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## Siddhartha's Smile: Schopenhauer, Hesse, Nietzsche

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Siddhartha's Smile:  
Schopenhauer, Hesse, Nietzsche

Senior Project Submitted to  
The Division of Social Studies  
and  
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by  
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## *Acknowledgments*

Mom: This work grew out of our conversations and is dedicated to you. Thank you for being the Nietzsche, or at least the Eckhart Tolle, to my ‘Schopenhchluter.’

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& Abby, my best pal: You kept me company throughout and happy always.

*meiner Mutter  
die mich zur Welt brachte  
gewidmet*

### *Note on translations, texts, and sources*

In this project, I analyze and compare the works of three German authors: Hermann Hesse (1877-1962), Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860), and Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900). As there is no single translator of all three, I have supplied translations in order to keep overlapping terms consistent and draw delineations when necessary. Hesse citations are primarily drawn from *Gesammelte Dichtungen* (Suhrkamp, 1958) and the second volume of *Materialen zu Hermann Hesses »Siddhartha«* (Suhrkamp, 1986), as edited by Volker Michels. Citations from Schopenhauer's *Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* are from the Insel Taschenbuch edition (1996). Nietzsche citations are drawn from either *Werke* (Zweitausendeins, 1999), edited by Ivo Frenzel, or from the *Kritische Studienausgabe* (Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 2011), edited by Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari. All abbreviations of cited texts will be found on page 4.

## *Abbreviations*

<i>EH</i>	<i>Ecce Homo</i> , Friedrich Nietzsche
<i>FW</i>	<i>Die fröhliche Wissenschaft</i> , Friedrich Nietzsche
<i>GD3/5/7</i>	<i>Gesammelte Dichtungen</i> (vol. 3, 5, or 7), Hermann Hesse
<i>G-D</i>	<i>Götzen-Dämmerung</i> , Friedrich Nietzsche
<i>GM</i>	<i>Zur Genealogie der Moral</i> , Friedrich Nietzsche
<i>GS7</i>	<i>Gesammelte Schriften</i> (vol. 7), Hermann Hesse
<i>GW12</i>	<i>Gesammelte Werkausgabe</i> (vol. 12), Hermann Hesse
<i>JGB</i>	<i>Jenseits von Gut und Böse</i> , Friedrich Nietzsche
<i>RB</i>	<i>Die Reden des Buddha: Mittlere Sammlung</i> , trans. Karl Neumann
<i>SN</i>	<i>Schopenhauer und Nietzsche</i> , Georg Simmel
<i>SvG</i>	<i>Über die vierfache Würzel des Satzes vom Zureichenden Grund</i> , Arthur Schopenhauer
<i>SW18/19</i>	<i>Sämtliche Werke</i> (vol. 18 or 19), Hermann Hesse
<i>MD1</i>	<i>Materialen zu Hermann Hesses »Demian«</i> (vol. 1), ed. Volker Michels
<i>MS1/2</i>	<i>Materialen zu Hermann Hesses »Siddhartha«</i> , (vol. 1 or 2), ed. Volker Michels
<i>WWV1/2</i>	<i>Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung</i> , vol. 1/2, Arthur Schopenhauer
<i>Z</i>	<i>Also sprach Zarathustra</i> , Friedrich Nietzsche

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*ridere coepi, dormiens primo, deinde vigilans*  
- Augustinus, *Confessiones* I.VI



## *Introduction* *Simmel's Problem, Hesse's Solution*

Arthur Schopenhauer and Friedrich Nietzsche are undoubtedly the most powerful and antithetical philosophers of nineteenth century Germany who attempt to understand the value and meaning of life in the world. Their driving questions are just as necessary to consider today as they were almost two centuries ago. Ought we – as Schopenhauer first calls out in 1818 with the publication of *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* [*The World as Will and Representation*] – stifle or even deny the Will to Live, the fundamental urge of all living creatures toward continued existence, which can maintain itself only through endless cycles of thoughtless slaughter and unjustifiable sufferings? Or must we – as Nietzsche answers Schopenhauer's call half a century later – find a way to affirm life by recognizing suffering as something meaningful, something that spurs us on, something that is ultimately justified by what we make of our lives?

In 1907, Georg Simmel, seminal German sociologist and philosopher, publishes a series of lectures – tersely titled, *Schopenhauer und Nietzsche* [*Schopenhauer and Nietzsche*] – in which he attempts to find meaning in the antithesis of these two intellectual giants. Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, he concludes, are not merely philosophers with opposing worldviews. Much more than this, they are the purest examples of a fundamental antithesis of the human spirit itself. At one pole, there is Schopenhauer's life- and world-denial, at the other, Nietzsche's absolute love and affirmation of the world and life. As conscientious, self-reflective beings, Simmel believes, we necessarily inhabit the space between the two. We are torn apart by innate, competing urges for creative self-assertion and compassionate self-resignation, and the dissonance between the two causes us to question our role as living creatures.

Simmel, in the final pages of *Schopenhauer and Nietzsche*, leaves us with a new philosophical problem: these opposing poles, or urges, of the spirit, he asserts, cannot be reconciled or synthesized. In the final paragraph, he writes,

Nach einem Frieden zwischen diesen Gegnern zu suchen, ist... wie jedes nutzlose Unternehmen, schlimmer als nutzlos, weil es den Sinn ihrer Gegensätzlichkeiten, und damit den Sinn eines jeden an und für sich fälscht.

To search for peace between these two opponents is... like any useless enterprise. Indeed, it is worse than useless, for it falsifies the meaning of their polarities and thereby the meaning of each philosopher in and for himself. (407-08)

Any attempt to strike a unity between these two urges, Simmel reasons, is doomed to fail; the most we can do is live our lives between the poles. Simmel's conclusion, though, should not be read as a grim confession of impotence. Rather, he presents it as a radical affirmation and celebration of the human condition itself. By respecting, cherishing, and cultivating both poles in equal measure, Simmel maintains, the individual is able to harness this tension and cultivate a noble and balanced personality (408).

Simmel is not the only German intellectual of the early twentieth century who engages the antithetical philosophies of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche. There is also Hermann Hesse, a generation younger than Simmel, who, reflecting on his life after receiving the Nobel Prize for literature in 1946, holds Schopenhauer and Nietzsche to be the German philosophers from whom he drew the most influence (*Nobel Lectures* 419). Hesse himself, having never read Simmel's *Schopenhauer und Nietzsche*,<sup>1</sup> even comes to recognize their polar influence on his thought. He writes in the *Schopenhauer Jahrbuch* (Schopenhauer Yearbook) in 1938,

Mit Schopenhauer begann ich mich schon in jenen Jünglingsjahren, in denen Nietzsche meine Hauptlektüre war, zu beschäftigen. Je mehr Nietzsche dann in den Hintergrund trat, desto mehr fühlte ich mich zu Schopenhauer hingezogen.

I began my engagement with Schopenhauer in those youthful years, during which Nietzsche composed the bulk of my reading. As Nietzsche moved further into the background, I felt myself more and more attracted to Schopenhauer. (GW12 257)

Hesse's brief remark points to a revealing trend in his relationship to the philosophies of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche: the intensity of his engagement with one stands in an inverse proportion to his engagement with the other. That is, his readings of Schopenhauer do not just become more frequent and intense, but they begin to outweigh and replace his readings of Nietzsche. He describes himself as feeling attracted (*hingezogen*) to Schopenhauer, as one would describe a positively charged magnet being pulled toward a negative pole. The parallel between Hesse's statement and the conclusion to Simmel's *Schopenhauer und Nietzsche* is striking and serves to show that Hesse, like Simmel, feels and understands the opposing power of the Schopenhauerian and Nietzschean worldviews.

Confrontations between antithetical worldviews are indeed central to many of Hesse's works. For instance, in *Steppenwolf* (1927), the civil is pitted against the animal, and in *Narziss und Goldmund* (*Narzissus and Goldmund*) (1930), the sensual against the spiritual. One work above all others, however, stands out as an aesthetic representation of the struggle between the Schopenhauerian and the Nietzschean: *Siddhartha: Eine indische Dichtung* (*Siddhartha: An Indian Tale*) (1922).

*Siddhartha* is the tale of a young boy, Siddhartha, who grows up among the priestly, Brahmanic caste in an ancient Indian city. Unsatisfied with his life and desirous of attaining spiritual enlightenment, he flees from his home with his friend, Govinda, to join a band of wanderings ascetics, the Samanas. After years spent practicing the rituals of the Samanas without success, Siddhartha and Govinda flee again and make way to one who is rumored to have actually attained enlightenment: the Buddha, Siddhartha Gotama, or simply Gotama as he is called in the novel. At Gotama's encampment, they hear his worldview firsthand, specifically his teaching of the way to *nirvana*, the spiritual release from worldly existence and its sufferings. While Govinda is swayed to join the ranks of the Buddhists, Siddhartha realizes that he can never attain salvation by submitting himself to the teaching of another – a

complaint he addresses to Gotama directly – and departs to a nearby city. Here he begins an affair with a courtesan, Kamala, and lives extravagantly as a merchant. After many years of stagnant, unfulfilling city life, however, he is driven to despair and attempts to drown himself in a river. He survives and decides to continue living, settling down near the same river alongside a humble but enlightened boatman, Vasudeva. Some years later, Kamala, travelling with her and Siddhartha's son, is bitten by a poisonous snake near Siddhartha and Vasudeva's home. She dies in their care, and Siddhartha takes in his son, only to suffer terrible grief when the young boy runs away back to the city. Eventually, Siddhartha has an ecstatic spiritual vision while gazing into the river, at which point he overcomes his grief and attains enlightenment. In the final chapter, Govinda and Siddhartha, now old men, cross paths one last time, and Siddhartha attempts to explain his enlightened worldview to Govinda, namely, his radical love for and affirmation of worldly existence. Govinda is unable to understand Siddhartha's teaching, which so clearly contradicts that of Gotama, and the novel ends as Siddhartha grants Govinda an ecstatic vision similar to the one which led him to enlightenment.

Indeed, in *Siddhartha*, the Schopenhauerian and Nietzschean worldviews are each represented by a figure named Siddhartha. There is, at one pole, Siddhartha Gotama, the Buddha, who teaches his followers to flee from the world and seek *nirvana*, the final state of otherworldly bliss and the cessation of rebirth. At the other pole, there is Siddhartha the protagonist, who turns his back on the Buddha and presents an opposing doctrine of unqualified love for the world – and even, as we will see, the desire to be reborn into it. Ironically, then, the very title, *Siddhartha*, seems to signify an irreconcilable antithesis inherent to the work itself.

However, *Siddhartha* stands in defiance of such a Simmelian reading. For the novel does not merely let this antithesis stand, but seeks to reconcile the worldviews of the two

Siddharthas. Specifically, Siddhartha Gotama and Siddhartha the protagonist are united by the symbol of the smile, which signifies an attitude to which Hesse grants more importance than their expressed opinions concerning the value of life and world. In Hesse's terminology, this attitude is *sich fallen lassen*, letting oneself fall, by which is meant the willingness to accept one's destiny and enact it with complete authenticity. Thus Siddhartha and Gotama's worldviews, though Schopenhauerian and Nietzschean in character, are not to be seen as irreconcilable opposites, but as equally valid and authentic expressions of a shared attitude. For this reason, *Siddhartha* can be read as an attempted reconciliation the Schopenhauerian and Nietzschean worldviews themselves.

