



*(Continued from back flap)*

In 1932 he returned to the United States and devoted himself to research work in the fields of music and history. During this period he wrote BEETHOVEN AND THE FRENCH REVOLUTION and a revised HISTORY OF SCANDERBEG, the national hero of Albania.

Fan S. Noli • Beethoven and the French Revolution



# Beethoven

and the  
French Revolution



by Bishop Fan S. Noli

## Beethoven and the French Revolution

Numerous books have been written on Beethoven, but this is the first to deal extensively with his political ideology: the French Revolution. The ideals of this great social upheaval inspired Beethoven to write his masterpieces, especially the Third Symphony, the Ninth Symphony, and the opera "Fidelio".

Bishop Noli, the Author, who is both a musician and a historian, gives well-documented evidence as to the ideological connotations of Beethoven's music. Every admirer of Beethoven should read this book, and thereby gain deeper appreciation of his compositions. The well-known music critic, the late Alfred H. Meyer, formerly Dean of the College of Music of Boston University, read the manuscript and commented: "A real contribution to the Beethoven literature."

17 Dhjetor 2008

Per Fatmir Beja,

Me respekt per  
patriotizimin dhe kujdesjen  
e tij per trashëgiminën  
atdhetare shqiptare.

\*  
A. H. Noli  
Boston

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# **BEETHOVEN AND THE FRENCH REVOLUTION**

by

**BISHOP FAN S. NOLI, MUS. B., PH. D.**

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**New York**

To the Memory  
of my Father

STYLIAN GEORGE NOLI

Cantor of the Albanian Village Church  
In Kuteza, Ibrik-Tepe, Eastern Thrace

MY FIRST MUSIC TEACHER

F. S. N.

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by

BISHOP FAN S. NOLI

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Noch eins! Es gibt keine Abhandlung, die sobald zu gelehrt für mich wäre. Ohne auch im mindesten Anspruch auf eigentliche Gelehrsamkeit zu machen, habe ich mich doch bestrebt von Kindheit an den Sinn der Besseren und Weisen jedes Zeitalters zu fassen. Schande für einen Künstler, der es nicht für Schuldigkeit hält, es hierin wenigstens so weit zu bringen.—

*Ludwig van Beethoven.*<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>. In a letter to Breitkopf & Härtel, Nov. 2, 1809.—Beethovens Sämtliche Briefe, Kastner-Kapp, p. 147.

I.—INTRODUCTION

*When France has a cold, all  
Europe is sneezing.—Metternich.*

### *The Problem*

Beethoven was nineteen years of age when the French Revolution broke out in 1789, thirty-four when Napoleon became emperor of France in 1804, and forty-five when the era of Metternich was inaugurated by the Congress of Vienna in 1815. He spent his early years at Bonn, Rhineland, where he was born in 1770, and composed for the rest of his life in Vienna, where he died in 1827.

The issues raised by the French Revolution dominated Europe for over a century and had tremendous repercussions in every corner of the earth. They were manifold in character: political, social, economic, religious and cultural. They affected every branch of human activity, including music with its devotees. Beethoven was no exception. The only point to determine in his case is: How far was he influenced by the new ideas spread by the French Revolution and how far is the spirit of his times reflected in his musical work? This is the problem to be discussed and dissected in this book within the modest limits of a thesis.

### *Conflicting Views*

Schindler, Beethoven's first biographer, in his own apologetic and soft-pedal fashion, makes it quite clear that



Beethoven was a radical and that he sympathized with the new ideas. But the question was more or less neglected for seventy years and remained where it was left by Schindler when he published his first biography of Beethoven in 1840. It was reopened by the eminent French composer Vincent d'Indy (1851 - 1931) in his critical biography of Beethoven, published in 1911, in which he maintains that Beethoven was not influenced at all by the new ideas of the French Revolution. Another Frenchman, Romain Rolland (1866 - 1945), the famous novelist, scholar and musical critic, joined issue with Vincent d'Indy in 1927 in an extensive article, published in the socialist newspaper of Berlin "Vorwärts" in which he takes the opposite view, namely that Beethoven is an authentic "Son of the French Revolution." As no other musicologist has made any attempt to approach the problem systematically, it may be formulated as follows: Who is right, Romain Rolland or Vincent d'Indy?

#### *Importance of the Problem*

Our problem is of the utmost importance to the historian in general and the musicologist in particular. Its solution will throw light on a hitherto half-explored region and will help much to explain the personality and the work of one of the greatest composers. The average man in the street is interested in this question no less than the book-worm of history and musicology. The great ideals of the French Revolution, liberty, equality, fraternity, democracy, rights of man and rights of nations

are as much burning issues of the day as they were one hundred and fifty years ago when they were first proclaimed. Consequently, scholars as well as laymen would like to know Beethoven's attitude towards these great human ideals.

#### *Difficulties of the Problem*

The difficulties are those confronting the mythologist and the paleontologist: An enormous mass of fantastic myths on the one hand and a heap of fragmentary facts on the other. The casual investigator is free to make his choice. He may pick up the myths and weave a brilliant story, good for the market and pleasant for every one; or he may pick up the facts and patch up an indigestible thesis, impossible for the market and good only as a document of scholarly perspiration; or he may ride both horses in the good old eclectic fashion, use both myths and facts as they suit him best and build up a hybrid monster, belonging neither to history nor to mythology, which might be absorbed by the market as an exotic curiosity. But there is one choice possible for a scientific investigator. He has to grapple with the fragmentary facts at his disposal and, like the paleontologist, try to reconstruct a plausible specimen of an antediluvian animal. The fragmentary facts at his disposal are so tricky and contradictory that two different men like Vincent d'Indy and Romain Rolland could make out of the same material two different stories, as far apart from each other as two assertions—one negative and the other affirmative—can possibly

bc. What is worse, the wrong story of Vincent d'Indy sounds more plausible than the better story of Romain Rolland. After all, it is much easier to believe with Vincent d'Indy that Beethoven, living as he did in the Roman Catholic atmosphere of Vienna and supported as he was by reactionary and feudal aristocrats, was himself a reactionary German and a good Roman Catholic, hostile to all French ideas, more or less anti-Semitic, absolutely indifferent to politics, and leading an isolated life in the ivory tower of his art, immune from all exterior influences. There are facts to support Vincent d'Indy's contentions which, dressed in brilliant and masterful French, sound like logic itself. It is only a pity that there are also facts, pointing in the opposite direction, that of Romain Rolland. Under these circumstances, the task of disentangling the elusive truth is extremely difficult but not exactly hopeless.

#### *Method of Investigation*

The method of investigation adopted is that of ascertaining the facts through a careful and critical study of the sources. Legends are eliminated without any further discussion. The results thus obtained are rather meagre but they have the advantage of approaching the truth as much as is possible with the material at our disposal. An extensive chapter on Beethoven the man has been inserted as a background for Beethoven the rebel.

## II.—THE SOURCES

*And he was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.—St. Matthew, XVII, 2.*

### *Anton Schindler*

A few years after his death, Beethoven was duly canonized by the hero-worshippers. Anton Schindler (1796 - 1864) was the first evangelist of the new Messiah. His father was cantor and schoolmaster in his native town, Medl-Neustadt of Moravia. He began the study of music and the violin early in his life. While quite young he entered the University of Vienna to study law but assiduously kept up his music by practice in an amateur orchestra. He was introduced to Beethoven accidentally in 1814 when he was asked by the violinist Schuppanzigh<sup>1</sup> to take a note to the great composer. Later in the year he played in Beethoven's two concerts of November 29 and December 2. In 1815, Schindler was arrested and sent to jail for his revolutionary activities among the University students.<sup>2</sup> After his release, Beethoven invited Schindler to tell him all about his experiences. They met often afterwards and

1. Beethoven nicknamed him "Mylord Falstaff" on account of his corpulence. Letter to Schuppanzigh, April 26, 1823, Beethovens Sämtliche Briefe, Kastner-Kapp, p. 659.

2. Schindler, Beethoven, I, Einleitung, p. V.

the intimacy increased until, early in 1819, he became Beethoven's secretary and factotum and took up residence in his house in 1822. He then became conductor of the Josefstadt Theatre where he studied Beethoven's works under his own direction. The breach between them came in 1824 as a result of the failure of Beethoven's concert of May 23.<sup>1</sup>

After two years of estrangement, Schindler returned to the master's house in December, 1826, when the latter arrived in Vienna from Gneixendorf to die. Schindler at once resumed his position, attended him with devotion till his death, wrote several letters to Moscheles on the details of the event and in company with Breuning took charge of Beethoven's papers. After Breuning's death two months later, all the papers of Beethoven came into Schindler's possession. He published his first Biography of Beethoven in 1840. This was followed by a second edition of the Biography with additions in 1845. The third and last edition appeared in 1860.

Schindler tells us frankly how he suppressed all the disturbing episodes in Beethoven's life: He felt he was "obliged to treat very summarily of those unhappy circumstances, together with their causes, and to throw them overboard, whenever it could be done, as superfluous ballast, entreating the reader to have recourse to his own

1. Beethoven called him "Lumpenkerl von Samothrazien" or "Lumpenkerl von Epirus nicht weniger von Brundisium."—Letter to Schindler, 1823, Beethovens Sämtliche Briefe, Kastner-Kapp, p. 683.

imagination for filling up the details of many a scene."<sup>1</sup>

Whenever the unpleasant details could not be conveniently suppressed, Schindler tried to soft-pedal them and always managed to absolve Beethoven by denigrating all those associated with him. To him Beethoven was a Messiah who could do no wrong, and any assertion which cast doubts on the Messiah's divine character was a blasphemy. He fell out with Ferdinand Ries, because the latter contended that "about great men anything and everything may be told: it can do them no harm."<sup>2</sup>

He criticized severely Wegeler and Ries for divulging various ugly facts and for publishing certain letters of Beethoven addressed to them in 1819-20, in which Beethoven's financial miseries were described. In Schindler's opinion, those letters "ought not to be exposed to the public eye, but should have been suppressed by his friends Wegeler and Ries; for the tenor of those letters would lead one to suppose that Beethoven . . . had written notes solely for money."<sup>3</sup>

Furthermore, Schindler is peculiarly careless about

1. "Deshalb wird er (der Biograph) auch genötigt sein, den grössten Teil jener unglückseligen Begebenheiten samt ihren Beweggründen summarisch zu fassen, und wo es sich tun lässt, als überflüssigen Ballast über Bord zu werfen, den Leser noch besonders ersuchend, die Ausarbeitung mancher Scene in ihre Details seiner eigener Phantasie zu überlassen." Schindler, Biographie, 1845, I, p. 46.

2. "Es ist überhaupt ein ganz falscher Grundsatz: Von grossen Männern kann Alles und Alles gesagt werden, es schadet ihnen nichts." Schindler, Biographie, 1845, I, p. 14. Also Thayer, English Edition, III, p. 198.

3. Schindler-Moscheles, Life of Beethoven, 1841, I, p. 195.

his dates, which usually are wrong. Obviously, he did not attach any importance to them. Nevertheless, Schindler is an invaluable source of information concerning Beethoven, especially when he is apologetic about him. Somehow or other, while trying piously to cover up the great master's sins, he simply lets the cat out of the bag. Anatole France in his "Ile des Pengouins" advises all the liars, when they tell a lie, not to go into details because they run the risk of getting mixed up. Unfortunately, this advice came too late for Schindler. He always goes into details whenever he feels obliged to tell a pious lie for the benefit of his master, always gets mixed up and always gives us unconsciously some valuable hints about the real facts in each case. Some typical examples of this kind of Schindlerian apologetics will be discussed later on in the course of this book.

#### *Thayer & Co.*

Beethoven's biography had become a melodramatic mess of nondescript legends when his great biographer, Alexander Wheelock Thayer (1817-1897), appeared on the scene. Born in Natick, Massachusetts, he received a liberal education at Harvard University, whence he took the degree of Bachelor of Laws in 1843. He was employed for a short time in the College Library where interest in the life of Beethoven took hold of him. Henceforth, with a few minor digressions, he devoted his entire life to collecting materials for a critical biography of the Master.

The result of his labors was a monumental collection

of documents, critically analysed, from which the prosaic and unadorned life of Beethoven emerged in its true environment of men and things. Thayer set forth his guiding principles in these words: "I fight for no theories, and cherish no prejudices; my sole point of view is the truth—about Beethoven the man."<sup>1</sup>

Thayer's labors were embodied originally in five bulky volumes in German. His book was entitled "Ludwig van Beethovens Leben." He did not live long enough to see all the volumes published. He died after the third volume had appeared. The German editor of the first three volumes, Dr. Hermann Deiters of Bonn (1833-1907), was urged by Thayer to translate the original text literally but was given "full liberty to proceed according to his judgment in the presentation of documentary evidence."<sup>2</sup> The first volume (1770-1796) was published by Weber of Berlin in 1866; the second volume (1796-1806) in 1872; the third volume (1807-16) in 1879. The fourth volume was unfinished at Thayer's death. Deiters undertook to revise and complete the work but died after the revision of the first volume, which came out in 1901. Dr. Hugo Riemann of Grossmehlra (1849-1919) completed the fourth volume in 1907, the fifth and last in 1908, and brought out the revisions of the second and third volumes in 1910-1911. The English edition by Henry Edward Krehbiel (1854-1923), published by the Beethoven Association of New York in 1921, is an abridged arrangement

1. Thayer, English Edition, I, Introduction, p. XI-XII.

2. Thayer, English Edition, I, Introduction, p. XI.

of the whole of the above material. According to Krehbiel himself, his English edition is not a translation of the German work but rather a "presentation of the original manuscript so far as the discoveries made after the writing did not mar its integrity. . . ." In other words, the editors, both German and American, did not simply translate and copy. They arranged, they revised, they contributed, and they corrected the original text. Consequently, they deserve a good deal of credit as Thayer's collaborators.

The chief defect of both editions, German and English, is the chronological method established by Thayer himself,<sup>2</sup> which makes the book as monotonous and tiresome as a chronicle of the Middle Ages. In their present shape both editions are simply hopeless for the average reader and can exhaust the patience of even the most authentic book-worm. Another defect is that Thayer follows the example of Schindler in suppressing certain unpleasant details in Beethoven's life. In one case he frankly admits it.<sup>3</sup> So far as the problem of this book is concerned, Thayer contributed next to nothing to what Schindler had already said. Last but not least, Thayer is wrong in looking down upon Schindler's Biography. The latter is much more than an anthology of pious lies.

1. Thayer, English Edition, I, Introduction, p. VIII.

2. Krehbiel "chose his own method of presentation touching the story of the last decade of Beethoven's life . . ."—Thayer, English Edition, Introduction, p. XVI.

3. "The names of two married women might be here given to whom at a later period Beethoven was warmly attached; names which happily have hitherto escaped the eyes of literary scavengers, and are therefore here suppressed."—Thayer, English Edition I, p. 253.

No time need be wasted in extolling the merits of Thayer's work. The mass of documents patiently collected and critically analysed speak volumes for themselves. But one of its chief merits deserves to be emphasized especially. Thanks to Thayer, the deified Beethoven has been humanized and brought down from heaven to earth. Thayer did more than that. In the good old times, it was the general belief that Beethoven was the victimized hero and that everybody around him was a villain. Thayer has produced documents which go far to prove that the exact opposite is much nearer to the truth, namely, that Beethoven was the villain and all the others were the victims. Curiously enough, Beethoven himself sometimes realized how great a rascal he was. In a moment of charming objectivity and self-criticism, he signs one of his letters: "Tantus quantus lumpus L. v. Beethoven." But that happened very rarely. As a rule, he claimed to be a Saint who could do no wrong. For instance, he wrote once: "Never have I done anything bad."<sup>2</sup>

### *Beethoven's Letters*

The most important collections of Beethoven's letters are the following: (1) by Dr. Ludwig Nohl, containing 411 letters, published in Stuttgart in 1865; they were translated into English by Lady Wallace and published in two volumes in 1867 in London; (2) by Dr. A. C. Kalischer,

1. Letter to Frau Nanette Streicher, Sept. 15, 1817.—*Sämtliche Briefe, Kastner-Kapp*, p. 443. "Lumpus" is the latinized German word "Lump" (rascal).

2. "Nie habe ich etwas Schlechtes begangen."—Letter to Schott, Dec. 17, 1824, *Sämtliche Briefe, Kastner-Kapp*, p. 738.

critical edition, containing 1220 letters with annotations and explanations, published in five volumes in Berlin and Leipzig, in 1906-8; a second edition of Kalischer's collection, revised by Theodor von Frimmel, was published in 1909-11; it was translated into English by J. S. Shedlock and published in two volumes in London, in 1909; a selection of 456 letters from Shedlock's translation, edited by A. Eaglefield Hull, was published in 1926 in two volumes in London; (3) by Emerich Kastner and Julius Kapp, containing 1474 letters, published in Leipzig, in 1923, in one volume; (4) other letters are given by Thayer in his German and English editions.

Beethoven's letters are the most valuable source of information for his biography. They were not meant for publication. Consequently, Beethoven speaks out his mind and behaves in them as if there were no listeners and no spectators. Ignaz Moscheles (1794-1870) tells us how the absent-minded Beethoven was standing one morning at the open window undressed, how a swelling crowd of street boys greeted him with roars of laughter and how he wondered what it was all about.<sup>1</sup> Beethoven offers exactly that same spectacle to all those who read his letters today. He stands before them in a charming negligée and sometimes in a pure and literal déshabillé.

Beethoven's letters should be studied in the original for several reasons: In the first place, they are very hard to translate even by an ideal translator; in the second place, no translator in any language has the courage to be as profane as Beethoven was, and least of all an Anglo-Saxon

1. Schirmer, *Impressions of Contemporaries*, p. 93.

translator; in the third place, they are full of Shakespearian puns which defy any translation at all. Under these circumstances, a casual translation becomes very easily a mistranslation and a distortion of the original. And such is, to a certain extent, Shedlock's translation of Kalischer's collection although it deserves to be read for its painstaking annotations and comments. Hull's edition repeats Shedlock's errors since it is only a selection of letters translated by the latter. Lady Wallace's translation of Nohl's collection is a much better job.

