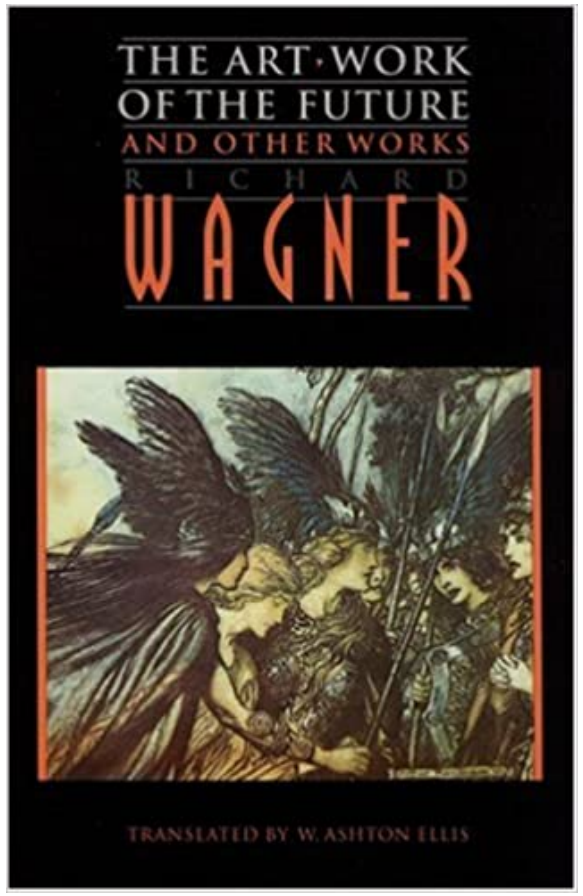
Gesamtkunstwerk

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

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

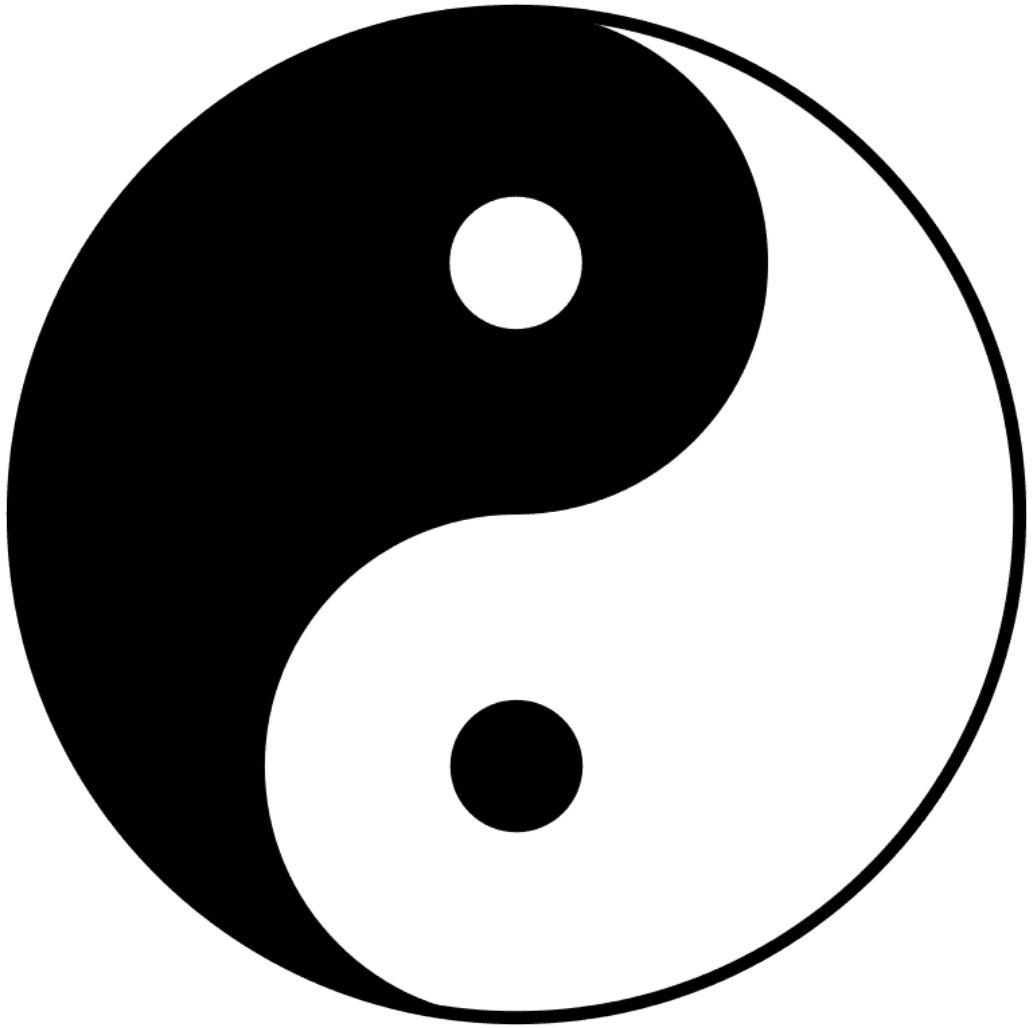
Friedrich Nietzsche

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)