The first two chapters of this project will present a Simmelian reading of *Siddhartha*, unearthing the Schopenhauerian and Nietzschean worldviews as represented by the figures of Gotama and Siddhartha, respectively. Beginning with the third chapter, we will witness how *Siddhartha* reaches beyond Simmel's conclusion in *Schopenhauer and Nietzsche* by analyzing the smile, the objective correlative of the attitude of *sich fallen lassen*, as a symbol used to reconcile the worldviews of Siddhartha and Gotama. Here we will draw insight from another work by Hesse, *Klein und Wagner (Klein and Wagner)* (1919), in which the connection between *sich fallen lassen* and the smile is first established. In the fourth and final chapter, we will investigate Hesse's development of *sich fallen lassen* and the symbol of the smile in relation to his engagement with Chinese philosophy, specifically Taoism, a tradition of thought based on the ultimate reconciliation of apparent opposites.

## *Chapter One* *Gotama, Schopenhauer, Nirvana*

Wir freuen uns an Trug und Schaum, / Wir gleichen führerlosen Blinden,  
Wir suchen bang in Zeit und Raum, / Was nur im Ewigen zu finden.

What are our joys? Delusions, foam. / We may as well be blind and guideless.  
We search, despairing, time and space, / For what is found in the Eternal.

- Hesse, "Wir leben hin" (We Live Forth) (1907)

In this chapter we will investigate what we, following Georg Simmel, will call the "Schopenhauerian pole" in *Siddhartha*. Though most of the first part of the novel deals with Schopenhauerian themes, we will only be observing Hesse's portrayal of the Buddha, or as he is called in *Siddhartha*, Gotama. As we draw out the primary characteristics of both Schopenhauer's philosophy and Gotama's teaching, or Buddhism, we must keep in mind that we will not be discussing Buddhism *per se*, but only "Buddhism" as understood by Hesse. This will be done primarily by analyzing Gotama's worldview as expressed in *Siddhartha* and drawing from Hesse's letters and journals for the sake of clarification. To provide a foundation for our investigation, we will begin the chapter by exposing the Schopenhauerian roots of Hesse's understanding of Buddhism.

### **From Nietzsche to Schopenhauer to Buddhism**

As we saw above (p. 8), Hesse explains in an article for the *Schopenhauer Yearbook* that he came to the work of Schopenhauer after a period of dedication to Nietzsche.<sup>2</sup> In this same article, he continues to describe how this switch to Schopenhauer is connected to his engagement with ancient Indian thought:

Mit Schopenhauer begann ich mich schon in jenen Jünglingsjahren, in denen Nietzsche meine Hauptlektüre war, zu beschäftigen. Je mehr Nietzsche dann in den Hintergrund trat, desto mehr fühlte ich mich zu Schopenhauer hingezogen, um so mehr als ich, von ihm unabhängig, schon früh einige Kenntnis der indischen Philosophie bekam.

Die spätere intensivere Beschäftigung mit indischer... Geistesart war es wohl, die mich abhielt, so viel Schopenhauer zu lesen, wie ich es sonst getan

hätte; so ist es gekommen, daß ich »Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung« zwar  
vielmals in Händen gehabt, aber doch nur ein einziges Mal ganz und  
konsequent gelesen habe.

I began my engagement with Schopenhauer in those youthful years,  
during which Nietzsche composed the bulk of my reading. As Nietzsche  
moved further into the background, I felt myself more and more attracted to  
Schopenhauer, especially as I had acquired some knowledge of Indian  
philosophy early on, independent of my readings of him.

It was my later, more intensive engagement with Indian... ways of thought  
which prevented me from reading as much Schopenhauer as I otherwise would  
have. So it came that I had *The World as Will and Representation* many times  
in my hands, although I only once read it fully and methodically. (GW12  
257f.)

Just as it is the work of Schopenhauer that tears Hesse away from his studies of Nietzsche, it  
is his studies of Indian philosophy that eventually tear him away from Schopenhauer.

However, there is a crucial difference between these two events. Whereas Hesse describes  
his engagements with Schopenhauer and Nietzsche as being inversions of one another, he  
describes Indian philosophy as a stand-in for Schopenhauer's. In Simmel's parlance, Hesse's  
switch from Nietzsche to Schopenhauer is a motion from one pole to its opposite, while his  
later switch from Schopenhauer to Indian philosophy remains at the same pole.

In an undated piece first published post-mortem, titled "Über mein Verhältnis zum  
geistigen Indien und China" (On My Relationship to the Spiritual India and China), Hesse  
gives a more definite time frame of his engagement with Schopenhauer and Indian  
philosophies. He writes that in his childhood, he is already exposed to objects and languages  
of India, where his parents and grandfather were missionaries. His father even has a number  
of Buddhist prayers that he translated into German and which he and young Hermann often  
read aloud (MSI 339-40). This is, however, as Hesse later recalls, a time when "es noch  
keine moderne Indologie gab, als noch keine Upanishaden etc. etc. übersetzt waren" [modern  
indology did not yet exist, nor were there translations of the Upanishads, etc., etc.] (MS I

256). His childhood exposure to Indian thought, then, is primarily to its symbols and rituals; he has yet to develop an understanding of its esoteric meanings and motives.

As Hesse continues to explain, it is not until about 1904, when he is twenty-seven years old, that a brief honeymoon with Schopenhauer's philosophy prods him to a more thorough engagement with the philosophical works of ancient India.<sup>3</sup> This begins with a feverish reading of Franz Hartmann's translation of the *Bhagavad Gita*, which Hesse later in life refers to as "das erste echte indische Werk, das ich kennen lernte" [the first authentic Indian work, with which I acquainted myself] (*MS I* 256, 340; cf. Mileck 160). As Hesse then moves from this first independent study of classical Indian philosophy to readings of Karl Eugen Neumann's translation of the *Dhamapaddam* (1892), Hermann Oldenberg's *Buddha* (1881), and later, Paul Deussen's translation of the *Upanishads* (1897), it is primarily the pessimistic, Schopenhauerian elements that attract his attention. Hesse admits of this time,

Meine damalige Philosophie war die eines erfolgreichen, aber müden und übersättigten Lebens, ich faßte den ganzen Buddhismus als Resignation und Askese auf, als Flucht in Wunschlosigkeit, und blieb Jahre dabei stehen.

My philosophy at the time was that of a successful but tired and jaded life. I understood all of Buddhism as resignation and asceticism, as flight into wishlessness, and I stood by this belief for years. (*MS I* 340)

It is not surprising that Hesse comes to understand Indian, especially Buddhist, philosophy, as pessimistic and resignatory. German Indology at the turn of the twentieth century is still the legacy of Schopenhauer, who sees life- and world-denial as central to Buddhism. This tendency to resignation is just what Schopenhauer, the arch-pessimist,<sup>4</sup> sees as being so noble and valuable in Indian philosophy. In opposition to Hegel, Germany's philosophical titan of the early nineteenth century, who describes the denizens of India as ethically stagnant "vegetable people" (Halbfass 84-99), Schopenhauer places the intellectual and moral accomplishments of ancient Indian thinkers, specifically the Buddha, on par with –



sometimes even *above* – those of Western thinkers like Immanuel Kant or Christ<sup>5</sup>.

Approaching the *fin de siècle*, as Hegel's popularity wanes and Schopenhauer's waxes, it is the latter's now-famous words that inspire Germany's new generation of indologists:

Wir... schicken nunmehr den Brahmanen englische *clergymen*... um sie aus Mitleid eines bessern zu belehren... Aber uns widerfährt was Dem, der eine Kugel gegen einen Felsen abschießt. In Indien fassen unsere Religionen nie und nimmermehr Wurzel: die Urweisheit des Menschengeschlechts wird nicht von den Begebenheiten in Galiläa verdrängt werden. Hingegen strömt Indische Weisheit nach Europa zurück und wird eine Grundveränderung in unserm Wissen und Denken hervorbringen.

We... are now sending English clergymen to the Brahmins... so that we may, out of pity, put them right... With this enterprise, however, we are faring just as well as one who fires a bullet against a cliff. Our religions will never strike roots in India: the primordial wisdom of mankind will not be supplanted by the events in Galilee. In contrast, the wisdom of India is now flowing back to Europe and will bring forth a fundamental change in our knowledge and thinking. (WWVI §63)

True to Schopenhauer's words, the turn of the twentieth century sees missionaries who no longer preach, but receive and bring back to Germany the teachings of the Indian subcontinent. Among these is Karl Eugen Neumann, one of the most important – though now largely ignored – indologists of the period. After reading Schopenhauer, Neumann is inspired to return to the university, study Sanskrit, and translate, among other works of Buddhist scripture, the *Dhamapaddam* (1892) and the *Reden des Gotomo Buddhho* (*Discourses of the Buddha*) (1895-1901), a collection of medium-length discourses given by the Buddha (Marchand, 344f). Both works have a profound effect on Hesse's understanding of Buddhism, and Hesse produces several positive reviews of Neumann's *Discourses* at the time he is composing *Siddhartha* (MSI 40, 147-48).

There is good reason to regard Neumann's translations as a deliberate attempt to strengthen the relationship between Schopenhauer's philosophy and Buddhism. For instance, to make the unfamiliar teachings of the Buddha sound more familiar and reasonable to a

German audience, Neumann makes frequent reference to the philosophy and terminology of Schopenhauer in the explanatory notes. In the primary text, too, he borrows Schopenhauer's most fundamental and peculiar terminology: *Bejahung und Verneinung des Willens* (affirmation and denial of the will). For instance, in the "Elephantenspur" (Traces of the Elephant), the eighth discourse of the first volume of the *Mittlere Sammlung* (*Middle Length Discourses*), Neumann twice renders the Buddha as saying,

Was... Wille, Vergnügen, Bejahung, Behagen ist, das ist die Leidensentwicklung; was... Verneinung des Willensreizes, Verleugnung des Willensreizes ist, das ist die Leidensauflösung

What... will, enjoyment, affirmation, and pleasure is, that is the evolution of suffering; what... denial of the stimulation of the will, renunciation of the stimulation of the will is, that is the solution to suffering. (*RB* 213)

Most revealing of all, however, Neumann concludes his preface to the first volume with the statement that "Die Reden stammen zwar aus dem 6. Jahrhundert vor Christus: aber sie machen zuweilen den Eindruck als gehörten sie ins 6. Jahrhundert nach Schopenhauer" [To be sure, the discourses are from the sixth century before Christ; however, at times they make the impression that they belong to the sixth century after Schopenhauer] (*RB* XXXII).

In *Eine Bibliothek der Weltliteratur* (*A Library of World Literature*) (1929), a book of simultaneous autobiography and kaleidoscopic literary review, Hesse gives a clear image of his dedication to Neumann's translations. He writes,

Es waren... die Übersetzungen indischer Quellen, die ich auftreiben konnte, beinahe alle sehr mangelhaft, einzig Deußens »Sechzig Upanishaden« und Neumanns deutsche »Reden Buddhas« gaben mir einen reinen, vollen Geschmack und Genuß der indischen Quellen.