The contention that Beethoven's letters have no literary value whatever is a gross exaggeration. True, by far the greater number do not contain matter of any intrinsic value. For instance, most of the short notes to Zmeskall, Schindler and Holz, factotums of the master, owe their origin to Beethoven's dislike of entrusting oral messages to his servants.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, whatever the master wrote in the way of private correspondence was dashed off on paper like a telegraphic message in an elliptic and disconnected form, defying every rule of orthography, grammar, punctuation and syntax. Nevertheless there are enough letters to form a little anthology of brilliant, sparkling, passionate and lapidary Beethovenian prose, good enough to deserve a place among the masterpieces of German literature.<sup>2</sup> It is surprising that nobody ever

1. In Kastner's and Kapp's collection, 145 letters are addressed to Baron Zmeskall, 77 to Anton Schindler, and 44 to Carl Holz.

2. A memorandum, several pages long, dealing with the case of Beethoven's nephew, should be included in such an anthology. It is a masterful exposition from the master's point of view. Thayer does not mention this masterpiece. It appears only in *Beethovens Sämtliche Briefe, Denkschrift*, Feb. 18, 1820, Kastner-Kapp, pp. 550-568.

thought of it. But sooner or later, we shall have to discover Beethoven the writer.

Last but not least, there is enough material in Beethoven's letters to justify a thesis like the present, which is very gratifying indeed, the more so inasmuch as the evidence comes from the hand of the master himself and is therefore authentic and incontrovertible.

### *The Conversation Books*

It is common knowledge that, from the very beginning of his deafness, Beethoven could communicate with his visitors only by means of written notes. At home, a slate was commonly used upon which the visitors would write something only to obliterate it immediately after it was read by the master. When Beethoven was away from home, in coffee-houses and inns, an ordinary blank note-book of a size and thickness easy to carry in the coat pocket was used. It passed from hand to hand and one or another of his friends wrote questions or replies. Beethoven himself took part in the conversation orally and used the note-book for his remarks on rare occasions when he did not trust his voice. Sometimes, the note-book was used also at home instead of the slate whenever it was desirable to preserve what was written. About 400 of these conversation note-books came into the possession of Schindler, who piously destroyed 263 and transferred 137, comprising 11,460 pages, to the Royal Library of Berlin in 1845. Thayer made a complete

transcript of them and used them in his biography.<sup>1</sup> Conversations covering the period of March, 1819, to March, 1820, were published in 1923 by Recht in Munich with critical notes by Walter Nohl.

The contents of the Conversation Books are very disappointing to those who expect to find in them something similar to the conversations of Goethe with Eckermann. In the first place, Beethoven is mostly silent and lets his friends do all the talking. In the second place, those conversations were not intended for publication, information, or edification. In the third place, the pious Schindler, after destroying what he considered unworthy of the master, expurgated and edited the rest. Consequently, the Conversation Books are the most fragmentary of all the sources of information we possess and should be used with extreme caution. Nevertheless, they are not exactly devoid of any interest or value. They give us a general idea of the things in which Beethoven was interested in his last eight years and a half. Of course, his worries about his nephew Carl came first. They fill entire conversations. His deafness and his chronic diarrhoea come next. Sympathetic visitors bring him news about the latest discoveries and cures.<sup>2</sup> Then, scattered among these, come discussions about current events, finances, stock market, politics, revolutions, Napoleon, religion, literature, music,

1. Thayer, English Edition, III, pp. 11-12, German Edition, IV, pp. 151-155.

2. A visitor tells Beethoven that a foreign Count restored his wife's hearing by taking horse-radish freshly dug from the soil, rubbing it well into a wad of cotton and inserting the cotton in her ear.—Conversation Books of November, 1819, p. 163, Blatt 37a.



theatre, apartments, housekeepers, wines, widows, girls, and books. The latter form an important item and appear always in Beethoven's handwriting with full title, author, publisher, price, and book store where they could be obtained. Finally, here and there, like oases in a desert, come a few remarks in Beethoven's handwriting.

It is true that what we get in the last analysis from the fragmentary Conversation Books is far from what we innocently expect from them but, after all, we do get a good deal of valuable information which serves to complete the picture of Beethoven's life, time and environment in Vienna.

#### *Impressions of Contemporaries*

Soon after Beethoven's death, all those who had come in touch with him wrote more or less extensively about their impressions and helped to swell his legendary biography. The most important collections of these testimonies of contemporaries are those published by Ludwig Nohl in 1877, by Albert Leitzmann in 1921, by Theodor von Frimmel in 1923, and by G. Schirmer in 1926. Most of these impressions are anecdotal and should be used with extreme caution. But some of them deserve careful study, for instance those by Ries, Breuning, Holz and Moscheles, who had known Beethoven intimately for years. It was Ries who contended that "to tell the whole truth about great men was right and could do them no harm." In holding this realistic view he was well in advance of Schindler and Thayer who thought it fit to suppress certain facts of great importance.

### III.—BEETHOVEN THE MAN

*Alas! However brilliant his fame may appear, an artist does not enjoy the privilege of being the daily guest of Jupiter in Olympus. Unfortunately, commonplace humanity only too often unpleasantly drags him down from these pure ethereal heights.*  
—Beethoven.<sup>1</sup>

It is easy for the historian to prove that all great men were quite human; it is absolutely impossible for the hero-worshipper to believe it. This is the reason why legends about a great man persist even after they have been killed and buried by the historian. They are seven-headed Hydras. When one head has been cut off, two new ones emerge immediately. The historian's task is like that of Hercules: He must not only chop off those Hydra heads but also prevent the new ones from taking the place of the old ones.

#### *Beethoven the Ugly*

The first stubborn legend to destroy is that all heroes look like Charming Princes. As a rule, they do not. But the hero-worshipper, like Desdemona, sees the beauty of the hero's soul and corrects his looks accordingly.

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1. Letter to Peters, June 5, 1822; Nohl, II, p. 64; Kastner-Kapp, p. 609.

And so we have the heroic statues of Beethoven which are pure products of the hero-worshipping imagination of the artists. The real Beethoven was of simian ugliness. Undersized, stocky, with a swarthy and pock-marked face, a thick and flat nose, small and weak eyes, protruding teeth,<sup>1</sup> black and bristly hair, short hands and thick fingers, he looked like an unlicked bear, a Gorgon-headed totem, a fantastic gargoyle, or a reincarnation of the original cave man. Beethoven himself was conscious of his own ugliness and tells us so in his letters.<sup>2</sup> Even the pious Schindler has to admit it and makes hardly any attempt to beautify the master. On the contrary, after describing him more or less realistically, he adds that, when Beethoven laughed, his small brown eyes sank in their sockets, his head grew larger, his face became broader and he looked like a grinning ape.<sup>3</sup> As a rule, to those who did not suspect his identity, Beethoven looked like a perfect idiot.<sup>4</sup>

### *Beethoven the Cripple*

The next legend to destroy is that, physically, all heroes are varieties of the Herculean type. As a rule, they are not. For instance, Beethoven was a physical wreck, a

1. "Ausserdem zeigte sich die Gaumenfläche Beethovens ausnahmsweise eben und die obere Zahnreihe in überraschender Weise nach vorne zu fast in gerader (horizontaler) Richtung aus ihr hervortretend . . ."—Breuning, *Aus dem Schwarzspanierhause*, p. 128.

2. Letter to Gleichenstein, March 18, 1809, Kastner-Kapp, p. 134 and letter to Zmeskall, 1819, p. 544. In the latter Beethoven writes: "O Gott, was ist man gelagert, wenn man ein so fatales Gesicht hat wie ich."

3. Schindler-Moscheles, II, p. 192-3.

4. "Trottel." Thayer, German Ed., V, p. 389; Eng. Ed., III, p. 241.

mere cripple. He himself tells us that he was sickly all his life.<sup>1</sup> In his childhood he had smallpox which affected his eye-sight and disfigured his face. In his letters he complains continually of bad ears, sore eyes, asthma, gout, rheumatism, jaundice, bad stomach, colics and wretched intestines. In his last years, he was paralyzed by deafness and chronic diarrhoea. Finally, he died from cirrhosis of the liver.<sup>2</sup>

Furthermore, there is evidence that, in his early manhood, he had contracted some kind of a venereal disease, probably syphilis, which accompanied him to the grave. Dr. Bertolini of Vienna gave Thayer confidential information about it and showed him his own prescriptions in the case—the prescriptions referred to by Grove.<sup>3</sup> Thayer suppressed the evidence and dismissed the question with a veiled hint, quite clear in this case, that Beethoven paid "the common penalties of transgressing the laws of strict purity."<sup>4</sup> An entry in the Conversation Books of 1819 in Beethoven's handwriting proves that the master was interested in the diagnosis and cure of all venereal diseases and wanted to get a book dealing with that subject, which sounds rather suspicious.<sup>5</sup>

The question is more or less controversial. Newman<sup>6</sup>

1. "War ich nicht immer ein siecher Mann?" Letter to Wegeler, Nov. 16, 1801, Kastner-Kapp, p. 54.

2. To Dr. Theodor von Frimmel belongs the credit of having made it clear that Beethoven's fatal malady was cirrhosis of the liver of which dropsy was a symptom.—Thayer, English Edition, III, p. 308.

3. Grove's Dictionary, I, p. 271.

4. Thayer, English Edition, I, p. 253.

5. L. von Lagunan, *Die Kunst alle Arten der Lustseuche zu erkennen, zu heilen und sich dafür zu sichern etc. etc.*, vierte verbesserte Ausgabe, Erfurt, 5 fl. 54 kr., bey Wimmer, dem Jägerhorn gegenüber.—Conversation Books of 1819, p. 115, Blatt 41a.

6. Ernest Newman, *The Unconscious Beethoven*, pp. 37-44.

and Grove believe that Beethoven suffered from syphilis, Schaufler considers it "quite probable, though not certain," while Dr. Schweisheimer declines to place any reliance on the alleged evidence until it is published.<sup>2</sup> But even if we agree with the latter, which is not so easy, the diseases from which Beethoven suffered were numerous enough to make his life a torture. His heroism consisted in overcoming them and composing the masterpieces we all admire in spite of the physical disabilities by which he was literally crippled.

### *Beethoven the Drunkard*

The pious Schindler describes thus the master's drinking habits: "Beethoven's favorite beverage was fresh spring water which, in summer, he drank in well-nigh inordinate quantities. Among wines, he preferred the Hungarian Ofener variety. Unfortunately, he liked best the adulterated wines, which did great damage to his weak intestines. But warnings were of no avail in this case. This is the best evidence that Beethoven was not a drunkard as his last physician—Dr. Wawruch—described him."<sup>3</sup> Here

1. "Strong circumstantial evidence, coupled with frequent outbursts of a despair unwarranted by circumstances known to us, make it extremely probable, though not certain, that he suffered from some venereal disease, acquired or inherited."—Schaufler, *Beethoven*, p. 97.

2. Newman, *The Unconscious Beethoven*, p. 41.

3. Schindler, *Beethoven*, 1927, II, p. 194 and pp. 295-8. Dr. Andreas Wawruch, an amateur violoncellist and ardent admirer of Beethoven's music, attended him on his deathbed. His diagnosis and treatment of Beethoven's sickness were correct. In his report—*Aerztlicher Rückblick auf Ludwig van Beethovens letzte Lebensperiode*—Dr. Wawruch emphasizes Beethoven's "vorherrschende Neigung für geistige Getränke" and makes it clear that the master drank himself to death in his last seven years.—Schirmer, pp. 221-2, Nohl, *Beethoven*, p. 325.

we have a typical example of Schindler's apologetic methods. He proves that Beethoven was a drunkard while he tries to absolve him from that accusation. The details he gives us are very significant. Beethoven, like all alcoholics, enjoyed best the adulterated wines, because they contained more alcohol and had a "kick" in them.

But Dr. Wawruch is not the only one to tell us that Beethoven was a heavy drinker. Carl Holz, one of the secretaries and factotums of the master, confirms Dr. Wawruch's testimony.<sup>1</sup> He describes Beethoven as Gargantuan in eating and drinking: "He was a stout eater of substantial food: he drank a good deal of wine at table but could stand a good deal, and in merry company he became intoxicated."<sup>2</sup> Schindler answers by denigrating Holz and by alleging that it was Holz who led the poor and innocent master to taverns and carousals and that it was Holz who spread reports that Beethoven had contracted dropsy from vinous indulgence.<sup>3</sup> Yes, continues the apologetic Schindler, it is true that Beethoven used to "offer sacrifices to the Wine God publicly" in 1825 and 1826 but Holz was responsible for all these excesses!<sup>4</sup> Again, Schindler goes into details, gets mixed up, lets the cat out of the bag, and tells us indirectly but very plainly that Beethoven in his last years drank himself to death,

1. Carl Holz enjoyed Beethoven's confidence to the extent that he was duly authorized to write the master's biography on Aug. 26, 1826.—Kastner-Kapp, p. 818. See also Thayer, *English Edition*, III, p. 197.

2. "Er ass stark und substantiös; trank bei Tisch viel Wein, konnte aber viel vertragen; in lustiger Gesellschaft bekneipte er sich.—Thayer, *German Edition*, V, p. 187, *English Edition*, III, p. 196.

3. Thayer, *English Edition*, III, app. 195-6.

4. Schindler, *Beethoven*, 1860, II, p. 110.

because the dropsy and the cirrhosis of the liver from which he died are usually the results of heavy alcoholic excesses.<sup>1</sup> Schindler's contention that Carl Holz was to blame for Beethoven's alcoholism is simply childish. Even Thayer, who piously agrees with Schindler that Beethoven was not a drunkard, exonerates Holz, and admits that Beethoven, from youth up, was so accustomed to take wine at his meals, that his physicians found it difficult to make him obey their prohibition of wine when he was ill.<sup>2</sup> As a matter of fact, alcoholism was in Beethoven's blood. His father and his grandmother were hopeless drunkards.<sup>3</sup>

Wines of all the varieties, German, Austrian, Bohemian and Hungarian, are mentioned again and again in his letters and conversations: Rhine wines, Mosel wines, Rüdeshheimer, Melniker, Gumpoldskirchner, Grinzinger, Adelsberger, Nessmüller, Steicher, Seidler, Ofener, Erlauer, Vöslauer, Sankt Georger, Ruster and Tokayer.

Beethoven preferred the Hungarian red wines<sup>4</sup> because they were heavier and cheaper. He emptied bottles upon bottles in the "rich banquets" the Hungarian Coun-

ness Erdödy offered him and, of course, he fell sick the next day.<sup>5</sup> Whenever Count Brunswick sent him "Nektar" from Hungary, Beethoven invited all his friends to share it with him, and wrote to Brunswick: "We drink your wine, and we get drunk for you when we drink your health."<sup>6</sup> When he is sick with Hungarian wines, then he tries Champagne for a change and expects inspiration and stimulation from the sparkling French wine. A headache is all he gets and then he writes to Kuhlau: "I learned once more from experience that such things rather prostrate than promote my energies."<sup>7</sup> But this penitent mood of the sick man does not last very long, for he writes again to Carl Holz: "Today is Sunday. Let us have a Sunday carousal!"<sup>8</sup>

Baron Zmeskall and Carl Holz, both of them heavy drinkers, took part in those Beethovenian Bacchanalia.<sup>9</sup> Holz seems to have been the champion of the group, because even Beethoven had to admit that Holz was a hard drinker!<sup>10</sup> We get an exact idea of what Beethoven means by "hard drinking" when we read that he expected his guests to swallow at least three bottles of wine in a single

1. Dr. Wawruch, in his post-mortem report, tells us that Beethoven, when he was thirty years of age (in 1800), "he began to indulge in alcoholic drinks . . . while he sought to obviate the effect of excessive punch and ice by long and fatiguing walks. About seven years ago (in 1820), this change in his manner of life brought him to the brink of the grave. He had a violent attack of inflammation of the bowels which, although it yielded to medical treatment, gave rise to much subsequent suffering and colic pains, and which, in part, favored the development of his mortal illness.—Schirmer, pp. 221-2, and Nohl, Beethoven, p. 325.

2. Thayer, English Edition, III, p. 196.

3. Thayer, English Edition, pp. 47 and 49.

4. Carl Holz writes: "Abends trank er (Beethoven) Bier oder Wein, meistens Vöslauer oder roten Ungarwein."—Thayer, German Edition, V, p. 187.

1. Letter to Zmeskall, 1812, Kastner-Kapp, p. 209.

2. "So oft wir — mehrere amici — dein Wein trinken, betrinken wir Dich, d. h. wir trinken deine Gesundheit."—Letter to Brunswick, May 11, 1807, Kastner-Kapp, p. 105.

3. Letter to Kuhlau, Sept. 3, 1825; Nohl, II, p. 212; Kastner-Kapp, p. 788.

4. Letter to Holz, 1826, Kastner-Kapp, p. 814. Shedlock translates the German "Sonntagschmaus" as an innocent "right good Sunday meal."—Kalischer-Shedlock, II, p. 430.

5. Beethoven calls them so: "Ich kam diesen Morgen um vier Uhr erst von einem Bacchanal, wo ich sogar viel lachen musste, um heute ebensoviel zu weinen."—Letter (authentic) to Bettina, Feb. 10, 1811, Kastner-Kapp, p. 184.

6. "Er trinkt stark, unter uns gesagt."—Letter to Nephew Carl, Aug. 11, 1825, Kastner-Kapp, p. 783.

meal.<sup>1</sup> Sometimes, the master challenged his guests to a drinking contest. Sir George Smart knocked him out in such a bout, but alas! He does not tell us in what round.<sup>2</sup> Anyhow, he proved that Shakespeare was right in maintaining that no Dutchman can beat an Englishman in drinking.