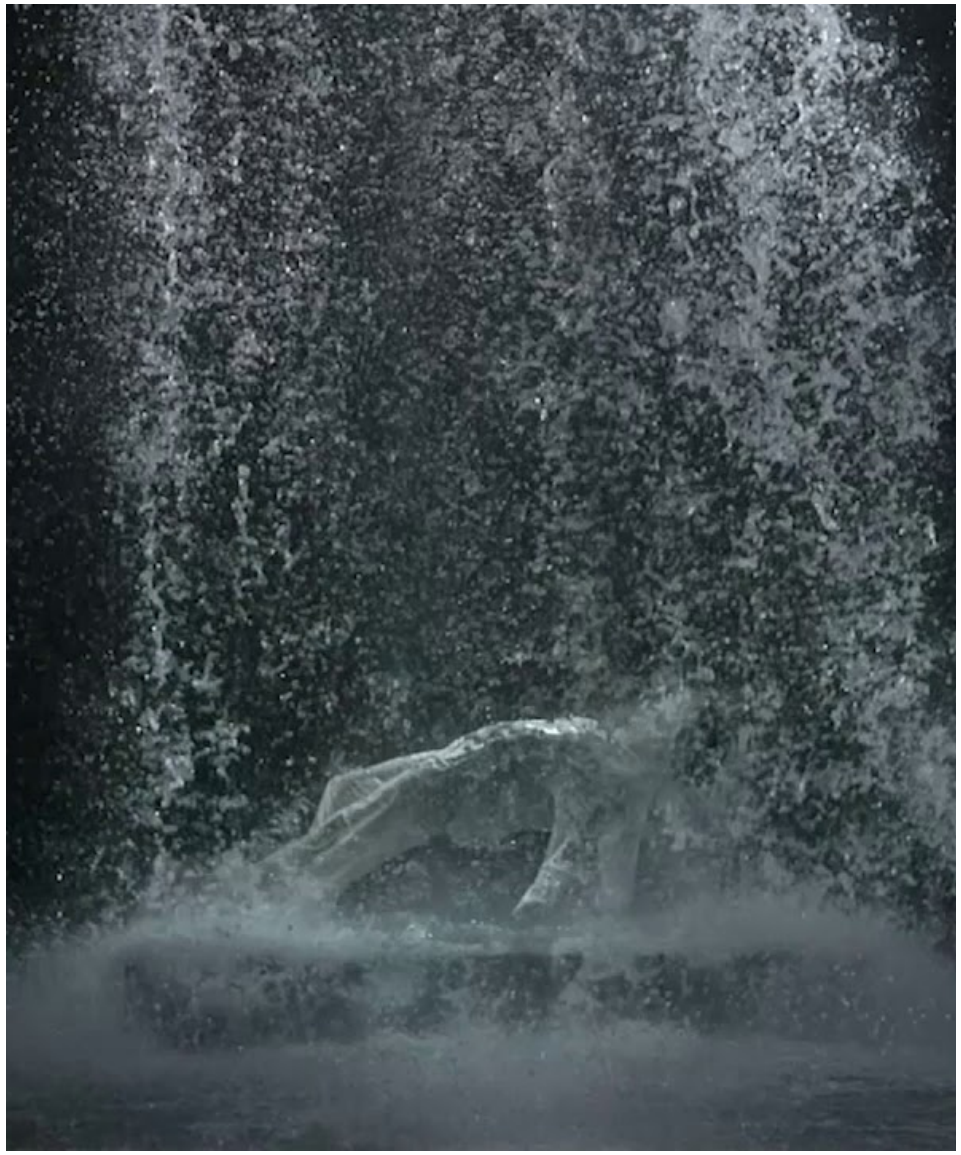
the tristan chord

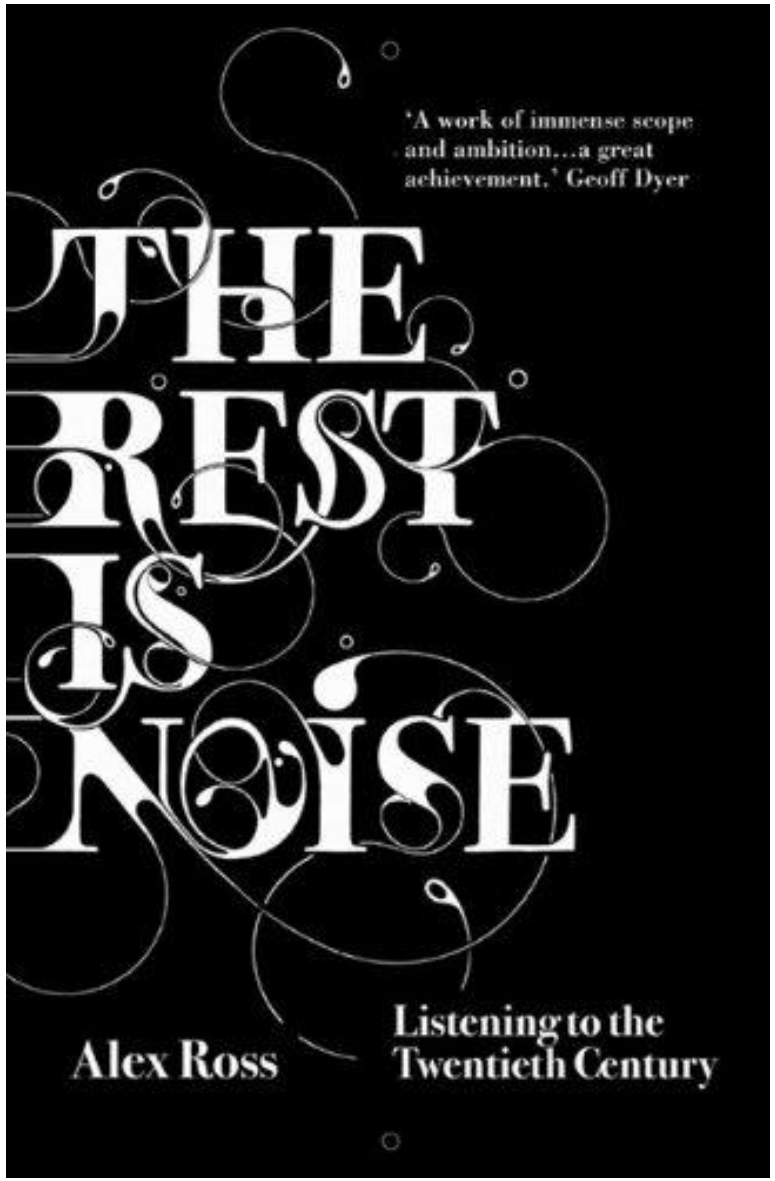
after Tristan and Isolde by Richard Wagner

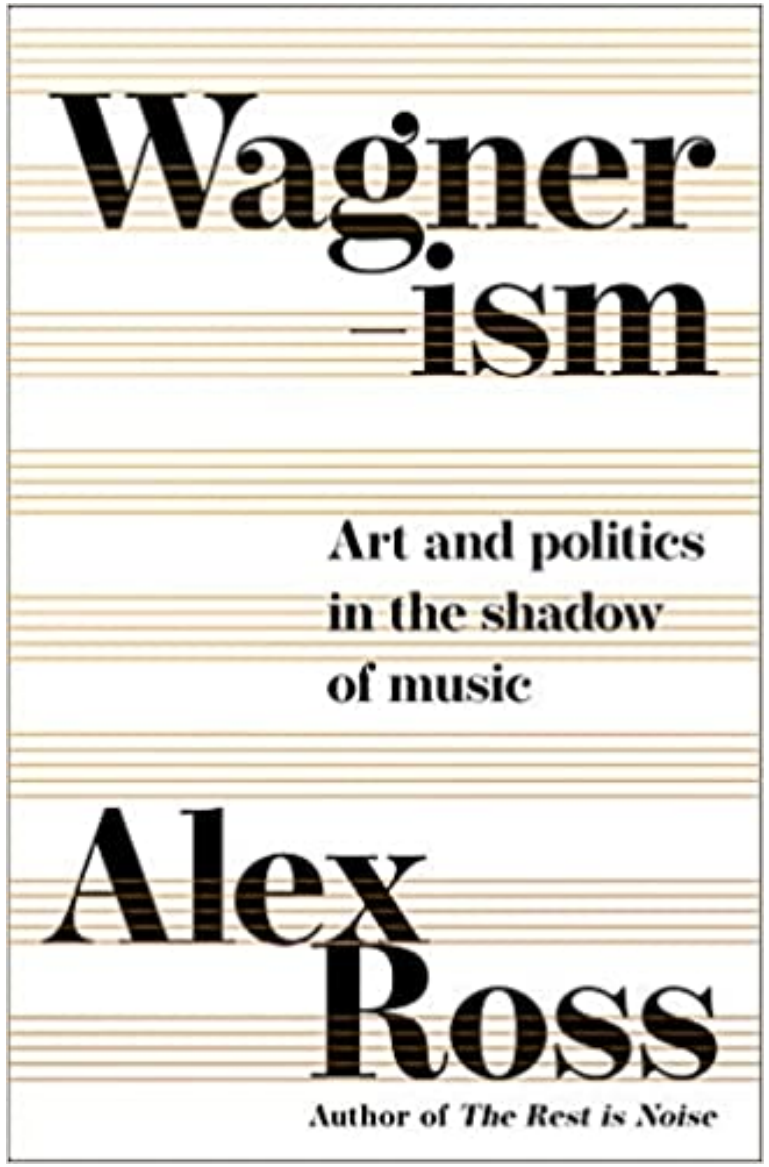
Pivotal moment in History of Western Music when tonality collapses – extreme **‘chromaticism’**

Second Viennese School – Schoenberg

Atonality




'A work of immense scope and ambition…a great achievement.' Geoff Dyer
THE REST IS NOISE
Alex Ross
Listening to the Twentieth Century


Wagner-ism
Art and politics in the shadow of music
Alex Ross
Author of The Rest is Noise

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 as starting point.

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

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