Almost all of the translations of Indian sources that I could get my hands on were quite poor. Only Deussen's *Sixty Upanishads* and Neumann's *Discourses of the Buddha* gave me a full, undiluted taste and appreciation of the Indian world. (*GS* 7 338-39)

Just how “undiluted” Hesse’s sources are is a question that will not be resolved in the present work, as any answer would necessitate a long and rigorous comparison of the German translations with the original Pali texts. Nonetheless, it is Neumann, an orientalist who sees himself contributing to the legacy of Schopenhauer, who provides Hesse with the first translations of Buddhist texts that Hesse judges to be authentic. Considering that Hesse is drawn to Neumann’s translations directly after his primary engagement with the philosophy of Schopenhauer, there is good reason to believe that what he enjoys in the translations, consciously or unconsciously, is their Schopenhauerian quality.

In the remainder of this chapter, we will observe Hesse’s own portrayal of the Buddha in *Siddhartha*. To distinguish the latter from the historical Buddha, we will, following Hesse, refer to him as Gotama. As we will see, Gotama’s worldview is in many respects identical with Schopenhauer’s, and can be taken as the crystallization of Hesse’s Schopenhauerian understanding of Buddhist thought.

### **Gotama and Schopenhauer on the Nature of the World**

We will begin with the most fundamental similarity between Gotama and Schopenhauer: their ontological beliefs, that is, their beliefs about the nature of the world, both its happenings and its inhabitants. Both Schopenhauer and Gotama begin from a deterministic understanding of the universe. They consider all events to be subjected to an omnipresent and unrelenting law of causality that determines the entire course of world-events. For this reason, each one in turn describes the world as “eine ewige Kette von Ursachen und Wirkungen” [an eternal chain of causes and effects] (*WWV I* §7, *PP I* 216, *SvG* §20; cf. *GD3* 641).<sup>6</sup> There is – with the one important exception of final spiritual salvation, which will be addressed below – no Lucretian “swerve” to atoms, nor any notion of free will, divine intervention, or pure chance that could give rise to an undetermined event.

Everything that occurs, cognitive or physical, happens as it does because it *must*, because it is part of the never-ending chain of causes and effects.

Granted, Schopenhauer and Gotama reach this conclusion from different paths. Schopenhauer, following his reading of Immanuel Kant, is a transcendental idealist. In other words, he believes that the external world is a “representation” (*Vorstellung*<sup>7</sup>) of the world constructed by our minds. What this means is that our minds, on receiving data from stimulated sensory organs, uses *a priori*, or innate, cognitive laws to rework this same data into objects of perception. Specifically, according to Schopenhauer’s slimmed-down version of Kant’s epistemological schema, there are three such *a priori* cognitive laws: time, space, and causality (the latter being the combined working of the former two).<sup>8</sup> The entire natural world we perceive, then, has already been reworked by these laws, and therefore necessarily takes the form of a causally-linked series of occurrences in space and time. This is, in Schopenhauer’s terms, *die Welt als Vorstellung*, the world as representation. The latter has no truth in itself; it is filled with nothing but “mere appearances” (*bloße Erscheinungen*) (*WWVI* §3).<sup>9</sup>

Though Gotama is not as clear as Schopenhauer with regard to the source of determinism, the determinate nature of the world also serves as the cornerstone of his worldview. In Siddhartha’s words, as he speaks to Gotama,

Als eine vollkommene, als eine nie und nirgends unterbrochene Kette zeigst du die Welt, als eine ewige Kette, gefügt aus Ursachen und Wirkungen. Niemals ist dies so klar gesehen, nie so unwiderleglich dargestellt worden.

You describe the world as a perfect chain that is never and nowhere interrupted, an eternal chain made of causes and effects. Never has this been so clearly seen, never so irrefutably established. (*GD3* 641)

Siddhartha continues to note what he sees as Gotama’s most important teaching:

die Einheit der Welt, der Zusammenhang alles Geschehens, das Umschlossensein alles Großen und Kleinen vom selben Strome, vom selben Gesetz der Ursachen, des Werdens und Sterbens

the unity of the world, the connection of all events, the enclosure of everything big and small by the same stream, by the same law of causes, of becoming and dying. (GD3 641-42)

Siddhartha's repeated emphasis on Gotama's notion of the causal interconnection of events shows us that Gotama, like Schopenhauer, has set up the law of causality as a central tenet of Buddhism.

### **The Need for Salvation**

For both Schopenhauer and Gotama, the doctrine of determinism is not an end in itself, but serves as a means to explaining the nature of our experience, and specifically, our experience of suffering. In Gotama's teaching, suffering arises from the fact that the causally determined world in which we live is permeated with impermanence. Indeed, impermanence and the law of causality are two sides of the same coin. An event can only be caused when a previous event has caused it, and in doing so, passes away. Certainly this is the case in *Siddhartha*, as Siddhartha refers to Gotama's "Gesetz der Ursachen, des Werdens und des Sterbens" [law of causes, of becoming and dying] (GD3 642). Siddhartha is not referring to two distinct laws; as is clear from his use of grammatical apposition, Siddhartha is construing the same law in two different ways. That is to say, Gotama's "law of causes" simply is the "law of becoming and dying."

Because the world and the things within it are subject to the law of causality and thus impermanent, if we attach ourselves to these things, believing we should possess them permanently, we will only cause our own suffering. This is the ground for the first Noble Truth of Buddhism, the Noble Truth of *Dukkha* (Suffering), or as Gotama refers to it in *Siddhartha*, "die Lehre vom Leiden" [the doctrine of suffering] (GD3 638). Its basic principle is that the things of the world do not lead to ultimate satisfaction, but rather to continued

suffering. Or, as Gotama puts it, “Leiden war das Leben, voll Leid war die Welt” [Life was suffering, the world was full of suffering] (*GD3* 638; cf. Spiro 37).<sup>10</sup>

The second Noble Truth of Buddhism, which Gotama calls “die Lehre... von der Herkunft des Leidens [the doctrine of the source of suffering] (*GD3* 638), has to do with the explicit cause of suffering. The historical Buddha names the latter *tanha*, or “thirsting,” which is roughly equatable with the concepts of craving, desire, or wanting (Spiro 38; Panaïoti 133ff).<sup>11</sup> Thirsting, in other words, designates a particular disposition of the subject toward the objects of the world, namely the desire to possess objects or enter into situations which lead to pleasure, as well as the desire to avoid objects and situations which lead to suffering. Yet, according to the first Noble Truth, the permanent satisfaction of thirsting or desire is impossible, as even pleasurable situations and objects pass away of necessity.

In anticipation of the objection that thirsting, and thus suffering, will simply come to an end after the death of the individual, the historical Buddha introduces a caveat: attachment and thirsting, unless permanently extinguished during one’s life, lead to rebirth, as the subject still desires existence as such (Spiro 42). Those individuals who still thirst after life become caught up in *samsara*, the cycle of rebirth, repeatedly entering the world and undergoing the sufferings inherent to life. For Buddhism proper, there is simply no argument as to whether remaining in *samsara* might be desirable. The notion that pain is an evil is simply axiomatic (ibid. 39), meaning that the only conceivable goal is the cessation of suffering. This would, in turn, entail the escape from *samsara* and the end of rebirth.

The third Noble Truth of Buddhism, which Gotama calls “die Lehre vom Weg zur Aufhebung des Leidens” [the doctrine of the way to the negation of suffering] (*GD3* 638), is that there is a way out of *samsara*. This way out is, quite logically, the cessation of thirsting. The attainment of a thirstless state is *nirvana*, or as Gotama sometimes refers to it, salvation (*Erlösung*) (*GD3* 638). In the words of Hesse’s contemporary, Albert Schweitzer, *nirvana* is

“das innerliche Losgelöst-Sein von den Dingen [der Welt]” [the inner detachment from the things [of the world]] (*Weltanschauung* 96). This is indeed a sentiment that Gotama shares. As Govinda, Siddhartha’s lifelong friend who has converted to Buddhism, says, Gotama “verbot uns, unser Herz in Liebe an Irdisches zu fesseln” [forbid us to shackle our hearts with love to worldly things] (*GD3* 729). Furthermore, as Siddhartha and Govinda first see Gotama, they recognize him immediately “an der Vollkommenheit seiner Ruhe, an der Stille seiner Gestalt, in welcher kein Wollen... war, nur Licht und Frieden” [by the perfection of his serenity, by his tranquil figure, in which there was no wanting... only light and peace] (638). That is, Gotama has extinguished his wanting or thirst, and thereby attained the highest state of serenity, or *nirvana*.

Buddhists who have attained *nirvana*, then, are detached from the world and no longer desire its objects. Nor do they desire life as such, which frees them from the cycle of rebirth. According to the legend of Gotama as presented in *Siddhartha*:

Einer sei erschienen, Gotama genannt, der Erhabene, der Buddha, der habe in sich das Leid der Welt überwunden und das Rad der Wiedergeburten zum Stehen gebracht... er hatte Nirwana erreicht und kehrte nie mehr in den Kreislauf zurück, tauchte nie mehr in den trüben Strom der Gestaltungen unter.

A man had appeared named Gotama, the Sublime One, the Buddha. It was said that he had overcome the pain of the world and halted the wheel of life.<sup>12</sup> ...He had attained *nirvana* and would never again return into the lifecycle; never again would he dive into the murky stream of forms. (*GD3* 631-32)

Gotama’s halting of the wheel of life, or the cycle of rebirth, is indeed the kernel of *nirvana* as understood by Hesse. In a journal entry from the time of *Siddhartha*, he refers to “das echte Niwana” [the true *nirvana*] as “Das Nichtmehrgeborenwerden” [release from birth] (*MSI* 11). Again, Hesse writes in a letter from 1930: “...Das, worum Buddha sich in seinen Hunderten von Predigten bemüht hat, ist... eine neue Lehre von der *Erlösung* aus der ewigen Wiederkehr, vom Weg zu Nirvana” [What the Buddha strove to establish in his hundreds of sermons is a new teaching of the *salvation* from the eternal return, of the way to *nirvana*]

(MSI 210). That such a state of *nirvana* can be attained by adhering to the Buddha's teaching is the fourth and final Noble Truth of Buddhism. Gotama states it so: "Leiden war das Leben, voll Leid war die Welt, aber Erlösung war gefunden: Erlösung fand, wer den Weg des Buddha ging" [Life was suffering, the world was full of pain, but salvation [*Erlösung*] had been found: he found salvation who went the Buddha's way] (GD3 638).

