The battle of divided
will, the struggle between instinctual and spiritual desires that rages within Harry Haller,
(and, indeed, in all of Hesse’s major protagonists), Harry’s harsh judgment of himself and
others, his self-loathing and inability to find any sustained peace of mind—all this, at least in
Hesse’s mind, was in large measure the literary abreaction of Hesse’s own inner struggle with the consequences of his Pietist upbringing. That Harry’s totem animal is the wolf, the natural enemy of the lamb, is no accident.

Steppenwolf

During the period between the death of his father in 1916 and the completion of Steppenwolf in 1927, Hesse lived in a state of near permanent spiritual anxiety and psychological torment; he was constantly at the brink of suicide, and he specifically pointed to ‘breaking the will’ as that principle or doctrine that made life so very hard for him. As is often stressed in the secondary literature, Hesse’s “spirit would not be broken. It is perhaps this battle of wills more than any other factor that set a would-be writer and future Nobel laureate on his path.”66 If Hesse won the battle, he paid a heavy price for his victory.

In the mid 1920s, following the completion of Siddhartha, Hesse’s literature took a radically confessionalist turn. As Hesse explained in a letter of 1926, “I gave up aesthetic ambition years ago and I don’t write fiction but rather confession, just as someone drowning or someone poisoned isn’t concerned with his hairstyle or the tone of his voice but simply screams out loud.”67 After the war, there was no going back to a religion of art. “I can no longer enjoy and approve many beautiful and well-constructed works of today’s poets, whereas I can feel sympathetic toward many very crude and carelessly constructed utterances of the youngest, simply as attempts at unrestrained candor.”68 Hesse’s Steppenwolf, though not carelessly constructed,69 did strike many readers as crude; Hesse’s public airing of his
innermost torments and fantasies was for many readers shocking. The product of a severe period of crisis, in *Steppenwolf* Hesse laid bare his soul in the attempt to right its wayward course.

The work was not initially well received. Hesse’s friends and the reading public alike balked at the forthright descriptions of the ‘roaring 20s.’ Hesse’s friend and biographer Hugo Ball operated Zürich’s famed Café Voltaire, birthplace of Dada and the performative genre of cabaret. Hesse’s descriptions of the 1920s world of jazz and cabarets, absinthe and special cigarettes, eroticism and sexual experimentation shocked what was left of his bourgeois, middle class readership, and early social and literary criticism found little of value in the work. The German Catholic Literary Advisor called the book a “poisonous, dangerous confusion, poisonous in its unbridled sensuality, dangerous in its radical and caustic negation of all life’s values, a confusion of abstruse, crass, and paradoxical ideas.” For stylistic reasons, Joseph Mileck did not consider *Steppenwolf* to be among those works of Hesse’s that would achieve lasting fame. But time has proven the early rejections to have been rash. *Steppenwolf* has been a focal point of Hesse studies and criticism, is now generally considered one of Hesse’s greatest achievements, and was “the work that sparked Hesse’s reception in postwar Germany and America.”

There are a number of factors to which *Steppenwolf* owes its popularity. Written in between the two World Wars, and influenced by the radical social and cultural criticism associated with Dada, the novel opens into an immensely fascinating and complicated moment in the social history of twentieth-century Europe. Moreover, in a culture obsessed with psychology and the implications of psychoanalysis for literary criticism, *Steppenwolf* has proven to be most fertile soil for critics to plow. Another facet of the work that has surely
contributed to widespread interest is Hesse's movement toward a literature informed by themes and a style that have come to be identified with postmodernism. Through the metaphor of Steppenwolf's famed "magic theatre" Hesse explores the multiple, fragmentary, and paradoxical perspectives that constitute a postmodern reality; dance, drama, and game playing are put forth as metaphors for life; multiple interpretative voices and perspectives run through the novel, making it extremely difficult to know where to draw the boundaries between author, narrator, and protagonist; the notion of the plurality of the soul is central to the novel, undercutting the simple presupposition of a universal human nature or Cartesian self that can be discovered in autobiographical narrative; distinct boundaries between fact and fiction, illusion and reality are erased in the myriad of reflecting and self-reflecting surfaces around which the work is constructed; irony, parody, and humor are held forth as the only possible vehicles for both understanding and coping with the world. These postmodern features and themes make Steppenwolf an appealing and interpretively complex work.

Steppenwolf consists of three main parts: (1) a "Preface" penned by a bourgeois narrator as an introduction to (2) "Harry Haller's Records," which includes (3) a lengthy "Treatise on the Steppenwolf," that is, a treatise on Harry Haller's self, which is half man, half wolf. Haller's records and the treatise are presented by the narrator as the writings left behind by Harry after he moved out of the home of the narrator's mother, from whom Haller had rented a room for some months. "Harry Haller's Record's" consist of a first person account of Harry's life and thoughts, including his fantastical experiences in the "magic theatre." The third component, the treatise, is written in the third person, and is said to have been given to Harry by a man encountered in the street. Questions of who wrote the treatise, when it was written, and how Haller actually came to possess it have garnered much
speculation. We shall take it as Haller’s self-reflexive account and analysis of his worldview, his self, his problems, and a description of what is required of Harry if he is to ever overcome the pain inherent in bearing the burden of a divided self. The treatise is itself a mirror or window into Harry’s inner life; the observations contained therein formulate Harry’s central problems, and suggest the direction Harry must move if he is survive and flourish; the subtitle of the novel could read: ‘what Harry Haller must learn.’

One perspective on Steppenwolf has been to view it as a therapeutic fiction, and this is the course we will take. Hesse had a conscious understanding of his writing as a therapeutic practice, and a reading of Steppenwolf ought to keep this in mind, especially if understanding the relationship of the work to Pietism is the aim. “True,” Hesse wrote in a preface to a 1941 edition, “the story of the Steppenwolf pictures a disease and a crisis—but not one leading to death and destruction, on the contrary: to healing.” Hesse repeatedly went out of his way to emphasize that Steppenwolf is the “work of a believer,” not an anarchist or a nihilist. To those that saw in the work only the deranged psyche of its protagonist/author Harry Haller/Hermann Hesse, Hesse pleaded that readers focus not on Harry’s disease, but on the “immortal spirits” (die Unsterblichen) who lead Harry out of a state of despair and anguish to a glimpse of the “third kingdom” in which they live:

To attain this... a Steppenwolf must once have a good look at himself. He must look deeply into the chaos of his own soul and plumb its depths.... Man and wolf would then be compelled to recognize one another without the masks of false feeling and to look one another straight in the eye: Then they would either explode and separate forever, and there would be no more Steppenwolf, or else they would come to terms in the dawning light of humor.
It is possible that one day Harry will be led to this later alternative. It is possible that he will learn one day to know himself. He may get hold of one of our little mirrors. He may encounter the Immortals. He may find in our magic theatres the very thing that is needed to free his neglected soul.\textsuperscript{77}

The magic theatre which Harry enters is nothing other than the theatre of his mind, a plumbing of the depths in the hope that his soul may be healed.

One of the key contexts to understanding Steppenwolf as a “healing fiction” is Hesse’s Pietist background. As the bourgeois narrator informs the reader:

Although I know very little of the Steppenwolf’s life, I have all the same good reason to suppose that he was brought up by devoted but severe pious parents and teachers in accordance with that doctrine that makes the breaking of the will the corner-stone of education and upbringing. But in this case the attempt to destroy the personality and to break the will did not succeed. He was much too strong and hardy, too proud and spirited.

If the attempt did not succeed in destroying Harry’s personality and will, it did succeed... in teaching him to hate himself. It was against himself that... he directed during his whole life the whole wealth of his fancy, the whole of his thought; and in so far as he let loose upon himself every barbed criticism, every anger and hate he could command, he was, in spite of all, a real Christian and a real martyr. As for others and the world around him he never ceased in his heroic and earnest endeavor to love them, to be just to them, to do them no harm, for the love of neighbor was as deeply in him as the hatred of himself, and so his whole life was an example that love of one’s neighbor is not possible without love of oneself, and that self-hate is really the same as sheer egoism, and in the long run breeds the same cruel isolation and despair.\textsuperscript{78}

Hesse felt the Pietist “doctrine” of ‘breaking the will’ had “ruined” his life, and given that Steppenwolf charts Hesse’s “hellish journey” through himself, a significant part of the
journey is Hesse’s final auseinandersetzung with the psychological, intellectual, and spiritual legacy of ‘breaking the will.’

Through the mid 1920s the figure into which Hesse poured his experiences, thoughts and problems was Harry Haller, a middle aged intellectual living from town to town in rented rooms, accompanied only by his trunk of books and his propensity to seek out the underbelly of Europe’s postwar cities. The parallelism between the names of Harry Haller and Hermann Hesse is of course no accident:

Haller’s place of birth, parents, and childhood, his physiognomy, psychology, and philosophy, his feelings, thoughts, inclinations, habits, and experiences, his relationship to women, music, literature, and politics, to his age, the bourgeois world, and Germany, and his crisis, fantasies, and resolutions were all Hesse’s.

And these are just some of the parallels that Joseph Mileck traces between author and his character. Harry Haller thinks of himself as a “wolf of the Steppes” or a Steppenwolf, a half-man half-beast who periodically strays “into the towns and the life of the herd... a more striking image could not be found for his shy loneliness, his savagery, his restlessness, his homesickness, his homelessness.” Like Hesse, who forever thought of himself as an “outsider,” Haller is the lone wolf whose life and thoughts are viewed with suspicion and fear by the bourgeois world.

It is important to emphasize that the Steppenwolf is an image used by Harry Haller to describe himself; in a passage from the treatise echoing or mirroring the psychological interpretation of the narrator quoted above, Harry’s self-reflexive voice observes:

It might be... that in his childhood he was a little wild and disobedient and disorderly, and that those who brought him up had declared a war of extinction against the beast in him; and precisely
this had given him the idea and the belief that he was in fact actually a beast with only a thin covering of the human.\textsuperscript{82}

Hesse is again pointing to the doctrine of ‘breaking the will’ as having conditioned his (and Harry’s) neurotic, divided, despairing self. Hesse’s/Harry’s healing consists precisely in overcoming this divided view of himself, a process that we can for convenience break up into three lessons, and relate to Hesse’s/Harry’s Pietist heritage.

First, Harry must cut through this radically dualistic view of the world and of himself. In \textit{Demian} Hesse sought to overcome the divided “two worlds” of his (and Sinclair’s) pious family home through a Jungian/Gnostic vision of totality symbolized by Abraxas. In \textit{Steppenwolf} Hesse paints a picture of radical plurality and multiplicity. Demian and Pistorius may preach a different gospel than Hesse’s Pietist ancestors, but it is built on the same dualistic worldview. In \textit{Demian}, Hesse writes of Sinclair’s acquaintance with “the wonderful thousand headed tangle of gods from prehistory to the dawn of the Christian conversion.”\textsuperscript{83}

What is latent in this image, and what Hesse will more adequately unpack in \textit{Steppenwolf}, are the implications of a polytheistic mythology and psychology.\textsuperscript{84} Harry reads in the treatise:

\begin{quote}
\textit{The division into wolf and man, flesh and spirit, by means of which Harry tries to make his destiny more comprehensible to himself is a very great simplification. It is a forcing of the truth to suit a plausible, but erroneous, explanation of that contradiction which this man discovers in himself…. For there is no single human… who is so conveniently simple that his being can be explained as the sum of two or three principal elements; and to explain so complex a man as Harry by the artless division into wolf and man is a hopelessly childish attempt. Harry consists of a hundred or a thousand selves, not two…. And if ever the suspicion of their manifold being dawns upon men of unusual powers and of unusually delicate perceptions, so that... they break through the illusion of unity of the personality and perceive that the self is made up of a bundle of selves, they have only to say so and at once the majority puts them under lock and key, calls science to aid, establishes schizophrenia and protects humanity from the necessity of hearing the cries of truth from the lips of these unfortunate persons.}\textsuperscript{85}
\end{quote}
A clearer formulation of the position of the antipsychiatry movement to emerge in the 1950s could not be found. But underneath the overt psychological observations is the “Christian conversion” referred to in Demian; that event and process through which the “thousand headed tangle of gods” was reduced to two—Christ and devil; the lamb and the wolf.

The treatise makes clear that Harry is suffering the psychological consequences of an inadequate mythology; the origin of Harry’s personal mythology (his image of himself as the Steppenwolf) is the dualistic mythology (and theology and morality) of his Pietist upbringing. Harry’s division of himself into wolf and man is but a variation of the Pietist distinction between the ‘natural man’ and the ‘Christian man,’ and the author of the treatise is trying to get Harry to understand the consequences of such a mythology:

If we consider the Steppenwolf from this standpoint [of the multiplicity of the soul] it will be clear to us why he suffered so much under his ludicrous dual personality. He believes, like Faust, that two souls are far too many for a single breast and must tear the breast asunder. They are on the contrary far too few, and Harry does shocking violence to his poor soul when he endeavors to apprehend it by means of so primitive an image.  

For the Pietist in Harry, the demand for ‘breaking the will’ was ever present—the demand to cut the wolf from his breast.

Here we arrive at the second lesson Harry must learn: he must learn to affirm his beastliness, his animal nature. “There is a world of falsehood where the base, the animalistic, the impure is considered beautiful…. My dear child, God help you and bless you and save
you from this." These words, from one of Marie Hesse’s letters to her son after having read his *Romantic Poems*, reveal the strongly dualistic worldview of Hesse’s family. As it is, her claim is too abstract to have any real meaning; it acquires meaning only by filling in the contents of this “false world,” by articulating what is “base” and “animalistic.” As we have seen, within Hesse’s Pietist milieu such activities as dance and theatre were considered part of the kingdom of Satan, and Hesse came to perceive his love of this aesthetic world as sinful. In other words, Harry overzealously judges his desires and inclinations as being wolfish, that is, animalistic and base.

One of Harry’s great achievements is to simply learn how to dance; implicit in this is Harry’s learning to rid himself of his puritanical attitude toward it. That dance is a fundamental theme of the novel can only be fully understood and appreciated in relation to Pietist suspicion of it. Harry’s initiation into dance is conducted by the young Hermine, whom Harry meets one night in a pub with a dance hall in the back. “She wore a thin dance-frock cut very low and a withered flower.” “I found her charming, very much to my surprise, for I had always avoided girls of her kind and regarded them with suspicion.”

“Now we’ll go and give your shoes and trousers a brush and then you’ll dance a shimmy with me.”

“Now that shows,” I cried in a flutter, “that I was right! Nothing could grieve me more than not to be able to carry out any command of yours, but I can dance no shimmy, nor waltz, nor polka, nor any of the rest of them. I’ve never danced in my life. Now you can see it isn’t all as easy as you think....”

“So you can’t dance? Not at all? Not even a one step? .... But you learned reading and writing and arithmetic, I suppose, and French and Latin and a lot of other things? I don’t mind betting you were ten or twelve years at school and studied whatever else you could as well. Perhaps you’ve even got your doctor’s degree and know Chinese or Spanish. Am I right? Very well then. But you couldn’t find the time and money for a few dancing lessons! No, indeed!”
"It was my parents," I said to justify myself. "They let me learn Latin and Greek and all the rest of it. But they didn’t let me learn to dance. It wasn’t the thing with us. My parents never danced themselves."  

Later in the novel Harry realizes that Hermine reminds him of himself as a young boy; Hermine is Hermann Hesse in all his impishness, and her task is “to overcome the rigid mind-body dualism by putting [Harry] in touch with the libidinous energies damned up within his physical self. He has to relearn the simplest bodily functions—to eat, drink and sleep, to touch and be touched, above all to dance and laugh.”

Harry also has to relearn psychological functions, the most important of which is the free release of fantasy without the condemning judgment of a harsh superego. In the “magic theatre” Harry encounters Hermine sleeping with the musician Pablo, and in a fit of jealous rage, plunges a knife into her heart. When Harry is later brought before the court of "immortals" and "judged," they laugh him out of court for, among other things, having "confounded our beautiful picture gallery with so-called reality and stabbed to death the reflection of a girl with the reflection of a knife." The immortals understand that the murder is an intrapsychic act within the drama of Harry’s soul. As such it is something to be pondered and understood, and it is none other than Mozart who attempts to lead Harry to the meaning of the act. Growing up in a culture where “everyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery in his heart” (Matthew 5:27), one could develop a harsh, self-damning conscience; such was the case with Harry/Hesse. For years Hesse had followed his father’s admonishing words to take “oneself to court more severely than others do”; without being flippant, Hesse, like Harry, had to learn to lighten-up, he had to learn to laugh.
The court Harry comes before in the final scene of *Steppenwolf* is very different from that ruled by his overzealous superego. And this is Harry’s third lesson.

