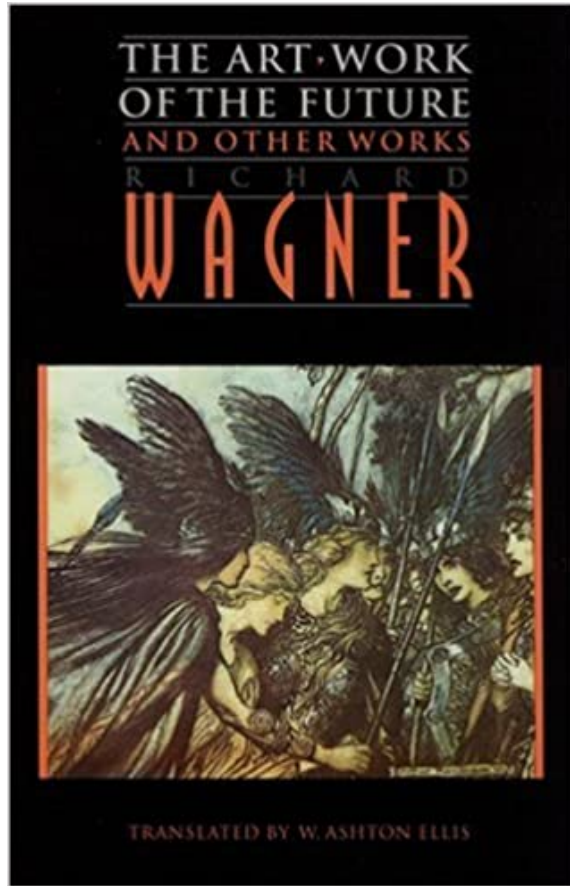


Gesamtkunstwerk

...in the 21st Century

L5 RESEARCH IN CONTEXT (ADAD5003) – STORY, SOUND AND MOVING IMAGE

The Total Artwork of the Future



In a series of essays, in particular '[The Artwork of the Future](#)', Richard Wagner describes the possibility of a novel artwork, the Gesamtkunstwerk, which draws together pre-existing art forms and appeals to multiple sense modalities.

Referred to (and translated) variously as the “**great united artwork**” or the “**artwork of the future**”, Wagner’s account of the Gesamtkunstwerk is mired in a labyrinthine background theory of aesthetics which covers, a seemingly **teleological** account of nature and considerations of nature’s relation to art and science, not to mention a political and sociological analysis of the conditions under which such an artwork could be produced.

The term is now most frequently used to discuss the work of Wagner himself, in particular his four-part opera cycle ***Der Ring des Nibelungen***. Encompassing the visual arts of costuming and set-design as well as music and poetry, opera is a paradigmatic case of a multimodal artform that spans across artistic fields.

Wagner took his vision to extremes with the Ring Cycle by building a theatre and organising a festival – the Bayreuth Festival, which continues to this day – to host the performance of his opera cycle, so that the artwork could be experienced exactly as he intended.

The Mythological Origins of Wagner's Operas

The Power of Story – The Power of Myth

The Birth of Tragedy

Friedrich Nietzsche

Nietzsche says because god doesn't exist we, as humans, are thrown back upon ourselves.

