

# Plato—Beethoven: A Hermeneutics for Nineteenth-Century Music?

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In recent years, the word “hermeneutics” has re-entered the language of discourse about music—re-entered, that is, in German, after an absence of perhaps forty years; but really *entered* for the first time in the English language. In German, Carl Dahlhaus’s definition in *Foundations of Music History* of 1967 reawakened our awareness, and a 1975 volume of essays on the subject under his editorship reinforced that initiative.<sup>1</sup> In English, the driving force for an exploration of musical hermeneutics was, of course, Joseph Kerman’s polemic on criticism, supported especially by the writings of Anthony Newcomb; and the round table at the Bologna Conference of the International Musicological Society in 1987, entitled “Music Criticism between Technical and Hermeneutic Analysis,” was a symbolic moment in the evaluation of hermeneutics for musical purposes.<sup>2</sup> Others who have

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<sup>1</sup>Carl Dahlhaus, *Grundlagen der Musikgeschichte* (Cologne: Hans Gerig, 1967), trans. J. B. Robinson as *Foundations of Music History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 4-5, 71-85 passim; *Beiträge zur musikalischen Hermeneutik*, ed. Carl Dahlhaus, *Studien zur Musikgeschichte des 19. Jahrhunderts*, vol. 43 (Regensburg: Bosse, 1975).

<sup>2</sup>Joseph Kerman’s initiative started with his “A Profile for Musicology,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 18 (1965): 61-69, and continued in many places, including his *Contemplating Music: Challenges to Musicology* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard

contributed to that evaluation directly or indirectly include Peter Kivy, Edward Cone, Fred Maus, and Marion Guck; but a music-hermeneutic practice has been formulated and put to the test on music only in the past five years in the work of Lawrence Kramer, and on texts about music still more recently by Gary Tomlinson.<sup>3</sup>

My own treatment of the field, in volume 2 of my *Music Analysis in the Nineteenth Century*, gives a historical account of general hermeneutics and seeks to illustrate how this was put into practice in writing about music.<sup>4</sup> The present paper<sup>5</sup> goes beyond that, attempting to demonstrate more tangibly the working of hermeneutics in the early nineteenth century. My purpose is to isolate the hermeneutics of its earliest practitioner, Friedrich Schleiermacher, unfiltered by the subsequent hermeneutics of Dilthey, Heidegger, Gadamer and others, and to consider its relevance to music by looking at one particular and celebrated piece of writing about music, namely E. T. A. Hoffmann's review of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony.<sup>6</sup>

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University Press, 1986). Proceedings of the round table appear in *Atti del XIV congresso della società internazionale di musicologia . . .*: vol. 1, *Round Tables* (Turin: EDT, 1990), 645-90.

<sup>3</sup>Lawrence Kramer, *Music as Cultural Practice, 1800-1900* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 1-20 passim; Gary Tomlinson, *Music in Renaissance Magic: Toward a Historiography of Others* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1993), 1-43, 247-52 passim.

<sup>4</sup>Ian Bent, ed., *Music Analysis in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), vol. 1, *Fugue, Form and Style*; vol. 2, *Hermeneutic Approaches*.

<sup>5</sup>This paper was first presented at the International Conference on Nineteenth-Century Music at the University of Surrey, Guildford, England, on July 17, 1994.

<sup>6</sup>First published in *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* 12 (1809/10): cols. 630-42, 652-59; German edition Friedrich Schnapp, *E. T. A. Hoffmann: Schriften zur Musik: Aufsätze und Rezensionen* (Munich: Winkler-Verlag, 1977), 34-51; Eng. trans. in *E. T. A. Hoffmann's Musical Writings: "Kreisleriana," "The Poet and the Composer," Music Criticism*, ed. David Charlton, trans. Martyn Clarke (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 234-51, reproduced with modifications and commentary in Bent, *Music Analysis in the Nineteenth Century*, vol. 2, 141-60; see also pp. 123-24.

*Schleiermacher's Hermeneutics: The Practice*

Who, then, was Friedrich Schleiermacher? A contemporary of Hegel, he was a theologian and a philosopher. Educated by the Moravian pietists and later schooled in the philosophy of Kant, he was powerfully influenced by the events of the French Revolution. His theology was already tending towards the liberal when, in 1797, he was introduced to the circle of August and Friedrich Schlegel, Novalis, Wackenroder, and other literary figures of the Romantic movement. Indeed, Friedrich Schlegel lived as a tenant at his house for two years, and the two became close friends and collaborators. Schleiermacher is even the basis for one of the characters in Schlegel's fragmentary novel *Lucinde*, and Schleiermacher himself wrote a defense of the novel.<sup>7</sup>

His first theological work, from 1799, *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers*,<sup>8</sup> diverged from rational Enlightenment theology by placing high value on experience and revelation. This book, together with later ones,<sup>9</sup> established him as the leading Protestant German theologian of his day and the father of modern Protestant theology. Around 1797, he and Friedrich Schlegel conceived a plan to translate all of Plato's works into German. They worked on it together until 1804, when the project caused the two men to fall out. Schleiermacher then continued the work, writing the introductions to the whole and to

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<sup>7</sup>Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Vertraute Briefe über Friedrich Schlegels Lucinde* (1800), ed. K. Gutzow (1835), ed. W. Hirschberg (Weimar: Martin Biewald, 1920). A useful biography is Martin Redeker, *Schleiermacher: Leben und Werk* (Berlin: Gruyter, 1968), trans. John Wallhausser as *Schleiermacher: Life and Thought* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1973).

<sup>8</sup>Idem, *Über die Religion: Reden an die Gebildeten unter ihren Verächtern* (Berlin: Unger, 1799), trans. Richard Crouter as *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

<sup>9</sup>Idem, *Der christliche Glaube* (Berlin: Reimer, 1821-22), trans. Hugh Ross Mackintosh and James Stuart Stewart as *The Christian Faith* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1928; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976); *Das Leben Jesu: Vorlesungen*, ed. K. A. Rügenik (Berlin: Reimer, 1864), ed. and with an introduction by Jack C. Verheyden, trans. S. Maclean Gilmour as *The Life of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975).

each individual dialogue. All of volumes 1 and 2, and part of volume 3, achieved publication before his death. Thereafter, the work remained incomplete.<sup>10</sup>

We can see Schleiermacher's hermeneutics at work by studying his introductions to Plato's Dialogues, for they have long been held up as exemplary models of hermeneutic inquiry. For example, the philosopher Wilhelm Dilthey draws attention to the introduction to *The Republic* as follows:

[Schleiermacher] started with a survey of the structure, comparable to a superficial reading, tentatively grasped the whole context, illuminated the difficulties, and halted thoughtfully at all those passages which afforded insight into the composition. Only then did the interpretation proper begin.<sup>11</sup>

In particular, I should like to look at his introduction to the dialogue entitled the *Sophist*. The *Sophist*, not one of the more popular of Plato's Dialogues, may not possess the drama of, say, the *Phaedo*, in which we see the final hours and death of Socrates, or the *Meno*, in which a slave is cross-questioned in a demonstration of the existence of Platonic ideas or forms. Nevertheless, it is an important dialogue—one of three in which, broadly stated, Plato investigates the nature of philosophy. Moreover, these are the only three of all of Plato's Dialogues that refer

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<sup>10</sup>Friedrich Schleiermacher, ed., *Platons Werke* (Berlin: Realschulbuchhandlung, 1804-28), vol. 1, pt. 1 (1804); vol. 1, pt. 2 (1805); vol. 2, pt. 1 (1805); vol. 2, pt. 2 (1807); vol. 2, pt. 3 (1809); vol. 3, pt. 1 (1828) [unfinished]; 2nd ed. (1817-28), trans. William Dobson as *Schleiermacher's Introductions to the Dialogues of Plato* (Cambridge: Deighton; London: John William Parker, 1836).