The Buddha's way is specifically the practice of the Noble Eightfold Path, which, following Neumann's translation, are: "rechte Erkenntnis, rechte Gesinnung, rechte Rede, rechtes Handeln, rechtes Wandeln, rechtes Mühn, rechte Einsicht... rechte Vertiefung" [right knowledge, right disposition, right speech, right action, right way of life, right effort, right discernment... right meditation] (R 877). Recalling from above (p. 16) that the Buddha, in Neumann's translation, also explains that "what... denial of the stimulation of the will, renunciation of the stimulation of the will is, that is the solution to suffering," it would seem that the Noble Eightfold is directed toward cultivating virtues which quiet the will. All of these virtues, however, can also be interpreted as eudaemonic virtues, that is, virtues which lead toward personal well-being *in the world*. The latter interpretation would, in turn, undermine the claim that the Buddhist worldview is ultimately life- and world-denying. While this view is held by modern interpreters (e.g., Panāṭi 161ff), we must remember that we are attempting to piece together Hesse's view of Buddhism, which is influenced by the legacy of Schopenhauer, who establishes Buddhism as a life- and world-denying religion. Keeping this in mind, we will now turn back to Schopenhauer to draw out the central similarities between his worldview and Gotama's.

According to Schopenhauer, the entire world as representation is underlain by a transcendent Will (*Wille*),<sup>13</sup> whose only function is to strive endlessly toward existence (*Dasein*) (WWV2 §28, p. 523). Schopenhauer even sees the Will as analogous to thirsting; he writes, "Wollen und Streben ist sein ganzes Wesen, einem unlöschbaren Durst gänzlich zu



vergleichen” [Wanting and striving is its entire essence, entirely comparable to an unquenchable thirst] (WWV I §57). The Will, then, is an extreme version of the Buddhist notion of thirsting; whereas in Buddhism thirsting is a psychological state, Schopenhauer’s Will is *the* ontological principle of the universe (cf. Panaïoti 160).<sup>14</sup> Everything in the world, according to Schopenhauer, is a manifestation of the Will, from natural forces such as gravity and magnetism all the way up to the level of organic creatures. Organic creatures, however, do not merely exist, but *live*. Accordingly, Schopenhauer refers to this highest stage of the Will’s manifestation as the Will to Live (*Wille zum Leben*<sup>15</sup>) (WWV2 §28).

It is just at the point where the Will becomes the Will to Live that suffering enters the scene. For living creatures are not insensitive like stones, but have subjective experience of the world and central nervous systems hardwired to feel pain. And the world is full of opportunities to do just that. Not only do animals tear each other apart in the quest for sustenance – or as Schopenhauer puts it, “Der Wille [muß] an sich selber zehren... weil außer ihm nichts daist und er ein hungriger Wille ist” [The Will must feast on itself, for it is all that exists, and it is a hungry Will] (WWV §28)<sup>16</sup> – but more importantly, any sense of creaturely satisfaction is necessarily fleeting. For the things of the world, being subject to the *a priori* cognitive law of time, are by their very nature temporal and transitory. The life of the Will in the world, Schopenhauer writes, is for this reason nothing but “das stete Haschen nach immer andern Truggestalten” [the continuous chase after ever-changing illusions] (WWV I §57). Indeed, we can read this as a combination of Gotama’s first two Noble Truths: suffering is caused by desire, and specifically, the desire for transient phenomena.

Though the Will to Live, according to Schopenhauer, is itself the source of suffering, most creatures – including humans – do not realize this fact. They remain slaves to the Will, striving after the impermanent satisfaction of creaturely urges, continuing to do the things that are conducive to self-preservation and procreation. In this way, the Will to Live

preserves itself in the world, and the cycle of life and suffering continues. Indeed, Schopenhauer even believes that the Will to Live – or at least the individual’s specific will\*, which he terms the “character” (*Charakter*) – is passed from parent (specifically father<sup>17</sup>) to child, meaning that the will of the individual is literally reborn into the world as a result of procreation (WWV2 §43). The idea is quite similar to Gotama’s notion of *samsara*, according to which desire, specifically the desire for continued existence, leads to the rebirth and continued suffering of the individual. This similarity is not lost on Schopenhauer, as he himself equates the continuance of the personal will with “Sansara” [*samsara*] (WWV2 §48).

Schopenhauer further believes that at the highest stage of the Will’s manifestation in the world – that is, at the level of humans – the intellect can become so powerful that individuals recognize the world for what it really is: an endless slaughter-bench and an eternal spring of misery, all in the service of the Will to Live. In Schopenhauer’s terms, these individuals see through the *principium individuationis* – the combined working of space and time that splinters the transcendent Will into separate bodies – and realize that all the things of the world, including themselves, are manifestations of the same Will (WWV I §66). They see that the entire world as representation, as *samsara*, is nothing but the reflection of the ruthless, hungry Will in space and time. At this moment, they face the moral problem *par excellence*: to be or not to be? In full knowledge of what they, as members of the world, are *essentially* – that is, Will to Live – they must choose to either continue affirming life and world, or to turn away from the world and deny their wills.

As Schopenhauer believes that affirming the personal will can only lead to the continuance of life and suffering, he reasons that individual salvation (*Erlösung*) is to be attained through the denial of the will. Schopenhauer’s practical philosophy, reminiscent of the Eightfold Path of Buddhism, therefore sets up those actions as virtuous which serve to

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\* I use the lowercase “will” to refer to the specific will of the individual, which is, according to Schopenhauer’s hereditary theory, a sliver or aspect of the transcendent Will to Live.

quiet the will and stymie egoistic tendencies. This includes, most importantly, denying the desire for procreation, meaning that, for will-denying individuals, the cycle of rebirth comes to a close. Freed from their attachment to the world, to *samsara*, all that remains for such world- and will-deniers – whom Schopenhauer terms “saints” (*Heiliger*) – is salvation (*Erlösung*), the highest and only lasting state of peace (*Ruhe*). Schopenhauer himself notes the similarity between this idea and the Buddhist conception of *nirvana* (WWVI §48, p. 781), even ending his *World as Will and Representation* with a tip of the hat to the latter.<sup>18</sup>

Schopenhauer is not alone in comparing his theory of salvation with the Buddhist concept of *nirvana*. In a journal entry from February 17, 1921, Hesse himself describes *nirvana* in unabashedly Schopenhauerian terms. He writes, “Nirwana ist, wie ich es verstehe, das Zurückkehren des Einzelnen zum ungeteilten Ganzen, der erlösende Schritt hinter das prinzipium [*sic*] individuationis” [*Nirvana* is, as I understand it, the reverting<sup>19</sup> of the individual to the undivided whole, the salvific step behind the *principium individuationis*] (MSI 21). As this entry dates from about two weeks after he completes the chapter “Gotama” (MSI 39), in which the Buddhist worldview is most clearly explicated, it is plain to see that Hesse has Schopenhauer on his mind at the exact time he is shaping his own image of the Buddha. In this same journal entry, however, Hesse also expresses his reserves about the Schopenhauerian-Buddhist goal of *nirvana*. He writes, “Eine andere Frage ist es, ob man diese Rückkehr begehren soll oder nicht, ob man es auf dem Wege Buddhas tun soll oder nicht” [It is another question if one ought to desire this reversion or not, if one should go the way of the Buddha or not] (ibid.). As we will see in the next chapter, Hesse attempts to answer this question by presenting an opposing, world-affirming – in other words, Nietzschean – worldview in the figure of Siddhartha.

## *Chapter Two* *Siddhartha, Nietzsche, Amor Fati*

Verlaß mich du, unholder Traum / Vom Leid der Welt!

Please let me be, unpleasant dream / Of this world's pain!

- Hesse, "Im Grase Liegend" (Lying in the Grass) (1914)

That two opposing worldviews can be reconciled implies that their opposition is understood. For this reason, we need to understand why exactly the two Siddharthas (Siddhartha and Siddhartha Gotama) are to be taken as representatives of opposite worldviews. This will be done by showing that Siddhartha's worldview is comparable to that of Nietzsche's, and as such, opposite to Gotama's Schopenhauerian worldview. Most importantly, we will see that Siddhartha embraces an attitude that Nietzsche calls *amor fati*, that is, the love of fate, and specifically, the love of one's fate as a creature in a world filled with suffering. *Amor fati*, in turn, is Nietzsche's own inversion and denial of Schopenhauer's goal of salvation (*Erlösung*), which, as we have seen, is equatable with Gotama's goal of *nirvana*.

### **Siddhartha, Zarathustra, and the Goal**

In August 1920, Hesse's work on *Siddhartha* comes to a halt. He has by this point written everything up to the fourth chapter, in which Siddhartha refuses to submit himself to the teaching of Gotama and experiences his first "awakening" (*Erwachen*). Like Siddhartha, Hesse feels that he is still missing the proper source of personal experience he needs to move forward with his task (*MSI* 10). He has certainly been able to paint a vivid portrait of "Siddhartha dem Dulder und Asketen" [Siddhartha the endurer and ascetic], but this is only because he is familiar with the tendency to world-renunciation that characterizes this period of Siddhartha's life. At the age of thirty, Hesse even practices his own non-ecclesiastical form

of Buddhism (*MSI* 202). Almost fifteen years later, as Hesse takes his major break from writing *Siddhartha*, his friend Romain Rolland describes him as

hager, hohlwängig, ...asketisch, hart aus Knochen geschnitzt... Er hat sich sogar fast von allem, was dem Leben eines modernen Menschen Wert gibt, vom Wohlsein, von der Beteiligung am Kulturbetrieb, losgelöst. Er lebt wie ein Weiser aus Indien.

haggard, hollow-cheeked, ...ascetic, carved out of bone... He has almost completely detached himself from everything that gives value to the life of the modern person: from wellbeing, from active participation in cultural pursuits. He lives like an Indian sage. (*MSI* 115)

It is not surprising that Hesse is at a loss when it comes time to portray “Siddhartha den Sieger, den Jasager, den Bezwingen” [Siddhartha the victor, the yes-sayer, the conqueror] (*MSI* 10) – or, to conclude his list of unabashed Nietzschean borrowings,<sup>20</sup> Siddhartha the *Übermensch*\*. He certainly wants his protagonist to embody a life-affirming, Nietzschean ideal, but he still lacks the experiential source to bring this new side of Siddhartha to life.

Ironically, considering that Hesse chooses to subtitle *Siddhartha* “eine indische Dichtung” [an Indian tale], he intends for the final sections to present a distinctly anti-Indian – and as we will see, anti-Schopenhauerian – worldview. Hesse even comes to refer to *Siddhartha* as “der Ausdruck meiner Befreiung vom indischen Denken” [the expression of my emancipation from Indian thought] (*MSI* 202), by which he specifically means Buddhism, or at least, his Schopenhauerian interpretation of Buddhism as “resignation and asceticism, as flight into wishlessness” (above, p. 14). That *Siddhartha* borrows heavily from the symbolic world of India should not lead the reader into thinking otherwise, as Hesse himself writes to his friend, Stefan Zweig,

Daß [meine Religion] im Siddhartha noch indisch gekleidet geht, heißt nicht, daß das Indische daran mir noch wichtig sei, aber erst, als eben dies Indische anfang, mir nicht wichtig zu sein, wurde es für mich darstellbar.

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\* Rather than using the gendered “overman” or awkward “overhuman,” I will use the German *Übermensch*. Accordingly, the plural is “the *Übermenschen*.”