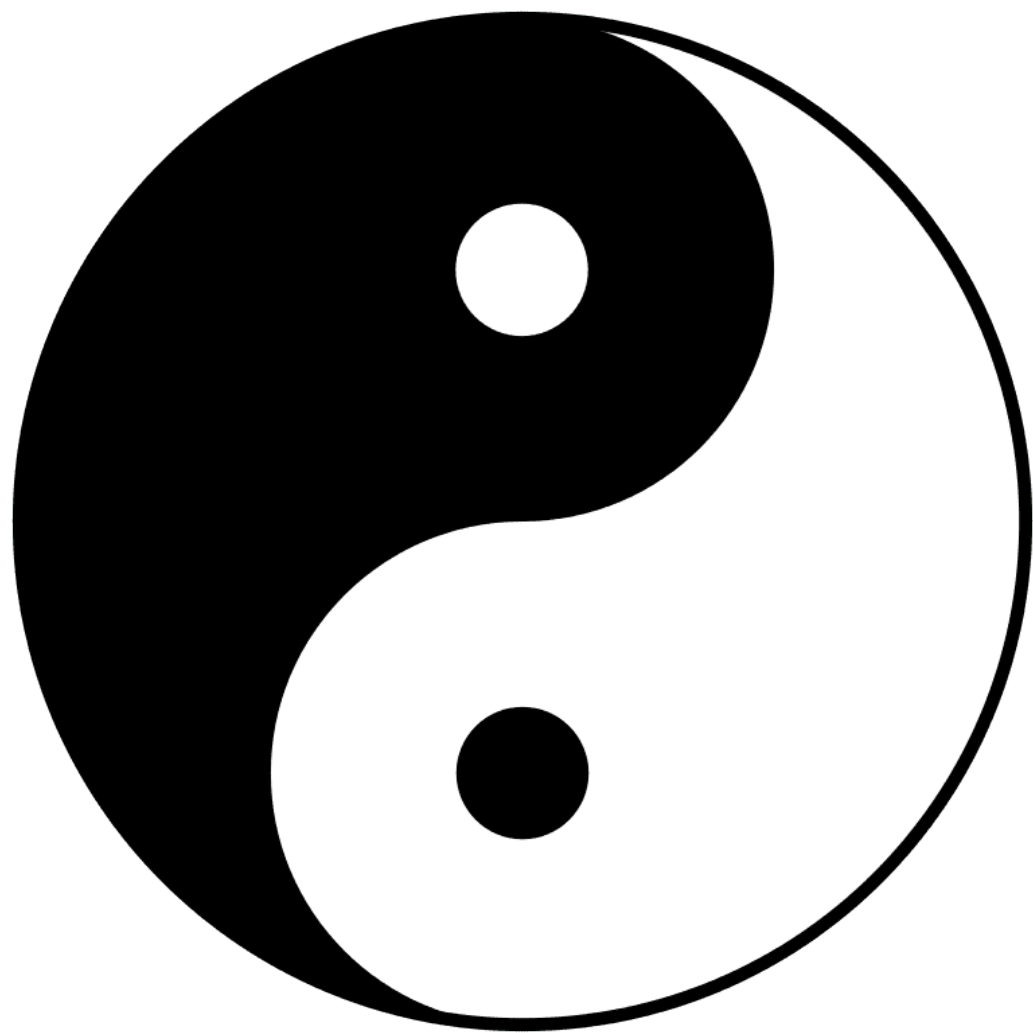
The nature of who we are is based on two impulses; order and chaos. We can't have one without the other.

Order and chaos are the basis of human suffering.

Nietzsche associates **order and chaos** with the gods

Apollo - order and Dionysus - chaos. Therefore human existence is tragic.





‘Melancholia’
as
Wagnerian Music Drama



Lars von Trier's *Melancholia* (2011)