As part of his trips in the magic theatre, Harry attends a ball and dances with Hermine. The account is based in part on Hesse’s frequent visits to Zürich clubs and cabarets in the winter of 1925-1926. As Hesse explained in a letter to a friend, it is during this time that the veil began to lift somewhat, as Hesse allowed himself to partake in some of the simple pleasures of the urban bourgeoisie: “What a Foxtrottel I am for struggling thirty years with the problems of humanity without ever having learned what a masked ball is.... And what friends I have that they would let me wander around all these years!.... My God, if I only still knew the name of that beautiful, beautiful girl. Dear God, let me find her again.”

An important theme in *Steppenwolf* is Harry’s relationship to the bourgeois world; his wolfish side viciously attacks it, while his human side is perpetually drawn to it. Part of Harry Haller’s education involves learning to make peace with his own bourgeois, middle-class sensibilities and desires.

The Steppenwolfs of the world, we read in the treatise, have one foot in the world of the bourgeois and with other, seek to kick it to pieces. The Steppenwolf has a strong desire to be both a “saint and a profligate” but “owing to some weakness” the “constellation of the bourgeois binds him with its spell.” “Despising the bourgeoisie” while also belonging to it, Harry Haller “lives under an evil star in a quite considerable affliction.” In this condition, in this “hell,” the talents of the world’s Steppenwolfs “ripen and bear fruit.” From here, a “few... break free [from their attraction to the bourgeois and] seek their reward in the unconditioned and go down in splendor. They wear the thorn crown and their number is small.” Those who remain, the analysis continues, have “a third kingdom left open to them,”
one that is arrived at only through “humor,” which allows one to extol the impulses of saint, sinner, and the bourgeois:

To live in the word as though it were not the world, to respect the law and yet stand above it, to have possessions as though ‘one possessed nothing,’ to renounce as though it were no renunciation, all these favorite and often formulated propositions of an exalted worldly wisdom, it is in the power of humor alone to make efficacious.

If the Steppenwolf “were to succeed... in decocting this magic draught [of humor] in the sultry mazes of his hell, his rescue would be assured.... His relation to the bourgeois world... would cease to cause him the continual torture of shame.”

Harry Haller’s attraction to the world of the bourgeois is often connected to Hesse’s family background. Mileck, for example, states that Haller’s family home “was the cultivated bourgeois home Hesse’s had been.” But it is misleading to conflate the “world of light” of Demian or Harry Haller’s seeking out clean, respectable homes in which to live with the world of the bourgeois. Hesse rather thinks of his family as servants of God, closer to those who do find release in the “unconditioned” than to those who, like himself and Harry, remain in the world of the bourgeoisie; this is precisely the source of the viciousness with which Harry repeatedly attacks his bourgeois self. Paradoxically, part of Hesse’s wolfishness is the legacy of his parents’ outright rejection of the world of the bourgeois, which lead them to a negative judgment of Hesse’s vocation as a writer. When Hesse judges himself to be a “writer of cheap fiction” this is the parental voice ringing in his ears. The emotion of “shame” that Harry feels for partaking in the world of the fashionable middle class is born from the unconditional piety that accompanies “rebirth,” that experience and state which Hesse could never achieve, but which he saw at work in his grandparents and parents whose
lives “were entirely controlled by the Kingdom of God and [who] stood in its service.”

Shame is an outer-directed emotion, and Hesse’s shame is born by his persistent feelings that he has not measured up to the selfless release into the unconditional achieved by his parents; he was forever judging his own bourgeois sentiments and lifestyle through their eyes.

So repelled is Harry by the world of the bourgeois that he even hates the radio, “the last victorious weapon in the war of extermination against art.” It is Mozart himself who takes Harry to task, turning on the “tin trumpet” and laughing as the “murdered and murderous music ooze[d] out and on.” Harry is hyper-reflexive, so caught-up in analyzing and criticizing the social and spiritual significance of the radio (he does the same thing with his analysis of jazz, a “music of decline” that was played at the fall of the Roman Empire) that he is unable to do as Mozart commands: “Just listen you poor creature, listen without either pathos or mockery…”

Some of Hesse’s most profound experiences in later life involved listening to Bach’s Christmas and Easter Passions and Cantatas over, of all things, the radio.

In the original German, the section of the novel titled “Treatise on the Steppenwolf” is “Traktat vom Steppenwolf.” The term “traktat” here alludes to the publication and dissemination of “tracts” that were a fundamental feature of nineteenth-century Pietism. The “Traktat vom Steppenwolf” then has a specific reference to Hesse’s Pietist background, as his family operated the Calw publishing house that produced, among other things, tracts. The Protestant tractate tradition dates back to Luther, whose writings were published and disseminated as a kind of teaching or manifesto. Pietists explicitly referred to their publishing ventures as ‘Traktatgesellschaften’ or, in English, ‘Tract societies.’ The aims of Pietist tracts were to teach the Christian faith and Christian values and, ultimately, were aimed at
encouraging conversion. Tracts were the means for Pietists, as they were for Luther, to proclaim the gospel, and relate Biblical teachings to the issues of the times.

In *Steppenwolf*, the tractate sets the stage for the experiences in the magic theatre that Harry Haller subsequently relates. As mentioned, the tractate explicitly refers to Harry’s Pietist upbringing, and I have argued that its contents—Harry Haller’s three lessons—have a background in the dualistic worldview of Hesse’s Pietist heritage, especially the notion of ‘breaking the will’ which is introduced in the tractate as a cause of Harry Haller’s suffering. By employing the genre of the tractate, Hesse is signaling his intention to criticize and replace a central teaching of Pietism that he had assimilated—‘the breaking of the will,’ which is rooted in the dualism between the ‘natural man’ and the Christian man. The tractate on the Steppenwolf is a new dispensation, a new truth to which Harry must be converted if he is to be ‘saved,’ or, at the very least, if he is to continue to live.

Lest we take this suggestion too seriously—and it is reasonable that Hesse had something like this in mind—we should also observe that the opening sentence of the tractate, “Es war einmal einer namens Harry, genannt der Steppenwolf,” employs the diction of German fairy tales: “Once upon a time there was a man named Harry, who was called the Steppenwolf.” This opening to the tractate is interpretively rich. One possibility is that Hesse is writing a parody of the genre of the religious “tract” by framing it as a fairy tale; without this, the tract could take on too heavy a meaning, becoming a new, stringent god to which Harry must bow, which is antithetical to Harry’s learning how to dance and laugh. A tractate is deadly serious; a fairy tale has a touch of the comic and absurd, without being simplistic. Harry Haller’s soul is a fairy tale or a fiction, and in his pocket at the close of the story Harry has “all the hundred thousand pieces of life’s game.... A glimpse of its meaning had stirred
[his] reason and [he] was determined to begin the game afresh. These pieces would stay in Hesse’s possession for several years, until he scattered them on his writing table, and attempted to fit them together in the story of H.H.'s frustrated attempt to recollect the people, places, and events of his fantastic Journey to the East.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 5

1 Life Story, Briefly Told, 44.
2 Stelzig, Hermann Hesse's Fictions of the Self, 43.
4 “Self-will” (1919), in If the War Goes On, 83-85. Another of Hesse's many formulations of this virtue is found in the novella “Klein und Wagner”: “This voice spoke the truth, and truth was comfort, healing, refuge. This voice grows so long as one love’s oneself and is at one with their destiny; it was the voice of God, or the voice of the unique, most truthful, innermost I, beyond all lies, excuses, and play-acting” (Werke, 5: 232).
5 “Zarathustra's Return,” (191) in If the War Goes One, 86.
6 Mileck, Between the Perils of Politics, 6.
7 Life Story, Briefly Told, 54.
8 Martin Schmidt first argued that Pietism entailed a theological revolution on par with that achieved by Luther, and emphasizes that the essence of Pietism is the experience of rebirth and a theology of regeneration. See his Wiedergeburt und neuer Mensch (Witten: Luther Verlag, 1969). Though Schmidt’s claims regarding Spener’s theology have been disputed by some (such as Johannes Wallman) at the very least we can say that Pietists placed an emphasis on religious experience, over against what was perceived as the dead letter of the word and a lifeless confessionalism.
10 The meaning and relevance of rebirth or new birth amongst various Pietist groups is somewhat of an open question within Pietist studies. Martin Schmidt, in his influential work, Wiedergeburt und neuer Mensch (Witten: Luther Verlag, 1969), argued that the centerpiece of Spener’s theology was the New Birth, and since this cannot be derived from Lutheran Orthodoxy, Schmidt looked to German mystical traditions as the origin for Spener’s theological revolution. The New Birth thus became linked to a mystical or religious experience of conversion. Johannes Wallmann is among those to challenge Schmidt’s understanding of New Birth, placing more emphasis on Spener’s collegia pietatis, bible reading, pastoral work, and an eschatology of ‘hope for better times.’ For Wallmann, Spener’s emphasis on New Birth is not linked to a dramatic conversion experience but to a growing in and cultivation of a life in Christ through particular activities and social circles. For an introduction to the debate, see W.R. Ward, “German Pietism, 1670-1750,” The Journal of Ecclesiastical History 44.3 (1993), 2-4, for a brief review of historical developments in Pietist scholarship around the question of New Birth.
11 This is likely due to the fact that Swabia and north Switzerland were strongholds for Anabaptists.
12 Magnus Friedrich Roos was an influential member of Pietist circles, not the least reason of which was his effort to build bridges between Pietism and the established church in Württemberg. A critic of the speculative theology of Oetinger and Michael Hahn, Roos was a tutor at the Tübingen Stift, and a pastor in the town of Göppingen. A student of Johann Albrecht Bengel, Roos was known for his eschatological theology and his interest in using the Bible as a tool to gain psychological insight. See Martin Brecht, Der württembergische Pietismus, 267-268 for more on Roos. Hesse, in his The Fourth Life of Joseph Knecht, fold the figure of Roos into his story of eighteenth-century Pietism.
14 Stein, 91.
15 Heiko Oberman, Luther: Man Between God and Devil (New York: Image Books, 1992), 184. Luther’s famous formulation, ‘simul peccator et iustus,’ is the basis of Orthodox Lutheran theology’s understanding of the justified sinner.
16 As Erb has discussed, ‘rebirth’ is a central theme in the writings of Gottfried Arnold: “The new birth is [for Arnold] the sine qua non of Christian life, a supernatural act worked solely by the divine to the increase of a holy life and the renewal of the image of God in man (regeneratio).” See his ‘Pietist Spirituality,” 261.
17 Pelikan, Bach, 61.
18 Brown, Understanding Pietism, 60.
20 Brown, 16.
21 Brown, 16.
22 See Martin Schmidt, Wiedergeburt und neuer Mensch, 24.
24 The literary, theological, and moral connections between English Puritanism and German Pietism were maintained and strengthened through institutional affiliations. Pietist missionary and publishing societies in Germany (such as those in Basel and Calw with which Hesse’s family was connected) built close relationships with similar institutions in England. It is no accident that Hesse’s critique of Protestant mission in the short story “Robert Aghion” is told through the experience of an Englishman. The Reformed tradition in England and the Pietist movement in Germany shared a religious culture; by writing of a young Englishman’s mission to India, rather than of a young German, Hesse could at once call into question yet deflect direct criticism of the life’s work of his family.
25 Dillenberger and Welch, 79.
26 Calvinists and Pietists alike were harassed and persecuted throughout Lutheran Germany in the 1690s, but welcomed in Brandenburg-Prussia, which became a stronghold of the Pietism of Spener and Francke.
27 Richard Gawthrop, in his Pietism and the Making of Eighteenth Century Prussia (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), focuses on the role of Pietism in Prussian state building. In Francke’s educational techniques, argues Gawthrop, the Prussian state found a powerful means through which to inculcate loyalty to the crown, to the military, and to the state bureaucracy. Francke’s reforms thus became an instrumental part in the rise of modern Germany.
28 Francke founded a school for the poor, a Latin school (for middle class boys en route to the university) and the Paedagogium (for upper-class boys). See Gawthrop, 155-156.
29 Gawthrop, 156.
30 Gawthrop, 159. Richard Gawthrop (152-163) provides a detailed account of the schools established by Francke in Halle. He emphasizes the importance of Francke’s reforms for the building of the Prussian state and the rise of German nationalism, going so far as to frame Francke’s pedagogical techniques in the context of Robert Lifton’s work on thought control. For a different take on Francke’s educational reforms, see Marcia Bunge, “Education and the Child in Eighteenth Century German Pietism,” in The Child in Christian Thought, 247-278, ed. Marcia Buge (Grand Rapids, Mich: W.B. Eerdmans, 2001). Bunge argues that Francke’s work was instrumental in raising the condition of the poor and the working class. The “breaking of the self-will” for Francke meant to initiate a change “from subordinate self-love to love of God.” What was required was “igniting a spark of true piety,” “implanting piety,” in the heart. Children were to be treated in a loving, gentle manner, in keeping with the “sweetness of the gospel” rather than the “harshness of the law.” Francke allowed for corporal punishment, but advocated that it is better not to use it, as it “drives children to hate their teachers and parents, causes them to perform good actions only out of fear, and even creates in them an aversion to true piety.” While Gawthrop agrees that corporal punishment was not in principal advocated, he concludes that in practice it was regularly used. The debate will likely continue. For our purposes, what is most crucial is the association of the arts (dance and theatre) and “free-wheeling” bodily activities as part of the process of breaking the will. “Games and other pastime such as dancing, jumping, and so forth arise from an improper and empty manner in life, and common and unchaste postures in speech are associated with them” (Francke, cited in Pelikan, Bach, 61).
31 Lehmann, Pietismus und weltliche Ordnung, 128.
“Pietists attacked lascivious mixed dancing, then mixed dancing on Sundays, then mixed dancing altogether.... Pietist moralists singled out Christian attendance at the theatre as a special symptom of the worldliness infecting the church and made it a sinful act in itself” (Pelikan, *Bach*, 61-62). Many Pietists, especially those in Prussia under the influence of Francke, “viewed secular literature and the theatre, together with dancing, games of chance, drinking, and revelry, as worldly pleasures to be avoided by the reborn Christian.” Francke listed literature and theatre “among the worldly activities that a theology student should avoid.” *Petig*, *Literary Antipietism*, 167-168.


See Hayden-Roy, 164-166, who discusses the widespread use of these images in Swabian Pietism.

See, for example, the letter of 22 February 1893 from Johannes Hesse to his son, *KJ* 1: 336, cited in Chapter Two.

In the aftermath of the Maulbronn affair, Hesse’s letters demonstrate that he framed his relationship to family and faith in terms of the story of the Prodigal Son. The motif of the Prodigal Son lurks beneath Peter’s Camenzind’s rejection of an outer worldly aestheticism in favor of returning home to Nimikon to serve the needs of his father and community, and is explicitly invoked in *Demian*. During the mid 1920s Hesse would again frame the autobiographical accounts of his depression and self-searching with the image of the wayward son. In his *Crisis* poems, written and published simultaneously with *Steppenwolf*, Hesse again reveals how powerfully his narrative imagination and self-understanding were influenced by the image of the Prodigal Son. In an early poem in this series, titled “Der Wüstling,” Hesse introduces the reader to the “little boy” who “learned Greek and went to confirmation, a devout father’s promising son.” But such recollections are swamped in images of the profligate: “Now I prefer, like the Prodigal Son, to sit in brotherhood with the swine.” One poem, titled “Zu Johannes der Täufer sprach Hermann der Sünder” (To Johannes the Baptist said Hermann the Drunkard), requires little interpretation. See “Krisis: Ein Stück Tagebuch,” in *Materialien zu Hermann Hesses Der Steppenwolf*, ed. Volker Michels (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1972), 161-198; here, 187. Further references to this volume are cited as M4TSTEP.

*Oetinger*, *Selbstbiographie*.

Cited in Ball, 47.