In those memorable Bacchanalia, the poet of the bunch would write an appropriate Wine Song. Here is one:

Sagt, was ist der Mond so bleich,  
Und wie singen Frösch' und Unken  
Ach, so kläglich in dem Teich?  
Wasser haben sie getrunken!  
Aber seht die Sonne an!  
Kennt ihr diese Lehre fühlen?  
Sie trinkt Wein auf ihrer Bahn,  
Steigt ins Meer dann sich zu kühlen.  
Sonn' und Mond und Frösch' und Unken,  
Fort mit Wasser, Wein getrunken.<sup>3</sup>

That Beethoven was a wine enthusiast can be seen very clearly in the following letter, addressed to Senator Brentano of Frankfurt: "I recommend to you my worthy friend, the first wine-artist of Europe, Herr Neberich. He is a master in the aesthetic ordering and succession of the various wines, and as such he deserves the heartiest applause.<sup>4</sup> I do not doubt but that he will honor you very

highly at the Upper Councils of Frankfurt. At every offering to Bacchus, the rank of the high-priest belongs to him, and no one could send forth a better 'Évoc, Évoc' to the Wine God than he."<sup>1</sup>

Beethoven remained true to Bacchus until his last breath. On his death-bed he exclaims: "Only through Malfatti's science shall I be saved!"<sup>2</sup> Why? Because Dr. Wawruch had compelled him to drink only a kind of salep beverage,<sup>3</sup> while Dr. Malfatti now allowed him to drink as much wine as he wanted, and sent him several bottles of old Gumpoldskirchner. The merciful Dr. Malfatti thought very probably that there was no reason whatever to torture the dying composer with salep tea and ordered ice punch for him. Beethoven drank avidly, became intoxicated, fell asleep, dreamed that he had completed his Saul and David Oratorio, woke up, asked for more wine, and thought he was saved by Malfatti. Omar Khayyam would have described the situation with this quatrain:

Then said a Vessel with a long-drawn sigh,  
"My Clay with long oblivion is gone dry:  
But fill me with the old familiar Juice,  
Methinks I might recover by-and-by!"

1. Letter to Brentano, March 4, 1816, Kastner-Kapp, p. 341; Kalischer-Shedlock, I, p. 399.

2. "Nur durch Malfatti's Wissenschaft werde ich gerettet."—Letter to Schindler, March 17, 1827, Kastner-Kapp, p. 843.

3. "Derselbe (Dr. Wawruch) hatte den armen Beethoven bald eine wirklich staunenerregende Menge Salep-Decoctes trinken lassen. Achtzig sechsunzenflaschen hatte die Wirtschafterin Sali bereits in die Apotheke zurück getragen . . ."—Breuning, Aus dem Schwarzspanierhause, p. 89.

1. "Beethoven went into the adjoining room and brought back five bottles, one of which he placed before Schindler, one beside himself and three in a row in front of me."—Grillparzer in L. Nohl's Beethoven, p. 229.

2. Schirmer, Impressions, p. 196.

3. Conversation Books, December 1819, p. 236, Blätter 52a and 52b.

4. The German word "Beifall" (applause) is translated erroneously by Shedlock as "success."—Kalischer-Shedlock, I, p. 399.

Yes, that was exactly the kind of medicine he needed. So Beethoven writes at once to his old friend Baron Pasqualati to ask him for some wine, Champagne, Grinzinger, and especially old Gumpoldskirchner.<sup>1</sup> Pasqualati sends him more wine than he asked for. Beethoven drinks and feels perfectly happy. That was the right thing to do according to the poet:

Ah, make the most of what we yet may spend  
 Before we too into the Dust descend:  
 Dust into Dust, and under Dust to lie  
 Sans Wine, sans Song, sans Singer, and—sans End.

Yes, Pasqualati's Champagne was excellent, but the Baron had forgotten to send him a Champagne glass, and it was a mortal sin for a wine devotee to drink Champagne from the wrong glass. So Beethoven writes to Pasqualati again and asks him to send him more Champagne and a Champagne glass this time.<sup>2</sup> At the same time, he appeals to Schott of Mainz for some authentic Rhine wine.<sup>3</sup> Schott sent him immediately several bottles. The pious Schindler received the wine just in time and placed two bottles of Rüdeshheimer upon the table near the dying master's bed. Beethoven looked at them and said: "It is a pity, a pity, too late!" These were his last words. His last act, as the pious Schindler writes to Schott, was this: Of

1. Letters to Pasqualati, 1827, Kastner-Kapp, p. 840, and March 16, 1827, *ibid.*, p. 843.

2. Letter to Pasqualati, 1827, Kastner-Kapp, pp. 840-1.

3. Letters to Schott, Feb. 22, 1827; Kastner-Kapp, pp. 837-8, and March 1, 1827, *ibid.*, p. 839.

the Rüdeshheimer wine, Beethoven kept taking a few spoonfuls until he passed away.<sup>1</sup>

Ah, with the Grape my fading Life provide,  
 And wash my body whence the Life has died,  
 And in a Winding sheet of Vine-leaf wrapt  
 So bury me by some sweet Garden-side.

### *Beethoven the Lover*

Ferdinand Ries (1784-1838), who enjoyed the privilege of being one of the two pupils Beethoven ever had, maintains that the master was always in love for short periods but never for more than seven months.<sup>2</sup> Wegeler adds that the objects of Beethoven's attachment were always of the higher ranks.<sup>3</sup> Schindler admits that Ries and Wegeler are right but remarks that Beethoven's loves were platonic, that the master preserved "his virtue unscathed" and that "he passed through life, conscious of no fault, with truly virgin modesty and unblemished character."<sup>4</sup> But this bold assertion about the platonic character of Beethoven's loves does not appear in the third edition of Schindler's Biography. The courage failed him when he was challenged to proclaim it for the third time. And yet, the legend of Beethoven's virginity is still alive. Three widely different men, like Vincent d'Indy, Romain Rol-

1. Schindler to Schott, April 12, 1827, Kalischer-Hull, p. 391-2.

2. Wegeler and Ries, *Notizen*, p. 42.

3. Schindler-Moscheles, 1841, I, p. 55.

4. "Beethoven, gleich jenem Halbgotte, seine Tugend unbefleckt zu bewahren wusste . . . und von dieser Seite betrachtet er, sich keines Fehls bewusst, mit wahrhaft jungfräulicher Schamhaftigkeit und reiner Sitte durch's Leben wandelte." Schindler, 1845, I, p. 35.

land, and Sir George Grove, believed in it even after Thayer had killed the legend once for all.<sup>1</sup> Yes, it is the old story of the hero, soaring high in heaven above all human weaknesses and passions. But in his letters and conversations Beethoven looks quite human and sometimes very weak.

In 1810, Beethoven writes to Zmeskall: "Do you not remember the situation in which I am, as once Hercules with Omphale? . . . Farewell, do not speak of me as the Great Man, for I have never felt the power or the weakness of human nature as I do now."<sup>2</sup> The master states his case very clearly. He was the helpless slave of his Queen Omphale and, as we know, he crawled at the feet of a different Queen every six months. One of these Omphales was Amalie Sebald. Beethoven sends her a kiss: "Der Amalie einen recht feurigen Kuss, wenn uns niemand sieht."<sup>3</sup> The kiss must be very fiery, non-platonic, and it must be conferred upon Amalie when nobody sees the lovers, which sounds rather suspicious.

In another letter we come across some more kisses of a more suspicious character: "Two lady singers paid us a visit today and wanted to kiss my hands by all means. As they were very pretty I preferred to offer them my mouth to kiss. This, by the way, is the shortest we can say to

1. Vincent d'Indy, *Beethoven*, p. 56; Romain Rolland, *Beethoven*, pp. 12-13; *Grove's Dictionary*, I, p. 266. Romain Rolland changed his mind later on. See *Beethoven the Creator*, I, p. 30.

2. Letter to Zmeskall, April, 1810, Hull, p. 97; Kastner-Kapp, *Letter to Zmeskall*, 1817, p. 455.

3. Letter to Tiedge, Sept. 6, 1811, Kastner-Kapp, p. 200.

you."<sup>4</sup> The last sentence sounds rather mischievous. But, as Dante says: *Guarda e passa!*

The mystery thickens and Beethoven is treading on dangerous ground. He is now casting amorous glances on a married woman, the German wife of a Frenchman, Madame Bigot. He tries to entice her into the woods, while her husband is absent. The lady not only rejects the invitation but also tells the whole nasty story to the jealous husband. And now Beethoven has to apologize to Monsieur Bigot and explain away the whole thing in a letter, in which we read this charming and exquisite sentence: "But how can my good Marie put such a bad meaning on my actions?"<sup>2</sup> Anyhow, one cannot escape the conclusion that, in this case, the master was caught "en flagrant délit." But Madame Bigot was not the only married lady in whom the master was interested. Frau von Breuning, as the young Breuning tells us, was another.<sup>3</sup> As we have already seen, there were two married ladies with whom Beethoven had intimate relations but the pious Thayer destroyed the evidence before it was discovered by scandal-mongering writers and musicologists.<sup>4</sup>

In the *Conversation Books* Beethoven is silent about his loves but what his friends note down is very significant. For instance, Peters, co-guardian of Beethoven's nephew, writes: "Wollen Sie bei meiner Frau schlafen? Es ist sehr

1. Letter to Brother Johann, Sept. 8, 1822, Kastner-Kapp, p. 621.

2. "Aber wie kann die gute Marie meinen Handlungen so eine böse Deutung geben?" Letter to the Bigots, 1808, Kastner-Kapp, p. 119.

3. Breuning, *Aus dem Schwarzspanierhause*, p. 32.

4. Thayer, *English Edition*, I, p. 253.



kalt."<sup>1</sup> We do not know whether Beethoven accepted this kind invitation on that cold night. But, a few days after, the master paid a clandestine visit to Frau Peters who, by the way, was neglected by her husband,<sup>2</sup> and now the plot thickens again. Herr Peters, jocularly or seriously, writes in the note-book: "Mithin Protest gegen die alleinige Visite bei meiner Frau!"<sup>3</sup>

In another entry a kind friend writes in Beethoven's note-book: "Czerny knows a widow who loves you and wants to marry you." Her name was Frau Stramm. We do not know what Beethoven said about this marriage, but we have a remark by the same friend about the widow: "Das wäre eine Maitresse wo es zu Frau nicht."<sup>4</sup> Another friend writes in Beethoven's note-book: "Das Mädchen bei der Birne war nicht schlecht." We do not know again what the master thought of this Birne girl. But the visitor offers his services to Beethoven: "Die werde ich für Sie kuppeln."<sup>5</sup> True, we cannot make Beethoven responsible for what his friends tell him about married women, widows and girls. But would Beethoven's friends talk to him in that way if the master did not like that kind of loose talk?

To make a long story short, according to his own letters and conversations, Beethoven was just human, *menschlich*, and sometimes *allzumenschlich*. He was

1. Conversation Books, 1820, Blatt 7a, p. 253.

2. Conversation Books, Blatt 1a, p. 253.

3. Conversation Books, 1820, Blatt 57a, p. 278.

4. Conversation Books, 1819, Blatt 54b, p. 172.

5. Conversation Books, 1819, Blatt 45a, p. 205.

neither Puritanic nor oversexed, but he was too weak to defend and preserve his "virtue unscathed" against the onslaughts of the Viennese Harpies, Sirens and Omphales. He simply surrendered in the first encounter with the first real Omphale. And his defeats were always crushing and humiliating.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, we must defend the master against the unjust accusation that he picked up his girls among the aristocratic ranks. There is plenty of evidence to prove that, in this respect, Beethoven was very democratic. He was interested in good-looking creatures of all the social classes. For instance, Ries tells us that the master admired the three daughters of a humble tailor, and there is a letter to prove his story. Beethoven sends his greetings to that famous trio through Ries: "Remember me to the fairest of the fair!"<sup>2</sup>

### *Beethoven the Grand Mogul*

According to the legend, the hero is a "chevalier sans peur ni reproche." If the facts contradict that article of the hero-worshippers' Credo so much the worse for the facts. Guided by this pious principle, Schindler maintained that harmful facts about Beethoven should be ruthlessly suppressed.<sup>3</sup> From his own point of view, he was perfectly right: For instance, certain ugly facts concerning Bee-

1. "Mein Stolz is so gebeugt . . . Dem Papier lässt sich nichts weiter von wem, was in mir vorgeht, anvertrauen."—Letter to Gleichenstein, 1810, Kastner-Kapp, p. 167.

2. "Schneiden Sie nicht zu viel, empfehlen Sie mich den Schönsten der Schönen."—Letter to Ries, July 25, 1804, Kastner-Kapp, p. 81.

3. "Ries legte nämlich Wert auf Dinge, die teils interesselos, teils verletzender Art waren, darum keinesfalls vor das öffentliche Forum gehörten."—Schindler, 1827, Vorwort, p. X.

thoven's behavior with his servants, his friends and his publishers had to be suppressed because they could not be soft-pedaled or explained away. Unfortunately, they survived Schindler's suppression and they all speak against Beethoven. The master behaved like a very big rascal or, as he himself put it, like a "tantus quantus lumpus."

No time should be wasted by any kind-hearted musicologist to justify his behavior. It cannot be done. He was brutal with his servants and the waiters. He hurled invectives, eggs, dishes, books and chairs at their heads. He maltreated, slandered, and vilified his most devoted friends, Lobkowitz, Lichnowski, the Elder Breuning, Ries, Mälzel, Holz and the pious Schindler himself. He cheated scandalously the Philharmonic Society of London by selling them three old overtures as if they were new.<sup>1</sup> He promised his *Missa Solemnis* to five different publishers at the same time and gave it to none.<sup>2</sup> He received the money in advance for that same *Missa* from Simrock and gave it to Schott.<sup>3</sup> He blackmailed his benefactors. For instance, he threatened to expose those who had guaranteed him an annuity as a voluntary gift for life.<sup>4</sup> He himself was conscious of his own unfairness in this case because he describes himself as a "plaintiff against his benefactors."<sup>5</sup> The result of this behavior was that

1. Thayer, English Edition, II, pp. 333-4.

2. Thayer, English Edition, III, pp. 51-2.

3. Thayer, English Edition, III, pp. 39 and 177.

4. "Fällt diese Geschichte durch das Verhalten der Kinskyschen Familie schlecht aus, so lasse ich diese Geschichte in allen Zeitungen bekannt machen, wie sie ist—zur schande der Familie."—Letter to Kanka, Aug. 22, 1814, Kastner-Kapp, p. 282.

5. Petition to Landrecht of Prag, 1814, Kastner-Kapp, p. 290.

Beethoven estranged every friend with whom he came in touch. Sometimes he simply kicked out like dogs those who tried to serve him in spite of everything.

Yet there are four persons whom Beethoven never succeeded in estranging. He was as rough with them as with his worst enemies but they endured his profanities and brutalities with an angelic resignation and a dog-like affection. First in this list comes Nanette Streicher (1769-1833), the heroic pianist, who undertook to put order in Beethoven's housekeeping, a really Herculean task,<sup>1</sup> when the master decided to take his nephew into his home. Second comes Baron Zmeskall (1759-1833), the patient volunteer factotum, who cut the quills with which the master wrote his masterpieces. To him Beethoven wrote more letters than to any one else, always asking him for a service. Third comes the Cardinal Archduke Rudolf (1788-1831), one of the two pupils Beethoven ever had, and his lifelong protector and Mæccenas. He was always ready to help the master out of his endless difficulties. Fourth comes the younger Breuning (1813-1892) who had the courage to accompany the master in the streets, something nobody else could do more than once, because Beethoven looked such a fool and the street urchins poked fun at him and called after him.<sup>2</sup> The Breuning lad did not mind. He was there to help the aging master in his last years, saw him spit into the mirror instead of out of the window, watched him flirt with his mother, attended him at his deathbed, and was nearly crushed by the crowd at his funeral. The

1. Letter to Nanette Streicher, 1818, Kastner-Kapp, p. 474.

2. Schirmer, p. 200.

master gave him the highest title of affection he could bestow on his most intimate friend: "Hosenknopf." Sometimes he called him "Ariel." On Zmeskall, Beethoven bestowed the title of "plenipotentarius Regni Beethoveniensis" very probably because he was the most humble of all his servants. Haydn was right in calling Beethoven the "Grand Mogul."<sup>1</sup> Like Wagner, Beethoven could tolerate around him only obedient subjects, whom he treated like an oriental despot. The pious Schindler fell into disgrace and was ignominiously dismissed because he had once committed the mortal sin of using his own judgment instead of following blindly the instructions of the Grand Mogul.<sup>2</sup>

### *Beethoven the Jovial*

According to the legend, the hero is a very sad creature who never laughs. Consequently, Beethoven looks terribly serious in his pictures, which does not correspond to the facts at all. As a rule, he was very jovial in spite of all his sorrows and tribulations. As he himself puts it: "Heaven be thanked, in spite of my agitato's, everything for the time being goes on all right and as wished for."<sup>3</sup> As an artist he loved variety and after the agitato an allegro or a scherzo followed. His letters to intimate friends are full of puns, nicknames, jokes and roars of Homeric laughter.

He calls Schindler Papageno, Schuppanzigh Falstaff,

1. Thayer, English Edition, I, p. 248.

2. "Ich beschuldige Sie nichts schlechten bei der Akademie, aber Unklugheit und eigenmächtiges Handeln hat manches verdorben."—Letter to Schindler, 1824, Kastner-Kapp, p. 711.

3. Letter to Haslinger, Oct. 6, 1824, Kastner-Kapp, p. 730.

Diabelli Diabolus, one of his sisters-in-law the Queen of the Night, and the other one the Former and Present Courtesan.<sup>1</sup> But Baron Zmeskall, the Plenipotentiary of the Beethovenian Realm, beats everybody else in the titles the Grand Mogul showers upon his head. Here are some of them: His Zmeskallian Zmeskality, the Lord of all the Hungarian and Burgundian Vineyards, Music Count, Dinner Count, Supper Count, Glutton Count, Carnival Ragamuffin, Commander of all the Loose Fortresses, and Pasha of all the Rotten Harems! Then after the titles follows a warning: Beware of wounds received in the conquest of loose fortresses because the latter are more murderous than the impregnable ones!