<sup>11</sup>Lecture to the Prussian Academy of Sciences, 1896/97, published as "Die Entstehung der Hermeneutik," in *Philosophische Abhandlungen, Christoph Sigwart zu seinem 70. Geburtstag 28 März 1900 gewidmet* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1900), 185-202; *Gesammelte Schriften* (Leipzig and Berlin: Teubner, 1924), 5:317-31; trans. Hans Peter Rickman in *W. Dilthey: Selected Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 246-63. The quoted passage is on p. 259.

to one another, and in addition, they share a common group of characters.<sup>12</sup> Therefore they possess an overt relationship. The three are:

*Theaetetus—Sophist—Statesman*

What is more, these three are part of a larger sequence of seven that can be thought of as relating to the trial and death of Socrates:

*Theaetetus—Euthyphro—Sophist—Statesman—*

*Apology—Crito—Phaedo*

*Theaetetus* is the opening salvo of this sequence: in it, Socrates discusses the question “What is knowledge?” The *Sophist* falls roughly in the middle of the sequence: Socrates first faces the charges against him in the *Euthyphro*, the *Apology* describes the trial, Socrates refuses the opportunity to escape from prison in the *Crito*, and he makes his farewell and drinks the hemlock at the end of the *Phaedo*. But this sequence itself relates back to several earlier dialogues that (so to speak) set it up and relates forward to the *Timaeus*, which deals with the nature of the universe. In other words, the *Sophist* exists within a series of expanding groups, rather like Chinese boxes.

### ***Schleiermacher’s Introduction to the Sophist***

Schleiermacher’s introduction starts:

In the *Sophist* we distinguish at once and at the first glance two perfectly separate masses, one of which, distributed into the two extremities, starts with the idea of art, and endeavours, by

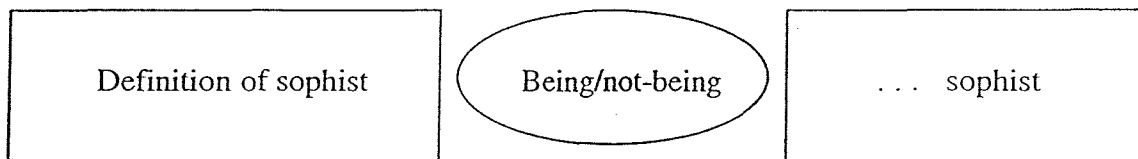
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<sup>12</sup>*Theaetetus*: Euclides, Terpsion, Socrates, Theodorus, Theaetetus; *Sophist*: Socrates, Theodorus, Theaetetus, Eleatic Stranger; *Statesman*: Socrates, Young Socrates, Theodorus, Eleatic Stranger.

continuous division and exclusion, to find the nature and true explanation of a Sophist; while the other, which forces itself into the middle of this . . . speaks of the existent and non-existent [i.e., being and not-being]. (246)<sup>13</sup>

By “at first glance” Schleiermacher means that he has begun with a non-critical reading of the dialogue, merely to observe anything that strikes him, and that he could not help noticing this particular distinction because of the very different kind of discourse used in these two parts (that concerning the sophist, and that concerning being and not-being). The opening and closing parts analyze their subject by continuous subdivision, whereas the middle part proceeds by linear dialectical reasoning. We might represent Schleiermacher’s conception of the structure diagrammatically as follows:

Figure 1. Diagram of Schleiermacher’s conception of the structure



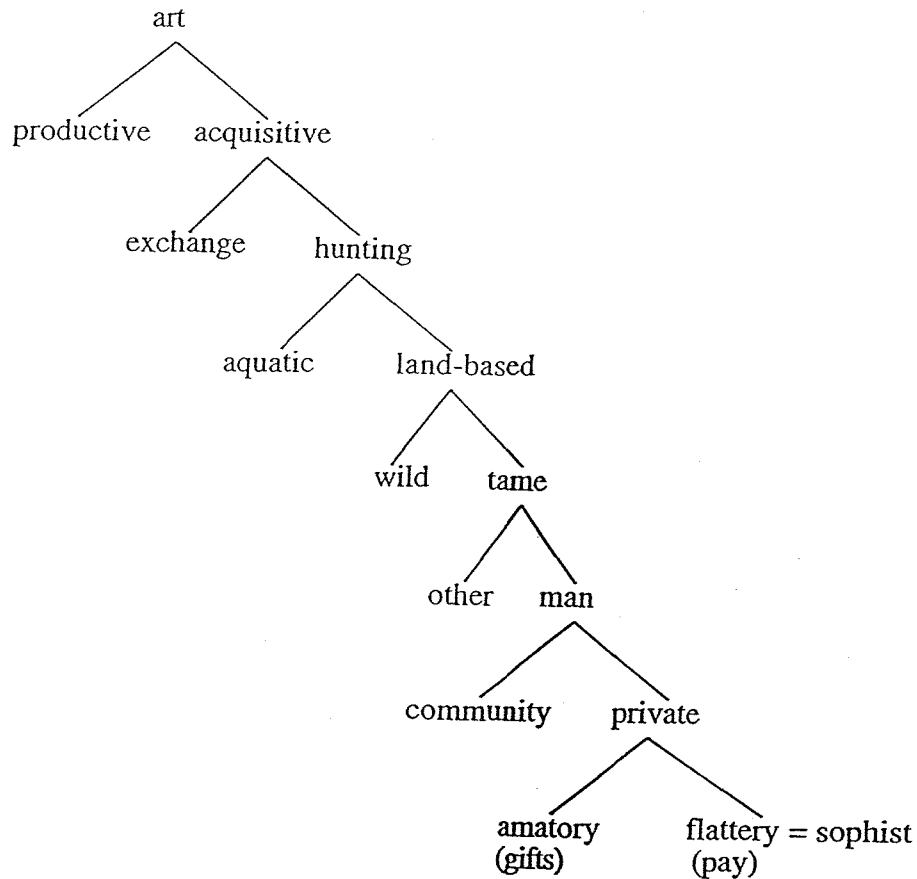
(What do we mean by “continuous subdivision”? We might take the case of *hunting*. Hunting divides into the hunting of aquatic and land-based creatures; land-based hunting divides into the pursuit of wild

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<sup>13</sup>This and all other translations from *Platons Werke* are taken from the 1836 Dobson edition cited above in n. 10.

and tame animals; tame animals into man and other animals<sup>14</sup> and so on until we conclude that sophism is a form of hunting, namely the hunting of rich and promising youths by flattery!

Figure 2. Continuous subdivision



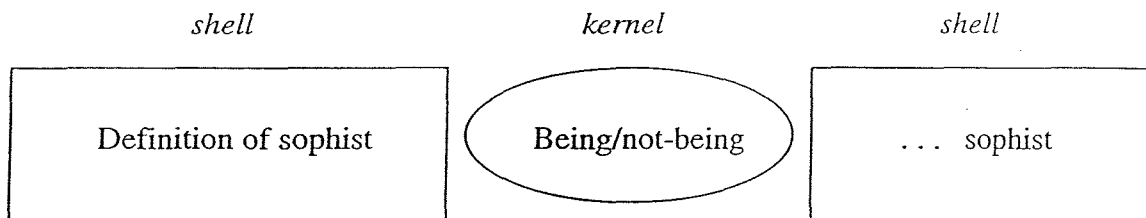
We can see from this example the irony with which Plato spotlights sophism: in the course of his characterization he portrays it first as one menial occupation then as another—merchandizing, juggling, and so on.)