In his recollection of Herr Classen, Hesse tells how the presence of the “theosophist” at the dinner table would make the children uneasy. He would chastise them for the eagerness and greedy pleasure with which they consumed their food, or if they “urgently stuck out their empty dinner plate to have it refilled.” One day, Hesse saw him shout at child who was too eagerly eating his food, “That is the greediness. That is the animal in you!” “Herr Classen,” 182-183.

See *About Grandfather*, 34-42.


These letters are cited in Stelzig, 58-59, who has approached *Eigensinn* not simply as Hesse’s favorite virtue but as an inborn character trait.


Ekkehart Baumgartner, in *Frühe Lebenskrise und Ursprung Künstlerischer Produktivität* (Munich: Akademischer Verlag, 1999), 66-67, has emphasized positive atmosphere of Hesse’s family home, arguing that Hesse’s successfully navigated the developmental stages that Erik Erikson associated with childhood: “Hesse developed [a sense of] basic trust over mistrust... of autonomy over shame and doubt... of initiative over guilt, and of industry over inferiority.”

Letter of 5 January 1891 from Herman Gundert to his son, *KJ* 1: 77.


*Peter Camenzind*, 481-482.
Beneath the Wheel, 173. The Deutsche Christentumsgesellschaft in Basel with which Hesse’s parents were associated emphasized (1) the inability of human beings to attain salvation solely on the basis of human capacities, (2) the uniquely divine nature of Christ, and (3) that salvation was obtainable only through the sacrificial death of Christ. See Martin Brecht, “Der Spätpietismus,” 128.

Unterm Rad, Werke 2: 50. The German expression used by Hesse is “den natürlichen Menschen zerbrechen.”


Letter of 15 January 1892 from Hermann Gundert to his son, KJ 1:164.

This is the theme of Hesse’s short story, “Der Lateinschüler,” Werke 2.


Tuskan, Understanding Hermann Hesse, 9.

Beneath the Wheel, 151.

“A Child’s Soul,” in Klingsor’s Last Summer, 1-42; here, 31-32

Letter of Spring 1926 to his sister Adele, cited in S4, 135.

Der Steppenwolf (1927), Werke 7: 191. The German term is ‘Brechen des Willens.’

Tuskan, 7.

Letter of 14 October 1926, MATSTEP, 97.

Journey to Nuremberg, 203-204.

As Ziolkowski has noted, Hesse consciously modeled the structure of Steppenwolf on the pattern of a sonata; see his “A Sonta in Prose,” in The Novels of Hermann Hesse, 70


Joseph Mileck, Herman Hesse and His Critics, 30-31.


“Nachwort zum ‘Steppenwolf’” (1941), in MATSTEP 159-160.

Schriften 7: 413.

Though not one to interpret his own writing, Hesse did feel that Steppenwolf was the least understood of his works. He even added an epilogue (in MATSTEP 159-160) to the a 1941 edition of the novel, suggesting readers focus less on Harry Haller’s condition and more on the intimations of healing and the kingdom of the spirit occupied by the immortals.

Steppenwolf, 63-64.

Steppenwolf, 12. The only other interpretive analysis or commentary given by the narrator in setting up the reader’s approach to ‘Harry Haller’s Records’ is his view that Haller is somehow representative of the spirit of the age. The narrator would not have felt compelled to publish Haller’s writing had he saw in them “nothing but that pathological fancies of a single and isolated case of a diseased temperament. I see them as a document of the times, for Haller’s sickness of the soul, as I now know, is not the eccentricity of a single individual, but the sickness of the times themselves...” (23-24). While Steppenwolf can be read against the background of early twentieth-century Europe, we will remain with the personal, therapeutic element of the work.

Though the city is not named, Steppenwolf is set in Zürich, the only one of Hesse’s novels to take place entirely in a contemporary urban setting.

See Mileck, Hermann Hesse: Life and Art, 175-179, for an exhaustive description of the similarities between Harry Haller and Hermann Hesse.

Steppenwolf, 19.

Steppenwolf, 47.

Demian, 150.

Steppenwolf is an outcome of Hesse’s wrestling with the strongly dualistic worldview we find in Demian. The Christ-Devil dualism of Demian was for decades the orienting ‘center’ of Hesse’s view of himself and the world. But this center could not hold, and in Steppenwolf we find Hesse experimenting with images and models that can order and pattern the many selves of his psyche. Hence the many references to game playing, to dance, and to theatre. In a manner similar to Nietzsche, Hesse develops a model of the soul using the metaphors of the ‘theatre of the soul’ and the intricacies of musical composition.


Steppenwolf, 69.

Letter of 15 June 1899, KJ 1: 357-358
This passage continues: "If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and throw it away; it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell."

Letter of 7 February 1926, Briefe 2, 130. The term “foxtrot” is a play on words, Trottel being German for a dunce, and ‘fox’ referring to the dance, the foxtrot.

See “Notizblätter zum Osten” and “Rundbriefe aus Sils-Maria,” in Werke 10.

Steppenwolf, 248.
CHAPTER 6

NARRATIVE JOURNEYS AND JOSEPH KNECHT

I admit that my own life frequently appears to me exactly like a legend. I often see and feel the outer world connected and in harmony with my inner world in a way that I can only call magical.... Now since so-called reality plays no very important role for me, since the past often occupies me as if it were the present, and the present seems infinitely far away, for these reasons I cannot separate the future from the past as sharply as is usually done.

- Hermann Hesse, Life Story, Briefly Told

Hesse’s completion of Narcissus and Goldmund in December of 1928 “marked the end of that turbulent decade during which Hesse was intent primarily upon coming to grips and to terms with himself.” The inner storms that gave birth to Steppenwolf were calmed by the more epic and serene medieval tale of the friendship between the passionate sculptor and the spiritual monastic. The composed style Narcissus and Goldmund was undoubtedly a reflection of a new-found stability in Hesse’s life. In the winter of 1926 Hesse began seeing Ninon Dolbin, and her presence undoubtedly helped Hesse achieve a measure of stability and hope for the future. The couple married in the fall of 1931, and moved into a new home in Montagnola in the Ticino (Southern Switzerland), thanks to the generous support of Hesse’s Zürich patron Hans C. Bodmer. With war looming on the horizon, Hesse’s “life assumed a slower flow and a more even rhythm. It became home-centered and revolved almost ritualistically around his writing, reading, correspondence, music, painting, and gardening.” Here, in the quiet hills of Montagnola, Hesse would, over a period of twelve long years, complete his final work, The Glass Bead Game (1943).
Hesse’s penultimate novel, *The Journey to the East*, was written in the period between the summer of 1930 and spring of 1931. Hesse’s final two works are intimately connected, as Hesse indicated in a letter of 1936: “If it [The Glass Bead Game] turns out as planned, then it will be my last major work and will give complete expression to the final phase of my inner existence which began with *The Journey to the East.*” An important feature of this “final phase” of Hesse’s “inner existence” was reflection on religious and theological questions, especially in relation to his Pietist-Protestant heritage. The “turning back to Christianity” that began around the time of *Siddhartha* was in full swing in this “final phase of [Hesse’s] inner existence” and Hesse’s interests were directed specifically at eighteenth-century Swabian Pietism.

After completing *Journey* in the spring of 1931 (the work would appear in print a year later) Hesse, as his letters of the early 1930s reveal, immersed himself in the history and theology of Swabian Pietism:

I’ve the house full of literature, mostly theological, from this period…. I’ve a favor to ask…. I would like a few biographies—old ones, if possible—of these Swabian fathers…. [Also] I would like a few of our religious schoolbooks; except for my school Bible, I no longer have any of them. I would especially like… the Church hymnbook, the Catechism, the Confirmation book. Also any short histories of Württemberg…. I’ve been reading… some old tomes from Calw, namely, writings on the lives of Swabian Pietists: Bengel, Oetinger, etc. And I’ve discovered that a few of them, like Oetinger, held an attraction for me in my youth…. At the moment I have, from a library in Zürich, Spangenberg’s complete works [4 volumes] on the life of Count Zinzendorf, and many other such works, also a Württemberg hymn book from the year 1700…. I would also like to know: How was it with church music in Württemberg between 1700 and 1750? Were there many organs in the cities and churches? Were there separate organists, or did the schoolmasters take care of this? Who did the singing in places with an organ, priests or teachers? I would especially like some dates on Johann Sebastian Bach…. Were Bach’s works known in Württemberg before 1750?"
This research and study was to inform Hesse’s work on *The Glass Bead Game*. But the impetus for Hesse’s interest in Pietist history was not informed merely by a future work, but by that which he had just completed: his *Journey*. While Pietism does not play the explicit role in *The Journey to the East* as it does in Hesse’s final novel, Hesse’s penultimate work sets the stage for Hesse’s and Joseph Knecht’s encounter with his Pietist heritage. In *The Journey to the East* we find Hesse addressing themes that make his subsequent turn to Pietism a reasonable and necessary, a claim that we unpack and defend in the first section of this final chapter.

Hesse’s works of the 1930s, works of central importance for understanding Hesse’s mature vision and faith, coincided with detailed, prolonged reading in Pietist histories and works of theology, biographies and autobiographies of influential Pietists, and church music and liturgy. “For some time,” writes Hesse in a letter of October 1933,

> I’ve been reading... some old tomes from Calw, namely, writings on the lives of Swabian Pietists: Bengel, Oetinger, etc. And I’ve discovered that a few of them, like Oetinger, held an attraction for me in my youth; but I was so put off by their biblical-pietistic jargon... that I found them unapproachable. I’m still not fond of Pietist language, but it no longer irritates me, and I’ve discovered behind these old books a few things that interest me... I was most pleased to see how these stubborn Swabian Christians took a stand against all the polish and cleverness of the Enlightenment; they are the only theologians of this era that one can still benefit from reading.

In the course of his research, Hesse came to hold Johann Albrecht Bengel (1687-1752) and Friedrich Christoph Oetinger (1702-1782), the two chief ‘fathers’ of Württemberg Pietism, in the highest regard. Hesse considered Oetinger the most “venerable and attractive personality of Protestant Pietism.”

Hesse’s studies in Swabian Pietism were in preparation for his work *The Glass Bead Game* (1943). Hesse conceived a plan for the story as early as 1927, and seriously began
work on the project in April 1931, following completion of The Journey to the East (1932).

In the late 1920s Hesse envisioned writing a number of life-stories of the same man, set in different time periods—a trans-temporal biography, or series of reincarnations. One of these stories was to be that of an eighteenth-century Swabian theologian, Joseph Knecht. Hesse’s original idea was to deal with “reincarnation as a form of expression for stability in the midst of flux, for the continuity of tradition and of the spiritual life in general.” In the early 1930s the plan of the work changed. Hesse turned his attention to the creation of the spiritual, utopian realm of Castalia and its Glass Bead Game—a futuristic vision of a kingdom of monk-like scholars dedicated to the study and preservation of the highest intellectual and aesthetic values drawn from the past. A narrator, himself a Castalian, would recount the life of Joseph Knecht—his school years, his rise to Magister Ludi of the Bead Game, and his eventual rejection of and departure from the Castalian world. The life-stories Hesse had already worked on became school exercises of the young Knecht, in which he projects himself back in time and writes fictional autobiographies “of the characters [he] longed to become.”

Three of these fictional life-stories were included, along with several poems, in the final version of the The Glass Bead Game as the posthumous writings of Joseph Knecht.

As for the “Fourth Life” set in Swabia, the narrator informs us:

We know from anecdotes and letters that [Knecht]...engaged in preliminary research for a life set in the eighteenth-century. He cast himself as a Swabian pastor who subsequently turned from the service of the church to music, who had been a disciple of Johann Albrecht Bengel, a friend of Christoph Friedrich Oetinger, and for a while a guest of Zinzendorf’s congregation of Moravian Brethren. We know that he was reading and taking notes on a quantity of old and often out of the way books on church organization, Pietism, and Zinzendorf, as well as on the liturgy and church music of the period. We know also that he was fascinated with Oetinger, the charismatic prelate, and that he felt genuine love and generation for Magister Bengel.
What the narrator tells of Knecht is true of Hesse, who indeed wrote two versions of the eighteenth-century biography, during the winter of 1933-34. The Swabian tale remained a fragment, though was eventually published posthumously as Der Vierte Lebenslauf Josef Knecht (The Fourth Life of Joseph Knecht, 1965). This “Fourth Life,” set as it is in eighteenth-century Swabia, is an important work for the purposes of our study, and for an interpretation of The Glass Bead Game. A reading of these two works in the context of Pietism comprises the second and third sections of this chapter.

**The Journey to the East**

The story Hesse unfolds in The Journey to the East revolves around the attempt of the protagonist, one H.H., to write a recollection of his involvement in the League of Journeymen to the East. H.H. joins the League in the period following the First World War, a time when “our country was full of saviors, prophets, and disciples, of presentiments about the end of the world, or hope for the dawn of a Third Empire.” Most people who knew of the League thought it “was one of the many newly blossomed cults, and that after a few years it would also be partly forgotten, despised and decried.” The truth of the matter, however, is that the great journey of the League in which H.H. participated is a timeless spiritual journey passing through several historical periods, and its members are drawn from the host of literary, religious, and other figures, including several of Hesse’s own characters:

I realized that I had joined a pilgrimage to the East, seemingly a definite and single pilgrimage—but in reality... this pilgrimage... had always and incessantly been moving towards the East, towards the Home of Light. Throughout the centuries it had been on the way... our whole host and its great
pilgrimage, was only a wave in the eternal stream of human beings, of the eternal strivings of the human spirit towards the East, towards Home.¹⁶

In *The Glass Bead Game* Hesse will count Pietism as part of this “eternal stream.”

As Ziolkowski has shown, Hesse uses the model of the *Bundesroman* or “League Novel” popularized in the late eighteenth and nineteenth-centuries. The League of Journeymen to the East is an elite society with a charter, a chapter house, a library and archive, a secret, a tribunal of Elders, a Superior, and novitiates.¹⁷ The entire edifice is used by Hesse as an allegory of his own and the eternal spiritual journey. “The structure of the *Bundesroman* can be grasped immediately; the more obscure autobiographical references, however, are evident only to readers familiar with Hesse’s other works, both fictional and essayistic.”¹⁸ H.H.’s journey, insofar as it is a “definite and single pilgrimage,” is Hesse’s journey, one aspect of which is the attempt to narrate the course of his spiritual path; this failed attempt at narration is in fact the central problematic of the novel.

H.H. begins his description of the journey knowing full well of the difficulties involved, for he has no longer the “tokens, mementoes, documents and diaries relating to the journey,” and a “large number of [his] recollections have also vanished.” H.H. is further handicapped by his vow not to reveal the secret of the League, and so his account may “remain incredible and incomprehensible.”¹⁹ H.H. is able to describe the trip though Swabia (Hesse’s childhood and adolescence), to the Bodensee (Hesse’s life in Gaienhofen) and into Switzerland and the Morbio Gorge (Hesse’s life in Basel, Zürich and the Ticino). “I wandered with my former betrothed along the edges of the forest of the Upper Rhine, caroused with friends of my youth in Tübingen, in Basel, or in Florence, or I was a boy and went with my school friends to catch butterflies to watch an otter.”²⁰ Intertwined with these
biographical fragments of Hesse's life are the more metaphorical wanderings with the likes of Parsifal, Sancho, and Vasudeva. Among the many of H.H.'s companions is the servant Leo, who carries the luggage, and is loved by animals. Leo is, of course, actually the leader of the expedition, and turns out to be the President of the League itself.

H.H.'s recollections break off at the point in the story when Leo disappears in "the middle of the dangerous gorge of Morbio Inferiore." The action of Journey, such as it is, revolves around this momentous event. As H.H. arrives at this point in the narrative he realizes he possesses no "center" around which to continue his story; he desires a "fabric" but has only "a bundle of a thousand knotted threads." Wanting to "hold fast to and describe this most important thing"—Leo's disappearance—all H.H. possesses is "a mass of separate fragmentary pictures which has been reflected in something, and this something is myself, and this self, this mirror, whenever I have gazed into it, has proved to be nothing but the uppermost surface of a glass plane." H.H.'s resolution of his radical self-doubt and frustration over the elusive quality of language is thus connected to his eventual rediscovery of Leo and the League which H.H. thought no longer existed.