Beethoven never missed an occasion to make a pun. If his brother is a Landowner (Gutsbesitzer), Beethoven is a Brainowner (Hirnesitzer). When he receives the diploma of Honorary Citizen (Ehrenbürger), he asks whether there are also Dishonorary<sup>2</sup> Citizens (Schandbürger) in the City of Vienna. He writes to Nanette Streicher that his housekeeping (Haushaltung) is without keeping (ohne Haltung) and the Educational Institute (Erziehungs-Institut) of Giannatasio del Rio becomes a Seducational<sup>3</sup> Institute (Verziehungsinstitut). He writes to Ries: "I understand that your wife is pretty. I kiss her mentally and hope to kiss her this winter personally." In another letter to Ries he writes: "When I come to London, I intend to commit an opposition against you and submit

1. "Vormalige und jetzige Hure."

2. Sometimes Beethoven distorts a word, or coins a new one, to suit his pun.

3. Distorted in Beethovenian fashion.

a proposition to your wife." He writes to Ries again: "When I come there, look out. I am not an old man, I am only an old boy."

Even on his death-bed Beethoven kept on making jokes: When dropsy developed an operation became necessary in order to prevent a rupture of the abdomen from the pressure of the enormous volumes of collected water. Dr. Wawruch had retained Dr. Seibert, principal surgeon of the hospital, to perform the operation. When Dr. Seibert introduced the tube into the incision and the water spurted out, Beethoven said, "Professor, you remind me of Moses striking the rock with his staff."<sup>1</sup>

#### *Beethoven the Paternal*

According to the legend, the hero has no family. If he happens to have one, then the problem arises how to deliver him from this calamity. On this point, the opinions are divided. The old-fashioned hero-worshippers suppress the family altogether and proclaim the virginity of the hero as an article of faith. The liberal hero-worshippers admit the existence of the family but brand it as a nuisance and a tragedy for the hero, something like the bad old girl Xanthippe scolding the good old boy Socrates. Beethoven enjoyed the rare privilege of becoming the victim of both these Procrustean groups. The first group proclaimed his perpetual virginity and the second group vilified his family, his brothers, his sisters-in-law and his nephew whose

1. "Herr Professor, Sie Kommen mir vor wie Moses, der mit seinem Stab an den Felsen schlägt."—Thayer, German Edition, V, p. 431; Eng. III, p. 276.

guardianship he assumed. That was relatively easy to do. Unfortunately there remained a very stubborn fact that could not be suppressed, namely Beethoven's mad affection for his nephew, the child of the Queen of the Night. *The latter* appealed to the courts, the case dragged for years and it could not be hushed up. The fact was there to stay. It is one of the few things on which all musicologists agree with a solemn Amen, and there is nothing left for the hero-worshippers but to swallow it and blame it all on their hero. Yes, he committed the most incredible and the most inconceivable thing for a male divinity to do: The lion drew in his claws, assumed a seraphic expression, put on a white skirt, grew a cute little pair of wings, and became the guardian angel of a baby. Egypt, in her wildest dreams, had never produced such a grotesque totem, and the angels in heaven and the hero-worshippers on earth covered their faces for shame.

Yes, Beethoven loved that child like a doting mother. He knelt before that child like an adoring Madonna. He became the humble nurse of that lovely boy. He laid aside all the awe-inspiring dignities of the Grand Mogul, he became the Hosenkнопf of that child, and was proud of it and proclaimed it to the entire world. Yes, he was a father with a child now but without a wife, so he assumed the duties of father and mother in one person. He accompanied the child to school and then waited at the door to take him back home. He prayed with him every morning and every evening. He worked for that child now. He suffered all sorts of privations and saved the money for

him. As a matter of fact, now for the first time in his life he discovered the value of money. He applied for money right and left, he extorted money from his patrons, he complained that he was reduced to beggary by the bad Cardinal Archduke Rudolph, he cheated his publishers, and on his death-bed actually begged money from the London Philharmonic Society though he had several thousands of florins in bank shares. Yes, he was ready to commit any crime for that child. No sacrifice was too great for him to make. Everything for that child.

The little loves Beethoven had with various girls were mere trifles in comparison with that all-consuming paternal passion. None of the former lasted more than seven months while the latter absorbed all his energies from his brother's death in 1815 to his own death in 1827. And oh, he made beautiful dreams about the future of that child. He wanted to make out of him a great "citizen of the world and a monument to himself." And he watched his progress in the school with a trembling heart. Oh, and how proud he was when the child learned to read Greek, the divine language of Homer and Plato and Plutarch, whom the master could read only in poor translations. He announced that great news at once to Goethe and was never weary of repeating it to everybody with whom he spoke. And the result of those untold sacrifices and unceasing cares was what every doting father and every adoring mother have experienced from time immemorial: a cruel tragedy and a heart-rending Golgotha.

Who was the villain in this unspeakable tragedy?

Was it the uncle, or the nephew, or the mother? Beethoven himself, in a moment of Olympian objectivity, excused the mother with a lapidary phrase that speaks volumes: "Mother—mother—even a bad one remains always a mother."<sup>1</sup> From the moment the mother was excused every finger was pointed against the nephew as the villain of the piece, and there are still musicologists who find it hard to say a kind word for him. It was Thayer who, with that fine Anglo-Saxon sense of fairness, absolved the nephew and pointed his accusing finger at Beethoven. The villain of the piece was in that direction but it was not Beethoven, who was himself as much a victim as the nephew and the mother: It was Beethoven's elemental affection for the child, that blind, unreasoning, tyrannical, intolerant, uncompromising, savage love, or in a word, super-love.

Beethoven tells us how that super-love worked in him: "There is no middle way possible, everything for me or nothing!"<sup>2</sup> That settled the question. The mother was prevented from seeing her child altogether and the child ran away to his mother. Then the case went to the courts. Beethoven won the case and got the child back. The plot thickens. Life again becomes intolerable with the uncle. In 1826 the nephew attempts suicide. And here we reach the climax of the tragedy. Schindler says that the blow bowed the proud figure of the composer and he soon

1. "Mutter—Mutter—selbst eine schlechte bleibt doch immer Mutter."—Letter to Nanette Streicher, June 18, 1818, Kastner-Kapp, p. 477.

2. "Es ist hier kein Mittelweg möglich, alles für mich oder nichts"—Letter to Blöchlinger, 1818, Kastner-Kapp, p. 536.

looked like a man of seventy. Less than a year later Beethoven died. He summarized his whole experience with his nephew in a lapidary sentence: "He who wishes to reap tears should sow love."<sup>1</sup>

To chide the master for his super-love is simply silly and it is sillier still to scold the bad child for it. On the contrary, we should be grateful to them both for we are the winners. All that suffering of twelve years and a half was not in vain. It was expressed by the master not only in his letters written with his heart's blood but also in his music whenever it pours tears of love, of the all-consuming love that child inspired in the great master.

#### *Beethoven the Self-taught*

According to the legend, the hero never goes to school and has no diploma or degree from any institution of learning. The hero gets his learning from his Divine Father by revelation or any other miraculous process which happily excludes prosaic quizzes, exams, reports, theses and dissertations. In this respect Beethoven was an ideal hero and gave no difficult problem to the hero-worshippers. He fitted exactly into the particular article of faith dealing with the hero's education. According to Schindler, "Beethoven's education was neither particularly neglected nor particularly good; he received elementary instruction and learned something of Latin at a public school."<sup>2</sup> From what Schindler says in his usual diplomatic and soft-pedal

1. "Wer Tränen ernten will muss Liebe säen."—Thayer, German Edition, IX, p. 20.

2. Schindler-Moscheles, 1841, I, pp. 27-28.

fashion, it appears clearly that the master's education was not good at all, or to put it still better, Beethoven had no education that is worth mentioning. His illegible scribbling is that of an illiterate<sup>1</sup> and he was pathetically helpless in arithmetic. In the Conversation Books we have examples of wrong additions. But he tried to perfect his knowledge in that field because we find an entry in the Conversation Books in Beethoven's handwriting: "Fr. König, The Easiest Method of Teaching Arithmetic to Children in a Pleasant Way, Revised Edition in two parts, 8 Prag, 4 florins and 30 Kreuzer."<sup>2</sup> The child that expected to learn arithmetic from Fr. König's book was Beethoven himself at the age of forty-nine. Unfortunately, he did not progress very much in that subject. On his deathbed he had just reached the chapter on multiplication. His nephew Karl explains to him in the Conversation Books that "Multiplication is a simplified form of addition . . ."<sup>3</sup> Exactly like Socrates who, in his death cell shortly before he drank the hemlock, had heroically started the study of music in accordance with a peremptory order given to him by Apollo in a dream.

From the above a good many musicologists have concluded that Beethoven remained an illiterate barbarian all his life, which is not true. We have seen, for instance,

1. "Gestern brachte ich einen Brief auf die Post wo man mich fragte wo der Brief soll? —Ich sehe daher dass meine Schrift vielleicht ebenso oft als ich selbst missdeutet werde." —Letter to Zmeskall, Oct. 9, 1813, Kastner-Kapp, p. 257.

2. Fr. König, Die Leichteste Art den Kindern das Rechnen auf eine angenehme Art beizubringen etc. etc., verbesserte Auflage, 8 Prag, 4 fl., 30 Kreuzer. —Conversation Books, March-May, 1819, Blatt 10b, p. 101.

3. Thayer, English Edition, III, p. 277.

that Beethoven's letters deserve a very high place in German literature. On the other hand, some of his writings prove conclusively that he was a highly cultured man who had read a good deal and acquired an education in that fashion. We know from his letters, from Schindler and from his private library what books he had read. Here are some writers with whose works Beethoven was familiar: Homer, Sophocles, Euripides, Demosthenes, Plato, Aristotle, Plutarch, Lucian, Cicero, Ovid, Tacitus, Shakespeare, Walter Scott, Voltaire, Rousseau, Kant, Klopstock, Goethe, Schiller, Sturm, Persian poets.

This is only a partial list, for very few books from Beethoven's private library have been saved. One of the latter is a Bible, mentioned by Edouard Herriot, who saw it in Vienna.<sup>1</sup> Beethoven became interested in Persian literature through his friend Baron Hammer von Purgstall, the famous orientalist and one of the first translators of Omar Khayyam, who published in Vienna an Anthology of Persian Poets.<sup>2</sup> Beethoven knew French enough to write more or less incorrectly letters in that language<sup>3</sup> and must have read some of the works of Voltaire<sup>4</sup> and Rousseau, for he quotes from the former while the

1. Herriot, Beethoven, p. 357.

2. Geschichte der schönen Redekünste Persiens mit einer Blütenlese aus Zweihundert Persischen Dichtern, Wien, 1818, Heubner & Volk, 1818, p. 433.

3. "L'amitié de vous envers moi me pardonnera toutes les fautes contre la langue française, mais la hâte où j'écris la lettre et le peu d'exercices et dans ce moment même sans dictionnaire français tout cela m'attire sûrement encore moins de critique qu'en ordinairement."—Letter to Neate, May 15, 1816, Kastner-Kapp, p. 349.

4. "Allein ich denke mit Voltaire, dass einige Mückenstiche ein mutiges Pferd nicht in seinem Laufe aufhalten können."—Letter to Klein, May 10, 1826, Kastner-Kapp, p. 808.

latter's "Contrat Social"<sup>1</sup> is mentioned in the Conversation Books. He knew Italian well enough to coin a more expressive term for the castrato.<sup>2</sup>

Beethoven read Tacitus in Baahrd's translation<sup>3</sup> but he was certainly able to read easy passages in the original since he quotes maxims in Latin and sometimes makes a joke in Kitchen Latin. Anyhow, he must have profited a good deal from Tacitus, from whom he learned how to express himself in an epigrammatic style. Here is an epigram of Beethoven: "Endless are our strivings. Vulgarity puts an end to everything."<sup>4</sup> Here is another: "For only Art and Science raise men to the God-head."<sup>5</sup> It is very significant that Beethoven realized the importance of science at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

Beethoven must have read Kant because he quotes from the Critique of Practical Reason<sup>6</sup> and mentions his Critique of Pure Reason.<sup>7</sup> To those who may imagine that he was not interested in such philosophical works, Beethoven himself answers in a letter to Breitkopf and Härtel: "One thing more: 'There is no treatise which would be too learned for me. Without in the least making a claim to learning on my own part, I have always

1. Conversation Books, Jan. 1820, Blatt 61a, p. 279.

2. "Virtuoso senza cujoni" and in German "Ohne-Hoden-Mann".—Letter to Artaria, Oct. 1, 1819, Kastner-Kapp, p. 522.

3. Letter to Gleichenstein, June 13, 1807, Kastner-Kapp, p. 106.

4. "Unendlich unser Streben, endlich macht die Gemeinheit alles."—Letter to Brunswick, 1812, Kastner-Kapp, p. 221.

5. "Denn nur die Kunst und die Wissenschaft erhöhen den Menschen bis zur Gottheit."—Letter to Emilie, July 17, 1812, Kastner-Kapp, p. 224.

6. "Das Moralische Gesetz in uns und der gestirnte Himmel über uns."—Thayer, German Edition, III, p. 193.

7. Letter to Ehlers, Aug. 1, 1826, Kastner-Kapp, p. 814.

tried from childhood onwards to grasp the meaning of the better and the wise of every age. Shame on any artist who does not think it his duty to do at least that much."<sup>1</sup>

Beethoven's letters are there to prove that this is not a vain boast. He was a highly cultured man for his age. Riezler is right when he remarks: "Anyone who calls Beethoven 'uneducated' has a strange idea of education."<sup>2</sup>

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1. Letter to Breitkopf & Härtel, Dec. 2, 1809, Kastner-Kapp, p. 148.

2. Riezler, Beethoven, p. 44.

#### IV.—BEETHOVEN THE REBEL



*Revolutionary Background*

Since the time of Louis XIV, le Roi Soleil, French influence has been paramount in the Germanies including Austria. From Vienna to Berlin and from Dresden to Munich all the German courts were more or less bad copies of the court of Versailles. French was the language of all these courts and French was the language of all the cultured classes.

Frederick the Great of Prussia (1740-86) and Emperor Joseph II of Austria (1765-1790), were admirers of Voltaire and Rousseau, whose revolutionary principles they tried to apply in their states with reforms from above. They were the most enlightened and benevolent rulers of their time. Frederick the Great was proud to proclaim that "the Monarch is not the absolute master but only the first servant of the State."<sup>2</sup> And this was not a mere boast. He worked harder than any of his subjects. Under his rule Prussia became one of the Great Powers of Europe, around which Bismarck unified Germany with his policy of iron and blood in 1870. Yet, this great Prussian King

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1. "Wohltun wie man kann—Freiheit überalles lieben, Wahrheit nie—auch sogar am Throne nicht verleugnen." Stammbuchblatt, May 22, 1793, Kastner-Kapp, p. 17.

2. Hayes, I, p. 347.

who laid the foundations of the modern German empire wrote and spoke French and despised German literature without making an exception for its greatest representatives, Lessing, Goethe, Schiller, and he simply ignored Kant. Joseph II of Austria surpassed Frederick the Great in revolutionary zeal and fanaticism. He actually tried to introduce all the reforms Rousseau had preached, of course, with the exception of Rousseau's basic idea of popular sovereignty. He subordinated the Church to the State, he abolished serfdom and emancipated the Jews long before the French Revolution did.<sup>1</sup> None of his reforms survived him. After his death the nobility and the clergy restored the status quo ante, and Joseph II died with no illusions about it for he ordered this epitaph for his grave: "Here lies the man who, with the best intentions, never succeeded in anything." He deserved a better epitaph. The famous exclamation of Francis I of France after his defeat by Charles V would have fitted him much better: "Tout est perdu sauf l'honneur."