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<sup>14</sup>This step is not fully spelled out by Plato. The argumentation occurs at 221E-223B of the dialogue.

After distinguishing the middle from the opening and closing layers<sup>15</sup> of the dialogue, Schleiermacher says that on grounds of construction we would assume the outer layer to be the real subject of the dialogue and the inner layer (about being and not-being) to be a necessary digression to the outer (the definition of a sophist). On the other hand, since we learn nothing about the sophist that we have not learned in previous dialogues, and since the central debate of being and not-being adds to the larger debate in the dialogues as a whole, then we may see the outer and inner layers of this dialogue as like a shell and a kernel.<sup>16</sup>

Figure 3. Outer and inner layers of the dialogue



But then Schleiermacher executes a shift. Is not the definition of the sophist part of a great trilogy of dialogues in which the philosopher, the sophist, and the statesman are in turn described? Surely, then, the definition of the sophist must be of at least equal importance to that of the inner layer. So, by viewing the *Sophist* as part of a larger whole, he now concludes:

there is here nothing to be rejected as mere shell, but . . . the

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<sup>15</sup>Dobson translates them as “masses.”

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 247: “shell and setting.”

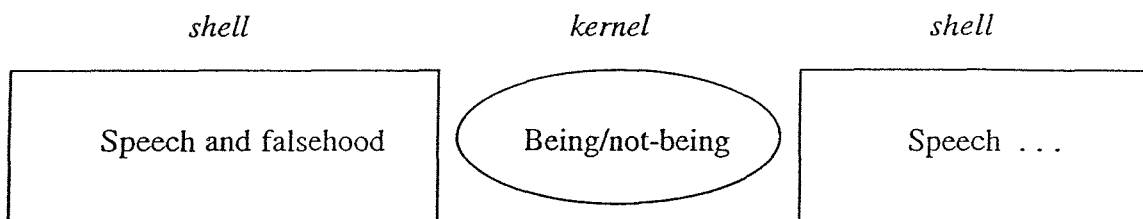


whole dialogue is like a precious fruit of which a true connoisseur is glad to enjoy the outward peel at the same time with the fruit itself, because grown as the former is into the whole, it could not be separated without hurting the pure and proper relish of the latter. (249)

Indeed, the outer layer is not all satire. It contains, for example, one argument relevant to the larger framework of Socrates' trial and death, namely that the sort of cross-examination for which Socrates is famous purges and purifies the mind of inconsistencies and falsehoods, and is, contrary to the charges against Socrates, non-subversive (249-50).

Schleiermacher now shifts back to the parts and whole within the *Sophist*. He turns to the central layer of the dialogue, showing that its structure mirrors that of the dialogue as a whole; that is, it comprises again an outer shell and an inner kernel:<sup>17</sup>

Figure 4. Outer shell and inner kernel

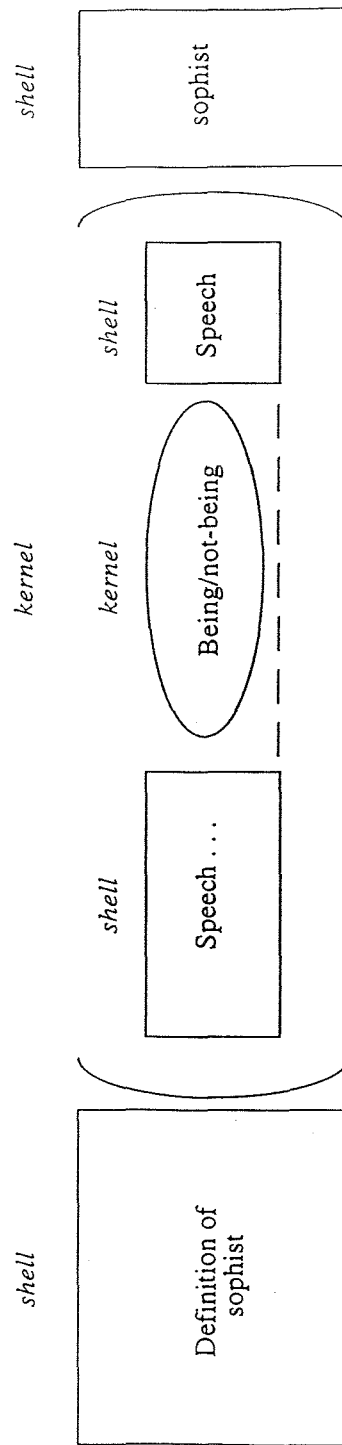


The outer part is a discussion of speech and falsehood; the inner part is a necessary digression that reinforces that discussion, on being and not-being. What is more, our inner and outer layers are what we might call “isomorphic” (to use a modern term), for in each case the outer discussion loses its way, and the inner discussion is interpolated so that

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 250: the parts are 236E-241B | 241B-259E | 259E-264C.

the outer one can find its footing again (see Figure 5).

Figure 5. Outer and inner discussions



Schleiermacher calls the inner-inner kernel (which itself divides into two parts<sup>18</sup>) “the most valuable and precious core of the dialogue,” where “the most inward sanctuary of philosophy is opened in a purely philosophical manner” (251).

Moreover, the inner “layer” of the dialogue refutes several of the past schools of Greek philosophy, and Schleiermacher teases these out one by one.<sup>19</sup> From this set of external references, Schleiermacher then turns to this dialogue’s “intimate relation” to two dialogues not included in our Socratic sequence, namely the *Parmenides* and the *Timaeus*. The *Parmenides* had, in his view, initiated a discussion of how “ideas,” in their pure form, can be said to exist—a discussion which later resumes in “a whole series of successive dialogues from the *Theaetetus* upwards.” In the *Sophist*, in turn, the “foundation” is “laid perfectly and dialectically” for the *Timaeus* (see Figure 6).<sup>20</sup> He then establishes links with several other dialogues on the basis of content<sup>21</sup> and uses these finally to confirm the closer links within its own trilogy, *Theaetetus—Sophist—Statesman*.

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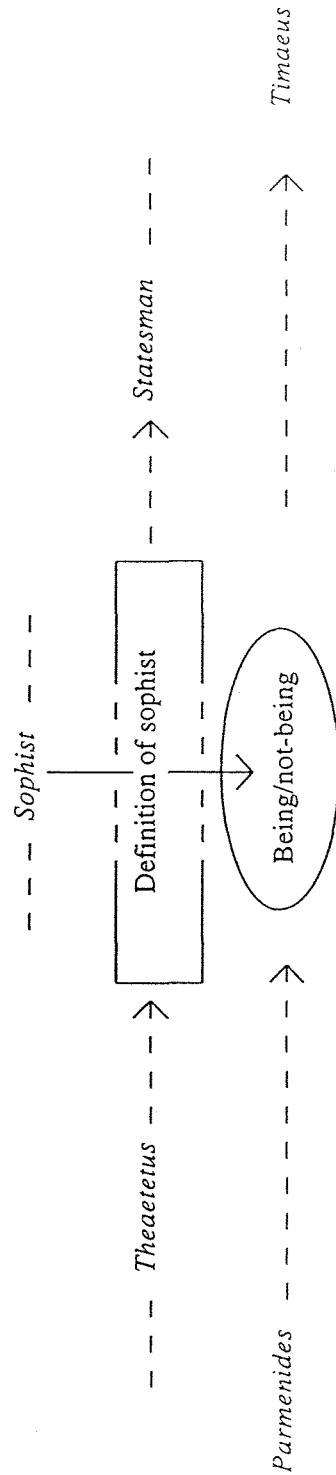
<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 252-53: being, and opposites (represented by rest and motion): Schleiermacher indicates 251B-254D | 254D-259E, but it might better be shown as 241B-250D | 250D-259D.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 254-59: *Parmenides* (241Dff), the Ionic philosophers (245Eff), the atomists (246Eff), the idealists (248Aff).