the tristan chord

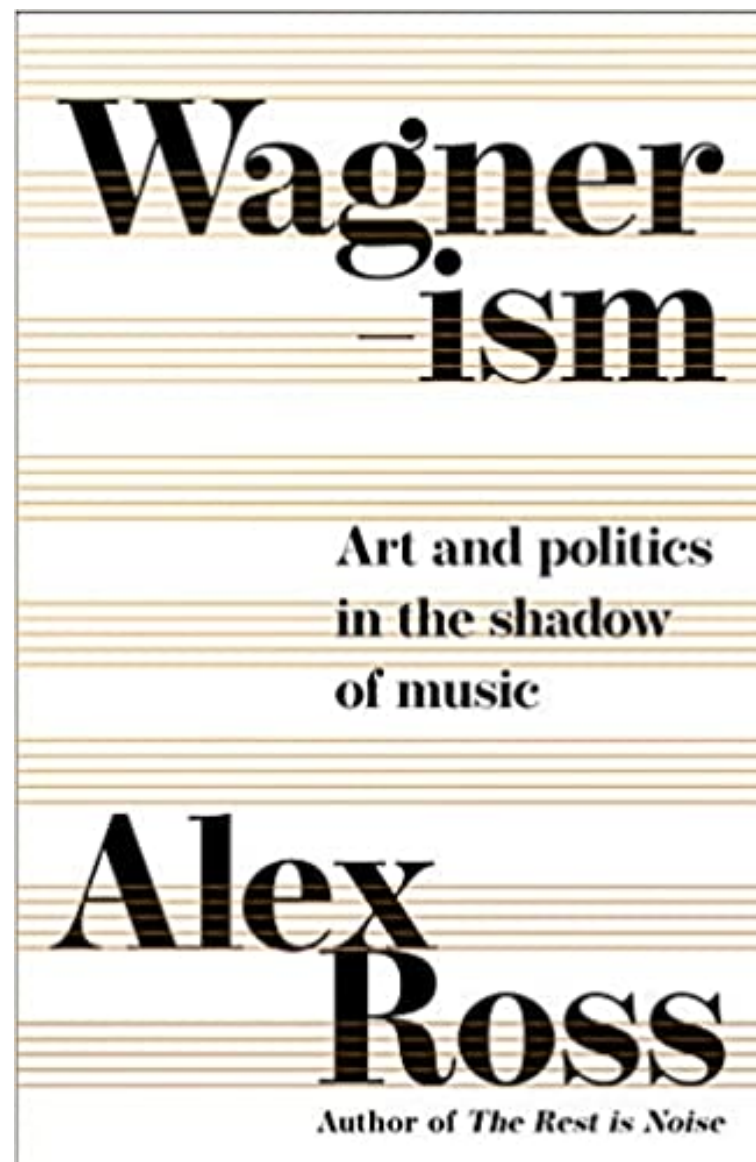
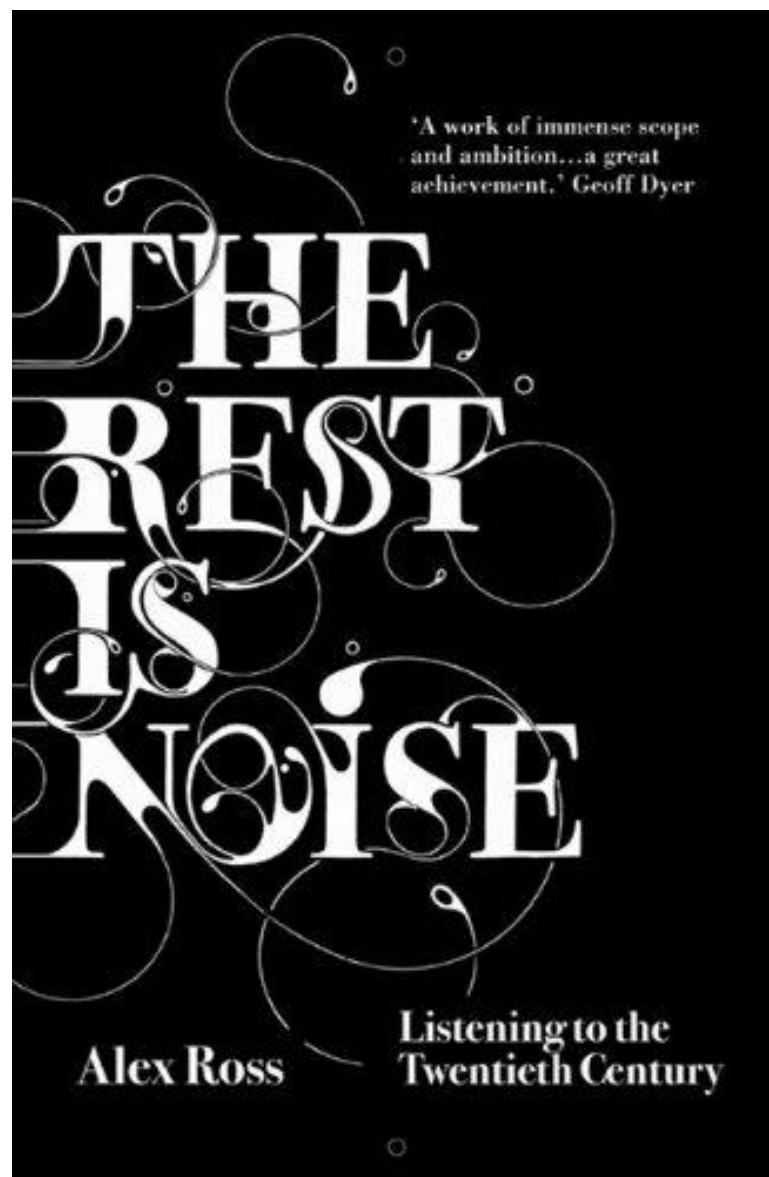
after Tristan and Isolde by Richard Wagner

Pivotal moment in History of Western Music
when tonality collapses – extreme
'chromaticism'

Second Viennese School – Schoenberg

Atonality





Research Task:

Investigate the mythological sources of Richard Wagner's Operas...

Suggestion start with the following...*The Ring Cycle* (all 4 parts), *Tristan and Isolde*, *Parsifal*

Q. What are the key themes of these myths behind the operas?

Q. Where have the same myths been used in contemporary art - think film, music etc..

Self-Study Task:

Start to build up your own resource of mythologies that inspire you – using the ‘Wagnerian’ ones as a starting point.

Remember to look at the themes and use of symbolism, archetypes, the elements etc.

“Who, then, will be the artist of the future?”

Gesamtkunstwerk

Bill viola

and the

new gesamtkunstwerk



beyoncé
and the
new gesamtkunstwerk

the artist as artwork





beyoncé

and the
new gesamtkunstwerk

autobiography – the
personal and the
universal



Lemonade (2016) – a beautiful and often disturbing kaleidoscope of poetry, feminism, racial politics, history, mythology, emotional upheaval, family, and romance



bjork
and the
new gesamtkunstwerk



leitmotif

thematic 'hooks' and the
musical motif

Handwritten musical score for Princess Leia's Theme in G major, 4/4 time. The score consists of three systems of staves with treble and bass clefs. The first system shows the first four measures with chords I, (ii°7), (I), and (ii°7). The second system shows measures five through eight with chords bII, vii, 7, bii, and bVI6. The third system shows measures nine and ten with chords iv6 and V, followed by a double bar line.

Princess Leia's Theme