When the French Revolution broke out there were as many enthusiasts for the new regime in the Germanies as there were in France. And they belonged to all the social classes from the humblest peasant hut to the proudest royal palace. There were Jacobin princes in the Germanies as there were in France. Prince Henry (1726-1802), brother of Frederick the Great, was the leader of the Francophile party in Germany before, during and after the Revolution. He was an admirer of the French Jacobin Prince of the House of Orleans, Citoyen Philippe-Égalité,

1. Hayes, I, 352.

and was also called Citoyen Henri.<sup>1</sup> He was distinguished in the Seven Years War and won the admiration of his brother, Frederick the Great, who declared that, of all his generals, he alone had never made a mistake. Like his brother, Prince Henry was a soldier, a statesman, and an admirer of French literature. French guests were particularly welcome in his palace at Rheinsberg, which enjoyed the reputation of a Jacobin club. He opposed the war against France, foretold that the invasion would fail, and that the French people would never welcome the foreign troops. He endeavoured to extricate Prussia from the war. The treaty of Basel in 1795, which gave France the left bank of the Rhine and the Austrian Netherlands, was mainly his work and registered the high water-mark of his influence and activity.<sup>2</sup>

Almost all the German universities were hotbeds of the French revolutionary ideas. Immanuel Kant of Königsberg (1724-1804) was their greatest spokesman. According to Nietzsche, he is the man who decapitated the God of Metaphysics on his revolutionary Guillotine of Reason with his famous syllogism: Human reason conceives things in time and space; God is beyond time and space; consequently human reason cannot conceive God. True, when the pious people of the Germanies protested against this sacrilegious execution, the good old Kant re-introduced the decapitated God from a back door with an involved syllogism and tried to breathe into him a new metaphysical life, but nobody ever believed that he meant it seriously. Consequently, he remained in the History of

1. Gooch, p. 405.

2. Gooch, p. 404.

Philosophy as the father of rationalistic atheism. But he was not satisfied with this achievement. Though an old man when the French Revolution broke out, he was there to welcome it with open arms and introduce it into his Realm of Reason. Since God and Divine Providence were definitely eliminated from the Universe, Kings reigning by the grace of God had no place on earth at all. Robespierre, by executing Louis XVI, had simply eliminated a minor official of the Great King of Kings whom Kant himself hurled down from the seventh heaven into the Tartarus down below the Realm of Reason. Consequently Robespierre was a mere disciple of Kant, and the French Revolution was simply the triumph of human Reason in the management of public affairs. So the great Prussian Jacobin of Reason became the Champion of the French Revolution and defended it as the right step in the right direction even after France had plunged headlong into the blood pool of the Red Terror. Kant's interest in political theory was aroused in middle life by the writings of Rousseau, to whom he owed his conversion to democracy, a debt which he acknowledged with a noble modesty: "There was a time when . . . I despised the masses; but Rousseau set me right; I learned to honour men and . . . help in restoring the rights of humanity."<sup>1</sup> Since then Kant was always on the side of the people and against their oppressors. He was challenged to a duel by an English merchant because he criticized the policies of George III and took sides with the American colonies.<sup>2</sup> After the capture of the Bastille Kant devoted his main activity to

1. Gooch, p. 261.

2. Gooch, p. 261.

treatises on political science and never missed an occasion, even in purely metaphysical writings, to defend the basic principles of the French Revolution. In his treatise on "Perpetual Peace," Kant went a step further and advocated a world-federation of free republics, a sort of super-state, governing the relations between the various states exactly as an individual state regulates the relations between its citizens, thus assuring universal peace among the fraternized democracies of free world-citizens. "Peace," he says, "cannot be preserved when some are bond and some are free." And this peace must not be based on the exploitation of man by man: "In every man we must honor the dignity of the whole race, and no human being must be used as a mere instrument of other men."<sup>1</sup>

Klopstock (1724-1803) and Schiller (1759-1803) were so active in propagating the new ideas of the French Revolution that the Assembly conferred on them both the title of "citoyen français."<sup>2</sup> Both were ardent admirers of Plutarch. Schiller became famous overnight in 1781 with his "Robbers", a drama which enshrined the burning message of Rousseau in all the compelling power of its revolutionary appeal. "Give me an army like myself," cries Karl Moor, "and Germany shall be a republic in comparison with which Rome and Sparta were convents." When it was first played at Mannheim, the theatre was like a mad house; eyes rolling, fists clenched, husky cries. Women fainted and strangers fell sobbing into each other's arms. "The Robbers" preached the gospel of social revolt, "Fiesco" of political rebellion. Like Schiller's early

1, 2. Gooch, p. 282.

plays it is a clarion warning to rulers and a fulminating declaration of the Rights of Man. In "Love and Intrigue", Schiller put on the stage the ruler of his own or some neighboring state with his mistress and his favorites, the nobility with their privileges, and the bourgeoisie in their helplessness. *Don Carlos* (1787) is Schiller's last and greatest political drama. Unlike earlier plays, it was written in verse and its ringing declamations became and have remained the current coin of reformers. "The Maid of Orleans" and "Wilhelm Tell" are variations of the same theme, the war of liberation against foreign oppression. Like Schiller and Klopstock, almost every German writer of importance was an enthusiast of the French Revolution at least until the Reign of Terror set in, with one single exception: Goethe. He was more or less hostile to the French Revolution and remained all his life an enlightened aristocrat of the eighteenth century who believed that reform should come from the benevolent rulers, not from the revolutionary masses.

Some German enthusiasts went to France and offered their services to the French Revolution. One of these was Baron Cloots (1755-1794) of Gnadenthal, Rhineland, the Orator of the Human Race, and another was Father Eulogius Schneider of Bonn, the Marat of Strassbourg, both of them ardent admirers of Voltaire and Rousseau. In 1790, when hereditary nobility was abolished, Cloots surrendered his gothic title and also his Christian name in order to debaptize himself.<sup>1</sup> He now signed: Anacharsis

1. His full name was: Jean Baptiste du Val de Grâce Baron von Cloots. He assumed the name of Anacharsis from the famous romance of Abbé J. J. Barthélémy.

Cloots, Baron in Germany, citizen in France. He became famous when he appeared before the bar of the Assembly at the head of foreigners resident in France. Standing between an Arab and a Chaldean, he told the Assembly that the world adhered to the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen. He called himself "Orateur de la race humaine" and was the only German member of the Convention. He was sent to the guillotine by Robespierre as a foreign nobleman, an atheist, an internationalist and an enemy of France.<sup>2</sup> As a matter of fact, he did put mankind about France and, like Kant, believed in a world-federation of which the French Republic would be only a component part, which was too much even for Robespierre. Cloots perished with a smile on his lips, bravely claiming the privilege of being the last of the batch to mount the scaffold.<sup>3</sup> Eulogius Schneider (1756-1794), a Franciscan monk, was professor of Greek literature at the University of Bonn. He lost his position because he expressed agreement with the most advanced principles of the Revolution. On the news of the destruction of the Bastille he composed a poem which he read to his class. Later on, he published poems and pamphlets in which he proclaimed his democratic convictions. The Elector's patience was exhausted and the professor was dismissed with a year's salary. He was invited by the University of Strassburg to occupy the chair of Canon Law. As a vicar of the Bishop of Strassburg, he preached "On the harmony of the Gospel and the French Constitution." He became a

1. Gooch, p. 325.

2. Gooch, p. 326.

member of the Jacobin Club and was appointed Public Prosecutor to the Revolutionary Tribunal at Strassburg. As such he terrorized Alsace by sending to the guillotine all the reactionaries. "People bleat of consideration and humanity," he cried. "Death to evil-doers is a service rendered to men of sound principles." With equal zeal he adopted the Cult of Reason and insulted believers in a series of parodies and satires. He won the name of "Marat of Strassburg" with his ruthlessness and was sent to the guillotine for his cruelty, which was too much even for Robespierre. Josef von Görres of Coblenz (1776-1848), another German republican, collaborated with the French for the establishment of republican regimes in Germany. After the Congress of Vienna he denounced the Holy Alliance as an instrument of oppression and had to flee to France. There was also a Jacobin composer, Reichardt, who lost his position of Kapellmeister to the King of Prussia on account of his French sympathies which he expressed in the form of letters to the Musical Journal in Berlin. But the kindly Frederick William (1786-1797), himself a musician, appointed him director of salt-mines, a lucrative sinecure. He remained true to the French Revolution even after the Reign of Terror, and in 1807 accepted the post of Kapellmeister to King Jerome Bonaparte of Westphalia at Cassel.

The influence of the French Revolution was so tremendous that all the rulers of Germany had to introduce far-reaching reforms under the pressure of the masses. This was especially true of Prussia where all the revolu-

1. Gooch, p. 351.

tionary reforms, embodied in the Napoleonic code, were literally copied and applied by far-sighted statesmen, like Hardenberg and Stein, and soldiers, like Gneisenau and Scharnhorst. But the enthusiasm for the French Revolution gave way to hatred after the Napoleonic invasions of the Germanies during which the French armies had to support themselves by requisitions, fines, indemnities and confiscations. The result was the German War of Liberation which found all the Germans united against the French. After the fall of Napoleon and the restoration of the Old Regime, during the era of Metternich, a revival of French sympathies began which ended in the Revolution of 1848.

### *Revolutionary Irreligion*

All the European revolutions before 1789 had, more or less, a religious character. The French Revolution was the first secular uprising based not on theology but on human reason. As a matter of fact, Reason was the deity of the French Revolution. The issue was quite clear. The partisans of the Old Regime identified Church and State and professed unqualified belief in the doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church. The partisans of the New Regime dissociated the Church from the State, were more or less anti-clerical, and sometimes went into extreme irreligion and atheism. Now, to what camp did Beethoven belong?

Schindler, in his usual apologetic way, tells us that Beethoven was brought up in the Catholic religion; that he was truly religious; that he was tolerant towards all denominations; that he had no systematic religious creed;

that his religious views rested less upon the creed of the Church than upon Deism; that he recognized the existence of God in the world as the world in God; that he found his theory of God in Nature; and that his guides were Christian Sturm and the Greek philosophers!<sup>1</sup> It is simply a hopeless mess. Schindler begins by asserting that Beethoven was a good Roman Catholic and concludes by revealing that he was a pagan. It is the same old story. Schindler tells a pious lie for the benefit of the master then he goes into details, he gets mixed up, and he lets the cat out of the bag. In this case, he must have had a good deal of trouble because the assertion that Beethoven's religious views did not rest upon the creed of the Church appears only in the third edition of his biography. We miss it in the first and second editions.<sup>2</sup> This correction means that when Schindler was challenged by his hecklers to speak more clearly, he had to admit what every critical reader of the first two editions of his Biography had already guessed, namely, that Beethoven did not believe in the doctrines of the Church in which he had been brought up. Thayer, with a few minor soft-pedal reservations, agrees with Schindler on that point. Beethoven's letters bear evidence that he was more irreligious than either Thayer or Schindler cared to tell us.

1. "Beethoven war in der Katholischen Religion erzogen. Dass er wirklich innerlich-religiös war bezugt sein ganzer Lebenswandel. . . Mit ziemlicher Gewissheit kann aber gesagt werden dass seine religiöse Anschauungen weniger auf dem Kirchenglauben beruhten, als vielmehr im Deismus ihre Quelle gefunden haben. . . Und scheint das mehrfach genannte Buch: Christian Sturm's Betrachtungen der Werke Gottes in der Natur, nebst den aus den philosophischen Systemen der griechischen Weisen geschöpften Belehrungen zumeist sein Wegweiser auf dieser Bahn gewesen zu sein."—Schindler, 1927, II, p. 161; Thayer, English Edition, III, p. 168.

2. Schindler-Moscheles, II, pp. 162-163; Schindler, 1845, I, p. 250

In a letter to Amenda the master writes: "Your Beethoven lives very unhappy, at strife with Nature and Creator. The latter I have often cursed for exposing his creatures to the smallest accident so that frequently the richest blossoms are thereby crushed and annihilated. Only think that my sense of hearing has become very weak . . ."<sup>1</sup> In a letter to Wegeler Beethoven repeats the curse: "I have often cursed the Creator and my existence."<sup>2</sup>

No comments are needed. This is rebellion pure and simple. Omar Khayyam, another rebel, utters a similar protest more sarcastically:

Another said—"Why, ne'er a peevish Boy  
Would break the Bowl from which he drank in Joy;  
Shall He that made the Vessel in pure Love  
And Fancy, in an after Rage destroy?"

But Beethoven was not crushed by the stunning blow of deafness. He fought his way through for twenty-six years after he became deaf. He tells us in his own lapidary fashion how he overcame this misfortune: "Plutarch taught me resignation."<sup>3</sup> Beethoven learned from Plutarch the Stoic, that this deterministic Universe is governed by in-

1. "Wie oft wünsche ich dich bei mir, denn dein Beethoven lebt sehr unglücklich, im Streit mit Natur and Schöpfer; schon mehrmals fluchte ich letzteren, dass er seine Geschöpfe dem kleinsten Zufalle ausgesetzt, so dass oft die schönste Blüte dadurch vernichtet und zerknickt wird. Wisse dass mir das edelste Teil, mein Gehör, sehr abgenommen hat."—Letter to Amenda, June 1, 1801, Kastner-Kapp, p. 42.

2. "Ich habe schon oft den Schöpfer und mein Dasein verflucht."—Letter to Wegeler, June 29, 1801, Kastner-Kapp, p. 47.

3. "Plutarch hat mich zu der Resignation geführt."—Letter to Wegeler, June 29, 1801, Kastner-Kapp, p. 47.

exorable and cruel laws, whose course cannot be changed by useless prayers and curses. Omar Khayyam, also a Stoic, describes this cruel materialistic determinism in his masterful quatrains:

The moving Finger writes and, having writ,  
Moves on: nor all thy Piety nor Wit  
Shall lure it back to cancel half a Line,  
Nor all thy Tears wash out a Word of it.

And that inverted Bowl we call The Sky,  
Whereunder crawling we live and die,  
Lift not thy hands to it for help—for it  
Rolls impotently on as Thou or I.

To those inexorable laws governing the universe the Stoics gave the generic name of Fate, or simply Nature, and they taught their followers to face them with resignation. This is the lesson Beethoven learned from Plutarch the Stoic. So Beethoven was reconciled with Fate, because after all, that same fate had given him the courage and the perseverance necessary in this cruel deterministic universe: "Den ausduldenden Mut verlieh den Menschen das Schicksal."<sup>1</sup> Armed with that weapon, Beethoven is now strong enough to grapple with Fate: "I will seize Fate by the throat, it shall not overcome me altogether."<sup>2</sup> Now Beethoven is on the right track. He will go over the top with that Stoic courage and perseverance in fulfilling his mission on earth, as Alfred de Vigny, another Stoic, said several years after:

1. Beethoven, *Skizzenblätter*, 1814, Kastner-Kapp, p. 283.

2. "Ich will dem Schicksal in den Rachen greifen."—Letter to Wegeler, Nov. 16, 1801, Kastner-Kapp, p. 54.

Gémir, pleurer, prier, est également lâche,  
Fais énergiquement ta longue et lourde tâche  
Dans la voie où le Sort a voulu t'appeler,  
Puis, après, comme moi, souffre et meurs sans parler.

This was, in Beethoven's opinion, the right religion for heroic natures like his. Consequently, those who accused Beethoven as an atheist were not wrong, after all. Ancient Stoicism was essentially atheistic, because in a deterministic universe governed by inexorable laws there was no place for Jupiter. True, Jupiter was allowed by the Stoics to stay in Olympus but he had to keep quiet there, which was worse than death for that old Thunder-juggling reprobate. At any rate, Beethoven himself tells us that he was accused of being a man without a religion.<sup>1</sup> A certain Pulai boasted that he would ruin the master in the eyes of the Court by exposing him as an atheist.<sup>2</sup> In 1819, he was shadowed by the police for having said aloud that "after all, Christ was only a crucified Jew."<sup>3</sup> But the Archduke Cardinal Rudolf was always there to help him out of all these difficulties with certificates of absolute Catholic orthodoxy.<sup>4</sup>

That Beethoven was a religion-scoffer can be seen in his own letters. For instance, he writes sarcastically to his brother: "Read the Gospel every day; take to heart

1. "Man kann denken, dass dies schon zu einer Anklage diene, dass ich keine Religion habe oder meinen Neffen nicht religiös anführte."—Denkschrift, Feb. 18, 1820, Kastner-Kapp, p. 567.

2. Vincent d'Indy, p. 94.

3. Romain Rolland, *Beethoven*, p. 50.

4. "Son témoignage soutiendra Beethoven contre les calomnies de sa belle-soeur, qui, s'était traîné jusqu'aux pieds de l'empereur, ou la perfidie du juif Pulai qui c'était vanté de perdre le musicien aux yeux de la cour en lui prêtant des propos athées." Vincent d'Indy, p. 94.

the Epistles of Saint Peter and Paul, travel to Rome, and kiss the slippers of the Pope."<sup>1</sup> In the same vein he writes to Haslinger: "Sing every day the Epistles of Saint Paul, go to Father Werner, who will show you the little book by which you will go to heaven in a jiffy. You see that I am anxious for your salvation, and I remain always with the greatest pleasure from eternity to eternity your most faithful debtor."<sup>2</sup> And if Beethoven had no respect for the Pope and his slippers, he was hardly expected to have any love for the lower clergy. He simply hates them and despises them. He calls them contemptuously "Pfaffen" (dirty priests), never "Priester." He could hardly conceal his joy when he learned that the Archduke Rudolf had refused to become a priest and he was ready to greet this great news with an appropriate pun: "Quick to Vienna where the first thunderous proclamation that I heard was that my gracious lord had given up all thoughts of dirty priesthood (Pfafftum) and dirty priestliness (Pfafftun) and nothing is to come of the whole business."<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, he was deeply disappointed when he received the news that Napoleon had concluded a concordat with the Pope and bitterly remarks that "now everything is going back to the old track."<sup>4</sup>

Even on his death-bed he remains an unrepentant Jacobin and a cynic. He had not read Voltaire and Lucian

1. Letter to Johann van Beethoven, July 31, 1822, Kastner-Kapp, p. 615.

2. Letter to Haslinger, Sept. 10, 1821, Kastner-Kapp, p. 600.

3. Letter to Breitkopf and Härtel, Oct. 9, 1811, Kastner-Kapp, p. 200.

4. ". . . alles wieder ins alte Geleise zu schieben sucht, Bonaparte mit dem Papste das Konkordat geschlossen . . ."—Letter to Hofmeister, April 8, 1802, Kastner-Kapp, p. 56.

in vain. As Schindler tells us, Dr. Wawruch begged him in the name of all his friends to partake of the Sacrament for the dying and get reconciled with heaven so that the world might also be shown that he ended his life like a true Christian. Beethoven replied quietly and firmly: "I will." The clergyman came at about 12 o'clock and the religious ceremony took place in the most edifying manner. The clergyman had scarcely gone when Beethoven said to Schindler and Breuning: "Plaudite, amici, comedia finita est."<sup>1</sup> So one of his last sarcastic remarks was directed against a sacrament of his Church.

But why did he consent to receive Holy Communion if he did not believe in it? Schindler tells us why. All the friends and relatives insisted, public opinion expected him to perform this last rite, and then there was the nephew whose future depended to a certain extent on the master's good name. As we have already seen, Beethoven prayed every morning and every evening with the nephew, when they lived in the same house.<sup>2</sup> He had to do it because the strongest argument against his guardianship was that he had no religion and that he neglected the religious education of his nephew. So he took Holy Communion only for the sake of Karl, and then he whispered his famous remark in Latin, as a response to the Latin prayer of the "Pfaffe." As he himself puts it in a letter: "There are circumstances which

1. Letter of Schindler to Schott, Hull, p. 391; Thayer, English Edition, III, p. 306.

2. To a question of the Magistrate Nephew Karl answers: "Ja, er ((Beethoven) bete Morgens und Abends mit ihm (Karl)." Thayer, German Edition, IV, p. 551.



many a time have compelled men to act against their convictions and their principles."<sup>1</sup>

### *Revolutionary Slogans*

Schindler tells us that "in his political sentiments Beethoven was a Republican."<sup>2</sup> He repeats this assertion in the three editions of his Biography, and this time he does not get mixed up. There is plenty of evidence in Beethoven's letters to prove that Schindler tells us the truth. All the slogans of the French Revolution can be found in Beethoven's writings and, sometimes, in places where we hardly expect them, in business letters and in love letters. And it must be borne in mind that all those slogans were anathema to the old régime of Vienna, which considered them dangerous to the state and forbade their use to its citizens.