As Stelzig suggests, the place of Leo's disappearance, Morbio Inferiore, has metaphorical value, as it connotes a state of self-doubt and failure. But Morbio Inferiore is also a place with autobiographical significance, a fact that sheds some light on the course of the novel. Morbio Inferiore is a small village in the hills near the town of Chiasso in southern Switzerland. In Hesse's day it was renowned as an artists colony and retreat center, and it is to this region that Hesse came in 1919 in a state of severe psychological and spiritual crisis following the death of his father, the dissolution of his marriage, and the end of the war. H.H.'s entry into Morbio Inferiore coincides with the loss of Leo, which is the loss of the
figure who represents for H.H.'s group the ideal of service and commitment to the journey—the very ideals that Hesse closely associated with the lives of his family, and their service to the kingdom of God. It is not unreasonable to suggest a connection between Leo and Hesse’s father Johannes, as Hesse’s own literal and metaphorical descent to Morbio Inferiore takes place in the years following the loss of his father. Leo’s disappearance interrupts the entire journey, as the various members feel certain that Leo has disappeared with his linen bag in which would be found all the various personal items that each member was certain they had lost and without which they could not continue. Gradually, all the things believed lost turn up, and attention focuses on the missing document, the League charter, which is believed to be in the possession of the missing Leo. As it turns out, it is not this document (akin to a confession of faith or a creed) that the travelers have lost but Leo himself—Leo is the spirit of the journey, faith in the journey, the loss of which makes the trip both incomprehensible and futile.

To extricate himself from the gorge of Morbio, H.H. commits himself to completing his account, even if he must “begin again a hundred times,”24 a commitment grounded in H.H.’s “faith in the meaning and necessity” of the journey. Through an act of will and the hope that through his work of writing an account of the Journey and the League he could “cleanse and redeem” himself, H.H., in a fever pitch, writes through the night of his need for Leo and his recollections of their experiences together. This ritual act of devotion to his vocation as the group’s “violinist and story-teller, [who] was responsible for the provision of music for [the] group”25 calls forth Leo, who informs H.H. he is to be brought before the High Court of the League. Confused by the route they follow, one of “detours, roundabouts and zig-zags,” and frequent stops at churches so Leo can pray and meditate, H.H. and Leo
arrive at the League building. H.H. is shown the huge library and archive, brought before the High Throne, and judged by guardians of the League for his "self-accusation" as a "deserter" of the journey; among the judges, who are so numerous as to defy counting, are the Swabian mystic "Albert Magnus, the ferryman Vasudeva, [and] the artist Klingsor."²⁶ In short order Leo himself appears in full regalia as President of the League, judges H.H., releases him from his vow of silence, and turns over to him all of the vast archives in the hope that H.H. may discover himself and complete his narrative task.

There appears to be but one direct mention of Pietism in Journey. H.H. comments that many people associated the League with the likes of Count Keyserling and [Ferdinand] Ossendowski, writers of adventurous and esoteric travelogues in foreign lands. In reality, these men were only passing themselves off as League brothers, and have as little to do with the Journey as the "ministers of a small sanctimonious sect have to do with the Savior, the Apostles and the Holy Ghost to whom they refer for special favor and membership."²⁷ Hesse rejected any form of religion that appeared to him to promote spiritual exclusivism, and the sectarian background or tendency of his family’s Pietism struck him as "narrow" and "pinched."²⁸ But the relationship of Journey to Hesse’s Pietist heritage rests not so much in specific content or themes, as is the case with Siddhartha and Steppenwolf; but in the very recognition of the idea of a heritage contained within the narrative.

H.H.’s vocation, his contribution or duty to the group, is that of violinist and storyteller; H.H. supplies the music for the journey. But the kind of music or story that H.H. is writing reflects a significant change in the kind of story Hesse was interested in telling. Up to Journey all of Hesse’s works transpired on a more or less personalist plane; that is, the stories told were lives of discrete individuals living in a defined period of time. In Journey there is
an interest in narrating not simply a *life* but *history* itself: H.H.’s journey has a personal element (it is his journey, Hesse’s journey) but also part of a larger historical narrative, an incessant movement “towards the East,” the “eternal striving of the human spirit towards the East, towards Home.” This “Home” has both a literal and a metaphorical meaning. Hesse’s journeying to a metaphorical or spiritual “home” would pass through his actual “home.” One thing H.H. learns in the archives of the League is that in his previous attempt to write the story of the journey he “had tried to avoid an objective presentation of the story, and without regard to more important relationships, aims and purposes, [he] had restricted [himself] to [his] personal experiences.” With this realization, H.H. resolves to begin the story afresh, beginning with “a short account of the League, its foundation and constitution.” Whereas Hesse’s novels up to this point had concerned themselves with “personal experiences” and personal memories, *Journey* signals Hesse’s realization of the importance of cultural experiences and cultural memory.

Cultural memory is a term that refers to the outward dimensions of human memory, exhibited in the products of material culture such as architecture, monuments, the visual arts, and books, and in performative genres such as commemorations and ceremonies. Cultural memory is the means by which societies ensure continuity by preserving collective experiences and knowledge, though it always entails a certain amount of construction. Memory, whether personal or cultural, is not a simple storage-retrieval device; through memory the past is actively shaped depending on the social and psychological needs of both individual and society. One of H.H.’s intentions in writing his account of his pilgrimage is to better understand himself. But an equally pressing aim is H.H.’s desire to preserve the story, history, and significance of the League. *Journey* is very much a work about the importance of
cultural memory, and the problems inherent in transmitting history, heritage, and tradition in narrative form.

World history, writes H.H., is “a picture book” portraying “humanity’s most powerful and senseless desire—the desire to forget. Does not each generation, by means of suppression, concealment and ridicule, efface what the previous generation considered most important...? The day of rediscovery will come for the deeds and sorrows of our League, which are now either forgotten or are a laughingstock in the world, and my notes should make a small contribution towards it.”

This is very much a personal and cultural reference. The modern world had rushed by Pietism, it literally was a “laughing stock” or forgotten to the bourgeois culture and liberal Protestantism of turn-of-the-century Germany. One of the rules of the League itself is that members must “visit and pay homage to all places and associations relating to the ancient history of our League and its faith,” and part of the journey entails visiting churches, altars, monuments, consecrated tombstones—those physical sites and products of material culture that mark and inscribe the history of the League on the landscape. Hesse would obey this rule himself in his return to the Pietism of his native Swabia. H.H. sees himself as a “servant” whose duty is to memory. H.H. must recall “the stirring series of deeds and wonders, the images and memories that will disappear... if he is not successful in passing some of them on to posterity by means of a word or picture, tale or song.”

Hermann Hesse is no longer the man for whom self-realization is the ultimate task; he has become a singer of tales, a vehicle for the transmission of the highest spiritual and cultural values. In his final great tale Hesse will be sure to weave Pietism into the story.
H.H.'s desire to preserve and transmit the story and history of the League is complicated by a number of factors. If in Journey Hesse was making a statement about the need to preserve and transmit cultural memories, he was also struggling with the practical and hermeneutical difficulties involved in such a task. When H.H. is given access to the archives he is overwhelmed by their vastness:

A new thought, a new pain shot through me life a flash of lightning. I, in my simplicity, wanted to write the story of the League, I, who could not decipher or understand one-thousandth part of those millions of scripts, books, pictures and references in the archive! Humbled, unspeakably foolish, unspeakably ridiculous, not understanding myself, feeling extremely small, I saw myself standing in the midst of this thing with which I had been allowed to play a little in order to make me realize what the League was and what I was myself.34

In one sense, the archive is a metaphor for personal memory, and H.H. has an experience similar to that described by Augustine when he is confronted by the immensity and power of memory. But the archive is also literally an archive of enormous proportions whose very size frustrates the desire and demand to be comprehensive. The archives are extremely important for H.H.'s task, largely because of his own limited powers of recollection. H.H. can't recall all the events of the story of the League, but the archives allow him to broaden, to check, to deepen his understanding of not just himself but of the story—of course the two go together: H.H.'s self-knowledge no less than the past itself are created in H.H.'s writing of the story. But the enormity of the archives means that any such story will remain partial, fragmentary, and necessarily selective.

If H.H. is frustrated by the enormity of the task, he is also suspicious of the ends to which cultural memory can serve. As they were traveling through Swabia the group became aware of the presence of strange "power." "It was the power of the guardians of the crown
who, since olden times, has preserved the memory and inheritance of the Hohenstaufen in that country.” The members of the League are warned by these guardians not to approach certain sites, and the guardians also attempt to coerce the leaders of the Journey “to put [the] expedition in the service of Staufen, and indeed to make preparations for the conquest of Sicily. When the leaders firmly refused this demand, he said he would put a dreadful curse on the League and on our expedition.” This short scene is likely an allusion to the rise of the Nazi party, whose interest in historical documents, Teutonic mythology, and archeological sites was in the service not of the preservation of the spirit but the pursuit of political and temporal power. Hesse rejected such aims, and he may also be alluding in this passage to his disappointment in the many artists, intellectuals, and church officials, who at the outbreak of the First World War Hesse felt were members of the League, but who placed their talents in the service of the crown.

The biggest difficulty facing H.H., however, is the thorny problem of narration itself. In the archives H.H. consults three versions (including his own account) of the events that took place at Morbio Inferiore. He realizes that although relating the same events, the two historians and the writer (H.H.’s account) contradict one another. “If ten other accounts by other authors were found about Morbio, Leo and myself, they would presumably all contradict and censure each other. No, our historical efforts were of no use… one could quietly let them be covered with dust in this section of the archive.” Even as H.H. reads his own account he becomes despondent, because the story he is reading seems confused and stupid; the clearest relationships were distorted, the most obvious were forgotten, the trivial and the unimportant pushed to the foreground. It must be written again, right from the beginning. As I continued reading the manuscript, I had to cross out sentence after sentence, and as I crossed them out, they crumbled up on the paper, and the clear, slopping letters separated into assorted
fragments, into strokes and points, into circles, small flowers and stars, and the pages were covered like carpets with graceful, meaningless, ornamental designs. Soon there was nothing more left of my text; on the other hand, there was much unused paper left for my work.\textsuperscript{37}

Hesse pens here a powerful image of the instability of the text and the endless deferral of meaning, two notions so central to the postmodern mind. These problems are not resolved in Journey. Though the vocation and cultural role of the writer as a contributor to the preservation and creation of memory is affirmed, Hesse also confronts the reader with the inevitability of historical relativism and the multiple, at times competing perspectives on reality inherent in any narrative. Hesse’s own works, too, like those he consults in the archives, will sit on shelves and collect dust. But the small window of hope that Hesse offers is that even though narrative is necessarily fragmentary, perspectival, and relative, even though it will be relegated to a dusty shelf, it nevertheless contains a trace of the absolute (the “eternal,” the “Home”) which Hesse (and the League of Journeyers) was ever seeking, and its reading may at some future time reveal such a trace to the reader: “faith is stronger than so-called reality.”\textsuperscript{38}

Given Hesse’s concern in Journey for the preservation of those aspects of cultural memory associated with spiritual values it is little wonder that following completion of the novel he would turn his attention to Pietism—a religious heritage that was not merely his own but also central to the religious history of Swabia. There are several hints in Journey suggesting Hesse’s recognition of the necessity of a re-encounter with Pietism. First, Hesse decries the forgetfulness of world history, the tendency to suppress or ridicule what pervious generations took to be the highest expression of spiritual values. This is perhaps a reference to the attitude of contemporary culture to Pietism, in which we would need to include Hesse’s own critical pronouncements. But what goes under the label of Pietism includes
more than Hesse’s personal Pietist milieu—it also includes the tradition of the Swabian fathers. In *The Glass Bead Game*, Bengel and Oetinger will be mentioned as forgotten progenitors of the game, and one of Joseph Knecht’s tasks is to remember their contributions.

Second, we have in the figure of Leo an allusion to Hesse’s Pietist past. Leo represents, among other things, the ideal of service, and H.H.'s losing of Leo at Morbio Inferiore can be read as the loss in both Hesse’s life and contemporary culture of the ideal of service represented and lived by Hesse’s father and the Pietist movement in general. Leo has the mysterious power to communicate with animals, linking him to the love piety of St. Francis that Hesse associated with his family’s Pietism. It is Leo bird-like whistling that allows H.H. to recognize him, and Hesse associated his father with the image of the bird.

“The tune stirred my memory and some dormant recollections came to the fore. The music was banal but the whistling was wonderfully sweet... as happy and as natural as the songs of birds.” During the trial scene Leo returns to H.H. the ring he was given at his induction in to the League but had subsequently lost. Again, we have an allusion to Hesse’s father, whose ring Hesse wore following his father’s death. As Leo places the ring on H.H.’s finger, “a thousand things occurred to [him], a thousand inconceivable acts of neglect.”

Though H.H. thinks he is being judged for his self-accusation of a deserter, it is Leo who informs him of his “real offences, which are legion.” First and foremost among these is H.H.’s slighting of religion, manifested in his impatience with Leo as he stopped to pray “at the Church of St. Paul and the Cathedral:"

[D]o you remember how we passed the Town Hall, the Church of St. Paul and the Cathedral in order to kneel and pray awhile, and how you not only refrained from entering with me to perform your devotions... but how you remained outside, impatient and bored, waiting for the end of the tedious ceremony which seemed so unnecessary to you, which was nothing more to you than a disagreeable
test of your egoistic impatience? Yes, you remember. By your behavior at the Cathedral gate alone, you have already trampled on the fundamental requirements and customs of the League. You have slighted religion, you have been contemptuous towards a League brother, you have impatiently rejected an opportunity and invitation to prayer and meditation.  

In *The Fourth Life* and *The Glass Bead Game* Hesse would make amends for these acts of neglect and his slighting of Leo’s piety.

The final scene of *Journey* has H.H. consulting his own file in the archives. Here he finds a small figurine, a “kind of deity or barbaric idol” consisting of two figures with a common back. H.H. lights a candle that illuminates the “strange double figure” and he sees that it is “a likeness of [himself],” but appeared “unstable, weak, dying or wishing to die.” H.H. then discovers a second candle, and the light it casts reveals that the second aspect of the figurine is Leo:

I now saw the double figure representing Leo and myself, not only becoming clearer and each image more alike, but I also saw that the surface of the figures was transparent and the one could look inside as one can look through the glass of a bottle or vase. Inside the figures I saw something moving, slowly, extremely slowly, in the same way that a snake moves which has fallen asleep. Something was taking place there, something like a very slow, smooth but continuous flowing or melting; indeed, something melted or poured across from my image to that of Leo’s. I perceived that my image was in the process of adding to and flowing into Leo’s, nourishing and strengthening it. It seemed that, in time, all the substance from one image would flow into the other and only one would remain: Leo. He must grow, I must disappear.

In his remembrance of his father Hesse describes Johannes Hesse as being “made out of the same substance that saints are made,” and in his later years Hesse increasingly felt the substance of his father’s spirit at work in his own life.

Hesse perhaps chose to close his description of the fusion of H.H. and Leo with the passage from the Gospel of John—“He must increase, but I must decrease” (3:30)—as a
further allusion to Hesse’s felt connection to the “faith of the fathers.” The line is spoken by John the Baptist (Johannes in German) who was sent before Christ to prepare the way, but with whose arrival must “decrease” so that He may “increase.” In this passage, John the Baptist’s life is defined in terms its relevance as a preparation for the birth or presence of another, the transmission of the spirit from one individual to another, or one generation to the next. Johannes’s Hesse’s life was one of giving up himself to a life in Christ; his life was an affirmation and embodiment of what H.H. realizes in the final scene of Journey: “He must grow, I must decrease.” Leo is of course more than Hesse’s father. But if we are correct in finding in Leo allusions to Hesse’s father and to Pietism, with its Franciscan-like piety of devout service and love, then in H.H.’s perception of the melting of the two images that comprise the figurine we have a powerful statement from Hesse affirming the continuity and transmission of a spiritual heritage. It remains to unpack how Hesse would affirm and integrate his Pietist heritage into his final vision, a vision expressed in The Fourth Life and The Glass Bead Game.