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., 259-60. On continuity between the *Parmenides* and *Theaetetus* onward, see *ibid.*, 118, 132 (*Parmenides*), 198-99 (*Theaetetus*). In Schleiermacher’s chronology (no longer accepted), the *Meno*, *Euthydemus*, and *Cratylus* arose between the *Theaetetus* and the *Sophist* (*ibid.*, 204, 263), so “successive” implicitly includes these. The proposed linkage, by its nature, “is intended to be said preliminarily only,” and has remained so, since Schleiermacher died before reaching the translation of, and commentary on, the *Timaeus*.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., 261-63: *Protagoras*, *Gorgias*, *Euthydemus*, *Cratylus*, *Meno*, *Republic*.

Figure 6. *Sophist* as focal point of five dialogues



This brief glimpse of Schleiermacher at work enables us to summarize as follows:

First, we saw borne out in his introduction to the *Sophist* what Dilthey had signalled in the statement quoted earlier, namely that Schleiermacher's method entails an initial exploratory reading—a “naive” incursion, we might say, into the text; that the reading process then starts all over again at a more detailed level; and that only at this second stage does the hermeneutic method proper begin.

Second, Schleiermacher works always with *parts* and *wholes*. He seeks to define what is subordinate and what is superordinate—what functions within what, and how it so functions.

Third, in doing this, he often runs into a blank wall, an impasse—what hermeneuticists call an *aporia*. When this happens, he executes a shift to a higher or lower level—that is to say, he starts treating as a *part* what has previously been a *whole*, or vice versa. By shifting levels in this way, he can later work his way back to the impasse and find his way through it. In so doing, he gradually fills out the picture bit by bit, until the totality stands clear before him.

Fourth, his normal mode of operation is *not* that of constructing a narrative. He doesn't “tell the story” of the dialogue; rather, he reflects on the elements of the dialogue. That is not to say that he never talks us through a portion of Plato's argument, for he does occasionally; but when he does this, it is always in the service of this reflective process, never for its own sake.

This brings us to the fifth point, namely that Schleiermacher works with the “message” of Plato's dialogue rather than with its outward form or its literary style. The structure that he identifies is a structure of *meaning*, not of external factors. Every text, Schleiermacher realized, whatever its language, and however close to or remote from our experience, is to some degree “foreign” to us, and thus demands to be “understood.” *Verstand*, the capacity to understand, and

*Verstehen*, the act of understanding, are central to hermeneutics. Hermeneutics treats text as message. Its concern lies with the author's intention; its purpose is to facilitate understanding in the reader.<sup>22</sup>

### *Schleiermacher's Hermeneutics: The Theory*

Although Schleiermacher wrote no book on the theory of hermeneutics, he lectured on hermeneutic method at the University of Berlin for a quarter of a century, and at his death he left behind his lecture notes for that course and other documents. All of these are now available in a German edition, and that edition in an English translation.<sup>23</sup>

It was Schleiermacher's achievement to create a field of general hermeneutics. In the eighteenth century there had existed three separate fields: biblical hermeneutics, classical literary hermeneutics, and juridical hermeneutics. In the first decade of the nineteenth century, Schleiermacher charted out an independent hermeneutics, capable of treating these three categories of texts, and in principle all other types

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<sup>22</sup>The irony of this is Schleiermacher's name, which means literally "maker of veils," hence by extension "obfuscator" or "obscurantist." It was Nietzsche who commented on this: "On the roll of knowledge the Germans are inscribed with nothing but dubious names, *all* that they have ever produced have been 'unconscious' coiners—an appellation as appropriate to Fichte, Schelling, Schopenhauer, Hegel, Schleiermacher, as it is to Leibnitz, and Kant: they are *all* obfuscators [*Schleiermacher*]" ("The Case of Wagner" [1882], §3, published in *Ecce homo* [1908]). It is unclear to me whether Nietzsche is implying also a propensity of German Idealist philosophers to bear unfortunate names: Fichte = "spruce tree"; Kant = slang for "peripheral region"; Schopenhauer = "hewer of ?"; Leibnitz = "body net?"; Hegel = ?. Elsewhere, Nietzsche remarked: "He who has once contracted Hegelism and Schleiermacherism is never quite cured of them" ("David Strauss, the Confessor and Writer," *Untimely Meditations*, Part I [1873], trans. Reginald John Hollingdale, with an introduction by J. P. Stern [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983], 27).

<sup>23</sup>Heinz Kimmerle, *Hermeneutik, nach den Handschriften neu herausgegeben* . . . (Heidelberg: Karl Winter, 2/1974), trans. James Duke and Jack Forstman as *Hermeneutics: The Handwritten Manuscripts* (Missoula, MT: American Academy of Religion, 1977; Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1986).

of texts as well, but which moreover was applicable also to spoken communication.

General hermeneutics was the field that lay between three other established fields of textual interpretation: philology (the study of language in and of itself), criticism (the repair of defective texts), and exegesis (the expounding of the meaning of individual words and phrases within a text). Hermeneutics, then, handled the text as a whole and dealt with its meaning as a whole, i.e., its *message*. Crucial to Schleiermacher's approach was his belief that, in all communication, *misunderstanding* was more likely to occur than not. Indeed, while thinking appears identical in everyone, Schleiermacher believed (contrary to Hegel) that each person thinks in a different language. But at the same time, he did not (like Derrida) revel in difference: he held that it was essential to strive to transcend difference.<sup>24</sup>

At the heart of Schleiermacher's hermeneutic theory, then, were two pairs of opposites: one of these we have already encountered, whole versus part; the other is new to us, namely, *objective* versus *subjective*. As to the first of these, Schleiermacher took a broadly organic view of any text: at all levels of construction there is a whole, comprised of parts; and this relation applies not only within the organic work itself, but also outside (as we saw with the *Sophist*), to the work in relation to other works in its class, to that class in relation to some larger class, to some body of knowledge, to a given social context, and so forth. As he said, for example:

The vocabulary and the history of an author's age together form a whole from which his writings must be understood as a part, and vice versa. . . . Complete knowledge always involves an apparent circle, that each part can be understood only out of the whole to which it belongs, and vice versa. (113)<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>Andrew Bowie: *Aesthetics and Subjectivity: From Kant to Nietzsche* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), 153.

<sup>25</sup>All quotations in this section of the essay are taken from Kimmerle, *Hermeneutik, nach den Handschriften neu herausgegeben* . . . , trans. Duke and Forstman as *Hermeneutics: The Handwritten Manuscripts*.

There exists a dialectical relation between whole and parts. The hermeneutic principle, he says,

is that just as the whole is understood from the parts, so the parts can be understood only from the whole. This principle is of such consequence for hermeneutics and so incontestable that one cannot even begin to interpret without using it. (195-96)

As to the second opposition, that of subjective and objective, Schleiermacher tersely observes:

Analysis of the task . . . proceeds from two entirely different points: understanding by reference to the language and understanding by reference to the one who speaks. Because of this double-character of understanding, interpretation is an art. Neither aspect can be completed by itself. (68)

In this antithesis, “language” corresponds with the objective pole, and “the one who speaks” with the subjective. Schleiermacher termed them the “grammatical” and “psychological” aspects. In short, he meant that the interpreter must approach the message of a text from two opposite ends simultaneously: from the linguistic fabric of the communication, and from the mind of the writer or speaker. As he said:

understanding . . . always involves two moments: to understand what is said in the context of the language with its possibilities, and to understand it as a fact in the thinking of the speaker. . . . Understanding takes place only in the coinherence of these two moments. (98)

But these two pairs of opposites are unworkable without one paramount principle—one overriding strategy—which is the quintessence of hermeneutic procedure: the celebrated *hermeneutic circle*. Take the grammatical and the psychological: When one starts, one has neither a complete knowledge of the individual language of the



utterance concerned nor a complete knowledge of the psychology of its author. Thus, in Schleiermacher's words:

Since in both cases such complete knowledge is impossible, it is necessary to move back and forth between the grammatical and psychological sides, and no rules can stipulate exactly how to do this. (100)

This "moving back and forth" suggests a shuttle, and indeed the metaphor of a shuttle is almost as common in Schleiermacher as that of the circle. For on a loom, a shuttle must be in constant motion, and the pattern that it weaves emerges, so to speak, perpendicularly to the plane of the shuttle—not in the path of the shuttle, as would be the case for many other methods of inquiry.