In a letter to an unknown publisher Beethoven speaks of his republican ideology and of the rights of man, which are trampled underfoot by the rulers.<sup>3</sup> He is a democrat, he protests the aristocratic designation of "cavalier", which Simrock gives him, and asks indignantly: "Why, then, have I deserved this predicate? Faugh! Who in these

1. "Wo gäbe es nicht Umstände, welche manchmal den Menschen zwingen wider seine Denkungsart und Grundsätze zu handeln!"—Letter to Könnertitz, July 17, 1823, Kastner-Kapp, p. 678.

2. "Beethoven war seinen politischen Gesinnungen nach ein Republikaner."—Schindler, 1845, I, p. 56.

3. "Wie die Gesetzbücher sogleich bei den Menschenrechten, welche die Vollzieher bei alledem mit Füßen treten, anfangen, so der Autor. . . . (Unter uns gesagt, so republikanisch wir denken, so hat's auch sein Gutes um die oligarchische Aritokratie) . . ." Letter to a Publisher, 1882 (?), Kastner-Kapp, pp. 631-632.

democratic times would accept such a title?"<sup>4</sup> He believes that just as a state must have a constitution so must an individual have one for himself, by which he means the rights of man and of the citizen again.<sup>5</sup> He is "a friend of all the human race,"<sup>6</sup> which sounds like Anacharsis Cloots. He is bringing up his nephew as a world-citizen,<sup>7</sup> which means that he believes in a world-republic, as Kant did. Moreover, he thinks that there should be only one Bureau of Art in the world, to which the artist would have only to hand in his art work in order to receive what he needs, which sounds like socialism.<sup>8</sup>

Anyhow, he does not believe in any form of monarchy at all. For him "the intellectual kingdom is dearest and far above all ecclesiastical and secular monarchies."<sup>6</sup> This sounds like the supremacy of Reason over everything, over Popes and Bishops, over Kings, Princes, and aristocrats, which means that we are back to the French Revolution. Yes, he loves Liberty above everything.<sup>7</sup> He honors the Liberty of all people.<sup>8</sup> Liberty!!!! What more do we

1. "Pfui; wer würde in unseren demokratischen Zeiten noch so eine Sprache annehmen?"—Letter to Simrock, Aug. 2, 1794, Kastner-Kapp, p. 21.

2. "Wie der Staat eine Konstitution haben muss, so der einzelne Mensch für sich selber eine."—Skizzenblätter, 1816, Kastner-Kapp, p. 360.

3. "Freund des ganzen Menschengeschlechtes."—Letter to Zmeskall, 1816, Kastner-Kapp, p. 395.

4. "Weltbürger."—Letter to Rio, Feb. 1, 1816, Kastner-Kapp, p. 337.

5. "Es sollte nur ein Magazin der Kunst in der Welt sein, wo der Künstler seine Kunstwerke nur hinzugeben hätte um zu nehmen was er brauchte."—Letter to Hofmeister, Jan. 15, 1801, Kastner-Kapp, p. 37.

6. "Mir ist das geistige Reich das liebste und die oberste allen geistlichen und weltlichen Monarchien."—Letter to Kanka, 1814, Kastner-Kapp, p. 279.

7. "Freiheit über alles lieben!" Albumblatt, May 22, 1793.

8. "So wissen Sie wie ich die Freiheit aller Menschen ehre."—Letter to Amalie Sebald, 1812, Kastner-Kapp, p. 230.

want???"<sup>1</sup> Peace and liberty are the highest possessions.<sup>2</sup> Only liberty and progress are our aim in the world of art just as in the whole creation at large.<sup>3</sup> And if we cannot have them in Europe, we can go find them in America. Thank heavens, we now have steamships. They will procure for us air and Liberty in far-off countries.<sup>4</sup> And in a letter to the Immortal Beloved, Beethoven makes a diversion in order to insert this sentence: "Humiliation of man before man makes me sick."<sup>5</sup> This sounds like an echo of Kant's exclamation "My whole being shudders when I think of serfdom."<sup>6</sup>

"Fidelio," the only opera Beethoven composed, is primarily a Hymn to Liberty and only incidentally a paean of conjugal love. Florestan is a martyr of the new ideas, of the new Truth:

Wahrheit wagt' ich kühn zu sagen  
Und die Ketten sind mein Lohn!

The prisoners, allowed to take some fresh air for the first time, intone a hymn to Liberty:

O Himmel! Rettung! Welch' ein Glück!  
O Freiheit! O Freiheit! Kehrst du zurück!

1. "Freiheit!!!! Was mill man mehr???"—Letter to Zmeskall, 1814, p. 269.  
2. "Ruhe und Freiheit sind die grössten Güter."—Skizzenblatt, 1817, p. 417.  
3. "Allein Freiheit, Weitergehn in der Kunstwelt wie in der ganzen grossen Schöpfung, Zweck."—Letter to Rudolf, July 29, 1819, Kastner-Kapp, p. 511.  
4. "Danken wir Gott für die. . . Dampfschiffahrt. Was für ferne Schwimmer wird es da geben, die uns Luft und Freiheit verschaffen!"—Letter to Schott, Dec. 5, 1824, Kastner-Kapp, p. 737.  
5. "Demut des Menschen gegen den Menschen schmerzt mich."—Letter to the Immortal Beloved, July 6, 1801 or 1812, Kastner-Kapp, p. 51.  
6. Gooch, p. 529.

When Florestan sees Leonora, he thinks she is the Angel of Liberty:

Ein Engel, Lenoren, der Gattin so gleich,  
Der führt mich zur Freiheit, ins himmlische Reich!

Fernando, announced by the trumpets, is the Liberator. He does not allow the prisoners to kneel before him; he is their friend and their brother:

Nicht knien länger sklavisch!  
Tyrannenstrenge sei mir fern.  
Es sucht der Bruder seine Brüder  
Und kann er helfen, hilft er gern.

In the Ninth Symphony we have a Hymn to Universal Brotherhood. Originally the Ode to Joy was an Ode to Liberty,<sup>1</sup> and Beethoven was busy with it from 1793. When Schiller changed it to a Hymn of Joy, the fraternization of the Human Race became the Leitmotiv of the famous poem:

Alle Menschen werden Brüder. . . .  
Seid umschlungen Millionen  
Diesem Kuss der ganzen Welt!

Beethoven was anxious to make his message perfectly clear this time and, like his great successor Wagner, he attached labels to his musical themes. That was absolutely necessary. He wanted to reach the masses and proclaim to them the new message of the French Revolution in a language they understood and admired, in the language of Schiller, the poet of Rousseau's New Covenant. Revolu-

1. Thayer, English Edition, III, p. 152.

tionary in his political views, Beethoven was revolutionary also in his art: He introduced choral music and vocal solos in the last movement of his Ninth Symphony. Yes, he did it for the stupid masses who could not understand his musical speech. He spoke to them now in their own jargon! Yes, but would it be possible to rouse those apathetic, sleepy, lethargic Vienna masses? Oh, that miserable Vienna rabble! "Verflucht, verdammt, vermaledeites, elendes Wienerpack!"<sup>1</sup> All they could do was to eat sausages and wash them down with brown beer. And when some one asks him whether the revolution broke out in Vienna, he replies sarcastically: "So long as the Austrian has brown beer and sausages, he will not start a revolution."<sup>2</sup> True, these Austrian masses were hopeless but the master had no choice. He tried his best with the big people but they proved to be worse than the rabble. Alas! "There is nothing smaller than our big folk!"<sup>3</sup> Or, as Beethoven puts it in French: "Parceque les grands sont le plus faibles."<sup>4</sup> So there was nothing left but to rouse the masses. That was exactly what his age needed. He expressed it very clearly when he wrote to that dear little rascal, his nephew Karl: "Our age needs mighty spirits to lash into action these cowardly, treacherous, wretched, roguish human souls."<sup>5</sup> His Karl understood all that. He knew Greek.

1. Letter to Bernard, Sept. 15, 1819, Kastner-Kapp, p. 521.

2. "So lange der Oesterreicher noch braunes Bier und Würstel hat, revoltiert er nicht."—Letter to Simrock, Aug. 2, 1794, Kastner-Kapp, p. 22.

3. "Etwas kleineres als unsere Grossen gibt's nicht."—Letter to Breitkopf and Härtel, 21 Sommermonat, 1810, Kastner-Kapp, p. 177.

4. Letter to Schott, Jan. 22, 1825, Hull, p. 338.

5. "Unser Zeitalter bedarf kräftiger Geister, die diese kleinsüchtigen, heimtückischen, elenden Schufte von Menschenseelen geisseln."—Letter to Karl van Beethoven, 1825, Kastner-Kapp, p. 785.

Yes, Beethoven felt that he was one of those mighty spirits and that Fate predestined him for that Herculean task. Now Fate knocks at his door and orders him to fulfil his Messianic mission. He is ready for the biggest job of his life. He knows how to do the trick. He will make the sopranos holler and yell and shriek triumphantly at the top of their voices like the market strumpets of Paris when they saw the guillotine chop off the head of Marie Antoinette and Louis XVI: Sic semper tyrannis! Yes, kill them all, hang them all, kings, and princes and aristocrats:

Ah! Ça ira, ça ira, ça ira!

Les aristocrat' à la lanterne:

Ah! Ça ira, ça ira, ça ira!

Les aristocrat' on les pendra.

In vain the poor sopranos appealed to the master to change those impossible high notes. Beethoven stood his ground. They said that it would sound fierce. That was exactly what he wanted, for then the masses would understand his message. And he was right. On May 7, 1824, the first performance of the *Missa Solemnis* in D and the Ninth Symphony took place. Baron Zmeskall was there to hear the Symphony that was meant to exterminate the class to which he belonged, but everything the master did was all right for him. He ordered his servants to transport him to the Kärntnertor Theatre, and poor, bed-ridden Zmeskall was carried to his seat in a sedan-chair.<sup>1</sup> The success was amazing; and his greeting was almost of a seditious character, for when Beethoven appeared he was accorded five rounds of applause; whereas, according to the strict eti-

1. Thayer, English Edition, III, p. 165.

quette of the city, it was the custom to give three only for the entrance of the Imperial Family. The police had to put an end to the manifestations. The Symphony raised frantic enthusiasm. Many wept. Beethoven fainted with emotion after the concert; he was taken to Schindler's house where he remained asleep all the night and the following morning, fully dressed, neither eating nor drinking.<sup>1</sup>

Yes, Beethoven this time did reach the masses not only of Vienna but of all the world for all times with his Jacobin Symphony of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. Some critics say that the music of the Ninth Symphony is not as good as that of the Third and Fifth Symphonies. It may be. *De gustibus non disputandum*. But the most important thing for Beethoven in this case was the message and he did deliver that revolutionary message to the masses in a language as clear as it could be done under the circumstances during the era of Metternich. The text could not be more explicit. Metternich's censor would not have allowed it. Beethoven described the situation very well to the poet Kuffner: "Words are bound in chains but, happily, sounds are still free."<sup>2</sup> And he used the musical sounds to supplement the poetic text. The masses liked and still like his masterful and dramatic combination of poetry and music.

### *Revolutionary Gospels*

The ideology of a person can be easily determined by his favorite books. We have a partial list of the

1. Romain Rolland, Beethoven, pp. 46-47.

2. Romain Rolland, Beethoven, p. 49.

books Beethoven used to like. Let us see whether we can ascertain his political ideology through some of them.

In the first place, come Plato and Plutarch. Beethoven quotes Plutarch now and then and sometimes alludes to him. On the other hand, Schindler tells us that the master dreamed of a republic like that advocated by Plato in his famous "Politeia."<sup>2</sup> Now, it so happens that Plato and Plutarch were the revolutionary gospels of all bourgeois city states from the Early Renaissance down to the middle of the nineteenth century. Plato, the philosopher of the Athenian democracy, was the appropriate prophet of the modern merchant patricians, while Aristotle, the philosopher of the Macedonian monarchy, was annexed and duly canonized by the Church and the aristocracy from the time of the Crusades. Plutarch has always been popular as the biographer of the republican heroes of Rome and Greece. The cult of Greek civilization during the Renaissance can be explained primarily by the fact that the Italian city states sought justification of their own bourgeois regime in the Greek antiquity. As a matter of fact, they claimed that they simply copied the Greek models. And, to enhance the similarity, a Platonic Academy was established in Florence by the Medici, the merchant patricians of the Florentine Republic.

Curiously enough, the French bourgeois republicans made exactly the same claim and insisted fanatically that their Jacobin republic was simply a revival of the city

1. "Plato's 'Republik' war in sein Fleisch und Blut übergegangen, und nach jenen Principien musterte er alle Verfassungen der Welt. So wollte er alles eingerichtet wissen wie es Plato vorgeschrieben hatte."—Schindler, 1845, I, p. 56.

states of Athens and of Rome as if the latter two were exactly of the same variety. They were not. Nor was it true that the Italian city states were exactly of the same variety as those of Ancient Rome and Greece. For instance, there was slavery in the latter while there was none in the Italian city states. And when we compare the great Jacobin Republic with the city states of the Greco-Roman antiquity, we discover that the similarities are reduced to a few names and terms, like Republic, consul, democracy and so on. The basis was entirely different. The basis in the Greco-Roman antiquity and the Italian Renaissance was the city, while in France it was the nation: the people with a common language, tradition and culture. Such a basis would be inconceivable to the Athenians and the Romans, while in the Renaissance it was advocated by a few men far in advance of their age, like Lorenzo the Magnificent and Niccolò Machiavelli.

But those differences did not disturb very much the modern imitators. Every revolution, religious, political, social or artistic, however original and brand new in every respect, has been invariably advocated as a return to a good old model discarded by the bad tyrants and despots of the day. So we have the historical paradox of revolutions going forward and claiming to go backward. The Reformation claimed to go back to primitive Christianity. The Florentine Camerata claimed to go back to the Greek tragedy. Rousseau claimed to go back to nature. The French Jacobins claimed to go back to the Athenian republic as it really existed, to the utopian republic as it was advocated by Plato, and of course to the great Republic

of the Roman Consuls as well. The leaders of all these "forward-backward" movements may have not known what going back to an ancient model really meant, but they knew perfectly well that an ancient fetish is the most convenient peg on which to hang a dangerous novelty, and they realized the enormous propaganda value of having in their particular band-wagon some of the giants of the Greco-Roman antiquity. This is how Plato, Plutarch and Brutus were annexed by the Jacobins to add Hellenic prestige and Roman dignity to their innovations, and this is how Plato's Republic and Plutarch's Biographies became the first Gospels of the French Revolution. Later on, the whole body of Greek literature and the republican section of Latin literature were added to Plato and Plutarch and were solemnly proclaimed as the New Testament of the Jacobin Republic. Every good Jacobin had to read this Bible, mostly Greek and partly Latin. So the French Revolution revived the cult of the Greco-Roman antiquity, insisting on the Greek section because the Latin section was adulterated by the Roman Emperors and the Roman Popes.

That Beethoven cherished that same cult of Republican Greece appears from his letters very clearly. He complains that he could not read the Greek writers in the original<sup>1</sup> and was happy to know that his dear nephew could do it.<sup>2</sup> In the Conversation Books, Beethoven notes

1. ". . . Homer, welchen letzteren ich leider nur in Übersetzungen lesen kann."—Letter to Breitkopf & Härtel, Aug. 8, 1809, Kastner-Kapp, p. 145.

2. "Schon über sechs Jahre hin ich habe einen Knaben . . . den Wissenschaften angehörig und in den reichen Schriften der Griechheit schon ganz zu Hause."—Letter to Goethe, Feb. 8, 1823, Kastner-Kapp, p. 640.

down in his own handwriting a book by Abbé J. J. Barthélémy (1716-1795), entitled "Travels of Anacharsis in Greece" in 7 volumes.<sup>3</sup> The imaginary hero, a descendant of the Scythian philosopher Anacharsis, visits Greece during the age of Solon, returns to Scythia and tells his people the glory that was Greece and describes her republics, her literature and her culture. It took the good Abbé thirty years to write this book but he was well rewarded for his pains. He became famous overnight, and his "Anacharsis" was one of the most popular books of the time. It was published in 1788 and soon became one of the sacred books of the French Revolution. It was translated into German in 1799. It was from this book that the famous Baron Cloots got his name of Anarcharsis.

When the French Revolution broke out Father Eulogius Schneider, the Marat of Strassburg, who was teaching Greek literature at the University of Bonn, interrupted his lecture in order to read to his class a poem on the capture of the Bastille. It ran thus:

No royal edict, no! "Such is our will,"  
Shall henceforth shape the burgher's destiny.  
Behold! in ruins lies the proud Bastille,  
The sons of France have won their liberty.

The poem was received with tremendous applause, and Eulogius Schneider wrote similar revolutionary poems which he published with subscriptions from enthusiasts of the French Revolution. One of those who openly subscribed to this book of Jacobin poetry in 1790 was Bee-

1. "Anacharsis Reisen, 7 Teile komplet, Schöntliche Auflage, 16 fl."—*Conversation Books*, March-May, 1819, Blatt 48b, p. 117.

thoven.<sup>1</sup> Eulogius was dismissed and had to flee to Strassburg but kept on writing poems. He wrote his masterpiece when he received from Paris a guillotine to chop off the heads of all those opposed to the Jacobin regime. The subject of the masterpiece is of course the guillotine. The first verse is sufficient to give an idea of the revolutionary beauties of the poem:

"O dear Guillotine! How welcome thou art!"

Hymns of Guillotine like this could be sung only by fanatical devotees of the Jacobin creed, and Beethoven must have belonged to them since he joined their singing even mentally. Anyhow, the memory of Eulogius Schneider must have been dear to the Beethoven circle because one of the group notes down in the *Conversation Books of 1819*: "Eulogius Schneider was also in Bonn."<sup>2</sup>

Schindler tells us that, besides the writings of the Greek philosophers, a book by Christian Sturm, entitled "*Beobachtungen der Werke Gottes in der Natur*"<sup>3</sup> was Beethoven's guide in formulating his pantheistic views of God and religion in general. The book expounds a rather antiquated natural philosophy, but it was in Beethoven's time by far the best manual of popular scientific truth, was more or less against the procrustean systems and dogmas of the various religions, and fostered a taste for the beauties of nature. It was something like a handbook of Rousseau's "Back to Nature" in a more or less popular scientific form.