**The Fourth Life of Joseph Knecht**

Hesse’s Swabian life is the direct outcome of his Pietist studies, and the central players from the great era of the Swabian fathers make an appearance in this story of the education of young Joseph Knecht: woven into the narrative are Johann Albrecht Bengel, Christoph Friedrich Oetinger, the radical Pietist Friedrich Rock, Count Zinzendorf, the hymnist Paul Gerhardt, the aged preceptor Magnus Roos, the mystics Johann Arndt,
Gottfried Arnold, and Jacob Böhme, and Spener and Francke. Historical themes touched on in the text include Pietist hymnody, the piety of Bach’s passions and cantatas, the mission of the Moravians to Swabia, the theology and experience of repentance, rebirth, and conversion, the spiritual-intellectual grandeur of the Swabian school system, the speculative, mystical propensity of Swabian Pietism, and the tensions between Pietist cells and Lutheran Orthodoxy. The most important influence, however, and the one we will emphasize here, is the figure and autobiography of Christoph Friedrich Oetinger.

Theodore Ziolkowski was the first to identify many of the original source documents used by Hesse in crafting *The Fourth Life*. The most important of these was Friedrich Christoph Oetinger’s *Selbstbiographie* (1762), as Hesse uses specific events from Oetinger’s *Life*. Ziolkowski rightly suggests that Oetinger’s Faustian-like seeking for religious knowledge likely resonated with Hesse. An additional reason Hesse was drawn to Oetinger was his Böhmist inspired theology, which bears many similarities to Hesse’s romantic mysticism, and offered Hesse a vehicle to further explore—and attempt to resolve—the tensions in his life and literature between religion and art, self-will and breaking the will, and his relationship to the “faith of the fathers.” Mark Boulby argues that *The Fourth Life* is of value for interpreting Joseph Knecht’s defection from Castalia, because the act is foreshadowed in the Swabian Knecht’s rejection of the vocation of a theologian in favor of becoming, under the influence of Johann Sebastian Bach’s music, a church organist. Moreover, as Boulby again notes, much of the material for the chapter in *The Glass Bead Game* titled, “The Legend,” which describes Master Knecht’s departure from Castalia (another fictionalization of Hesse’s flight of Maulbronn), is drawn from *The Fourth Life*. More broadly, Hesse’s in-depth studies in Swabian Pietism and his efforts in writing the
fragmentary *Fourth Life* shine through in the setting and ethos of the kingdom of Castalia described in *The Glass Bead Game*.

Oetinger was a figure Hesse could identify with, part of Hesse's cultural past, a father of the Swabian Pietism in which Hesse was raised. In his autobiography Oetinger speaks of “often traveling to Calw,” Hesse’s hometown. Oetinger’s autobiography reveals a restless seeker, a Faustian figure working his way through biblical hermeneutics, the Cabbala, alchemy, science, attempting to integrate diverse areas of knowledge into a harmonious whole. Hesse’s style was similarly eclectic and integrative. Hesse’s summary of the man in *The Fourth Life* reads:

>[Oetinger’s] own books, several of which have been preserved, are not beautifully written and not easy reading; it takes time, patience, and pains to penetrate to the sweet, living kernel. A ponderous, fussy speaker, he was a creative and original thinker. The era into which was born scarcely understood him; he won no professorships and achieved little fame, but contented himself with humble obscurity. The impact of his personality and teachings can be followed down to the generation of his great grandchildren.

This last sentence is important, because beyond sympathetic affection for the man, Hesse was also interested in Oetinger’s ideas, in his theology. Hesse writes that Oetinger’s “theology is not authoritative,” but it undoubtedly appealed to him. Oetinger’s Böhmist inspired theology allowed Hesse to achieve a degree of intellectual rapprochement with his Pietist heritage, while the figure and life of Oetinger allowed him a measure of narrative self-identification with Pietism, and the means to harmonize his flight from Maulbronn with the spirit of the Swabian fathers.

Joseph Knecht is born and raised in Beitelsperg, a small town in Swabia, early in the eighteenth-century. His father is a fountain master with sympathy for folk music, flute
playing, and occasional drinking. His mother “read the Bible and raised her son in a spirit of
pious obedience to the Lutheran church and the pure doctrine that had been faithfully
observed in the duchy since the days of [Johannes] Brenz and [Johannes Valentinus]
Andreae.”52 The young Knecht, a lover of music of all kinds, is groomed for the clergy
through private tutors, and eventually studies at the seminaries in Denkdorf under Bengel, at
Maulbronn [Hesse’s school], and finally in Tübingen, where he meets Count Zinzendorf and
studies under Oetinger. All through these years, Joseph’s love of music is both a source of
inner turmoil and a refuge. The fragment closes with Joseph graduating from Tübingen,
“supposedly on his way to becoming a pastor,” but the “prospect gave him no joy.” The
manuscript ends here, but from Hesse’s notes we learn that Joseph is “torn between his piety
and his love of music,” becomes “increasingly dissatisfied with theology,” and “becomes a
pastor, but find no fulfillment.” In time, Joseph learns of the “legendary Johann Sebastian
Bach,” hears some of his music, and “sees that here, far from doctrinal controversy,
Christianity has once again found a magnificent new expression, has become radiance and
harmony.” The experience of hearing Bach’s music confirms in Joseph his love of music, and
he leaves the clergy to become “an obscure organist.”53

The story of Joseph Knecht owes a great deal to Oetinger’s autobiography, and Hesse
was no doubt drawn to Oetinger out of sympathy for his life story. As a boy of six or seven
years Oetinger had a powerful experience while listening to Paul Gerhardt’s hymn, ‘Rise up
to your God, you sorrowful soul.’ The relationship between the experience of deep affliction
and sorrow and God’s saving presence and grace is a standard Pietist motif. This experience
would provide Oetinger a nodal point around which his life-long relationship to God would
turn. Joseph experiences something similar, not directly, but while secretly watching Rector
Bilfinger pray. Bilfinger “strode back and forth across the room, clearly he was prey to sorrowful thoughts.... He fell to his knees, folded his hands, pressed them together, raised and lowered them in prayer, then remained on his knees, bowing his head to the floor.” What Knecht as a boy of seven saw in this scene was how a grown man, indeed a pastor, could “kneel down... weep, struggle, humble himself, and implore.... His supplication had been heard; it had borne fruit.” Over the years Knecht would return to this experience, just as would Oetinger to his hearing of Gerhardt’s hymn. Though Knecht would not experience the final conversion or rebirth native to his Pietist surroundings, he would nevertheless retain a profound respect for the humility and “aura of joy, reconciliation, and grace” he witnessed in watching Bilfinger pray. There is little doubt that Hesse is alluding to his own respect for and attraction to the piety of his family.

Knecht’s schooling has none of the struggle and conflict that we find in Hesse’s own life, but Oetinger’s did, and Hesse’s doesn’t fail to comment on this fact. He writes how “Oetinger, a man distinguished by piety, learning, and true wisdom, was driven to despair and even to blasphemy by his teacher’s brutal severity.”54 This is an allusion to Oetinger’s comments on his early schooling: “After two or three words that I did not know by heart [the teacher reacted] with blows, hits, and senseless punishment.” “My tutor and Preceptor were so hostile, that I could have repaid their efforts with poison.” The rage and fury made me so angry that I cursed... and so began a life of turning away from God.” Oetinger left school, and began a prolonged period of restless seeking. He traveled, read voraciously, and composed poems. Eventually he returned to school, though he found himself, “like Augustine, suspended between two possibilities,” that of theologian or jurist and statesman.55
Among those who convinced him of theology was one Georg Bernhard Bilfinger, who in *The Fourth Life* is the young Knecht’s pastor.

Oetinger’s vocation as a theologian led him to attempt the most comprehensive formulation he could achieve; his thought, as discussed in Chapter 4, was incredibly eclectic. Never one to rest easily with doctrinal formulations, Oetinger’s thought was informed by “a freedom and a tension that [made his] theology and philosophy so lively [in contrast] to late Pietism, which [would] break up these dynamics in favor of orthodoxy.”\(^{56}\) Oetinger was often filled with doubt over his relationship to the established church, concerned over whether he could truly serve God within the structures and confines of the church. His writings were continuously monitored by the church consistory, and at times even banned from publication in Württemberg. All this made Oetinger an attractive figure for Hesse, and Joseph Knecht will similarly struggle with the tension between his duty to God through service to the church as a theologian and pastor, and service to God by tending to the inner call to be a musician. It is this fundamental tension in Hesse’s own life (symbolized in the flight from Maulbronn) that he is seeking to resolve in his Swabian tale. In terms of narrative identity, Hesse the author builds bridges to Pietism through the similarities between the lives of the fictional Knecht, the historical figure Oetinger, and his own life experiences within the world of Pietism. Paul Ricoeur’s observation that “subjects recognize themselves in the stories they tell about themselves,”\(^{57}\) is aptly demonstrated in Hesse’s felt connection to the cultural, theological, and experiential world of Oetinger.

Included in *The Fourth Life* are two accounts, lifted almost word for word from Oetinger’s autobiography—both deal with Oetinger’s encounter with the thought of Jacob Böhme. The first is Oetinger’s recollection of a talk with the owner of a powder mill in
Hesse uses this passage but it is his protagonist Joseph Knecht, not the character of Oetinger, who meets up with Jacob Böhme:

A pious old burgher of Tübingen, the lessee of the powder mill, once said to Knecht and his friends, “you are students of theology, but they bind your eyes and mouth; you are forbidden to read those books which, after the Bible, are the most pious in existence.” Eagerly, the students asked what books he was referring to. When he spoke of Jacob Böhme, they had no answer to make, for Böhme’s books were indeed banned.

The second event related by Hesse is Oetinger’s study with the cabalist Cappel Hecht. In Oetinger’s words, the real Oetinger, that is:

I came to love him, and I inquired how to best go about cabalist studies. He replied that I should save myself the work, because it wouldn’t lead anywhere. I should rather stay with the writings of my tradition. You can find the concerns of the Cabbala in a Christian book, and it deals more clearly with the Cabbala than does the Zohar. I asked, “Which book?” He replied, “Jacob Böhme.”

Hesse had much to choose from in drawing from Oetinger’s autobiography; the two times he quotes Oetinger are, almost word for word, incidents involving Jacob Böhme.

In a time when spirit and matter were being split apart, Oetinger found in Böhme a theology for keeping them together. “This was the idea of evolution... the total process of becoming is described by Böhme as a movement toward ultimate harmony.” Prior to his reading of Böhme, Oetinger conceived of God in static terms. Through Böhme, Oetinger developed the notion of God as that “Mystery which moves deliberately and constantly toward self-understanding through progressive self-actualization. Böhme’s theology united “the natural realm and the spiritual realm.” A Böhmist theology and mysticism of *becoming* was implicit in Hesse’s romanticism, and in *The Fourth Life* Hesse explicitly pays tribute to his fondness for Jacob Böhme.
In a letter of September, 1951 Hesse writes of his “sympathy for figures such as Jacob Böhme, Oetinger, etc.” The term Hesse uses in describing these men is “Erscheinungen.” The German verb ‘erscheinen’ can mean to appear, as in the appearance of a spirit; as a noun, der Erscheinung, the term connotes an apparition or vision or even a natural phenomenon: such is how Hesse conceived Böhme and Oetinger—phenomena of nature in which the spirit had manifested itself. This is also Hesse’s view of the great religious figures and saints of history. “In Christ I see a manifestation of God, a theophany, of which there have been many.” Though Hesse would in his later years refer to himself as a Christian or almost a Christian, he also realized that his understanding of Christ as a manifestation of the divine placed him in conflict with the confessional basis and faith of his Protestant heritage. “As for being a proper Christian, I am hindered by my inability to believe that God had only one Son, and that faith in Him [the Son] is the only way to God or holiness.”

Within the theological framework of the progressive self-actualization of God through nature and the creative individual, Hesse was able to take a step towards harmonizing his favorite virtue of self-will with the Pietist emphasis on giving up the self in service of God. The pursuit of one’s calling through an attentive listening to and acting upon the inner voice or the inner ‘I’ is conceived as an act of service and devotion to God. In Hesse’s mature vision, Eigensinn becomes for Hesse a testament to one’s relationship with God. Music was always first in Joseph Knecht’s heart, and the central problematic of the narrative is Joseph’s resolution the inner conflict this love entails. The dominant image employed in describing Knecht’s affirmation of love for music is harmony. Joseph’s first teacher, Preceptor Roos, not only drills Joseph in Latin and Greek, but shares his love of music, which they play together. “What really mattered to [Joseph] was the harmony, the
interweaving of parts." What Hesse is saying in *The Fourth Life* is that his own vocation of poet is an element of the harmonious sounds of the spirit. Hesse also incorporates a lengthy passage from Luther into the narrative:

What is most rare and wonderful is that one man sings a simple air or tenor, while three or four or five other voices play and leap around the simple air or tenor as though in jubilation, marvelously gracing and adorning it, and dancing as it were a heavenly round, meeting one another fondly and seeming to caress and embrace one another, so that those who understand this a little and are moved by it cannot but be filled with wonder and convinced that there is nothing more precious in the world than such song, adorned with many voices.

Here, Hesse uses tradition against tradition; the justification of his own love of music (literature and the arts) before the memories of his parent’s rejection of his vocational call is the basic question dealt with in *The Fourth Life*. Joseph’s decision to leave the clergy for his love of music, motivated as it was by attentiveness to the longings of his heart, is not in conflict with true piety. Joseph overcomes the divide between artistic expression and religious life.

When Joseph explains to his teacher Oetinger the conflict in his heart between the desire to be an organist and his duty to be a pastor and theologian, Oetinger replies:

God has a use for each of us; we need only be willing. Write to me or come and see me if there’s anything I can do for you! A lot of men have had to go through this; with some it takes a long time before God can really use them. We can only put the matter in God’s hands, my friend; we have no other recourse.
Knecht has a similar discussion with Magister Bengel, asking him if “his love for music was sinful.” Music, Knecht is told, is no more sinful than any other art. “I myself am not musical.... You have a noble gift that I lack; you must be grateful for it and not neglect it.”

In these literary acts of in loco parentis the “fathers” of Swabian Pietism, in bestowing their blessing on Knecht, implicitly affirm Hesse’s own call to be a poet.

The difference inherent in the shift from an individual self-will of individuation that characterizes Hesse’s early work to a mystical self-will is discussed by Hesse in a letter, in the form of a distinction between “zwei ich:”

In each of us are two ‘Is,’ and whoever knows where one begins and the other ends has attained wisdom. Our subjective, empirical, individual ‘I’... is subject to change, to moods, dependent upon externals, [and] very unsettled.... But there is another ‘I,’ hidden and mixed up within the first, but [should never be] mistaken for it. This second, higher, holier ‘I’... is not personal, but our participation in God.... This eternal ‘I’ is quiet and patient, whereas the other ‘I’ is pushy and impatient.

The willingness of which Oetinger speaks to Joseph is the will to follow God’s will, attentiveness to the demands of the “higher” and “holier” I. For Hesse, one’s deepest longing, one’s Eigensinn, is united with and derives from God’s will.

Hesse wrote the poem “Besinnung” in November of 1933, the same period during which he composed the Swabian tale and began work on The Glass Bead Game. The title of the poem means, literally, ‘reflection,’ but it also carries the connotation of self-recollection. Hesse, in a letter, refers to the poem as a “confession” in which he “sought to represent with the greatest accuracy possible the foundation” of his faith. The poem, writes Hesse, “represents the “beginnings of reflection on my heritage, which is Christian.”

Besinnung

Divine and eternal is the spirit.

Göttlich ist und ewig der Geist.
Towards him, our way leads,
His image and instrument we are;
Our innermost longing to
Become like him, to shine in his light.
But earthen and mortal are we created,
Dull sloth weighs heavily on us creatures.
True: with tender, motherly warmth, Nature keeps
us,
Earth gives us suck, cradle and grave bed us down;
Yet nature does not satisfy us,
Her maternal magic is pierced by
The undying spirit's spark and
Fathers to manhood the child,
Extinguishes innocence and spurs us to struggle and
Conscience.
As between mother and father,
So between body and spirit.
The fragile child of creation hesitates,
Trembling human soul, able to suffer
As no other creature, and capable of the highest:
Faithful, hopeful love.

Difficult is his path; sin and death, his fare,
Often lost in the dark, often
Better to have never been created.
But forever above him shines his longing,
His destination: the light of the spirit.
And we feel: he, the endangered,
Is loved by the eternal with a special love.

And for that reason love is possible
For us erring brothers even in division,
And not judgment and hate,
But patient love,
Enduring love moves
Us closer to the sacred end.