The circle or shuttle operates just as constantly on the polarity of whole and part. There is a particularly vivid passage that portrays the uncertain progress of the interpreter:

When we consider the task of interpretation with this principle in mind, we have to say that our increasing understanding of each sentence and of each section, an understanding which we achieve by starting at the beginning and moving forward slowly, is always provisional. It becomes more complete as we are able to see each larger section as a coherent unity. But as soon as we turn to a new part we encounter new uncertainties and begin again, as it were, in the dim morning light. It is like starting all over, except that as we push ahead the new material illumines everything we have already treated, until suddenly at the end every part is clear and the whole work is visible in sharp and definite contours. (198)

Striking in this graphic description is the absence from its portrayal of the hermeneutic circle of any derogatory overtones. The interpreter is not "stuck in a loop"; above all, Schleiermacher would never have dreamt of depicting it as a "vicious circle," as it came to be called by later writers. Far from vicious, the circle or shuttle was for him a

wholly productive process; indeed, it was the only way forward. It was the means by which the hermeneuticist overcame those impasses of which I spoke earlier. The circling gradually brought two separate bodies of evidence together until they fused as a single interpretation. Circling was thus like the focusing of two separate images into a single, three-dimensional image.

### *Plato and Beethoven*

Plato's Dialogues have been an object of interest to several hermeneuticists, and it is not difficult to see why. For a start, very little was known in the early nineteenth century of the order in which the Dialogues were written or intended to be read. The physical sources offered few clues. The internal evidence within the Dialogues was labyrinthine, and any intimations were well concealed. Where no order was known, the overall structure of Plato's philosophic argument was obscure, hence its very intention cryptic. Hermeneutics, with its constant shift between grammar and psychology, form and content, was an ideal method for laying siege to that problem. Moreover, there was an intrinsic kinship between the hermeneuticist's method and Socrates' dialectic, with its patient interrogations, its dramatic impasses, and extravagant digressions. It is not surprising, then, that Schleiermacher devoted a significant part of his energies to the Dialogues, and that they have also been a lifetime preoccupation for Hans Georg Gadamer in the present century.<sup>26</sup>

For writers on music in the nineteenth century, the only composer who exerted a comparable fascination was Beethoven. His music, too, was full of dramatic impasses and extravagant digressions. For example, the pounding diminished-seventh and added-sixth chords that collapse into a minor-ninth chord before giving way to a novel E-minor

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<sup>26</sup>See in particular Hans Georg Gadamer, *Dialogue and Dialectic: Eight Hermeneutical Studies on Plato*, trans. and with an introduction by P. Christopher Smith (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980); also *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (London: Steed & Ward, 1975, 2/1989; German original, 1960).

lyrical theme in the development section of the “Eroica” Symphony’s first movement are a veritable *aporia* in music and stand as a paradigm of such impasses in Beethoven’s work. The ordering of his musical discourse was hard to fathom and the clues were often well concealed. Whether it was governed by rational thinking, or whether only by impulse, was unclear. In such a situation, hermeneutic method might have laid siege to the issue. The question is, Did it?

### *E. T. A. Hoffmann’s Review of Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony*

The review published by E. T. A. Hoffmann in 1810 of Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony stands, of course, as a monument of music criticism, unprecedented in its command of technical detail, and marked out for its statement on the autonomy of instrumental music and for its organic imagery.

The central concern of this review was to demonstrate the composer’s control over his material. Hoffmann’s remark that “the whole work will sweep past many [listeners] like an inspired rhapsody” (250)<sup>27</sup> was intended to represent the prevailing reaction to Beethoven’s music in 1810. It was, however, a reaction against which Hoffmann set his cap. As he says, “it is usual to regard [Beethoven]’s works merely as products of a genius who ignores form and discrimination of thought and surrenders to his creative fervour and the passing dictates of his imagination” (238). Hoffmann made the point even more forcefully when he recast parts of this review for inclusion in his *Kreiskleriana* in 1814-15, saying satirically:

wise judges, gazing about them with a superior air, assure us that we can take their word for it as men of great intellect and profound insight: the good Beethoven is by no means lacking in wealth and vigour of imagination, but he does not know how to control it! There is no question of selection and organisation of ideas; following the so-called inspired method, he dashes

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<sup>27</sup>This and all other quotations in this section of the essay are taken from *E. T. A. Hoffmann’s Musical Writings*, ed. Charlton and Clarke, cited above in n. 6.

everything down just as the feverish workings of his imagination dictate to him at that moment. (98)

Then Hoffmann retorted tellingly:

But what if it is only *your* inadequate understanding which fails to grasp the inner coherence of every Beethoven composition? What if it is entirely *your* fault that the composer's language is clear to the initiated but not to you . . . ? (98; italics in the original)

It is *understanding* that is the crux of Hoffmann's concern. It is understanding that he seeks to engender by his review. His purpose is clear:

In truth, . . . his controlling self [is] detached from the inner realm of sounds and rul[es] it in absolute authority. . . . [O]nly the most penetrating study of Beethoven's instrumental music can reveal its high level of rational awareness . . . . (98)

“Rational awareness” translates *Besonnenheit*, a notion central to the review, the opposite pole to genius, and a term that will feature in our argument below.

Hoffmann's review is usually depicted as falling into three parts: an introduction, a main part, and a conclusion. In reality, it is considerably more complex than this. It operates within six distinct orbits. Working from the outer to the inner, these are: (1) instrumental music in general, (2) instrumental music from Haydn to Beethoven, (3) the Fifth Symphony as a whole, (4) relationships between pairs of its movements, (5) each individual movement as a whole, and (6) the flow of the music from moment to moment. Any depiction of the structure of the review must take into account the movement among these orbits, for each orbit is the “whole” of the orbit inside it and/or the “part” of the orbit outside it.

The most striking instance of the shift from part to whole occurs at the end of Hoffmann's description of the Scherzo. On reaching the first

chord of the Finale, he (Hoffmann) breaks off with the remark, “The reviewer has previously mentioned the intensifying effect of extending a theme by a few bars, and in order to make this clearer he illustrates these extensions together [Ex.]” (247-48). By laying out four versions of the opening theme, and then a fifth, in a semi-tabular manner, he offers a conspectus of the third movement as a whole; and having done this he draws a comparison of the tutti theme of the Scherzo with the main theme of the first movement (“Just as simple and yet, when it is glimpsed behind later passages, just as potent as the theme of the opening Allegro is the idea of the minuet’s first tutti [Ex.]” [248]). In doing the latter, he refers back to a similar point when, after describing the first movement, he treated that movement as a whole, identifying the forces that bind all parts of the movement—primary ideas, secondary ideas, and episodes—together:

There is no simpler idea than that on which Beethoven has based his entire Allegro [Ex.] and one perceives with admiration how he was able to relate all the secondary ideas and episodes by their rhythmic content to this simple theme, so that they serve to reveal more and more facets of the movement’s overall character, which the theme by itself could only hint at. . . . [T]he episodes and constant allusions to the main theme demonstrate how the whole movement with all its distinctive features was not merely conceived in the imagination but also clearly thought through. (244)

Thus, at the end of the first movement he shifts from the individual moment to the movement as a whole; at the end of the Scherzo he shifts first from the individual moment to the third movement as a whole and then to the first and third movements as a related pair.