1. R. Rolland, *Berlin Vorwärts*, March 26, 1927.

2. *Conversation Books*, March-May, 1819, Blatt 78b, p. 130.

3. Thayer, *English Edition*, I, p. 252.

That the books read by Beethoven were more or less revolutionary in character is proved by the fact that, when he died, three of his books were confiscated by the police. They were: Seum's, "Walks around Syracuse;" Kotzebue's "Over the Nobility;" and Fessler's "Views on Religion and Theology."<sup>1</sup> Judging from their titles, the first book preached political revolution, the second social revolution, and the third religious revolution. The three books are characteristic of Beethoven's political, social and religious views.

#### *Revolutionary Hero-worship*

The tyrannicide has been from time immemorial the hero of the republican city states. Brutus is the most famous of them. He is also the luckiest. He has been immortalized by Plutarch's biography, by Shakespeare's tragedy of Julius Caesar, and by a picture by the Jacobin painter David. Finally, he was canonized by the French Revolution and placed in the Jacobin Pantheon of heroes. Beethoven, like a good republican, had in his bedroom a small statue of Brutus, which is still preserved in the Beethoven Museum of Bonn.

Napoleon was the modern hero of the Revolution but he lost popularity when he proclaimed himself Emperor of France. After his death he became as popular as he was in the first years of his meteoric career, and began a new life with the Napoleonic legend, which culminated in the rise of Napoleon III, and ended dismally

1. R. Rolland, *Beethoven*, p. 52.

in the fall of the Second Empire in 1870. The republican Beethoven admired Napoleon in his early career; he was deeply disappointed when Napoleon concluded a concordat with the Pope in 1802;<sup>1</sup> he lost all respect for Napoleon when he became an Emperor; he hated Napoleon when he humiliated Austria and the Germanies; and he began to sympathize with Napoleon again after his fall and exile. There is no doubt whatever that Beethoven had originally dedicated his third symphony, the *Eroica*, to Napoleon. There are two documents in Beethoven's handwriting to prove it: In the first place, we have the original title-page of the *Eroica* with the erased dedication, which has been preserved and in which the name of Bonaparte can be still dimly seen in spite of the erasure.<sup>2</sup> In the second place, there is a letter in which Beethoven, speaking of the *Eroica*, writes: "The Symphony is really entitled Bonaparte."<sup>3</sup> Beethoven changed the dedication when he learned that Napoleon had proclaimed himself Emperor of France, according to both Schindler and Ries who happen to agree on this detail.<sup>4</sup> Ries was the first to break the news to the master, who flew into a rage and cried: "Then he, too, is nothing but an ordinary man! Now he also will tread all human rights underfoot, will gratify only his own ambition, will raise himself up above all others, and become a tyrant."<sup>5</sup> Then Beethoven went to the table,

1. Letter to Hofmeister, April 8, 1802, Kastner-Kapp, p. 56.

2. See illustration of manuscript title-page of the *Eroica* with the dedication to Bonaparte afterwards erased in R. Rolland, *Beethoven the Creator*, I, p. 62.

3. "Die Symphonie ist eigentlich betitelt Bonaparte."—Letter to Breitkopf & Härtel, Aug. 26, 1804, Kastner-Kapp, p. 81.

4. Schindler, 1927, I, pp. 107-8, and Schirmer, *Impressions*, pp. 53-4.

5. Schirmer, Chapter on Ries, pp. 53-4.

where the score of the Third Symphony lay with the name "Bonaparte" on it, took hold of the top of the title page, tore it off, and threw it on the floor. This first page was rewritten and not until then was the Symphony entitled *Sinfonia Eroica*. Ries and Lichnowsky were the only eye-witnesses of the scene. They related to Schindler later on what they saw on that memorable day.

Yes, the whole thing sounds quite natural, but we miss the Jacobin curses and the profane language of the master. No! as a whole, what Beethoven said on this occasion, according to Ries, sounds too mild. To begin with, Beethoven would have started with an Homeric curse, poco a poco crescendo. Like this, for instance: Verflucht! Verdammt! Vermaledeiter, elender Schuft und gemeiner Lumpenkerl! Then, sempre crescendo, a dirty pun on Napoleon; another filthy one on Bonaparte; then with clenched fists, fortississimo with three fff, a smashing sledge-hammer blow on the hated title of Emperor; then a chair would be hurled in the direction of Napoleon and would hit Lichnowski or Ries or both; then books and bottles would fly around until nothing was left to fling; then, decrescendo and rallentando, the master falls exhausted on the table where the Third Symphony score is lying, saved intact from this hurricane as if by a miracle; then, piano, syncopated sobbing for the world-republic, reduced to a heap of ruins; then, a pianissimo, subterranean and infernal tympani roll; then a complete silence, the silence before the next storm; the master sees the "Bonaparte" dedication; the infernal tympani roll is repeated mezzopiano; the master's eyes are distended and his

bristling mane is on edge; suddenly the full orchestra breaks into a crushing tutti fortissimo; then the tearing and the flinging of the title-page bearing the undeserved dedication takes place with a tremendous banging of the cymbals and a heart-breaking tympani roll. In a word, a "Weltumsturz."

There is more than one reason to suspect that Ries has rather soft-pedalled the whole thing. So, in this incident, Ries follows on the footsteps of the pious Schindler! Et tu, Brute! Anyhow, Vincent d'Indy does not attach any importance whatever to this dedication, because Beethoven had made similar dedications to other rulers, like the King of Prussia and the Empress of Russia.<sup>1</sup> True, but dedicating to those rulers was the regular thing to do and had absolutely no political significance whatever, while dedicating to Napoleon was taboo and anathema. It was tantamount to a declaration of principles. The incontrovertible fact that Beethoven actually wrote the dedication is sufficient evidence to prove that Schindler is right. Beethoven expected from Napoleon a republican millennium,<sup>2</sup> and felt that he had been cheated ignominiously.

### *Revolutionary Ethics*

Beethoven writes to Baron Zmeskill in 1798: "I don't want to know anything about your system of Ethics.

1. Vincent d'Indy, p. 79.

2. "Er lebte in dem festen Glauben, Napoleon gebe mit keinem anderen Plane um als Frankreich nach ähnlichen Principien zu republikanisieren, und somit sei—nach seiner Meinung—der Anfang zu einem allgemeinen Weltglück gemacht. Daher seine Verachtung und Begeisterung für Napoleon."—Schindler, 1845, I, p. 56.



Power is the ethical system of men who stand out from the rest, and it is also mine. And if you begin again today I will torment you until you find good and praiseworthy everything I do."<sup>1</sup>

A good many critics have interpreted these Beethovenian utterances as naive, selfish, overbearing and arrogant. They sound so but they are more than that. In this letter Beethoven erects his Power Morality into a system of Ethics for himself and for all strong men. By boldly asserting this theory, he becomes the precursor of Nietzsche, who thinks that the Superman is his own justification and leaves him free to formulate his own system of Ethics as it suits best his Messianic mission on earth. Those around him have no choice but to obey the Superman. This was exactly what Beethoven expected from Zmeskall to do ungrudgingly. It was too much even for a humble disciple like Zmeskall who had been hopelessly annexed by the Grand Mogul. In other words, it is the apotheosis of the Superman's individualism and his Will to Power. It is the extreme development of the Declaration of the Rights of Man, which later on will evolve the doctrine of anarchism pure and simple, erected into a system and an ideal to attain.

Beethoven's individualistic and egocentric Power Morality is utterly destructive as a social doctrine. No society can ever recognize or tolerate such an individual

1. "Ich mag nichts von Ihrer Moral wissen. Kraft ist die Moral der Menschen, die sich von anderen auszeichnen, und sie ist auch die meinige. Und wenn Sie mir wieder anfangen, so plage ich Sie so sehr, bis Sie alles gut und löblich finden, was ich tue."—Kastner-Kapp, p. 28.

privilege for any of its members. But the Superman knows how to circumvent this veto of society by the good old method of annexing obedient disciples and by extending his empire of devotees until he dominates the situation through them. Beethoven applied that method, and he succeeded. By annexing the Archduke Cardinal Rudolf and his circle of noblemen, he simply annexed the Austrian Empire for his musical mission. Wagner did exactly the same thing by annexing King Ludwig of Bavaria and, through him, the German Empire for his music dramas.

The method is bad in itself and may be catastrophic in its results. But in the case of Beethoven and Wagner it worked for the benefit of mankind, that is to say, it had its historical justification. Consequently, however paradoxical it may sound, we must be thankful to Beethoven and Wagner for being revolutionary in their methods, for working out their salvation through a Power Morality beyond good and evil, as Nietzsche would say, and for being tyrannical and domineering towards their disciples. Curiously enough, the hero-worshiper finds no difficulty in agreeing with Nietzsche and saying Amen to whatever the hero does and in being more obedient than the most obedient Baron Zmeskall, the Field-Marshal of all Volunteer Factotums in the History of Music.

#### *Revolutionary Friends*

"Tell me who your friends are and I will tell you who you are." If this good old axiom is true for the average

man it is much more so for Beethoven the Grand Mogul, who could tolerate around him only men of his own ideology, absolutely subservient to his own will. Beethoven is right when he speaks of his Beethovenian Realm. It was not an imaginary kingdom, it was a reality.

As we have already seen, Zmeskall is the plenipotentiary of the Beethovenian Kingdom; Tobias Haslinger the aide-de-camp, or Adjutanterl; Schindler the Private Secretary; Hosenknopf Ariel Breuning the Charming Page, mon page, mon beau page; Sir John Falstaff-Schuppanzigh the jester of the Court, who has picked up a bride co-equal in size and volume; Peppie, a human variety of a female elephant, the Grand Chef de Cuisine, who cooks well,<sup>1</sup> and knows especially how to prepare the bread-soup, cooked like a mush, which the master must always have with at least ten sizeable eggs to start his Gargantuan meals; Umlauf the Grand Bandmaster of the Grand Mogul Guard; Kinsky, Lobkowitz, Lichnowski, Brunswick, and Gleichenstein, Gentlemen of the Court; and Abbé Stadler the Grand Chaplain and Private Confessor of the Grand Mogul.

Umlauf raises his baton, and the band plays lustily a Turkish march in an allegro maestoso. The Grand Mogul enters. He has had a very bad night, one of the usual bachanalia until four o'clock in the morning,<sup>2</sup> with plenty of fish and fried oysters, Vöslauer wine, Melniker wine,

1. "Die Peppi kocht gut."—Letter to N. Streicher, 1818. Kastner-Kapp, p. 473.

2. Letter to Bettina, Feb. 10, 1811, Kastner-Kapp, p. 184.

Cyprus wine,<sup>1</sup> and Champagne. He can hardly stand on his feet, he staggers, he kneels before the Court Chaplain. The master's heart is heavy with sins, he needs badly an absolution of sins voluntary and involuntary.<sup>2</sup> The Abbé raises his hand and makes the sign of the cross over the head of the kneeling penitent and murmurs: "If it does no good, 'twill do no harm!"<sup>3</sup> Thereupon the Grand Mogul kisses the hand of the Grand Chaplain and the Court bursts into boisterous Homeric laughter. Falstaff-Schuppanzigh and the Elephant Peppie hold their abdomens in order to prevent a rupture from the convulsions of hilarity. The master belches half a dozen curses and ascends the throne.

Ariel Breuning intones in a treble voice: *Silentium!* The entire bunch stands at attention. The Grand Mogul reviews his Court! He misses some one. Oh, yes. Our dear nephew! Where is he? And the master bursts into tears. Alas, the nephew has run away. He simply could not stand this Grand Mogul Court. Carl Holz must go, and find out where the nephew is, and watch him, and report immediately. Now the Private Secretary reads letters and reports from obedient subjects, friends, admirers, and hell-dog publishers.

First report: Nobody believes that the *Missa Solemnis* in D will ever be ready. Beethoven replies: True,

1. "Man bekommt die Cyperlein vom Cypernwein."—Conversation Books, Herriot, Beethoven, p. 265.

2. "Morgen folgt mein Kanon, nebst dem Bekenntnisse meiner Sünden, wissentliche und unwissentliche, wo ich um die gnädigste Absolution bitten werde."—Letter to Cardinal Archduke Rudolf, 1823, Kastner-Kapp, p. 680.

3. "Hilft's nix, schadt's nix."—Thayer, English Edition, III, p. 236.

the blessed thing is not ready yet. But our Secretary of State, the Cardinal Archduke Rudolf, will issue a solemn Imperial Hatti-sheerif,<sup>1</sup> assuring everybody concerned that the Missa has been already completed.<sup>2</sup> Follow reports on the annuity which is not paid regularly; on the scandalous conduct of the master in the winehouses; on his denunciations of the Emperor, the government, the Police, the Church; and the law-suit on the guardianship of the nephew. Beethoven replies: Rudolf will fix all that with appropriate diplomatic demarches, imperial decrees, and solemn communiqués proclaiming to the world the unimpeachable Christian character and morality of the master.<sup>3</sup> Then the Grand Mogul has a sudden attack of colic and orders Oliva to run and fetch a doctor. Oliva replies that he has already consulted the doctor, who prescribed Tokay wine for the master, adding that, as a rule, it is less dangerous to drink than to eat.<sup>4</sup> Then the Court adjourns to the Swan Inn. Whereupon Oliva has an attack of colic also and remarks: "I am sick from yesterday's supper and I must go home today."<sup>5</sup>

Now, is this a Jacobin Club or a nondescript Revelers'

1. Imperial decree of the Sultans of Turkey. Beethoven uses this Turkish term more than once.—Letter to Schindler, 1823, Kastner-Kapp, p. 682.

2. "Ein abscheuliches Gerücht meiner Feinde, als sei diese Messe noch nicht vollendet, werde ich durch ein Zeugnis meines gnädigsten Herren des Erzherzogs Rudolfs Kaiserliche Hoheit . . . widerlegen lassen, da diese Messe schon seit 1822 vollendet gewesen."—Letter to Schleiermacher, Aug. 2, 1823, Kastner-Kapp, p. 686.

3. "Seine K. H. Eminenz und Kardinal, die mich als Freund und nicht als Diener behandeln, würden ungesäumt ein Zeugnis ausstellen sowohl über meine Moralität als über das Gewäsch von Olmütz, wo kein Wort davon wahr ist."—Letter to Dr. Bach, Oct. 23, 1819, Kastner-Kapp, p. 525.

4. Conversation Books, Herriot, Beethoven, pp. 264-5.

5. Conversation Books, Jan. 1820, Blatt 45b, p. 272.

Club? Well, it is both. All these noblemen, Rudolf, grandson of Emperor Joseph II, Kinsky, Lobkowitz, Lichnowsky, Brunswick and Gleichenstein are enlightened aristocrats and, by serving Beethoven, they are indirectly serving the French Revolution. The Cardinal Archduke Rudolf is the power behind the throne of the Beethovenian Kingdom but never appears in the Court because he is usually sick and then he lives in Olmütz, where he is tending his sheep, as Beethoven puts it.<sup>1</sup> Anyhow, all these noblemen are there for camouflage, and the Grand Mogul "values them for what they do for him and looks upon them only as instruments upon which he plays when he feels so disposed."<sup>2</sup> They are not allowed to take part in the deliberations of the inner cabinet. In the latter belong only the avowed partisans of the New Regime: For instance, Schindler, a veteran republican, who took part in the revolutionary activities of the University students and has been sentenced to jail for his democratic convictions. Reichardt, the Jacobin composer, who has lost his position of Royal Chapelmaster of Prussia for his French sympathies. All the other members of Beethoven's inner circle, like Kanne, Czerny, Bernard, Peters, Oliva, Schuppanzigh, are bourgeois writers, musicians and lawyers, all of them outspoken republicans. Baron Zmeskill is the only aristocrat, who is allowed to attend the meetings of Beethoven's exclusive Club, but he is more reliable than any bourgeois Jacobin of the purest water.

1. "Er hütet seine Schafe in Olmütz."—Schindler-Moscheles, 1841, II, p. 166.

2. Thayer, English Edition, I, p. 248. Even Baron Zmeskill was originally included in this list of aristocrats for some time.

What do they talk about, those friends of the inner circle of Beethoven? We have fragments of their discussions in the Conversation Books. They talk about Napoleon, who destroyed feudalism; they denounce the imperial government and the police; they expect lots of republics in 50 years; they discuss the growing influence of finance capital over the various governments of Europe; then the current news, revolts of the peasants in Hungary, activities of the revolutionary student organizations, flight of the republican Görres<sup>1</sup> to France and so on and so forth. Sometimes the master himself writes his opinion as in the following epigram, which tells the story of the dictatorships through the ages in a lapidary fashion: "Organized violence can achieve everything against a disorganized majority."<sup>2</sup>

Even on his death-bed the master must have his regular meetings with his republican friends. Dolezalek, Schuppanzigh and Linke come to visit him. Beethoven shows them the Handel scores which Stumpf sent him as a gift from London, and "the conversation ran out into a discussion of international politics."<sup>3</sup> His mortal enemy Abbé Jelinek declared publicly that Beethoven would end on the gallows. Indeed, the secret police had received several reports against him, and the dreaded Count Sedlnicky, the Police Minister, had several conferences on his case with the Emperor. Like Count Tolstoy, eighty years later,

1. "Der Görres ist für immer zu Grunde gerichtet weil er es wagte die Wahrheit zu sagen."—Conversation Books, Jan. 1820, Blatt 47a, p. 273.

2. "Gewalt, die eins ist, vermag alles gegen die Mehrheit, die es nicht ist."—Conversation Books, March-May, Blatt 87b, p. 133.