There are many parallels between “Besinnung” and Oetinger’s theology, which is not surprising given that Hesse was absorbed in the work of Oetinger and The Fourth Life precisely when the poem was composed. Hesse’s poem echoes one of the more poetic passages in Oetinger’s autobiography, and it may well be Hesse explicitly crafted ‘Besinnung’ with Oetinger—one of “the fathers”—in mind.

First, there is a distinction between creature and creator. Oetinger: “God is of himself and dependent on nothing. The creation is not of itself, and is fully dependent on God.”
Second, we are made in God’s image, and are God’s instrument; we yearn to become like God. Oetinger: “Oh God, draw me to you and to Christ, just as you draw all of creation to you and to salvation.” Third, we are mortal, often lost in the dark, accompanied by sin and death. Yet the eternal, divine light shines above us as our destination. Oetinger: “The power of creatures has been undone by sin.... Lead my heart out of this dark world into your light.... Oh God, light is the garment that you wear.... Admit me to you; let me wander in your light; keep me from doing the works of darkness.” Fourth, just as Hesse stresses struggle and suffering, the feeling that it would be better never to have been born, the Böhmist tradition understands conflict and suffering as something not external to God, but part of the self-manifestation of God. Finally, the motive force drawing us to God and capable of overcoming division and suffering is, for Hesse, as for Oetinger, enduring, patient love.72

Though Hesse uses the term Geist (spirit), rather than God, he writes that “the ‘spirit’ in my poem is not only divine, it is God, and it has nothing to do with pantheism.”73 In Hesse’s poetic vision the entire creation arises from and returns to God. Humanity, as part of this process of movement toward self-realization, is a participant in the nature of God. As Oetinger writes, “every person should study two things well: God and the self.”74 In such a Böhmist inspired theology, Eigensinn does not reflect egoism or narcissism, but attentiveness to, as Hesse puts it, “that mysterious power in [us] which bids [us] live and helps [us] grow.”75 Joseph at times suspected his love of music and the hours spent practicing the violin, but he could not bring himself to give them up. In all other respects he was very strict with himself, for he was determined to go the whole way, to transform and ennoble his whole life; to penetrate to the center, no longer to belong to himself and meet his own life but to make himself entirely into an instrument of God.76
But to make himself into an “instrument of God”—and here Hesse uses the same language as we find in “Besinnung,” Joseph must attend to the innermost yearnings of his heart. “Music always occupied first place in his heart,” we are told, “but not in his consciousness.” Joseph eventually follows the thought of the heart, with no separation between personal fulfillment and serving God. The Castalian Joseph Knecht will take a similar journey.
The Place of Pietism in *The Glass Bead Game*

Thus [Joseph Knecht’s] path had been a circle, or an ellipse or spiral or whatever, but certainly not straight; straight lines evidently belonged only to geometry, not to nature and life.79

*The Glass Bead Game* was published in Zürich in 1943, when Hesse was sixty-six. More than ten years in the making, it is Hesse’s crowing achievement—as one critic has it, “a subtle reweaving, in a luminous revisualization, of the pattern of a lifetime’s dreams.”80 *The Glass Bead Game* is a complicated work and our aims in this section are modest. Hesse explicitly weaves Pietism into his story of Joseph Knecht, and our goal is to understand the significance of Pietism to the narrative structure of the novel; this in turn will provide us with insight into Hesse’s conception of Pietism as a historical phenomenon, and his relationship to the tradition.

As is the case with all of Hesse’s novels, there is a rich autobiographical context to *The Glass Bead Game*. Just as Knecht projects himself into the characters he longed to become, Hesse projected himself into the character of Joseph Knecht. Knecht studies at elite schools, plays the violin, is enchanted by music. Knecht’s schooling, in Berolffingen, Escholz, and Waldzell, parallels the Swabian schools of Göttingen, Maulbronn, and Tübingen. Hesse’s descriptions of the Castalian school system are clearly indebted to his understanding of and love for the great mandarin tradition in Swabia. Mileck has done a masterful job detailing the close parallels between life and literature informing *The Glass Bead Game*,81 and the kingdom of Castalia is unthinkable without Hesse’s background in the spiritual-educational culture of Württemberg. What has been given little attention is the meaning and significance of Pietism to the historical-spiritual narrative that Hesse’s unfolds in *The Glass Bead Game*, which will be the focus here.
There are three sections to The Glass Bead Game. In the first, an anonymous narrator, a member of the elite group of scholar-monks of the province of Castalia, and writing around the year 2400, informs the reader of his desire to preserve the memory of Magister Ludi Joseph Knecht, and begins by providing some context in the form of an introduction to the history and practice of the Glass Bead Game, the central institution of this "pedagogical province." The game emerged in the twentieth century, the "age of the Feuilleton," a period of cultural decline, under the impetus of a few select individuals interested in the preservation of intellectual and spiritual values. These individuals and those that followed in their footsteps founded Castalia. What is the Glass Bead Game? The concrete details of how it is played are never given, but it is described: the game is a "mode of playing with the total contents of our culture; it plays with them as, say, in the great age of the arts a painter might have played with the colors on his palette. All the insights, noble thoughts, and works of art that the human race has produced in its creative eras, all that subsequent periods of scholarly study have reduced to concepts and converted into intellectual property—on all this the immense body of intellectual values the Glass Bead Game player plays like the organist on an organ." What is said here about the game isn't quite true; as is learned later, no one in Castalia, save Knecht, knows about Pietism; there exist cultural values, products, and movements that lie outside the scope of the game, and this is important to an interpretation of the novel.

The second section consists of the life story of the novel's hero, Joseph Knecht—his rise through the elite schools of Castalia, his contributions to the game, his appointment to the highest position in the hierarchy—Magister Ludi, Master of the Game. The concluding
chapter of Knecht’s life is an account of his legendary and unprecedented resignation and
defection from Castalia. It is this unique event that provides the impetus for the narrator to recall and set down in writing the life-story of this most unusual man. Other voices interrupt the narrator’s account, as he inserts into his chronicle of Knecht’s life letters and various documents from the Castalian archives.

Insofar as the novel deals with the intellectual, spiritual and moral development of its protagonist, it stands in the tradition of the German Bildungsroman. Ricoeur describes the genre of the Bildungsroman as one in which “everything seems to turn on the self-awakening of the central character. First, it is his gaining maturity that provides the narrative framework; then, more and more, his doubts, his confusion, his difficulty in finding himself and his place in the world govern the development of this type of story.” But this self-awakening, as Gadamer emphasizes in his discussion of Bildung, is intimately related to cultural memory, to history, to tradition. Bildung means more than simply individual development: it includes questions of memory and forgetting, the preservation and transmission of tradition, the relevance of memory and history to our grasp of the present and our hopes for the future, all of which is central to Joseph’s Knecht’s development, and his eventual decision to leave Castalia. Bildung is rooted in “historically effected consciousness,” a consciousness aware of history. “In Bildung... that by which and through which one is formed becomes completely one’s own... in acquired Bildung nothing disappears, but everything is preserved.” Knecht’s departure is the culmination of his Bildung, and his act of resignation the outcome of those cultural and moral forces that formed him: one of these sources, and one with a close relationship to Knecht’s ultimate rejection of Castalia, is Pietism.
The final section of the novel contains the posthumous writings of Joseph Knecht—some poems, and three fictional autobiographies, the later the result of “an old and much-mocked custom,” in Castalia in which “the authors cast themselves as the characters they longed to become.” As Knecht’s posthumous writings have little or nothing to do with Pietism, we will restrict our attention to the mention of Pietism in the life story of Joseph Knecht, but supplement this with some relevant material from The Fourth Life.

Knecht encounters Pietism in two different contexts. First, we learn that in addition to the three fictional lives the narrator includes among Knecht’s posthumous writings, Knecht also devoted a good deal of time to a fourth, set in 18th century Swabia. The studies and work undertaken by Knecht in attempting this “Fourth Life”—his study of eighteenth-century Swabian Pietism—are thus part of Knecht’s education or Bildung. The other explicit mention of Pietism in the narrative is found in Knecht’s conversations with Father Jacobus. Following his induction into the Order of the game players, Knecht is sent to the Benedictine monastery of Mariafels. It is at Mariafels that Knecht meets Father Jacobus (who is modeled in part on Hesse’s admiration for the historian Jacob Burkhardt) and the two have several conversations on religious questions, including eighteenth-century Protestantism and Pietism. In these discussions Knecht reveals the fruits of the studies he undertook in preparation for writing his fictional Swabian life. The question we want to pursue is the significance of Knecht’s knowledge of Pietism with respect to his decision to resign as Magister Ludi and leave Castalia.

A key feature of The Glass Bead Game is Hesse’s enfolding of narrated lives, historical epochs, and the event of Maulbronn. Behind Knecht’s departure from Castalia (an order of elite scholar-monks, “mandarins” as Hesse refers to them) lurks Hesse’s flight from
Maulbronn seminary and his giving up a potentially rewarding career as a scholar and theologian. In our reading of *The Glass Bead Game* we need to think simultaneously on three levels, or of three intertwined threads: the life of Hermann Hesse and his flight from Maulbronn seminary; the narrated life of Joseph Knecht, set in Castalia, and his departure from the Order; and the fourth, fictional life of Joseph Knecht, set in Swabia, and Knecht’s departure from theology and the clergy in favor of music. We further need to recognize an enfolding of three historical periods marked by cultural advancement and decline, framed by a key theme, the tension between stability and impermanence, continuity and change, and summed-up in one of Joseph Knecht’s extant letters:

> And I was powerfully gripped by the vision of transitoriness: the way before our eyes such a complex, ancient, venerable organism, slowly built up over many generations, reaches its high point, which already contains the germ of decay, and the whole intelligently articulated structure begins to droop, to degenerate, to totter toward its doom.... at the same time the thought abruptly shot through me, with a joyful, startled amazement, that despite the decay and death of that language it had not been lost, that its youth, maturity, and downfall were preserved in our memory, in our knowledge of it and its history, and would survive.

The vision described in Knecht’s letter is depicted in the narrative in terms of the rise and fall of cultural eras.

The narrator’s Castalia is set in the future (around the year 2400) and, as the narrator tells us, developed in response to the decadence and cultural decay of the 20th century (Hesse’s age). This is the “Age of the Feuilleton,” a “bourgeois” era of “untrammeled individualism... on the verge of that dreadful devaluation of the Word which produced, at first in secret and within the narrowest of circles, that ascetically heroic countermovement which soon afterward began to flow visibly and powerfully, and ushered in the new self-discipline and dignity of the human intellect.” The image of decline and renewal, presented
early in the narrative, is important, because in it we hear an echo of what is said about
eighteenth-century Pietism in *The Fourth Life*: “over the years this vigorously spontaneous
movement... was to slacken and degenerate. But then it was in its springtime...” The two
places—the spiritual-intellectual world of Castalia and the era of the Swabian Pietist
fathers—resemble one another in that they are both conceived as responses to spiritual and
social decline. Pietism’s first generation of Swabian “disciples,” as Knecht calls Johann
Albrecht Bengel and Friedrich Christoph Oetinger, the “fathers” of Pietism in Swabia,
brought the movement to its cultural zenith.

But in the time of Knecht’s life, some four centuries after the “heroic
countermovement” that established Castalia, Knecht is detecting the beginnings of the end.
The Order is detached from the vicissitudes of social life and politics, and has no interest in
history; the players of the game fail to see its historicity, that is, that it is impermanent; they
are living off the accumulated cultural capital of generations without producing anything
authentically new; they suffer from a certain aristocratic elitism and arrogance; the whole
structure is beginning to droop and is tottering toward its end. They deal in the products of
culture, but, owing to their lack of a historical perspective, can’t see the story of these
products. Hesse perceived his own era, a time viciously scarred by two World Wars, as the
end of an age, and he experienced Pietism as “meager,” “transitory,” “outdated,” and “almost
extinct”—the tale end of the great tradition founded by Bengel and Oetinger.

In understanding Knecht’s decision to leave, which is the ultimate act of his spiritual,
moral, and intellectual development, we need to see in it the workings of Knecht’s historical
awareness, part of which is his understanding of Pietism. Johann Albrecht Bengel, one of the
fathers of Pietism in Swabia, is specifically named by Knecht as “being among the secret
forerunners and ancestors of our game." Father Jacobus is surprised to learn of Knecht’s knowledge of Protestant Pietism: “is it normal in your astonishing Province that people know such abstruse and forgotten thing and names.” Indeed, it is not normal, and in The Fourth Life Hesse expands on the relationship of Pietism to the Game, through a digression of the narrator inserted into Knecht’s narrative. As in the novel, the speculative Pietism of Swabia is mentioned as a progenitor of the game, but Knecht is worried that “parts of the game... are in danger of being forgotten.” During his studies undertaken in the writing of his fictional Swabian Life, Knecht “felt only too keenly... the urge to capture [this] bit of history and perpetuate it in signs. These men developed a new, sincere, and passionate form of devotion and piety, and we should be quite justified in including them.” The problem, we are told, is that these Pietists didn’t establish any stable language or form, but only a number of small, fragmented sects—and “that is why Bengel and Oetinger could be forgotten and why a Voltaire, for example, is still remembered.” But the narrator goes on to write that these “subterranean movements should not be considered inferior and, in fact, the classical thinkers and artists”—those that are incorporated into the game—are not the “creative givers of bounty but consumers of the spiritual heritage... the unclassical and often anonymous movements have been the true sources of energy, the true preservers and augmenters of the heritage.”

This same image is used in The Glass Bead Game, where Knecht is described as having administered and increased the cultural heritage that had been handed down to him... [and] moved beyond it.”

What Hesse accomplishes in weaving together these lives and eras is a refiguration of the event of Maulbronn in which Hesse’s flight is (re)read and (re)written as being in harmony with his Pietist heritage. Knecht’s personality is described as consisting of two
antipodal tendencies—toward loyalty and service of the Order and "toward awakening, toward advancing, toward apprehending reality." In his eventual defection, these two qualities are brought together in harmony—his leaving/awakening is an act of service; Knecht is the true Castalian, just as many Pietists considered themselves true Protestants or members of Luther’s ‘inner Church.’ There is little doubt that Hesse saw himself as standing in a tradition from which he could not escape even if he wished to do so. If in his early years Hesse was fleeing the Pietism of his family, by around 1930 he saw it an essential part of who he was. Hans-Georg Gadamer says of tradition that it is not something that we relate to but something that we are, and it seems that Hesse came to this very conclusion with respect his Protestant-Pietist heritage. In the Introduction was cited Hesse’s late letter to his cousin, in which he discusses their life’s work in relation to the reception and transmission of tradition to the next generation: "the tradition will not end." This is precisely Joseph’s Knecht’s understanding of his need to leave Castalia: Knecht “administered and increased the cultural heritage that had been handed down to him... [and] moved beyond it.” “The idea of a heritage,” writes Ricoeur, ties together the “ideas of a debt and a tradition” and also expresses the notion of the efficacy of the past. In The Fourth Life and no less in The Glass Bead Game, by narrating Joseph Knecht’s debt to Pietism and the efficacy of his knowledge of Pietism in his life, Hesse was paying a belated tribute to the power of tradition in his own life.

If Hesse was writing (and justifying) his flight from Maulbronn in the journey of Joseph Knecht, it may well be he had another episode and figure from his youth in mind when in crafting The Glass Bead Game: Christoph Schrempf. In January of 1891 Schrempf caused a scandal by refusing to conduct baptisms, and from the pulpit chastised the church
with the charge of spiritual lethargy. Schrempf caused a stir among the young seminary students of Maulbronn. In the wake of the Maulbronn affair Hesse was looking for people with whom he could identify, and in Schrempf he saw a striking example of the religious conscience in action. There is textual evidence that Hesse may have had Schrempf in mind in conceiving Joseph Knecht’s eventual defection from Castalia. Sometime in the mid 1930s Hesse read Schrempf’s study of Luther and, as Hesse writes,

found to my surprise another confirmation of my own experiences and thoughts. Not long before I had made the attempt to formulate the foundations of my faith [a reference to the poem ‘Besinnung’]... and this attempt was virtually sentence for sentence identical to a chapter in Schrempf’s work. What Schrempf found in Luther and in himself is this faith: everything that happens to me and through me is good. It is good, even if it hurts. It is good, even if it goes against approved morality.... This is Luther’s ‘justification through faith,’ and this is Schrempf’s own faith.”