But shifts between part and whole are only one aspect of this review. Hoffmann also shifts frequently between what Schleiermacher called the “grammatical” and the “psychological.” For example, of the first movement:

after an episode again built only on a two-bar phrase taken up

alternately by the violins and wind instruments, while the cellos play a figure in contrary motion and the double-basses rise, the following chords are heard from the whole orchestra: [Ex.]. They are sounds that depict the breast, constricted and affrighted by presentiments of enormity, struggling for air. But like a friendly figure moving through the clouds and shining through the darkness of night, a theme now enters that was touched on by the horns in E flat major in [m.58]. (241-42)

The shift from purely technical to emotive (to use Peter Kivy's terms) and back again is palpable; indeed, it probably induces queasiness in the modern reader. Hoffmann's intention is clear: to attack the passage concerned from the two ends—from the short hammered phrases, diminished sevenths, heavy texture, then unison diatonic theme that constitute the “grammar,” and the effect of all this on the listener that constitutes the “psychology”—and to fuse the two in the reader/listener's mind. As we heard Schleiermacher say, “Understanding takes place only in the coinherence of these two moments.”

As Hoffmann shifts from objective to subjective, he often simultaneously moves from orbit to orbit. Take his opening description of the Scherzo: The slow movement has, at the psychological level, temporarily replaced the “awful phantom” of the first movement by “comforting figures.” However, at the grammatical level, the constant modulations, key-juxtapositions, and chromaticisms have not gone away, and so we sense that the first-movement horrors may return at any moment. Of the Scherzo he then says:

The distinctive modulations; the closes on the dominant major, its root becoming the tonic of the following bass theme in the minor mode; this theme itself, repeatedly extended by a few bars at a time: (246)

—all of these are grammatical points—

it is particularly these features which express so strongly the character of Beethoven's music described above, and arouse

once more those disquieting presentiments of a magical spirit-world with which the Allegro assailed the listener's heart. (246)

—all psychological points—

The theme in C minor, played by cellos and basses alone, turns in the third bar towards G minor; the horns then sustain the G while violins and violas, together with bassoons in the second bar and clarinets in the third, have a four-bar phrase cadencing on G. . . . (246)

—grammatical again—

The restless yearning inherent in the theme now reaches a level of unease that so constricts the breast that only odd fragmented sounds escape it. (247)

—and psychological.

As Hoffmann intermits the grammatical and psychological, he also reaches up out of the orbit of the Scherzo into that of the kinship between Allegro and Scherzo on which he will later capitalize at the end of the review by speaking of the “relationship which exists between the subjects of the two Allegros and the [Scherzo]” (251). At the same time, he also moves to the penultimate orbit, that of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven, because his allusion to “the magical spirit-world” recalls his earlier reference to the “nocturnal spirit-world [in] a purple shimmer” and the “magical quality” that he finds in Mozart, and the allusion to “restless yearning” recalls the “inexpressible yearning” at that same point; and to the outermost orbit, that of instrumental music as a whole, by recalling his references to “the realm of the infinite,” “an unknown realm,” and “that infinite yearning which is the essence of romanticism” (238).

To summarize, then, the hermeneuticist reading that I have given Hoffmann's review shows that it begins—after a presumed cursory reading—at the level of the largest totality by discussing autonomous

instrumental music, and then proceeds to the step-by-step progression to Haydn's, Mozart's, and Beethoven's instrumental music, which it tracks three times before taking each of the Fifth Symphony's four movements in turn. At the end of each movement it moves out to the orbit of that movement as a totality, and then (from the second movement onwards) on out so as to draw affinities with previous movements, concluding with a conspectus of all four movements, and a confirmation of his initial hypothesis—that the work “is conceived of genius and executed with profound awareness . . .” (251). At any time in this procedure he may reach out to the remoter orbits to establish links that illuminate his interpretation.

### *Hoffmann and Schleiermacher*

Having drawn attention to the similarities of procedure and method between Friedrich Schleiermacher's introductions to the Dialogues of Plato and E. T. A. Hoffmann's review of the Fifth Symphony of Beethoven, I should perhaps rest my case at this point. I have shuttled between two bodies of material, drawing parallels between them—to a limited extent, thus, my method has itself been hermeneutic. To stop here would be consistent with my methodological subject matter. But the power of *erklären* (to explain) over *verstehen* (to understand) is strong. The pull of the positivist method is irresistible.

If Hoffmann's review is, as I have suggested, hermeneutic in method, then since Schleiermacher was the creator of a general hermeneutics, and since the latter published the first exemplar of his method in 1804, it follows that *influence*, direct or indirect, must have been exerted by the one upon the other. The establishment of lines of influence is always difficult, even in those rare cases where there are statements on record by those involved (one thinks of Stravinsky, of Cage). Without such statements, as in the present instance, the task is hazardous. But the attraction of *proving* the case is seductive. So let me at least see how far I can carry out the investigation—though without any high hopes of success.

There is no lack of relevant biographical information. The approximate date on which Hoffmann made the acquaintance of



Schleiermacher for the first time is known: between June 18 and July 21, 1807. Even the precise time and place of that meeting is recorded.<sup>28</sup> The two men met again on December 12, 1807.<sup>29</sup> Much later in life, in 1820, Hoffmann was to defend Schleiermacher against charges of corrupting youth, and was admitted as a member of the “Society for Anarchy,” of which Schleiermacher had been a founder-member since 1809.<sup>30</sup>

Such evidence allows the possibility of influence, to be sure, but does not establish it. Any further step will lead me into marshy ground. One commentator reports that, on moving to Warsaw in 1804, Hoffmann began a lifelong friendship with Julius Eduard Itzig (an assistant judge there at the time, and later to become a senior official of the Supreme Court in Berlin), and that Itzig made it his business to acquaint Hoffmann with the poetry of Tieck and Brentano, the philosophy of Fichte, and probably also with the publications of Schleiermacher.<sup>31</sup>

Unsubstantiated as this is, I cannot unfortunately place any reliance on it. Nonetheless, let me explore its possibilities without giving it

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<sup>28</sup>*E. T. A. Hoffmanns Briefwechsel*, ed. Hans von Müller and Friedrich Schnapp, 3 vols. (Munich: Winkler-Verlag, 1967-69), 1:214 (to Itzig—see n. 31 below): “Yesterday I was at Mme Levi’s from 7:30 to 8:30, where many people were drinking *tea* with *rum* and making rational conversation; from 9:30 to 11:30 by invitation at Winzer’s, where once again many people were drinking *rum* with *tea*—I made the acquaintance of Bernhardi (has a handsome face), of Schleiermacher, and especially of the composer Schneider . . .” (first half of the letter destroyed, hence no date).

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*, 231 (to Theodor Gottlieb von Hippel): “Fichte and Schleiermacher are again here, Werner is going back to Berlin” (Zacharias Werner [1768-1823]: childhood friend, poet, dramatist). On February 9, 1809, he lunched at the house of senior civil servant Lorenz Fuchs and his wife (in Bamberg?), where Schleiermacher was the topic of conversation; see *E. T. A. Hoffmanns Leben und Werk in Daten und Bildern* (Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 1968), 169 (presumably a diary entry).

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*, 298.