3. Thayer, English Edition, III, p. 294.

he owed it to his fame that he was spared. His arrest would have caused a sensation all over Europe. On the other hand, the Archduke Cardinal Rudolf was always there to persuade his half-brother, Emperor Francis II (1792-1835), to let the sick master alone. Beethoven's reputation as an eccentric, hypochondriac and half-insane did the rest. Orders were given to the police not to pay any attention to him.<sup>1</sup>

### *Revolutionary Diplomas*

Beethoven received three diplomas which confirm the opinion that he was a radical: from Jerome Bonaparte, from Goethe, and from the Vienna Police Minister.

We have already seen that the Police Minister had several conferences with the Emperor about Beethoven: The master was one of the very few who were thinking aloud in Vienna. Beethoven knew it, because he writes to Breitkopf and Härtel in 1812: "It is quite possible that I may visit Leipzig. But, please, keep it a secret because, to tell you the truth, they do not quite trust me any more in Austria, and they are right and, perhaps, they will refuse me the permission or they will give it to me too late."<sup>2</sup> This letter and the police reports are the first diploma.

The second diploma is Goethe's description of Beethoven in a letter to Zelter: "Unfortunately, he is an utterly untamed personality, not at all in the wrong, if he finds the world detestable, but he thereby does not make

1. R. Rolland, Vorwärts, March 26, 1927.

2. Letter to Breitkopf and Härtel, Sept. 17, 1812, Kastner-Kapp, p. 232.

it more enjoyable either for himself or for others."<sup>1</sup> It is very clear that Goethe considered Beethoven too revolutionary. Curiously enough, Beethoven, on his side, considered Goethe too conservative as it appears from his letter to Breitkopf and Härtel: "Goethe is too fond of the court atmosphere, more so than is becoming a poet. Why laugh at the absurdities of virtuosi when poets who ought to be the first teachers of a nation forget all else for the sake of this glitter."<sup>2</sup> The two men describe each other perfectly well. A good many critics believe that Bettina read these two letters and dramatized the contrast between the two men by inventing the so-called Teplitz incident. This incident is described in a letter addressed by Beethoven to Bettina in Bettina's, not Beethoven's, handwriting. That means that the letter is not authentic.<sup>3</sup>

The incident, related in this letter, is as follows: Beethoven and Goethe on the promenade are confronted with the imperial family including the Archduke Cardinal Rudolf. Beethoven pulls his hat over his eyes and pushes with folded arms through their very midst while Goethe, hat in hand, stands aside with a profound obeisance. *Se non è vero, è ben trovato!*

The third diploma is the invitation to go to Cassel as Chapelmaster of the court of Jerome Bonaparte in 1808. This invitation means in the first place that Beethoven was considered a partisan of the New Regime. Otherwise it is inexplicable. Very probably Reichardt,

1. Letter to Zelter, Thayer, English Edition, III, p. 321.

2. Letter to Breitkopf & Härtel, Aug. 9, 1812, Kastner-Kapp, p. 226.

3. Romain Rolland has a detailed discussion of this incident and a special chapter on Bettina in his book "Goethe and Beethoven."

who was employed in that Court, gave assurances about Beethoven's ideology, which Beethoven denied later on.<sup>4</sup>

### *Revolution and Program Music*

Ries observes that Beethoven, in composing, frequently imagined for himself a definite subject.<sup>5</sup> Schindler adds that Beethoven imbued his mind with poetic ideas and that under their inspiration his compositions were created.<sup>6</sup> Certain letters of Beethoven confirm this opinion. Writing to Goethe, Beethoven says that he was imbued with the spirit of his Egmont when he wrote the Overture bearing that title.<sup>7</sup> We have also a short note by Beethoven on the poetic idea that presided over the composition of the Pastoral Symphony: "Reminiscence of country life."<sup>8</sup>

It is very dangerous to go into further details on this subject but we cannot dismiss it without repeating what has been said by every great composer that it is impossible to compose without an idea, poetic or prosaic, short like Beethoven's idea of the Pastoral Symphony or long like Richard Strauss's programs of symphonic poems. Now, if the composer is kind enough to label his compositions with the presiding ideas, we must get hold of those ideas and keep them in mind when we listen to the corresponding music without going into entangling details. For instance, if we have the *Eroica* we must bear in mind that the master

1. Letter to Breitkopf & Härtel, April 5, 1809, Kastner-Kapp, p. 137.

2. Wegeler & Ries, Notizen, p. 77.

3. Schindler-Moscheles, 1841, II, p. 82.

4. Letter to Goethe, April 12, 1811, Kastner-Kapp, p. 188.

5. Auf Skizzen zur Pastoral-Symphonie, 1807, Kastner-Kapp, p. 108.

wrote it for a revolutionary hero and that he himself was a soldier of that revolution. If he does not give us any further details we must not look for them unless we want to waste our time. For the Fifth Symphony we have Schindler's testimony that it is the symphony of Fate; for the Ninth Symphony we have the general idea, which is Joy, and an extensive revolutionary text for the fourth movement. Then we must read that text and keep it in mind.

But if the composer leaves us in the dark? In such a case, the least we can do is to read a short biography of the composer and get acquainted with him. Then we are sure to understand his music much better than without the biography. By biography is meant the biography of the man first, of the real man—unadulterated by childish legends—and the spirit of the man. For instance, we shall understand Beethoven's music, labeled or unlabeled, much better when we know that his spirit was that of the French Revolution.

#### *Beethoven the Anti-Semite*

Vincent d'Indy calls Beethoven an outspoken anti-Semite.<sup>1</sup> Is there any basis for that accusation? In Beethoven's letters there are some bad jokes on the Jews as there are on everybody else. Here are a few examples. Beethoven writes to Hofmeister the publisher: "And as you are neither a Jew nor an Italian we shall no doubt come to an agreement."<sup>2</sup> That means that Beethoven found it

1. "Un antisémite déclaré"—Vincent d'Indy, Beethoven, p. 42.

2. Letter to Hofmeister, Dec. 15, 1800, Kastner-Kapp, p. 35.

rather hard to cheat an Italian or Jewish publisher. Now comes a joke on Schlesinger, the Jewish publisher. He ordered a quartet, which happened to be the Quartet in F, Beethoven's last Quartet. Schlesinger bought it for 80 ducats and paid only 360 florins. Whereupon, Beethoven said: "If a Jew sends me circumsized ducats he will get a circumsized Quartet. That's the reason it is so short." Then comes the remark about Jesus, already quoted in a previous section. "After all, Jesus was only a crucified Jew." That means that Beethoven was interested in Biblical criticism and agreed with those who, since the time of Reimarus, believed that Jesus lived and died as a member of the Jewish Synagogue, was crucified by the Romans as a rebel, and later on was deified by his hero-worshipping peasants. If so, Beethoven's remark about Jesus sounds like Bible criticism rather than anti-Semitism. Anyhow, even if we admit that Beethoven was anti-Semitic, the thing was not as bad as Vincent d'Indy imagined. Beethoven had some very good Jewish friends, like Salomon of Haydn fame,<sup>2</sup> whom he admired, Ries and Moscheles with whom he corresponded until his death, and last but not least the Brentanos of Frankfort, who were of Jewish descent and who helped him with loans.

#### *Beethoven the Nobleman*

We come now to Beethoven, the son of Medieval Feudalism, who believed in the superiority of aristocratic blood and in the orders and medals of their kings.

1. Thayer, English Edition, III, p. 345.

2. Letter to Ries, Jan. 20, 1816, Kastner-Kapp, p. 335, and Letter to Ries, Feb. 28, 1816, Kastner-Kapp, p. 340.

The Flemish "van"<sup>1</sup> before Beethoven's name was not a title of nobility as the German "von" but Beethoven made his aristocratic friends in Vienna believe that it was. The pious Schindler had to admit reluctantly that the master did claim to be a nobleman while he was only a petty bourgeois.<sup>2</sup> The myth of Beethoven's nobility exploded when the aristocratic Landhaus Court asked him to produce the documentary proof of his nobility. He could produce none. Consequently, the case of his nephew was referred to the plebeian court of the Vienna Magistrate. Beethoven flew into a rage at this demotion and made the following remark in the Conversation Books in his own handwriting: "My nature shows that I do not belong among these plebs!"<sup>3</sup>

And thereby hangs another silly tale of nobility, namely, that Beethoven was the natural son of King Frederick William II of Prussia. The Brockhaus Encyclopaedia was allowed to print this myth in several successive editions. The republican friends of the master are scandalized as the Conversation Books of 1819 show.<sup>4</sup> Wegeler wants to know whether this story has any basis and Beethoven answers reluctantly on Oct. 7, 1826: "I have made it a principle never to write anything about myself nor to reply to anything written about me. For this

1. We read in the Conversation Books in Beethoven's handwriting: "Van" bedeutet den Adel und das Patriziat wenn es zwischen zwei Eigennamen in der Mitte steht, z. B. Bentinck van Dieperheim, Hoost van Vreeland etc. etc. Bei Niederländern würde man die beste Auskunft über diese unbedeutende Bedeutenheit erhalten."—Blätter 42a and 42b, p. 231, Dec. 1819.

2. Schindler, 1827, pp. 255-9.

3. Thayer, English Edition, II, p. 409.

4. Dec. 1819, Blatt 69b and 70a, p. 244.

reason I gladly leave it to you to make known to the world the honesty of my parents and my mother in particular."<sup>1</sup>

Beethoven heaped opprobrium and contempt upon the head of all those who possessed orders or decorations from crowned rulers, but he dedicated the Ninth Symphony to the King of Prussia for a third class Prussian Order of the Eagle, which he did not get; and his pride in the gold medal, weighing twenty-one Louis d'or, that was conferred upon him by King Louis XVIII of France was so great that his friends had some difficulty in persuading him not to wear it in public.<sup>2</sup> Nietzsche and Ibsen also, though of pure and authentic petty bourgeois origin, tried pathetically to prove that they were descended from Counts and Princes. Back of this lies, in the first place, the dear old legend that the hero is always of divine, or at least of aristocratic, origin. In the second place—and this is far more important—comes another myth, namely that modern civilization is a product of the upper classes, which is an historical absurdity. Modern civilization has been derived from two sources, in the first place from the purely bourgeois city states of Italy<sup>3</sup> and from the monasteries, whose hard working monks were one hundred per cent of peasant origin. The aristocrats looked down upon the scholarly peasant monk and the plebeian city bourgeois, but one day they captured the wealthy cities and the monasteries and they annexed not only their wealth but their glory also. In the third

1. Thayer, English Edition, Vol. III, p. 243.

2. Thayer, English Edition, III, p. 230.

3. The aristocrats were disfranchised in Florence.

place, comes of course another dear old legend, namely that the highest type of heroic humanity is the warrior, the head-hunter and the cannibal, who can literally slaughter his fellow-men and then roast them and eat them, or the modern warrior, who resents indignantly any relation whatever to the cannibal and yet roasts and eats his fellow-men just the same, or rather in a more effective and practical way, by exploiting them. But as Dante says: *Guarda e passa!* And what Dante means perhaps is this: What can a book-worm do against such stupid conditions!

#### *Beethoven the Pious*

The reactionary music that Beethoven wrote on the glories of the Congress of Vienna is so bad that it would be waste of time to discuss it at all. He wrote it simply to make some money, and some of his contemporaries knew perfectly well what he was doing. Tomashek, for instance, writes about a concert of that period: "The concert concluded with the 'Battle of Vittoria' over which most of the audience went crazy. But I, on the other hand, was pained to find a Beethoven . . . among the crassest of materialists."<sup>1</sup> But there is one composition which is not exactly bad though it is branded as reactionary by the master himself:<sup>2</sup> The *Missa Solemnis*. Several problems arise. How is it possible for an irreligious Jacobin to write a *Missa*? He can do it if he knows the technical side of the job but it would not be a *Missa*, it can only be a "messe noire," and the *Missa Solemnis* is

just that, and nothing else. The music may be good, and it is so, but it does not fit the text. It is bad program music. Then another problem. There is a prayer for peace in that *Missa*, and praying for peace during the era of Metternich was considered reactionary by partisans of the new regime living under a despotic government. Preaching or organizing revolutions was the orthodox thing for a Jacobin to do. Praying for peace was tantamount to agreeing with Metternich who used to say: "What Europe wants is not liberty but peace!"<sup>1</sup> Beethoven would answer that he had to do it for his nephew, for the Cardinal and so on and so forth. Again! *Guarda e passa!*

#### CONCLUSION

Of all the biographers of Beethoven in the XIX century, Schindler was the only one who insisted on the fact that Beethoven had a republican ideology; that he believed in the principles of the French Revolution; and that he was inspired by them in composing his masterpieces. All the others, including the great Thayer, simply neglected this very important question and left it where the pious Schindler had dropped it. In the XX century two Frenchmen took up the problem and discussed it more or less extensively: Vincent d'Indy and Romain Rolland, the former in the negative and the latter in the affirmative. Vincent d'Indy maintains that Beethoven was not influenced at all by the French Revolution, while Romain Rolland confers upon Beethoven the glorious title of the Son of the Revolution. Who is right? In order to answer the

1. Schirmer, *Impressions*, p. 107.

2. Letter to Hofmeister, April 8, 1802, Kastner-Kapp, p. 56.

1. Hayes, J, p. 719.



question we have to examine the sources. In the first place, come the writings of the master himself, his letters, diaries and conversations. They should be read in the original. If not, in any other translation than in English, because Beethoven uses profane language which the English translators soften, distort, and mistranslate. In the second place, comes Schindler who, in his Biography, told us the truth about the master's ideology, and who even in his pious lies rarely had the heart to suppress the truth altogether. After all, he knew Beethoven and that was an enormous advantage over the others. Anyhow, Schindler's testimony should not be dismissed unless it is hopelessly contradicted by incontrovertible evidence. In the third place, comes Thayer's Biography, a monumental collection of documents critically analyzed. His chief merit lies in humanizing the melodramatic Beethoven of the romanticists. But Thayer's conclusions should not be accepted as a gospel truth because Thayer is as guilty of certain sins of omission and commission as Schindler. Last come the anecdotal and legendary impressions of contemporaries which should be used very cautiously. But some of these writings, especially those by Wegeler, Ries, Breuning, Moscheles, and Wawruch, are as valuable as Schindler's Biography.

In studying Beethoven's life, the first thing to do is to eliminate ruthlessly all the legends and stick to the sources. Then Beethoven emerges as a real man. And a real man is more interesting than all the legendary heroes put together for the simple reason that the latter are derived from a single lifeless original created by the imagination of the

hero-worshippers. The real Beethoven, according to the sources, was very ugly and did not look like a hero at all. He was plagued by several infirmities and was almost crippled by deafness and diarrhoea. He was a heavy drinker and simply drank himself to death in his last years. He was neither puritanic nor oversexed, he had several love-affairs but none of them serious enough to affect him very deeply. He was very nasty to everybody around him, he behaved like an oriental despot, and fully deserved the title of Grand Mogul which Haydn gave him. In spite of all his troubles, Beethoven was usually jovial, and his letters are full of nicknames, puns, jokes and roars of laughter. The only serious love Beethoven ever had was that for his little nephew whose guardian he became. Worries about this child occupied the last twelve years of his life. His education was very deficient but he gave himself an excellent education by copious readings of books of all sorts.

Germany and Austria were deeply influenced by the French Revolution. So was Beethoven. He was a religion-scoffer and ended his life with a sneer for the Holy Communion he received. His irreligion is the most important evidence that he entertained radical political views. He was a republican. In his letters we find all the slogans and the dreams of the French Revolution. His *Fidelio* is a Hymn of Liberty and his Ninth Symphony a Hymn of Universal Brotherhood. Plato's Republic and Plutarch's Biographies were his revolutionary gospels. As a republican, he admired Brutus and Napoleon. To the latter he dedicated originally his *Eroica* but erased the dedication when he learned that Napoleon was proclaimed Emperor of France.

His ethical system resembles very much that of Nietzsche's Superman and Will to Power. His patrons were enlightened aristocrats but his intimate friends were republicans like himself. The description of Beethoven by Goethe, the invitation of Beethoven by King Jerome Bonaparte of Westphalia to be Chapelmaster of his Court at Cassel, and the secret reports of the Vienna police can be considered as diplomas confirming the revolutionary ideology of the master. On the other hand, Beethoven was mildly anti-Semitic and claimed descent from the Prussian King Frederick William II. He wrote a good deal of bad reactionary music during the Congress of Vienna which is unworthy of him. His *Missa Solemnis* is the only good reactionary music he wrote but it does not sound like religious music at all. It is rather a Choral Symphony, similar to the last part of the Ninth Symphony. In conclusion, Beethoven was a Son of the French Revolution, as Romain Rolland describes him, but with a few reservations for some of his reactionary views and opportunistic acts.

We possess no good picture of Beethoven. His best picture would be one that emphasizes three of his principal characteristics: His extraordinary affection for his nephew; his physical ugliness coupled with his selfishness and arrogance; and his revolutionary music. The following suggestion is offered to a painter or a sculptor: A human gargoyle with bristly hair and fiercely protruding teeth holding a lovely boy with one hand and the Ninth Symphony with the other. The inscription should read as follows: Beethoven the Angel, the Devil and the Rebel.

GOETTERN SCHADET NICHTS

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Bishop Fan Stylian Noli was born on January 6, 1882, in Ibrik-Tepe, an Albanian settlement near Adrianople, European Turkey. He came to the United States and studied literature at Harvard College, music at the New England Conservatory, and history at Boston University, from which he received the degrees of Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Music, and Doctor of Philosophy, respectively. In 1908 he was ordained priest and in 1923 bishop, and is now the head of the Albanian Orthodox Church in America. From 1920-1924 he represented Albania at the League of Nations in Geneva. In 1924 he became Prime Minister and Acting Regent of Albania. His regime was marked by agrarian reforms, which he was the first to introduce into his native land, up to that time owned by about a dozen semi-feudal landlords.

*(Continued on back page)*

# SHTOJCE

NE KETE SHTOJCE PERFSHIHEN  
VLERESIMET MBAS BOTIMIT TE LIBRIT  
NGA PERSONALITETE TE NDRYSHME TE  
KOHES NE KETE FUSHE

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so thick on the memory of great personalities, giving rise to myths. You performed this operation with the skill of a master. Congratulations!"

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