That [my religion] in *Siddhartha* is still in Indian garb doesn't mean that the Indian aspect in the book is still important to me. Rather, it was just as this same Indian aspect stopped being important to me that I was able to portray it. (MSI 190; Weber 79)

Siddhartha the protagonist, however, does not merely embody the negation of Gotama's Schopenhauerian worldview. He is as well the expression of a new goal that, Hesse wants to show, is both positively expressible and ultimately attainable. In order to clarify this, Hesse uses a unique narrative tactic in a pair of passages toward the end of the novel. Typically, the narrator of *Siddhartha* reports on what Siddhartha did or thought, but at two points in the penultimate chapter "Om," the narrator steps out of his otherwise limited role in order to make prescient claims about Siddhartha's goal, both its content and its attainability. Opening the chapter, the narrator says, "Obwohl er nahe der Vollendung war, und an seiner letzten Wunde trug" [Although he was close to perfection and bore his last wound] (GD3 715), which gives us a closer taste of what is to come, namely, a state of perfection. Further into the chapter, our vision of Siddhartha's approaching perfection becomes even more clear: "Ach, noch blühte die Wunde nicht, noch wehrte sein Herz sich wider das Schicksal, noch strahlte nicht Heiterkeit und Sieg aus seinem Leide" [Alas, the wound had not yet bloomed, his heart still resisted his fate, serenity and triumph did not yet shine forth from his pain] (717). By telling us what Siddhartha is not yet – perfect, accepting of fate, healed – the narrator slyly dangles before us the information we need to make sense of Siddhartha's ecstatic vision later on in the chapter. We are led to understand that the latter is not a mere illusion, mirage, or just another step along a never-ending path. Rather, Siddhartha attains the final goal, which the narrator confirms for us by ending the chapter with the actualization of his previously prescient claim: "In dieser Stunde hörte Siddhartha auf, mit dem Schicksal zu kämpfen, hörte auf zu leiden" [In this hour, Siddhartha ceased to battle with his fate, he ceased to suffer] (GD3 721). The narrator confirms that Siddhartha's vision is the

transformative event of his life, the moment when he reaches a state of perfection (*Vollendung*). This is, in the language of *Siddhartha*, “seines langen Suchens Ziel” [his long searching’s goal].

The word “goal” (*Ziel*) is not just limited to this passage, but appears in every chapter. Indeed, every chapter is the description of Siddhartha’s release from an old goal or discovery of a new goal, oftentimes both. In contrast with Siddhartha’s previous goals, however, his ecstatic vision at the end of “Om,” or more precisely, the new understanding of the world to which this vision leads him, is established as *the* goal. Linguistically, this is made clear by the peculiar construction of the phrase *seines langen Suchens Ziel* (his long searching’s goal). The construction is more typical of poetic or archaic texts, which, granted, is befitting of the general tone of the novel. What is most important, however, is that the use of this more poetic construction places emphasis on the word “goal” (*Ziel*). The phrase draws attention to itself and makes its intention clear: like an arrow racing towards its target, “seines langen Suchens” is aimed to strike *das Ziel*.

Already, this narrative focus on Siddhartha’s “langen Suchens Ziel” brings us into the world of Nietzsche. In Nietzsche’s *Also sprach Zarathustra* (*Thus Spoke Zarathustra*) (1883), which Hesse reads and admires (cf. *MDI* 150), Zarathustra fervently addresses the concept of *das Ziel*. For instance, in one of the concluding sections of the first book, “Vom tausend und einem Ziele” [On the Thousand and One Goals], we see Zarathustra lay out the kernel of the idea:

Tausend Ziele gab es bisher, denn tausend Völker gab es. Nur die Fessel der tausend Nacken fehlt noch, es fehlt das eine Ziel. Noch hat die Menschheit kein Ziel

Until now there were a thousand goals, because there were a thousand peoples. Now just the shackle of the thousand necks is lacking, all that is lacking is the *one* goal. Humanity still has no goal.

Though the positive content of Zarathustra's goal is not made clear in this passage, both the language and the title suggest that the furthering of humanity is dependent on a single unifying goal. This goal, as becomes clear throughout the work, is Nietzsche's infamous *Übermensch* (cf. Z "Vorrede" [Preface] §§4-5).

If Hesse's abundant use of the word "goal" is coming directly from his reading of Nietzsche, specifically Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*, then Siddhartha's "langen Suchens Ziel" is to be read as a solution to Zarathustra's problem of the missing goal. Siddhartha himself would then be Hesse's own portrait of the Nietzschean *Übermensch*. As further confirmation of this claim, we will need to determine if there are genuine correspondences between Siddhartha's and Nietzsche's goals. To do this, we will begin by analyzing Nietzsche's goal of the *Übermensch*, especially its relation to and inversion of Schopenhauer's ideal of the saint. This will provide us with the groundwork we need to dissect Siddhartha's goal and demonstrate its relation to Nietzsche's.

### **Nietzsche's Anti-Schopenhauerian Goal: The *Übermensch* and the Affirmation of Eternal Return**

In opposition to the Schopenhauerian saint, who renounces self-motivated willing in order to be freed from suffering, the Nietzschean *Übermensch* embraces suffering as the most potent stimulus to continue living. It would be a mistake, however, to think Nietzsche refutes Schopenhauer's pessimistic recognition of the overwhelming presence of suffering in the world. Far from dismissing pessimism as a whole, Nietzsche envisions a new ideal of a "Dionysian pessimism," which maintains gratitude and love for the world (*FW* §370; Dienstag 161-200). Nietzsche opposes this form of pessimism to the "Romantic pessimism" of Schopenhauer, which is born of hatred for and denial of the state of the world. Romantic pessimists like Schopenhauer shape their image of the world according to their own onerous existence, and are thus lead to conclude that the world is itself a hellish place that ought to be destroyed. As the kernel of this attitude, we see Schopenhauer proclaim, "Als Zweck unsers



Daseins ist in der Tat nicht anderes anzugeben, als die Erkenntnis, daß wir besser nicht dawären” [Indeed, we can boast no other purpose for our existence than the realization that we would be better off if we did not exist] (*WWV2* §48). Dionysian pessimists, on the other hand, do not place their faith in a world of eternal peace and painlessness somewhere beyond the world in which they live. Rather, they desire to enhance and aid the world, to give expression to their “überevollen, zukunfts-schwangeren Kraft” [overflowing strength, pregnant with the future] (*FW* §370). As Zarathustra would say, they remain “der Erde treu” [faithful to the earth] (“Vorrede” §3).

Because Nietzsche interprets Schopenhauer’s response to suffering as a symptom of weakness, he seeks to turn it on its head (*FW* §370; cf. *Panaïoti* 76ff., 105f.). Following Nietzsche, suffering is not something that ought to be radically eliminated. Rather, it must be reinterpreted as the most potent stimulus to life and its expansion (cf. *JGB* §225). A healthy dose of Dionysian pessimism, then, far from quieting the will, “paves the way to life-affirmation” (*Panaïoti* 105).<sup>21</sup> Indeed, to truly affirm life means to recognize, accept, and cherish every single instance of suffering as something that has potentiated the present moment. As Zarathustra says, “Sagtet ihr ja zu einer Lust? ...So sagtet ihr ja auch zu *allem* Wehe. Alle Dinge sind verkettet, verfädelt” [Have you ever said yes to a single pleasure? ...Then you have also said yes to *every* pain. Everything is interlinked, intertwined] (“Das trunkne Lied” [The Drunken Song] §10).

Nietzsche’s idea that the affirmation of life necessitates the affirmation of suffering is closely related to one of his most important and characteristic thought experiments: the eternal return (*ewige Wiederkunft/Wiederkehr*). The latter, which Nietzsche calls in *Ecce Homo* “die höchste Formel der Bejahung, der erreicht werden kann” [the highest formula for affirmation that can be achieved] (*EH* “Zarathustra” §1), is first presented in the penultimate aphorism of the first edition of *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* [*The Gay Science*] (1882).<sup>22</sup>

Suppose, Nietzsche writes, an all-knowing demon were to inform you that everything you have experienced – every pain, every joy, every mundane moment and triumph – must repeat itself for all eternity precisely as it has already occurred. Nietzsche’s question is: who could possibly rejoice at such a thought? His answer: only the *Übermensch*, who at every moment affirms the question: “Willst du diess noch einmal und noch unzählige Male?” [Do you want this again and uncountable times thereafter?] (*FW* §341).<sup>23</sup>

The affirmation of the eternal return characteristic of the *Übermensch* is, then, to be taken as Nietzsche’s answer to Schopenhauer’s “Romantic pessimism” and its corresponding ideal of the saintly denial of the Will to Live. For Schopenhauer, saints deny the Will to Live because they have recognized that the continued striving toward life is the ultimate source of suffering. Nietzsche turns this idea on its head and presents the greatest humans as those who are able to affirm – to *will* with all their power – the eternal return of life and all of the sufferings that make it possible, because they will life absolutely.<sup>24</sup> In *Schopenhauer and Nietzsche*, Georg Simmel nicely summarizes this antithesis between Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, writing, “Wie Schopenhauer nur einen einzigen absoluten Wert kennt: Nicht-Leben – so kennt Nietzsche gleichfalls nur einen: Leben” [As Schopenhauer knows only one absolute value: not living – Nietzsche, as well, knows only one: life] (348).

Not only is Nietzsche’s idea of the affirmation of the eternal return an inversion of Schopenhauer’s doctrine of the denial of the Will to Live, but as he implies in a stunning passage from *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* [*Beyond Good and Evil*], it is as well an inversion of the equivalent Buddhist doctrine of *nirvana* (§56). Both Buddhism and Schopenhauer’s philosophy, according to Nietzsche, are expressions of the same urge to flee from a world filled with suffering. The goal of *nirvana*, then, lures people “ins Nichts” [into nothingness] (*ibid.*), that is, to the desire for an imaginary Real World (*wahre Welt*) which supposedly

exists “beyond,” “behind,” and in direct opposition to the world of becoming (*G-D* “Geschichte eines Irrtums” [History of an Error]).

According to Nietzsche, there is only one type of person who recognizes the danger of “Romantic,” life-denying pessimism – whether in its Schopenhauerian or Buddhist form – and become attuned to “das umgekehrte Ideal” [the inverted ideal] (*JGB* §56). This, Nietzsche makes immediately clear in *Beyond Good and Evil*, is the *Übermensch*, who is

de[r] übermüthigste lebendigste und weltbejahendste Menschen, der sich nicht nur mit dem, was war und ist, abgefunden und vertragen gelernt hat, sondern es, so wie es war und ist, wieder haben will, in alle Ewigkeit hinaus

the highest-spirited, liveliest, and most world-affirming human, who has not simply learned to come to terms with himself and tolerate what was and is, but wants to have it all again, *just as it was and is*, for all eternity. (§56)

For the *Übermenschen*, there is no Real World for which they can or ought to strive, because they do not believe that the world in which they live is false or illusory (*G-D* “Geschichte eines Irrtums”). All that is real is the actual, impermanent, and ever-changing world that we inhabit, the world of becoming.