It is also Joseph Knecht’s faith, implicit in his recognition of “how far Castalia has moved away from its motherland.” Like a Luther or like a Christoph Schrempf, Knecht is one who is inside the “church” but leaves out an account of the conflict he experiences between his duties to the institution and his inner voice. Before leaving Castalia Knecht writes a “Circular Letter,” a traditional form of communication with Pietist and Protestant circles in which the author voiced and shared their views with like-minded others on the state of society, culture, politics, and religion. Knecht sounds very much like the Luther who is often presented as the model for modern individual autonomy and conscience. The Order, claims Knecht, has compromised its commitment to the life of the mind and spirit, and he would be a “coward” and a “traitor” to the very heart of the Order should he continue to support its continued outward and institutional existence, given that it has sold itself to “material interests.” “It is treason,” Knecht writes, “to sacrifice love of truth, intellectual honesty,
loyalty to the laws and methods of the mind, to any other interests, including those of one’s country.” This is what Knecht feels Castalia has done, and this is why he must take the courageous step and leave. The founders of Pietism were ready, where necessary, to criticize the church. They did not “blindly trust the church and were prepared, on the basis of religious or theological reasons, to separate from the church.” So too was Schrempf, so too was Knecht, and it is along such lines that Hesse revisioned his own flight from Maulbronn.

Hesse’s use of the name “Knecht,” to describe his protagonist, and of “Castalia” to describe the pedagogical province are relevant to an understanding of the impact of Pietism on the novel. The German ‘Knecht’ means something like ‘servant;’ and Joseph leaves Castalia in response to the needs of another—the young Tito, who desperately needs some guidance—to become a simple teacher. Knecht’s ‘awakening’ is a central theme of the novel, and entails bringing together the active and contemplative lives; he may be Master of the Glass Bead Game, but he is the master who is a servant—a purely aesthetic/spiritual world is incomplete without some commitment to the social world and the lives of others. Similarly, the Pietist awakening sought to bring together love of God with love of neighbor in a practical lived Christianity.

Hesse’s writing of Knecht’s flight bears the traces of the ethical flavor of Pietism, and the term ‘Knecht’ was one used within Pietist culture to refer to Christ. Johannes Hesse, for example, employs the notion in his Lebenslauf in describing his spiritual angst: “I am like a wandering and lost sheep Lord, looking for your servant [Knecht].” And the Basel mission society at which Johannes trained and with which the Gundert-Hesse family was closely affiliated established itself (in 1815) with the aim of “training missionaries after the image of Christ as servant [der Knechtsgestalt Christi].” Clearly in the name of Knecht Hesse was
drawing on the spirit of love and service in the world that he associated with his family. This spirit is what is missing from the game and from Castalia.

As for ‘Castalia,’ Hesse was likely alluding to the Castalia of Greek mythology and philosophy, though the text explicitly says that Castalia is not the Greek Castalia. Castalia as the pedagogical province owes a debt to the mandarin culture of the elite schools in Swabia, and it may be that Hesse was referring to a famous fountain near Tübingen that the Romantics dubbed the “Castalian Spring.” It is here those under the sway of the Romantic spirit—such as Friedrich Hölderlin, whose works and life Hesse knew well—would go to infuse their souls with the poetic inspiration associated with the Greek Castalia:

Their meetings were bathed in an aura of enthusiastic, quasi-religious celebration. Magenau [a member of the group] describes in his autobiographical sketch how at one such meeting in a garden house overlooking the Neckar Valley the three friends sang their entire repertoire of songs to joy. Schiller’s, along with the steaming punch bowl, was saved till last. Prior to this dual climax Hölderlin insisted they cleanse themselves in the ‘Castalian Spring,’ a nearby fountain, stating, ‘No one unclean can sing Schiller’s songs.’

The spiritual elitism of Castalia and its ethos of the mandarin culture associated with the elite schools of Swabia and the Tübingen Stift make such a link a definite possibility. Moreover, the members of the society to which Hölderlin belonged considered themselves to be intellectual and spiritual elites. They called themselves the *Aldermanbsbund*; the name derives from Klopstock’s *Deutsche Gelehrtenrepublik*, where the *Aldermänner* are the elite of an intellectual aristocracy, and preside over a stratified society. At the tops are the *Aldermänner*, the *Edlen* (nobility), whose “nobility rests not on their bloodlines, but on the merit of their ‘discoveries and inventions,’” a notion very much in keeping with Castalia. Beneath them are “guild members and the town folk, who are classified either as *Freie* (those
who can think on their own and seldom imitate) and Knechte (the imitators). Beneath these is a still lower class, the rabble (Pöbel), to which Klopstock most frequently appends the modifier ‘depraved’ (verdorben).”\textsuperscript{114} Given Hesse’s depth of knowledge of Romantic thought and culture, it is not unreasonable to assume he may have had such associations in mind in choosing the name for his pedagogical province and for his hero.

Knecht is both master and servant; he is the creative genius who added to the inventions of the Glass Bead Game, but he also affirms and embodies the model of the humble servant. Knecht spent so much time at Mariafels that the other players wondered “to what extent he became a Christian.” The narrator concludes that this realm is closed to our research;” in other words, it can’t be answered because the answer depends very much on the definition given to the key term. But, he continues, “Knecht had a kind of inner reverence which we would scarcely be wrong to call pious.” “Piety,” we read, “is faithful service and loyalty up to the point of sacrificing one’s life.”\textsuperscript{115} Hesse had profound respect for the path of the imitation of Christ, and even though it was not his path, he would not look down on the Knechte as did the Edlen of the Aldermänner, or the elites of Castalia.

\textit{The Glass Bead Game} is very much a novel about time and memory, and memory as a prerequisite for a future-to-be. Hesse called his final novel a “retrospect and a utopia.”\textsuperscript{116} “The motto of my thick new book... clearly states the purpose of the work. It is an attempt to portray something nonexistent but desirable and probable, and in so doing bring the idea a step closer to being realized.”\textsuperscript{117} The epigraph to the novel speaks of the difficulty and necessity in the “depiction of non-existent things,”\textsuperscript{118} and this can be understood in two senses—the not-yet-here and the no-longer-here, and these are interrelated. The narrator notes that “it imposes no strain on our credulity to believe in the continued existence of a
constellation that has vanished below the horizon.” Pietism is such a constellation in the novel and in Hesse’s life and temporal era. Pietism is outside the horizon of Castalia, just as it was outside the horizon of Wilhelmine and Weimar Germany—but it is not outside the consciousness of Joseph Knecht or Hermann Hesse. The Castalian Knecht speaks of Pietism’s “rich and many faceted intellectual history,” the moral influence of which can be traced for two hundred years—that is, to Hesse’s time. The same image is found in The Fourth Life: “The impact of [Oetinger’s] personality and teachings can be followed down to the generation of his great grandchildren”—again, down to Hesse’s generation. Knecht’s encounter with Pietism must be seen as a formative influence on his decision to leave Castalia, and Hesse’s own reencounter with Pietism, undoubtedly shaped the development of the novel.

The Glass Bead Game was written during the 1930s, and the events of the time had a significant impact on Hesse’s conception of the work. The book was a response to the rise of the Nazis to power, the “pressures of the moment” were the “race and blood blather of the Nazis,” the “poison gas” emanating from the speeches of Hitler and his ministers. Hesse turned his attention to the creation of the spiritual, utopian realm of Castalia and its Glass Bead Game—a futuristic vision of a kingdom of monk-like scholars dedicated to the study and preservation of the highest intellectual and aesthetic values. “Two things mattered to me,” Hesse wrote, “to build up a mental space, a refuge and a fortress, in which I could live in spite of the poisoning of the whole world; and... to express the resistance of the spirit against the barbaric forces and if possible to strengthen my friends over in Germany in their determination to resist and endure.”
Hesse’s Castalia, born during the rise of the Nazis and the outbreak of the Second World War, was for Hesse a “realm of spirit and soul,” an act of inner resistance to the outer horrors: “thus my work turned into a utopia… projected into the future, the terrible present was banished into a past that has been weathered.”

Castalia’s purpose, we read in the novel, is “to gather, educate, and shape men’s minds not by eugenics, not by blood, but by the spirit...” But “authentic Utopia,” as Herbert Marcuse writes, “is grounded in recollection,” and “the remembrance of things past may become a motive power in the struggle for changing the world.” It is Knecht’s encounter with history (including the history of Pietism) in his discussions with Father Jacobus and the studies undertaken in preparation to write his *Swabian Life*, that lead to his awareness of the problems of Castalia, and his ultimate realization that to save the Order he must leave it.

The Castalian realm of spirit was incomplete because it was detached from the world, unhistorical, unable to respond to the claims of others; the Castalians were developing a “mentality, a morality, and sense of self which was no longer viable in real, active life.” In a time and place mired in war and the insanities of National Socialism, Hesse projected an alternative horizon in *The Glass Bead Game*, and his remembrance of Pietism was part of this effort. “Any project for future alternatives to the paralysis of the present needs to remain mindful of the narratives of the past. The ethical imagination demands such an ‘anticipatory memory’—in order to reread history as a seed-bed of prefigured possibilities now erased from contemporary consciousness.” Pietism was just such a seed-bed for Joseph Knecht, and for Hermann Hesse.
NOTES TO CHAPTER 6

1 Life Story, Briefly Told, 56-57.
2 Mileck, Hermann Hesse, Life and Art, 199.
3 Mileck, 245.
4 Hesse, in a letter of 11 May 1936 to Peter Suhrkamp, Briefe 2: 37.
5 “My Belief,” 197.
6 In a letter of 1935 Hesse writes, “I was no longer young when I gradually began to reacquaint myself with the belief I was raised in…. I found myself driven to make a new effort to get to know the Protestant form of Christianity (Schriften 7:587).
7 MATGBG, 77-81
8 Hesse began The Glass Bead Game during this period; the well-known essay, ‘A Bit of Theology,’ which expresses a tripartite path of spiritual development in “almost Christian terms” was written in 1932; Hesse’s literary reviews for the Neue Rundschau in 1934 and 1935 were strongly informed by religious and theological works; Hesse’s letters of the early 1930s are filled with references to Pietism and religion; the important poem “Besinnung,” a statement of Hesse’s feeling of spiritual continuity with the “faith of the fathers,” was written in November 1933; and Hesse worked on The Fourth Life of Joseph Knecht, set in eighteenth-century Pietist Swabia, through in 1933 and 1934. In a letter of 1935 to his sister, commenting on his literary reviews and his work on The Glass Bead Game, Hesse writes: “In all these things, including my reviews, I often feel that father is close to me. To be sure, I believe there is also an ever present touch of grandfather Gundert’s side, behind whose Pietism and philology there was an abundant love of music and an illegal, well trained imagination for and pleasure in spiritual speculation” (Hesse, in a letter of January 1935 to his sister Marulla, in MATGBG, 107).
9 MATGBG, 76-78.
10 Schriften 7:590
11 MATGBG, 294.
12 The Glass Bead Game 115; hereafter GBG
13 GBG 115-116. Ziolkowski (1967) has discussed the various Pietist texts Hesse consulted (and borrowed from) in composing The Fourth Life of Joseph Knecht.
14 Hesse wrote two versions of the Swabian tale; we will cite only from the first.
17 Ziolkowski, The Novels, 255-261.
18 Ziolkowski, 261-262.
19 Journey, 4-7.
20 Journey, 26-27.
21 Journey, 37.
22 Journey, 47-48.
23 Stelzig, Hermann Hesse’s Fictions of the Self, 243.
24 Journey, 52.
25 Journey, 24.
26 Journey, 87.
27 Journey, 5. The German phrase translated here as “sanctimonious sects” is “pietistischer Sekten” (Werke 8:324.
28 “My Belief,” 179.
29 Journey, 14.
30 Journey, 90-91.
31 Journey, 8-9.
32 Journey, 13-14.
33 Journey, 46.
34 Journey, 96.
35 Journey, 16-17.
36 Journey, 115.
37 Journey, 89-90.
Journey, 52. Journey to the East bears some similarities to deconstruction. Hesse deconstructs the stability of the text, but like Derrida, he holds out the hope that the text contains a trace or crevice through which the absolute may shine. “Within the closure [of the text],” writes Derrida, “by an oblique and always perilous movement, constantly risking falling back on what is being deconstructed, it is necessary to surround the critical concepts with a careful and thorough discourse . . . and, in the same process, designate the crevice through which the as yet unnamable glimmer beyond the closure can be glimpsed.” The crevice Derrida speaks of is to be found in language, and through this crevice one glimpses “what Derrida has named in his essay on Levinas, the ‘unforeseeably-’ or ‘infinitely-’ or ‘absolutely-other,’ which Levinas locates at the very center of all religion and which Derrida aptly defines as ‘the religiosity of the religious.’” The “absolutely-other” discloses itself and through that which our conceptualizations fail to encompass. This experience of “otherness” is not achieved through direct contact, but through rupture, puzzlement, or confusion. In describing the experience of otherness Derrida uses religious language: “a distress and denuding, a supplication, a demanding prayer addressed to a freedom, that is, to a commandment: the only possible ethical imperative, the only incarnated nonviolence in that it is respect for the other.” In other words, Derrida is concerned with a certain type of literary experience—the experience of otherness—and deconstruction as a method seeks to lift out the otherness in even the most familiar of texts. [All citations here are from Giles Gunn, The Culture of Criticism, 49-50.]

Journey, 64.

See “Zum Gedächtnis,” Werke 10:126-130. On Johannes Hesse’s headstone is an inscription from Psalm 124, ‘We have escaped as a bird from the snare of the fowlers; the snare is broken and we have escaped!’ As for his father’s golden ring, as Hesse slipped it on his own finger “it fit well, and as I looked at this finger with the ring on it, that I had a thousand times looked at on my father’s hand and as a child often played with, turning it in my hand, my old sister looked too and we both realized how similar my hand looked to my father’s.” Hesse goes on to write of the ring as the symbol binding Hesse’s destiny and life to that of his father.

Journey, 102-103.

Zum Gedächtnis,” Werke 10:126. Though written shortly after Johannes Hesse’s death, Hesse’s recollection was republished as part of the material comprising Zum Gedächtnis unseres Vaters, co-authored and edited with his sister Adele. The volume appeared in 1930, precisely as Hesse was working on Journey.

“It was not just the bond of blood that drew us together at times of anxiety. Beyond this there was the power of a discipline and a belief that our father and mother had served and that none of us children thought of shirking, a faith that had continued to hold me in its embrace even after the cutting of all word and community bonds. We all felt this faith now, the belief in a destiny, the belief in a calling and obligation… one can easily kick at such a belief but one cannot extinguish it.” “Zum Gedächtnis,” 132.

In one of his Crisis poems Hesse uses the motif of John the Baptist in referring to his father: “Zu Johannes der Täufer sprach Hermann der Säufer” (To Johannes the Baptist spoke Hermann the Drunkard), MATSTEP, 187.


This phrase, “the faith of the fathers,” is used by Hesse in describing his poem “Besinnung,” which we will look at later in this chapter.


Oetinger, Selbstbiographie, 79.


Schriften 7:390

The Fourth Life, 128. It may be that Leo’s name, Andrea, is an allusion to the famous Swabian Johannes Valentinus Andreae (1586-1654), who was known for both his esoteric thought and practical piety.

The Fourth Life, 191-194.

The Fourth Life, 148-149.

Oetinger, Selbstbiographie, 26.


Weyer-Menkhoff, “Friedrich Christoph Oetinger,” 247.

Oetinger, Selbstbiographie, 36.

The Fourth Life, 171.
Oetinger, Selbsbiographie, 52. Hesse, in adapting this passage for use in The Fourth Life, removes the overtone of Christian universalism: “Actually,” he [Hecht, speaking to Oetinger] said with a smile, “the Christians had a true sage who was close to the Cabbala and its Christian counterpart—Jacob Böhme’ (The Fourth Life, 177).

Stoeffler, German Pietism, 110.

Werke 11: 98.

Briefe 4: 197.