<sup>31</sup>Ernst von Schenck, *E. T. A. Hoffmann: ein Kampf um das Bild des Menschen* (Berlin: Verlag die Runde, 1939), 139. Itzig (1780-1849): born Isaak Elias Itzig, changed first names in 1799, last name to Hitzig in 1809; later Hoffmann’s first biographer. Schenck offers no evidence for this assertion.

credence. *If* Hitzig *did* draw Hoffmann's attention to Schleiermacher's publications, and *if* those publications included *Plato's Works* (two large assumptions), then between 1804 and 1807 (when Hoffmann returned to Berlin) Hoffmann could have encountered volume 1, published in 1804, which included Schleiermacher's introduction to the Dialogues as a whole and his individual introductions to the *Phaedrus*, *Lysis*, *Protagoras*, and *Laches*, as well as their translations; volumes 2 and 3, published in 1805, which contained thirteen more dialogues with their introductions, including the *Parmenides* and the *Theaetetus*; and volume 4, published in 1807, which included four more, including the *Sophist* itself, and the *Statesman*. In short, any or all of the introductions to twenty-one dialogues might have come into Hoffmann's hands between 1804 and 1807. And if all of this were the case, he might even have encountered volume 5, published in 1809, which contained the introductions to and translations of a further eight dialogues, before writing his review of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony in 1810.

However, all of this is idle speculation. None of the external evidence has elicited *demonstrable* influence. To turn now to internal evidence is to lead to somewhat firmer ground. There is in fact one allusion to Plato's Dialogues in Hoffmann's writings. It occurs in *Kreisleriana*, in a letter from Baron Wallborn to Kapellmeister Kreisler:

Are you not, my dear Sir, a small, strange-looking man, with a physiognomy that one could compare in some respects with that of Socrates? This was highly praised by Alcibiades because the god within it was concealed behind a peculiar mask, yet shone forth in brilliant flashes of lightning, bold, graceful, and terrible!<sup>32</sup>

The reference here, as Charlton has identified, is to the praise of Socrates with which Alcibiades begins his speech in the *Symposium*:

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<sup>32</sup>*Kreisleriana*, pt. 2, item 1, ed. Charlton and Clarke, 125, where the allusion is identified as to the *Symposium*, 215A-216D.

Look at him! Isn't he just like a statue of Silenus? You know the kind of statue I mean; you'll find them in any shop in town. It's a Silenus sitting, his flute or his pipes in his hands, and it's hollow. It's split right down the middle, and inside it's full of tiny statues of the gods.<sup>33</sup>

Could it be through Schleiermacher's introduction and translation that Hoffmann came to know this passage? The *Symposium* appeared in volume 4 of Schleiermacher's edition (1807), along with the *Sophist* and the *Statesman*, where the three are presented as a "trilogy."<sup>34</sup> Moreover, Schleiermacher considered Alcibiades' "panegyric" to Socrates "manifestly the crest and crown of the whole dialogue,"<sup>35</sup> such that if Hoffmann had read Schleiermacher's introduction to the *Symposium*, his attention would have been drawn directly to that passage.

We must be careful, however. The section of *Kreisleriana* in which the Wallborn letter appears was written in 1814. Even if we could demonstrate that Hoffmann's knowledge of the *Symposium* came from Schleiermacher's edition, we would still not have established a link between Schleiermacher and the Fifth Symphony review of 1810.

There is just one further piece of internal evidence to consider, and it takes me to yet another of Plato's Dialogues. The Greek word *sophrosyne* (σωφροσύνη) denotes in one sense "soundness of mind,"

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<sup>33</sup>*Plato: Symposium*, trans. Alexander Nehamas and Paul Woodruff (Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett, 1989), 65. Woodruff footnotes that "flute" translates aulos, which is really a reed instrument.

<sup>34</sup>"Der Sophist" appears in vol. 2, pt. 2 (1807), 123-42/143-240 (introduction/translation); "Der Staatsmann," 241-55/256-354; and "Das Gastmahl" (literally "The Banquet," i.e., the *Symposium*), 355-70/371-452. The editorial notes appear on pp. 482-99, 500-511, and 512-18, respectively. The reference to "trilogy" is on p. 359. In his pursuit of parts and wholes, Schleiermacher interpreted the *Symposium* and the *Phaedo* (vol. 2, pt. 3 [1809], 5-22/23-124) as a dialogue-pair portraying Socrates the philosopher, and so considered *Sophist—Statesman—(Symposium + Phaedo)* a "trilogy" that portrayed a philosopher as outwardly mortal and inwardly immortal.

<sup>35</sup>Dobson, 27-28.

“moderation,” and “discretion”; and in a second, related sense “moderation in desires,” “self-control,” “temperance,” “chastity,” and “sobriety.”<sup>36</sup> Platonic use of the term arises in the *Protagoras*, where, in the sense of “temperance” or “self-control,” it figures as one virtue among several, others being wisdom, courage, justice, and holiness. The term comes to the fore (it is tempting to say “again,” assuming precedence for the *Protagoras*) in the *Charmides*, where it is the sole subject of an extensive inquiry.

In the course of Socrates’ dialectical moves within the *Charmides*, *sophrosyne* changes from being “temperance” to being a “science of self” in which one knows “what one knows and does not know,” and then to being the knowledge of good and evil, the end-product being a characteristically Socratic inconclusiveness. But in the course of the discussion, the notion that *sophrosyne* is a superordinate art which rules over a lower order of such arts as carpentry, medicine, geometry, shoe-making, navigation, or flute-playing is given serious consideration.

The relevance of these last two paragraphs is that Schleiermacher’s translation of *sophrosyne* is *Besonnenheit*, which signifies in modern German first “deliberation,” “circumspection,” “thoughtfulness,” “discretion,” etc.; and second “presence of mind,” “levelheadedness,” “collectedness,” etc.<sup>37</sup> Schleiermacher maintains this translation consistently throughout the *Protagoras* and the *Charmides*.

As I stated earlier, *Besonnenheit* is a term crucial to Hoffmann’s argument about the Fifth Symphony—one of two terms that he couples: *Besonnenheit* and *Genialität*. Their relationship is encapsulated in Hoffmann’s closing statement that the work is “conceived of genius and executed with profound awareness”: *dass es genial erfunden, und*

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<sup>36</sup>Henry George Liddell, ed., *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940), 789.

<sup>37</sup>The verb *besinnen* is “to reflect (on),” “to ponder,” “to consider”; its past participle *besonnen* is “prudent,” “circumspect,” “sober,” “discreet,” but also (perhaps by influence from *Besinnung*, “reason,” “considerateness,” etc.) “sensible,” “considerate.”

*mit tiefer Besonnenheit ausgeführt*,<sup>38</sup> where these two quintessentially nineteenth-century terms<sup>39</sup> are shadowed by an equally quintessentially eighteenth-century pair, *Erfindung* and *Ausführung*. If genius presides over the process of “invention,” then it is rational awareness that presides over “articulation” of that genius. Genius is here the lower order of art, rational awareness the superordinate art. Just as, in *Charmides*, *Besonnenheit* was the “science of self” (and it is this meaning that Schleiermacher picks out in his introduction, emphasizing “the complete difference between knowledge and perception with reference to its power of making itself its own object”<sup>40</sup>), so too in Hoffmann’s review it governs Beethoven’s symphony: “He is nevertheless fully the equal of Haydn and Mozart in rational awareness, his controlling self detached from the inner realm of sounds and ruling it in absolute authority [*Er trennt sein Ich von dem innern Reich der Töne und gebietet darüber als unumschränkter Herr*].”<sup>41</sup> *Besonnenheit* and *Genialität* are ultimately fused in a single notion, “rational genius [*die besonnene Genialität*].”<sup>42</sup>

For a definitive statement of the Socratic position on rationality with respect to art, it is to, of all places, the *Apology*—the dialogue in which Socrates defends himself at his trial, is found guilty, and is sentenced to death—that we must turn. In search of greater wisdom than his own, Socrates goes first to the politicians, then to the poets

tragic, dithyrambic, and the rest . . . . So I took up poems over

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<sup>38</sup>Charlton and Clarke, 251; original in *AmZ* 12 (1809/10): col. 658 (see n. 6 above for full citations).