The affirmation of the eternal return, the opposite of both Schopenhauer’s denial of the Will to Live and the Buddhist conception of *nirvana*, has another name: *amor fati*, the love of fate. In *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche makes this explicit:

Meine Formel für die Größe am Menschen ist *amor fati*: daß man nichts anders haben will, vorwärts nicht, rückwärts nicht, in alle Ewigkeit nicht. Das Notwendige nicht bloß ertragen, noch weniger verhehlen... sondern es lieben.

My formula for what is great in a human being is *amor fati*: that one wants to have nothing different, not forwards, not backwards, not for all eternity. Not merely to bear what is necessary, still less to hide it away... but *to love it*. (*EH* “Warum ich so klug bin” §10; cf. Kaufmann 284-86)

We hear immediate echoes of the above passage from *Beyond Good and Evil* in which Nietzsche describes his “inverted ideal,” which alerts us to the fact that he has the same idea in mind. In both passages he speaks of an affirmation “for all eternity” (*in alle Ewigkeit*), that

is, that one wants everything to eternally return, exactly as it already was and is. What is made clear in the later discussion of *amor fati* from *Ecce Homo*, however, is the element of *love*: the truly great humans, the *Übermenschen*, love their fate as members of the world of becoming, subject to all of its changes and pains. As we have seen, Nietzsche contrasts this love for the world with the hatred of the Romantic pessimists, who are unable to accept or embrace suffering, and consequently direct their will away from the world of becoming and toward some imaginary Real World. Conversely, the representatives of Nietzsche's goal, the *Übermenschen*, are characterised by their cultivation of *amor fati* and their joyous affirmation of the eternal return of the actual, existent world – a world filled with suffering.

### **Hesse's Anti-Buddhist Goal: Siddhartha and the Affirmation of Eternal Rebirth**

We now need to determine if there are genuine correspondences between Nietzsche's goal of *amor fati* and Siddhartha's final goal. To do this, we will draw from the three most important narrative descriptions of the latter. First, there is Siddhartha's ecstatic vision on the riverside, which carries him to the final state of perfection (*Vollendung*). Secondly, there is Siddhartha's attempt to communicate to Govinda what he has learned from his vision. The third narrative description of Siddhartha's goal occurs as Siddhartha later imparts a similar vision onto Govinda.<sup>25</sup>

The central motif of all three of these events is the experience of timelessness. Prior to Siddhartha's final vision, he has already learned from his observation of the river "daß es keine Zeit gibt" [that there is no time], in the sense that "Nichts war, nichts wird sein; alles ist, alles hat Wesen und Gegenwart" [Nothing was, nothing will be; everything is, everything has essence and presence] (*GD3* 698). This understanding is derived from his observation that the river is "überall zugleich" [everywhere at once]: at the mouth, at the falls, at the sea, or at the stream trickling down from the mountain. There is no future for the river, only presence (*ibid.*).

This idea is later expressed visually in Siddhartha's ecstatic vision in the chapter "Om." As he peers from the bank into the river, he sees visions of himself, grieving after his son flees from home, coupled with a vision of his father, grieving Siddhartha's own flight from his home city. An image of Siddhartha's son appears, and all three generations – Siddhartha, his father, and his son – flow into one another and dissolve into the river rushing by. The river soon becomes the showplace of "allen Menschen" [all people], each one striving with the current, each one reaching the goal (*alle Ziele wurden erreicht*) (GD3 720). The water, still the stage of Siddhartha's vision, steams and rises to the heavens, pouring back down again from vaporous clouds to collect and form puddles, brooks, streams, and eventually new rivers (ibid.). The people begin to sing; there are voices of joy and pain, good and evil. The voice flow together, become indiscernible. Everything together is "der Fluß des Lebens, ...die Musik des Lebens" [The river of life, ...the music of life] (ibid.). The only thing that separates these figures and voices is the passing of time. When one sees through the veil of time, however, all things take equal part in the eternal reprise of life and universal striving.

The imagery in Govinda's vision also points toward an experience of the timeless:

Er sah das Gesicht eines neugeborenen Kindes, rot und voll Falten, zum Weinen verzogen – er sah das Gesicht eines Mörders, sah ihn ein Messer in den Leib eines Menschen stechen – er sah, zur selben Sekunde, diesen Verbrecher gefesselt knien und sein Haupt vom Henker mit einem Schwertschlag abgeschlagen werden – er sah die Körper von Männern und Frauen nackt in Stellungen und Kämpfen rasender Liebe – er sah Leichen ausgestreckt, still, kalt, leer – er sah Tierköpfe... – er sah Götter... – er sah alle diese Gestalten und Gesichter[,] ...jede war ein Sterbenwollen, ein leidenschaftlich schmerzliches Bekenntnis der Vergänglichkeit, und keine starb doch, jede verwandelte sich nur, wurde stets neu geboren, bekam stets ein neues Gesicht, ohne daß doch zwischen einem und dem anderen Gesicht Zeit gelegen wäre.

He saw the face of a newborn child, red and full of folds, scrunched, crying – he saw the face of a murderer, saw him stick a knife into the body of another man – he saw, at the same moment, the culprit tied-up, on his knees, his head

lopped from his body by the executioner's sword – he saw the bodies of men and women, naked, in the positions and bouts of frantic love – he saw corpses stretched out, still, cold, and empty – he saw the heads of animals... – he saw gods... – he saw all of these forms and faces... each was a desire for death, a passionate and painful confession of impermanence, yet none died, each one just changed, was born anew, received a new face, without there being the slightest passing of time between each face and the next. (732-32)

Perhaps even more powerfully than the vision of Siddhartha, Govinda's vision captures the sense of timelessness being conveyed narratively. We are carried along the lifespan of a single person, from rosy-cheeked infancy to desperate criminality and finally death by execution. From this individual lifespan, we are brought to frenzied representations of human procreation and death: uncounted bodies tangled amid the rush of sexual passion, juxtaposed with countless corpses, all of them motionless, frigid, and lifeless. From the human, we proceed to the more-encompassing animal, then to the all-encompassing divine, transcendent sphere; the differentiation of birth, life, and death is shown to be nothing but a relic of our temporal interpretation of events and our inability to step outside of this interpretive frame. Though each of these events seems to bring something into or tear something out of existence, each is at its heart nothing but a shift in appearance. Each is but the donning of a new and different form by a transcendent life-force, which eternally and omnipresently reenters *samsara*, the world of becoming, by means of reincarnation and rebirth.

The careful reader will note here that Siddhartha's and Govinda's visions are basically recapitulations of Schopenhauer's description of the experience of the saint, who is capable of seeing through space and time and immediately perceiving the underlying unity of all things (above, p. 24-25). Furthermore, the notion of a timeless life-force that sustains itself through eternal rebirth into the world of becoming is indistinguishable from Schopenhauer's idea of the Will to Live. Considering these similarities, it would be very easy to conclude that Siddhartha's goal is in line with Schopenhauer's description of *nirvana*. This would, in turn,

imply that Siddhartha, like Gotama, seeks to flee from the world of becoming to some Real World in which there is no desire or suffering.

This conclusion, however, is easily refuted when we look at Siddhartha's attempt to explain his vision to Govinda. Specifically, at the heart of Siddhartha's teaching, we see him tell Govinda of his love for the things of the world. In opposition to Gotama, who, according to Govinda, "forbid us to shackle our hearts with love to worldly things" (above, p. 21), Siddhartha embraces the thingliness of the world. He does not, like Gotama, see salvation in the "inner detachment from the things of the world" (above, p. 21) but rather in the complete self-surrender to the world of becoming and all of the things therein. To Siddhartha, it does not matter that the things of the world are deceptive or impermanent; in fact, this makes them all the more worthy of love. As he explains to Govinda:

Mögen die Dinge [der Welt] Schein oder nicht, auch bin alsdann ja Schein, und so sind sie stets meinesgleichen. Das ist es, was sie mir so lieb und verehenswert macht: sie sind meinesgleichen. Darum kann ich sie lieben.

The things [of the world] may be illusion or not. If so, then I am just as well illusory, and so the things are always of my own kind. In my mind, that is what makes them so dear and venerable: they are of my own kind. Thus can I love them. (*GD3* 728)

We see Siddhartha locate his goal in the very same world from which Gotama seeks to flee. He does not, like Gotama, deny his fate as a transitory being among the impermanent things of the world, but rather accepts and embraces his fate as a thing among things.

Just as Nietzsche's *Übermensch*, Siddhartha dismisses the notion that there is a Real World beyond the world in which he lives. His yearning, his love, is directed at the world of becoming and suffering. He states this to Govinda clearly:

Ich habe an meinem Leibe und an meiner Seele erfahren, daß ich der Sünde sehr bedurfte, ich bedurfte der Wollust, des Strebens nach Gütern, der Eitelkeit und bedurfte der schmachvollsten Verzweiflung, um das Widerstreben aufgeben zu lernen, um die Welt lieben zu lernen, um sie nicht mehr mit

irgendeiner von mir gewünschten, von mir eingebildeten Welt zu vergleichen, sondern sie zu lassen, wie sie ist, und sie zu lieben, und ihr gerne anzuhören.

[In both body and soul I have experienced that I was in great need of sin. I needed lust; I needed to strive for goods; I needed vanity and the most despicable despair. I needed all this so that I could learn to give up my resistance, so that I could learn to love the world and no longer compare it with some imaginary world I wished for, but to let it be as it is, and to love it, and to belong to it gladly.] (GD3 726)

We see, then, that Siddhartha's goal, like Nietzsche's, is a double motion. It is both a return to the world of becoming as well as a destruction of the imaginary Real World. As he realizes, "Sinn und Wesen waren nicht irgendwo *hinter* den Dingen, sie waren *in* ihnen, in allem" [Meaning and essence were not anywhere *behind* the things; they were *in* them, in everything] (647; emphasis added).

It still remains to be seen if Siddhartha's goal, like Nietzsche's, is the affirmation of the eternal return. Supporting this idea, there is a particularly telling scene just after Siddhartha leaves the city and attempts to drown himself in the river. By some simple twist of fate, he survives and has a transformative experience of the sacred Om. Washing back onto shore, Siddhartha thinks to himself,

Wunderlich in der Tat war mein Leben... Wunderliche Umwege hat es genommen. ...Aber welch ein Weg war das! Ich habe durch so viel Dummheit, durch so viel Laster, durch so viel Irrtum, durch so viel Ekel und Enttäuschung und Jammer hindurchgehen müssen, bloß um wieder ein Kind zu werden und neu anfangen zu können. Aber es war richtig so, mein Herz sagt ja dazu... Wohin noch mag mein Weg mich führen? ...Er geht in Schleifen, er geht vielleicht im Kreise. Mag er gehen, wie er will, ich will ihn gehen.