"You hold that living out of one’s own I is simply egoism. But that appears so only to the European, who knows nothing about the I. The I to which seekers refer, and which for three thousand years has occupied the thought of the non-European world (the exception is European science)—this I is not the individual person... but rather the innermost essential core of every soul, which the Indians have named ‘Atman,’ which is holy and eternal. Whoever finds this I is on the path of the Buddha or the Vedas or Lao Tzu or Christ; in his innermost being he is united with the All, with God, and acts in accordance with his understanding and unity with him" (MATSID, 105).

Schriften 7:635. Hesse frequently spoke in such terms in his later years: “You hold that living out of one’s own I is simply egoism. But that appears so only to the European, who knows nothing about the I. The I to which seekers refer, and which for three thousand years has occupied the thought of the non-European world (the exception is European science)—this I is not the individual person... but rather the innermost essential core of every soul, which the Indians have named ‘Atman,’ which is holy and eternal. Whoever finds this I is on the path of the Buddha or the Vedas or Lao Tzu or Christ; in his innermost being he is united with the All, with God, and acts in accordance with his understanding and unity with him” (MATSID, 105).

Schriften 7:589.

Werke 1:104.

Oetinger, Selbsbiographie, 77-78.

Briefe 2:407

Oetinger, Selbsbiographie, 77.

Werke 10:458.

The Fourth Life, 163.

The Fourth Life, 143.

For Oetinger, what makes knowledge of God (and God’s will) possible is the sensus communis. Oetinger’s sensus communis is not the “common sense” of the rationalist tradition, though Oetinger does affirm the rationalist version. Rather, Oetinger translates sensus communis as “heart” and gives this hermeneutical application—we do not know through rational reflection on sense impressions but through the intuition and feeling of the heart (See Gadamer, Truth and Method, 26-27). The heart is for Oetinger an organ of perception and understanding, and this sheds some light on Hesse’s admiration for the stand taken by Swabian theologians against the “cleverness and polish of the Enlightenment.”

GBG, 379.

Boulby, Hermann Hesse, 267.


Specifically, the narrator-scholar names musicians, mathematicians, philologists, and the “age-old League of Journeymers to the East” (GBG, 37).

GBG, 15.

Once you enter the Order you are a member for life; even if one leaves the Order, one remains a member. Nevertheless, the unprecedented nature of Knecht’s resignation and leaving led him to be viewed as a kind of defector.

Ricoeur, Time and Narrative, 2:9


Gadamer, Truth and Method, 340-379

Gadamer, Truth and Method, 11-12.

GBG, 115
Aside from these explicit mentions of Pietism, the nature of the game itself has a measure of similarity to the speculative and integrative thought associated with the Swabian fathers. Bengel, owing to his complicated Biblical exegesis and mathematical calculations is identified by Knecht as a “progenitor of the game,” and the complex intricacies of the game remind one of the interests shared by Oetinger and Hahn not only for mysticism, the Cabbala, and enlightenment philosophy but also for technological devices such as clocks calculating machines, hydrostatic pumps, barometers, and scales. See Martin Brecht, Der Württembergische Pietismus, 279. The ethos of the pedagogical province also owes something to the culture of the Swabian Mandarins, as was discussed in Chapter 1.

If one considers the additional three fictional lives of Joseph Knecht then the number of levels and lives are necessarily added to; this would not, however, alter our interpretation of the place of Pietism in the novel.

Hesse satirizes not merely the banality of popular culture, which he sees as being driven by the story-lines of trivial events and personalities crafted by a media culture, but also the role of academics, who through public talks, newspaper articles and radio appearances pass along valuable information to the public in the form of talks with titles such as “Friedrich Nietzsche and Women’s Fashions of the 1870,” or “The Composer Rossini’s Favorite Dishes” (see GBG, 20-23).

The Fourth Life, 161.

The emergence of Castalia imaginatively parallels the Pietist Awakening of the late 17th and 18th centuries that rippled through Germany and northern Europe. Just as the Age of the Feuilleton was decadent and spiritually bankrupt, so too was the Lutheran orthodoxy that the early Pietists such as Philipp Jakob Spener sought to reform perceived as spiritually dead, and detached from active service and commitment to social life: love of God and neighbor was what Spener sought to infuse into religious and social life.

See, for example, GBG, 193-194, 277, 351.

My Belief, 177

GBG, 166

GBG, 165.

The Fourth Life, 181-182. In his essay, ”My Belief” (Mein Glaube) written in 1931, Hesse writes that “almost all true Christianity and true devotion to the Kingdom of God were not to be found in these boring byway [established] churches, but in even more obscure, though for that very reason inspired and active, conventicles of more dubious and transitory form—all this was no secret to me in my fairly early youth, although in my father’s house the established churches and their traditions were always mentioned with reverence (a reverence which I felt was not wholly genuine and early grew doubtful of... [T]he whole inspired heroism of their [his family’s] Christian lives got its nourishment from reading the Bible and not from the Church and the divine services on Sunday” (178).

GBG, 49.

GBG, 274

See, for example, Hesse’s conception of being born in to a Protestant family and culture as part of destiny (cited on p. 215, n.59), and his reference to himself as being “Protestant by temperament and nature” (cited on p. 181).

Briefe 4:383

Ricoeur, Time and Narrative, 3:228.

“Nachruf auf Christoph Schrempf,” Werke 10:254-255. In his remembrance of Christoph Schrempf Hesse implicitly associates himself with this tradition of the Protestant conscience and individualism. “[Schrempf] descends directly and distinctly from south German Pietism,” wrote Hesse in a letter, “not from an enthusiastic but rather a sober and very austere form of Pietism. And if he freed himself quite early on not just from Pietism but from Christianity and every dogmatic form of religion, his sober, honest, upright manner betrays his origins” (Ausgewählte Briefe, 142; Letter of 18 April 1935 to Stefan Zweig).

GBG, 297.

In writings such as Luther’s ‘Freedom of a Christian’ many German philosophers, writers, and theologians saw the paradigm of religious freedom, individualism, and conscience.

GBG, 359.


The idea of being affected by the past is fundamental to Gadamer’s hermeneutics, and is taken up by Ricoeur (Time 3:217-229). The notion of Bildung, as Gadamer emphasizes, includes the impulse of “preservation,” and the drive to absorb everything that has been received (Truth and Method, 11). It should not, however, be understood as uncritical reverence for tradition, and Hesse, as we have seen, found much in Pietism to criticize.  

Hesse clearly saw the dangers of Hitler from the beginning, as these words in a review dating from 1921 demonstrate: “A small publication, ‘Verrat am Deutschland’ by Wilhelm Michel, gives me occasion to say a few words about one of the most hateful and stupid forms of German nationalism, about the idiotic, pathological anti-Semitism of the swastika bards and their many, particularly student hangers-on.... Today, there is in vogue among the horribly misguided young Germans a kind of murderous hounding of Jews that does enormous harm, not only because it prevents youth from seeing the world as it is but also because this manner of persecution buttresses disastrously the general inclination to find a scapegoat for all that is wrong.... Simply to set up a class of people as a scapegoat for the world’s evil, a scapegoat for the multitude of sins and indulgences or our own people, is such a horrible degenerate act that the resultant harm exceeds tenfold the harm that ever may have been perpetrated by the Jews” (Vivos Voco, 2, July, 1921, cited in Mileck, Between the Perils of Politics, 71).
CONCLUSION

Pietism, to borrow the language of Charles Taylor, was one of the fundamental sources of Hermann Hesse's self. "The genesis of the human mind," writes Taylor,

is ... not monological, not something each accomplishes on his or her own, but dialogical.... We define [our identity] always in dialogue with, sometimes in struggle against, the identities that significant others want to recognize in us. And even when we outgrow some of the latter—our parents, for instance—and they disappear from our lives, the conversation with them continues within us as long as we live.¹

This image of self-formation through conversation aptly suits Hesse's relationship to Pietism. The conversation took place at an intensely personal, but also a cultural, level. Through his parents, and especially through his grandfather Hermann Gundert, Hesse felt connected to the intellectual and spiritual tradition of Swabia, a tradition to which Pietism made no small contribution—and this connection is manifestly present in Hesse's literature, as I have attempted to show in this study.

Hesse's radical individualism and self-will were no doubt a reaction to Pietism's demand for the surrender of the self in a "corporate community;" his frequent harsh self-recriminations no doubt conditioned in part by guilt feelings bred by his Pietist milieu; his repeated neo-Platonic statements and fictionalization of a unique, transcendent God or One informing and inflected in the diversity of the world's religious traditions were a response to a perceived religious exclusivism and triumphalism inherent in Christian theology, myth, and institutions, and fostered by the sectarian nature of his family's Pietism.² But for all Hesse's criticism of his religious heritage there are deep running affinities: Hesse's skeptical and
critical attitude toward the bourgeois world he was immersed in; the autobiographical and confessional impulse of his literature; his ecumenical outlook; his romantic, Böhmist mysticism; his pacifism and internationalism; his repeated evocations of the value of service and the ideal of love—all this Hesse absorbed from his Pietist heritage and transmitted to others through his literature. And even Hesse’s criticisms of Pietism stand inside the tradition of the ‘true Protestant,’ an image that Hesse readily applied to himself. Just as early Pietists considered their movement a reformation of the Reformation, Hesse felt himself, even in revolt—perhaps especially in revolt—to be fulfilling a certain destiny demanded by his Protestant character and heritage. Hesse’s “back and forth between veneration and revolt” is a basic feature of his literature, a pivot around which the lives of Hesse’s characters revolve, or a tension that in the act of tugging in two directions at once, propels their development; this is explicitly so in the case of Hans Giebenrath, Emil Sinclair, Harry Haller, and Joseph Knecht, and implicit in the lives of Peter Camenzind, Siddhartha, Narcissus and Goldmund, and H.H.

It is tempting to view this back and forth movement, symbolized most powerfully in Hesse’s frequent fictionalizations of the event of Maulbronn, as something of an obsessive compulsive disorder. Johannes Cremerius, in his psychoanalytically informed study, sees Hesse as subjected to irresolvable tensions generated by exposure to two radically different world views—the strict Pietism of his family and the “liberal, enlightened world” view represented by psychoanalysis, which Hesse discovered during the First World War:

Hesse’s reception of Freud was enthusiastic, but it includes aspects not derived from psychoanalysis. In other words, ideas from a completely different world flow, through the back door, skewing his understanding of Freud; [these] ideas derive from a world in opposition to the Freudian, from the world of the religion. More precisely, [they derive] from the unresolved world of his childhood in
Calw, with its pietistic [emphasis on] sin and punishment. For several years... Hesse [was] thinking in
two worlds: in the liberal, enlightened world of Freud and in the narrow pietistic world of his
childhood.

In the Freudian world, Cremerius continues, Hesse found the impulse to self knowledge; in
"the Pietistic world of his childhood there [was] no such impulse to self-understanding, [no]
deliverance from moralistic judgments, [only] personal salvation, [and] deliverance from
original sin... The aim [was] to be on the right path, the path to religious experience, to
become God..."³

Aside from the fact that it might actually be possible to think in two different worlds,
and perhaps even beyond them into a third, Cremerius’ remarks are demonstrative of the
narrow and stereotypical portrayals of Pietism that have often informed discussions of
Hesse’s life and works. The sharp distinction between a liberal, enlightened world and a
narrow, unenlightened one is as dualistic as the “Pietistic” world view that Cremerius
criticizes and associates with Hesse’s family. If there was in Hesse’s childhood an emphasis
on sin, guilt, and punishment, as Cremerius suggests, there was also a great deal other than
that. If Hesse repeatedly returned in his literature to his childhood and the tradition of Pietism
we need not see this strictly as the product of psychological dynamics; Hesse’s literature is
not merely therapeutic fiction.

Like his character Harry Haller, Hesse felt himself living in between two ages, and he
did what is frequently done in such social-historical moments: he attempted to cobble
together a new worldview and ideal of ethical action out of the fragments he found around
him. The religious and intellectual traditions of Swabia were part of the “material” Hesse had
at his disposal. In attempting to understand a tumultuous and even horrific present, and to
project a possible future, Hesse turned to the past; and his past—in both a personal and
cultural sense—was in Württemberg Pietism. Ideas do indeed “flow” into Hesse’s works “through the back door.” But this is not simply the flowing of unresolved complexes and neuroses, but the bringing of the past into the present through a door deliberately left open. Hesse was less than enamored with enlightened rationalism. The attention Hesse gives in his literature to his Pietist past is not simply a drag preventing his full entry into the modern present, as Cremerius would have us think—rather, the Pietist tradition is part of what informs Hesse’s considered assessment and criticism of his present.

Charles Taylor has written of the “malaises of modernity,” which he identifies as individualism, disenchantment, and a withdrawal from social-political life: “The first is fear about what we might call a loss of meaning, the fading of moral horizons. The second concerns the eclipse of ends, in face of rampant instrumental reason. And the third is about a loss of freedom.” Taylor unpacks the response to this situation in terms of an ethic of authenticity, associated with the “powerful moral ideal of… self-fulfillment,” which entails being “true to oneself.” Taylor then defines two broad orientations with respect to this ideal of authenticity. The first he calls the “knockers”—those who reject the discourse of authenticity as little more than narcissistic egoism or hedonism. The “boosters,” in contrast, are those who whole heartedly affirm individualism, authenticity, and the quest for a re-enchanted world. Taylor’s analysis is well suited to the Hesse’s works and their public reception. Hesse falls into the camp of “boosters,” and it has been precisely Hesse’s fictionalization of the personal quest to find meaning and significance amidst the malaises of modernity that has found such widespread popular appeal.

Taylor rejects both the “booster” and the “knocker” position, and attempts to chart a course between them on the basis of the notion of “retrieval” which entails “making
palpable” to both camps what an ideal of authenticity really entails. Taylor’s reflections are relevant here, for they reframe Hesse’s interest in Pietism along very different lines than does Cremerius’s psychoanalytic orientation. What Taylor wants to retrieve, what he wants to incorporate into the ideal of authenticity, is the centrality of dialogue in the formation of one’s identity:

I can define my identity only against a background of things that matter. But to bracket out history, nature, society, the demands of solidarity, everything but what I find in myself, would be to eliminate all candidates for what matters. Only if I exist in a world in which history, or the demands of nature, or the needs of my fellow beings, or the duties of citizenship, or the call of God, or something else of this order matters crucially, can I define an identity for myself that is not trivial. Authenticity is not the enemy of demands that emanate from beyond the self; it supposes such demands.\(^5\)

In defining himself, the background of things that mattered to Hesse—self-will as duty to a higher, ‘I’, the ideals of service and love, an ecumenical openness and internationalism, the rejection and condemnation of war, a transcendent God who could bring unity and tolerance to religious differences—were grounded in Hesse’s Pietist past. It would be difficult to find a more insightful and concise interpretation of The Glass Bead Game than these words of Taylor’s, and one could readily imagine them being spoken by Joseph Knecht. If, as I have argued, we can reasonably read the development of Joseph Knecht as being influenced by his encounter with Pietism, then Hesse’s life and works are not merely an example of Taylor’s ideal of authenticity: this ideal is also in part the product of Pietism. Pietism whispered in Hesse’s ear, pushing him to define an identity for himself that was not trivial, an identity formed by the demands and calls of history, nature, fellow beings, citizenship, and God. “The inner voice,” wrote Johannes to his troubled son, “calls us to... faith; [this faith] is exemplified by many noble individuals, by a purpose, a goal, an intention in nature... by all
that directs us to what is highest.” Hesse would not forget these words, and did his best to live his life accordingly.

In a letter of December 1931, Hermann Hesse wrote: “A lady from Münster in Westphalia [Helen Baaten] wrote to me recently saying she was doing a dissertation on ‘Hermann Hesse and Swabian Pietism.’ I couldn’t get myself to reply to her, such was the extent of my interest in the matter.” Hesse tended to look askance at the pontifications of critics and interpreters of his works, and I’ve found myself wondering from time to time what he might have thought of this dissertation—provided, of course, that he would have condescended to actually reading it. I can only hope he may have had some interest for these pages.

NOTES TO THE CONCLUSION

2 Hesse repeatedly took issue with what he perceived as “the pretension of churchly-dogmatic Christianity to be the sole bearer of [religious] truth.” See MATSID, 7.
4 Taylor, 10; 14.
5 Taylor, 40-41.
6 Letter of 22 February 1893 from Johannes Hesse to his son, KJ 1: 336.
7 Schriften, 7:513.
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