<sup>39</sup>Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm (*Deutsches Wörterbuch* [Leipzig: Hirtzel]) cites only Goethe and Fichte for *Besonnenheit*; Klinger, Schiller, and Goethe for *besonnen* in this sense (vol. 1 [1805]); and Goethe, Schiller (1795, 1797), Tieck, and von Humboldt for *Genialität* (vol. 4, pt. 1 [1897]).

<sup>40</sup>Dobson, 107.

<sup>41</sup>*AmZ*, 12: cols. 633-34; Charlton and Clarke, 238.

<sup>42</sup>Col. 658 = p. 251.

which I thought they had taken special pains, and asked them what they meant . . . . Now, I am ashamed to tell you the truth, Gentlemen, but still, it must be told. There was hardly anyone present who could not give a better account than they of what they had themselves produced. So presently I came to realize that poets too do not make what they make by wisdom [*Weisheit*], but by a kind of native disposition [*Naturgabe*] or divine inspiration [*Eingeistung*], exactly like seers and prophets.<sup>43</sup>

The German given in square brackets is that of Schleiermacher, whose commentary and translation appeared in volume 2 (1805).<sup>44</sup> Socrates speaks here of *sophia* (“wisdom”), not of *sophrosyne*, and Schleiermacher thus translates it *Weisheit*, not *Besonnenheit*; and Schleiermacher translates *physei* as *Naturgabe* (“natural gift”), not as *Genialität*. The passage is nevertheless useful to our discussion in enforcing the separation of rationality from artistic insight, and in confirming with caustic clarity the superordinacy of the former over the latter.

This is how far the trail takes me. To summarize: The external biographical evidence identifies channels of communication through which Hoffmann might have been influenced by Schleiermacher’s method of interpretation. Internal textual evidence establishes at least one certainty: that Hoffmann knew Plato’s *Symposium*, though not necessarily before 1814. Finally, Schleiermacher’s repeated use of *Besonnenheit* in 1805, and Hoffmann’s in 1810, to express remarkably similar concepts, is strikingly suggestive. At the same time, I have found no instances of direct textual borrowing from, or parallel

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<sup>43</sup>*Apology*, 22B-C, quoted from *The Dialogues of Plato*, vol. 1, *Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, Meno, Gorgias, Menexenus*, trans. R. E. Allen (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1984), 84.

<sup>44</sup>“Des Sokrates Vertheidigung,” vol. 1, pt. 2 (1805), 179-229, the passage in question being p. 197. The *Apology* is placed in an appendix (“Anhang zur Ersten Abteilung der Werke des Platon”), because of Schleiermacher’s doubts about its Platonic authenticity.

readings with, Plato's *Charmides*.

My positivist pursuit of proof has ended inconclusively, without the sought-for indisputable link—I was right to hold out no high hope of success.

The lack of textual dependency is all the more disappointing because an alternative hypothesis has been on the table since 1977. Peter Schnaus, who in his study *E. T. A. Hoffmann as Reviewer of Beethoven for the "Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung"* conducted an examination of Hoffmann's language,<sup>45</sup> suggested a parallelism with Jean Paul's *School for Aesthetics* of 1804. Course 3 of the fifteen courses making up this work is entitled "On Genius," and the second section (§12) of Course 3 is "Besonnenheit." This section, which briefly discusses Plato's own control of genius in the *Phaedrus* and the *Republic*, without entering into the substance of any of the Dialogues, offers this series of metaphors in illustration of Richter's idea:

[The poet] must simultaneously cast flames upon the least detail and apply a thermometer to the flames; he must in the battle heat of all his faculties maintain the subtle balance of single syllables and must . . . lead the stream of his perceptions to the debouchement of a rhyme. Inspiration produces only the whole; calmness produces the parts.<sup>46</sup>

The passage to which Schnaus draws attention is the following:

Nun gibt es eine höhere Besonnenheit, die, welche die innere Welt selber entzweit und entzweiteilt in ein Ich und in dessen Reich, in einen Schöpfer und dessen Welt. Diese göttliche Besonnenheit ist so weit von der gemeinen unterschieden wie

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<sup>45</sup>Peter Schnaus, *E. T. A. Hoffmann als Beethoven-Rezensent der Allgemeinen Musikalischen Zeitung* (Munich and Salzburg: Katzbichler, 1977), 80-83; reported in Charlton and Clarke, 18.

<sup>46</sup>*Vorschule der Aesthetik*, trans. Margaret R. Hale as *Horn of Oberon: Jean Paul Richter's "School for Aesthetics"* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1973), 37.

Vernunft von Verstand, eben die Eltern von beiden.<sup>47</sup>

(Then there is a higher reflectiveness which divides and separates the inner world itself into two parts, into a self and its realm, into a creator and his world. This divine reflectiveness is as far from the common kind as reason is from understanding, for these are their respective parents.)<sup>48</sup>

To this passage there is no single direct parallelism in Hoffmann's review, but two phrases perhaps recall it:

. . . die hohe Besonnenheit des Meisters . . .<sup>49</sup>

. . . Er trennt sein Ich von dem innern Reich der Töne . . .<sup>50</sup>

(. . . high reflectiveness of the master . . .

. . . he separates his self from the inner realm of sounds . . .)

The difficulty that now faces me is pointed up by the fact that Schleiermacher's first use of *Besonnenheit* in his Plato translation, within the *Protagoras*, was published in the very same year as Jean Paul's *School*: 1804. Jean Paul could have taken the word over from Schleiermacher; Schleiermacher could have taken it from Jean Paul; or their two usages could have come from a common source, or even from mutual communication. We may never know; lines of influence are liable to become ever more ramified rather than being solved. What we can say, for what it is worth, is that Jean Paul refers twice to Schleiermacher in the *School*, and on both occasions in conjunction

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<sup>47</sup>Schnaus, 81.

<sup>48</sup>*Horn of Oberon: Jean Paul Richter's "School for Aesthetics,"* trans. Hale, 36.

<sup>49</sup>*AmZ*, 12, col. 634.

<sup>50</sup>*Ibid.*, cols. 633-34.



with Plato, for example:

The same [that they are exemplary, as are Goethe's *Propyläen* and *Wilhelm Meister*] is true of the few works by the keen, ironical, generous great-great, etc., grandson of Plato, Schleiermacher.<sup>51</sup>

However, it is to Schleiermacher's *Critique of All Previous Ethics*, of 1803, that Richter refers in a footnote at that point.

It is time to abandon my positivistic search as hopeless, and finally to rest my case. Let me admit the power of *verstehen*, postulate the commonality of purpose and method of Schleiermacher and Hoffmann in their two enterprises, and at the same time suggest that the Fifth Symphony was a special case in Hoffmann's mind: a work so lofty that it prompted a special approach, a special method of treatment. The very adoption of the hermeneutic method may itself have been a rhetorical device, a means of saying implicitly that Beethoven's symphony needed no more defense or justification than did Plato's Dialogues—that while interpretation might reveal a clear structure beneath the complex and baffling surface, the work was already as unassailable as that masterpiece from the fourth century BC.

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<sup>51</sup>Ibid., 286.