Indeed, my life was strange. ...It took strange detours. But what a way it was! I have had to go through so much foolishness, through so much vice, through so much error, through so much disgust and disappointment and misery, just so that I could become a child again and begin anew. But just so was it proper; my heart says *yes* to all that... Where else will my way lead me? It goes in loops, perhaps it goes in a circle. May it go where it will; I will follow it. (GD3 689-90)



Siddhartha's heart – his will – says *yes* to his strange life and everything that has happened in it: all the errors, vices, and sufferings. Just as in the case of Nietzsche's *Übermensch*, it is the things that turn the Buddhist *away* from life – suffering and the vanity of striving – that Siddhartha so radically affirms and wills. Again, similar to Nietzsche, Siddhartha describes his will to repetition: his life's way, Siddhartha says, "goes in loops, perhaps it goes in a circle. May it go where it will; I will follow it." He even speaks of himself as a child, who has returned into the world from a past incarnation. Indeed, this is the exact thought he has as he washes to the shore: "Im ersten Augenblick der Besinnung erschien ihm dies frühere Leben wie eine... einstige Verkörperung, wie eine frühere Vorgeburt seines jetzigen Ichs" [In the first moment of consciousness this earlier life appeared to him as a... former embodiment, as an earlier birth of his present self] (*GD3* 684). Siddhartha, then, affirms the eternal return – at least, the latter as clad in the Indian mask of eternal *rebirth*. Like Nietzsche's *Übermensch*, he "has not simply learned to come to terms with himself and tolerate what was and is, but wants to have it all again, *just as it was and is*, for all eternity" (above, p. 33).

In a journal entry from January 1921, just as he is finishing the chapter "Gotama," Hesse himself even describes Siddhartha's goal as the affirmation of eternal rebirth. He writes, "Siddhartha wird, wenn er stirbt, nicht Nirwana wollen, sondern neuen Umlauf, neue Gestaltung, Wiedergeburt." [When Siddhartha dies, he will not want *nirvana*, but rather new circulation, new formation, rebirth] (*MS I* 11). Siddhartha, then, is driven by his love for his fate as a member of the world of fleeting forms – what Schopenhauer would call "mere appearances" (above, p. 18) – to affirm the prospect of rebirth and return. His attitude is pure *amor fati*.

In contrast to Siddhartha's attitude of *amor fati* and his affirmation of eternal rebirth, we recall that Gotama "had attained *nirvana* and would never again return [*wiederkehren*] into the lifecycle; never again would he dive into the murky stream of forms" (above, p. 21).

Gotama denies just what Siddhartha affirms: the eternal return via rebirth into the world of changing forms. A letter Hesse writes in 1930 strengthens this idea. The teaching of the Buddha, Hesse explains, deals explicitly with the idea of “ewige Wiederkehr” [eternal return] (*MSI* 210), by which Hesse specifically means the cycle of rebirth. This, however, is really nothing new; the idea had been present in Indian religion long before the Buddha entered the world stage. What makes Buddha’s teaching so unique, is rather his “neue Lehre von der Erlösung aus der ewigen Wiederkehr, vom Weg zu Nirwana” [new teaching about the *salvation* from the eternal return, about the way to *nirvana*] (*ibid.*). Though written almost a decade after the publication of *Siddhartha*, Hesse’s quick synopsis serves to solidify the above argument. The Buddha preaches a way out of the eternal return of rebirth because it is seen as the ultimate source of suffering.

The language of “return” (*Wiederkehr*) that Hesse uses is not simply coincidental; it is a direct reference to Nietzsche’s thought of the eternal return. Though Nietzsche typically refers to the thought as *Wiederkunft* (cf. *EH* “Zarathustra” §1), he does use the term *Wiederkehr* interchangeably (cf. *Z* “Der Genesende” §2). The latter term is simply the one that Hesse latches onto, as we can see from a political piece that Hesse publishes in April of 1920 under the title “Zarathustra’s Wiederkehr” [Zarathustra’s Return] (*MSI* 37).<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, in a poem from 1901 titled “Belauschtes Nachtgespräch” [“An Overheard Conversation at Night”], Hesse references “Die Lehre von der ewigen Wiederkehr” [the teaching of the eternal return] (*GD5* 477). This same poem makes overt reference to Nietzsche, and interestingly, can even be taken as a debate between Nietzsche and Schopenhauer, or at least between adherents of their respective worldviews: one interlocutor, like Schopenhauer, sees the highest virtue as “Weltensagung” [world-renunciation] while the other rebukes by citing Nietzsche (*GD5* 476-77).

Similarly, *Siddhartha* itself can be read as a dialogue between Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, or at least representatives of their respective worldviews. There is, at one pole, Siddhartha Gotama, who, like Schopenhauer, establishes *nirvana*, the denial of *samsara*, as the goal of his teaching. At the other pole, there is Siddhartha the protagonist, who, like Nietzsche, turns the Buddhist goal on its head and sets up a new goal of the radical affirmation of the world of becoming, of *samsara*. The antithesis between Schopenhauer and Nietzsche is thus mirrored by the two Siddharthas, whose opposing worldviews tear *Siddhartha* the novel apart. In the following chapter, we will see how their opposing worldviews are reconciled and *Siddhartha* returned to a whole.

### *Chapter Three* *The Smile, Symbol of Reconciliation*

The final pages of *Siddhartha* contain a stunning image: Siddhartha's smiling face, permeating Govinda's ecstatic vision of the stream of worldly existence. At first glance, it seems to be the perfect symbol for Siddhartha's affirmation of *samsara*. He is smiling, we might think, therefore he must be expressing his love for the world. Observing the smile only in relation to Siddhartha the protagonist, that is, we might take it as a one-sided symbol, as a symbol of world-affirmation.

This conclusion, however, would lead to the dissolution of the present argument, for not only Siddhartha, but also Gotama is characterized by his smile. In fact, the smiles of Siddhartha and Gotama, as we will see, are identical in both appearance and symbolic significance. This, in turn, seems to lead to the conclusion that either Gotama, like Siddhartha, is world-affirming, or that Siddhartha's smile is actually a symbol of Buddhistic world-denial. However, there is another way of interpreting the smile that maintains the present argument and harmonizes with greater trends in Hesse's work. Specifically, we will argue that the smile does not signify world-affirmation or denial *per se*, but rather an overarching attitude shared by Siddhartha and Gotama that can find expression in both of their opposing worldviews. This attitude, as we will see, is what Hesse refers to as "sich fallen lassen," or "letting oneself fall."

The relation between *sich fallen lassen* and the smile is first presented in a work Hesse writes just prior to *Siddhartha*, namely, *Klein and Wagner* (1919). By engaging this text first, we will prepare a much stronger basis for our analysis of *sich fallen lassen* in *Siddhartha*, as well as its relation to the symbol of the smile. Before we can do this, however, we need to solidify the claim that Siddhartha and Gotama's smiles are identical.

#### **Different Words, Same Smile**

Aside from the boat man Vasudeva, whom we will address in the next chapter, there are only two characters in *Siddhartha* who reach the goal of enlightenment (*Vollendung*). The first is Gotama, representative of a life- and world-denying, or in our terminology, Schopenhauerian, worldview. The second figure is Siddhartha, who embodies the Nietzschean goal of life- and world-affirmation. Though Siddhartha himself recognizes the polarity of his and Gotama's expressed worldviews, he nonetheless believes there is something that unites him with Gotama. As Siddhartha says to Govinda in the final chapter,

Ich kann nicht leugnen, meine Worte von der Liebe stehen im Widerspruch, im scheinbaren Widerspruch zu Gotamas Worten. Eben darum mißtraue ich den Worten so sehr, denn ich weiß, dieser Widerspruch ist Täuschung. Ich weiß, daß ich mit Gotama einig bin.

I cannot deny that my words concerning love contradict, seemingly contradict Gotama's words. It is just for this reason that I distrust words so much, for I know that this contradiction is deception. I know that Gotama and I are united. (*GD3* 729).

Siddhartha, however, never seeks to work out the contradictions between his own worldview and Gotama's. On the contrary, he simply lets them stand. This unresolved tension is one of the elements of the work that makes it so interesting, and certainly one that causes the reader to search beyond what is said for some unifying thread between Siddhartha and Gotama.

Siddhartha himself gives a hint of an answer. He explains to Govinda,

Auch bei ihm, auch bei deinem großen Lehrer [Gotama], ist mir das Ding lieber als die Worte, sein Tun und Leben wichtiger als sein Reden, die Gebärde seiner Hand wichtiger als seine Meinungen.

Also with him, also with your great teacher [Gotama], the thing is more dear to me than the words, his doing and his living more important than his speaking, the gestures of his hand more important than his opinions. (729)

Any synthesizing point between the two figures, Siddhartha suggests, is not to be found in their words or teachings – that is, their *expressed* worldviews, which have been the subject of

our analysis so far. Rather, Siddhartha hints, this thread is to be found in their actions, their doings. As there is only one action of symbolic importance common to both Siddhartha and Gotama – namely, the smile – this is the most reasonable place to search for a point of reconciliation.

There are certainly suggestions that Siddhartha and Gotama’s smiles might not be identical. For instance, in the first narrative description of Gotama, we read: “sein stilles Gesicht war weder fröhlich noch traurig, er schien leise *nach innen* zu lächeln” [his tranquil face was neither happy nor sad, he seemed to smile quietly *inward*] (637; emphasis added). Unlike the Buddha’s inward-directed smile, Siddhartha’s smile is always directed outward: we see him “*aus* den alten Augen lächelnd” [smiling *out* of his old eyes] (722; emphasis added). Each of their respective smiles, then, has a distinct direction. In light of this, one might argue that the narrative attempts to bring the two smiles more into line with their respective teachings: whereas Gotama preaches a stoical resignation from the things of the world and turns his smile inward, Siddhartha preaches love for all worldly things and pours his smile outward.

There is, however, much more evidence to support the claim that the two smiles are meant to be equated. In the final pages, we find:

Dies Lächeln Siddharthas war genau dasselbe, war genau das gleiche, stille, feine, undurchdringliche, vielleicht gütige, vielleicht spöttische, weise, tausendfältige Lächeln Gotamas, des Buddha.

This smile of Siddhartha was exactly the same, was exactly the even, tranquil, subtle, impenetrable, perhaps kind, perhaps mocking, wise, thousandfold smile of Gotama, the Buddha. (732)

Directly after this, we read: Siddhartha “lächelte still, lächelte leise und sanft, vielleicht sehr gütig, vielleicht sehr spöttisch, genau, wie Er gelächelt hatte, der Erhabene” [smiled silently, smiled softly and faintly, perhaps very kindly, perhaps very mockingly, exactly as He had smiled, the Sublime One] (732-33). This repetition of identical descriptions and the repeated

use of the word “exactly” (*genau*) emphasize that the smile is a symbolic means of bridging these two characters. As no other passage in the book describes a shared action of Gotama and Siddhartha so emphatically, we can reason that the primary physical gesture that unites them is the smile.

What does this smile mean? As *Siddhartha* is by no means an expository text, we will first observe the role of the smile in *Klein and Wagner*, a novella written by Hesse directly before *Siddhartha*, to show that the smile is the expression of an attitude Hesse calls *sich fallen lassen*, or letting oneself fall. This method of exposition is certainly limited in that each text is and ought to be considered a world in itself. For this reason, our analysis of *Klein and Wagner* can by no means serve as a final judgment of the meaning of the smile in *Siddhartha*. Nonetheless, in *Siddhartha* there are resounding echoes of the concept of *sich fallen lassen* as first presented in *Klein and Wagner*, and more importantly, of its relation to the symbol of the smile. Our preliminary investigation of *Klein and Wagner*, then, will ultimately lead us to a richer and more precise treatment of certain aspects of the smile that are less apparent in *Siddhartha*.

### ***Sich fallen lassen in Klein and Wagner***

In *Klein and Wagner*, Hesse relates the semi-autobiographical tale of a man, Friedrich Klein, who flees from his home in Germany to a small town in Italy. Here, Klein begins an affair with a dancer named Teresina, but soon thereafter develops symptoms of a dangerous schizophrenia. Most notably, he starts to harbor feelings of spiritual affiliation with Ernst August Wagner, a German school teacher who, in 1913, murders his wife and children, among nine others (cf. Winkler). At the end of the novella, Klein nearly succumbs to the desire to murder Teresina in imitation of Wagner’s crime. Just before he carries through, however, he decides to end his own life by rowing a small boat onto a lake and dropping

himself off the side. In typical Hesse fashion, the novella ends with Klein's premortem mystical vision.

Despite its ending, it would be a mistake to think that *Klein and Wagner* is a treatise on the value of suicide. Rather, it aims at a much more subtle and spiritually important attitude, which Hesse names *sich fallen lassen*, letting oneself fall. For certain, Klein literally lets himself fall off the side of a rowboat in order to drown himself, but this is not the primary focus of the work. As the narrative makes clear, the focus is Klein's newfound attitude, his *willingness* to let himself fall. His resultant death is immaterial; the narrator assures us: "Daß er sich ins Wasser und in den Tod fallen ließ, wäre nicht notwendig gewesen, ebensogut hätte er sich ins Leben fallen lassen können" [That he let himself fall into water and into death was not necessary. He could just as well have let himself fall into life] (*GD3* 549).

Because the attitude of *sich fallen lassen* is not meant to be taken literally, it is important to observe the more abstract definitions given by Klein. For instance, he further clarifies *sich fallen lassen* as "den Schritt in das Ungewisse hinaus, den kleinen Schritt hinweg über alle die Versicherungen, die es gab" [the step out into the unknown, the small step away from all of one's assurances] (550). Also, it is described as "sich dahingeben" [giving oneself forth], "sich ergeben" [surrendering], and "auf alle Stützen und Boden verzichten" [relinquishing every support and solid ground] (549). What seems most important about the attitude of *sich fallen lassen* is that those who let themselves fall cease to *resist*, and specifically, that they cease to resist the natural course of the world. They no longer protect themselves by shunning unfamiliar ideas or situations; Klein even compares the small boat off of which he lets himself fall to "sein kleines, umgrenztes, künstlich versichertes Leben" [his small, confined, artificially guarded life] (*GD3* 548).

Disposing of the concepts that have grounded and restrained their lives, Klein further recognizes, those who let themselves fall gravitate toward a central universal power, toward a



will greater than their own. At least within the scope of *Klein and Wagner*, this greater will is the will of god. As Klein realizes in his final moments, there is “nur eine Kunst, nur eine Lehre, nur Ein Geheimnis: sich fallen lassen, sich nicht gegen Gottes Willen sträuben” [only one art, only one teaching, only one secret: letting oneself fall, not struggling against god’s will] (551). However, we are not confronted with the familiar god of Abrahamic monotheism. The god of *Klein and Wagner* desires only to bask, passively, in the “Musik der Weltchöre” [music of the world’s choruses] (554). Similar to Siddhartha’s ecstatic vision on the riverbank, in which he hears the “music of life” (above, p. 35), this world chorus in *Klein and Wagner* is a cacophonous harmony. There are voices of good and evil, war and peace; there are sufferers and conquerors, affirmers and deniers (cf. *GD3* 553). Some call god light, some darkness; some see god as mother, some as father; god is praised as creator and loathed as destroyer (554). There is no one right way to relate oneself to this god; “Jeder könnte suchen, jeder könnte finden” [Everyone could search. Everyone could find] (554). For this god does not name himself\*, but only desires to be named. Indeed, the only positive activity attributed to this god is his will, specifically his will to exist in the recognition of living creatures, whether this recognition is positive or negative: “Er wollte genannt, er wollte geliebt, verflucht, gehaßt, angebetet sein, denn die Musik der Weltchöre war sein Gotteshaus und sein Leben” [He wanted to be named; he wanted to be loved, cursed, hated, prayed to. For the music of the world’s choruses was his house and his life” (554). Klein’s experience shows that this house of god, composed of the manifold voices of the creatures of the world, is the central point toward which people let themselves fall.

A possible weakness in Hesse’s idea of *sich fallen lassen* is that the corresponding conception of god may be too vague. How can people determine if there is even a distinct point toward which they are falling? They could simply be, in Nietzsche’s words, falling

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\* Following Hesse, I will refer to god with the masculine pronoun.

“durch ein unendliches Nichts” [through an eternal nothingness] (*FW* §125). Perhaps in anticipation of this pitfall, Hesse adds a second principle element to the concept of *sich fallen lassen*: the idea that individuals can hear within themselves their true voices among the world’s choruses. As Klein thinks to himself,

Woher war diese holde Stimme gekommen? ...Auf welchem Ast saß dieser seltne, scheue Vogel? Diese Stimme sprach die Wahrheit... Diese Stimme entstand, wenn man im Herzen mit dem Schicksal einig war... sie war Gottes Stimme, oder war die Stimme des eigenen, wahrsten, innersten Ich.

Where had this voice come from? ...On which branch sat this rare, shy bird? This voice spoke the truth... This voice arose if and when one, in his heart, was at one with his destiny... it was god’s voice, or it was the voice of one’s own, truest, innermost self. (*GD3* 494)

The inner voice – the song of this “rare, shy bird” – is the voice of both god and one’s destiny. To heed this voice, then, is to fulfill one’s destiny in the divine ordinance, to live truly and authentically. However, when one’s mind is buzzing with idle chatter and all too familiar concepts, the “truest, innermost” voice is drowned out. As the narrator asks, “Warum konnte er diese Stimme nicht immer hören? Warum flog die Wahrheit an ihm immer vorbei wie ein Gespenst?” [Why could he not always hear this voice? Why did the truth always fly past him like a ghost?] (494). Before individuals can live authentically, before they can find their true voices among the choruses of the world, they must let themselves fall, banishing the white noise of the everyday world, the stagnant concepts that stand in the way of the attainment of destiny.

Klein’s final realization is that when individuals let themselves fall, they attain the final goal of salvation (*Erlösung*). We should not, however, think that this salvation is a return to some divine and peaceful Real World. As Klein recognizes in his final ecstatic moments, there is no “Bleiben in Gott” [abiding in god] or otherworldly “Ruhe” [peace] (551). There is only the world in which we live and “das ewige, ewige, herrliche, heilige Ausgeatmetwerden und Eingeatmetwerden, Gestaltung und Auflösung, Geburt und Tod,

Auszug und Wiederkehr, ohne Pause, ohne Ende” [the eternal, eternal, wonderful, holy being-exhaled and being-inhaled, formation and dissolution, birth and death, departure and return, without pause, without end] (GD3 551). As there is no divine, otherworldly peace to be found, Klein realizes, “Es gab eine andere Ruhe, im eigenen Innern zu finden. Sie hieß: Laß dich fallen! Wehre dich nicht! Stirb gern! Lebe gern!” [There was another peace that was to be found in one’s inner self. It was called: Let yourself fall! Resist nothing! Die gladly! Live gladly!] (551). The concept of *sich fallen lassen*, then, individualizes the idea of a final peace or salvation. There is not one goal or one teaching that can lead there, for peace is only found in the willingness to let oneself fall and heed the call of destiny. This destiny may be death, life, affirmation, or denial; none of this matters. All that matters is letting oneself fall.

### **The Smile as Symbol of *sich fallen lassen* in Klein and Wagner**

A symbolic gesture is the objective correlative of a corresponding attitude, the attitude made object. For instance, a writer might use a clenched fist to symbolize defiance, or a finger pointed skyward to signify a character’s idealism. In the case of *sich fallen lassen*, the symbolic gesture is the smile.

We can draw this connection because in all of the mental descriptions of *sich fallen lassen*, the smile is the only bodily gesture mentioned. Just as Klein has his final realization about the salvific power of *sich fallen lassen*, we read:

Wie hatte er sein Leben lang Angst gelitten, und nun, wo der Tod ihn schon  
am Halse würgte, fühlte er nichts mehr davon, keine Angst, kein Grauen, *nur*  
*Lächeln*, nur Erlösung, nur Einverständnis

How he had suffered his entire life, and now, when death had him by the  
throat, he felt no more of that, no fear, no dread, *only smiling*, only salvation,  
only acceptance. (GD3 549; emphasis added)

Every other descriptor in this passage – the lack of fear and dread, the deep acceptance, salvation – refers to the attitude, or the inner side, of *sich fallen lassen*. Only the smile stands forth as a bodily gesture capable of containing the immensity and ambiguity of this attitude.

In this sense, it is the perfect choice; as German philosopher and sociologist, Helmuth Plessner (1892-1985), begins his wonderful essay "Das Lächeln" [The Smile], the smile surpasses all other gestures in respect to ambiguity (*Vieldeutigkeit*) (Plessner 175).

The smile, however, is not unique to Klein. It is rather the definitive gesture of all those who have let themselves fall and attained salvation, even the murderer Wagner. Indeed, Wagner's killing spree, Klein realizes, is an instance of *sich fallen lassen*; it is an escape from the constraints of bourgeois values and the fulfillment of his ownmost destiny (cf. 485, 527). It is for this reason that Klein, in his final moments of consciousness, beholds Wagner, smiling:

Der Mörder Wagner, dessen Schatten so breit über Kleins Leben gefallen war, lächelte ihm ernst ins Gesicht, und sein Lächeln erzählte, daß auch Wagners Tat ein Weg zur Erlösung gewesen war, auch sie ein Atemzug, auch sie ein Symbol, und daß auch Mord und Blut und Scheußlichkeit nicht Dinge sind, welche wahrhaft existieren, sondern nur Wertungen unsrer eigenen, selbstquälerischen Seele.

The murderer, Wagner, whose shadow had fallen so completely over Klein's life, smiled at him solemnly, and his smile told that Wagner's deed had also been a way to salvation, a breath, a symbol, and that even murder and blood and atrocity are not things that truly exist, but are merely valuations of our own self-tormenting soul. (*GD3* 551-52)

The nihilistic implications of this passage will be further discussed in the conclusion. For now, it suffices to recognize that Wagner, like Klein, smiles because he has let himself fall.

### ***Sich fallen lassen in Siddhartha***

As we mentioned above (p. 42), Siddhartha's smile should not be taken as a symbol of his life- and world-affirmation *per se*, as it is identical with the smile of Gotama, who preaches the denial of both life and world. It would make no sense aesthetically to have the smile represent two polar worldviews simultaneously – that is, unless the smile were actually the objective correlative of some overarching attitude that can find expression in both.

Furthermore, if this overarching attitude is *sich fallen lassen*, then the latter must be present in both Siddhartha and Gotama.

Tellingly, the term itself occurs only twice throughout *Siddhartha*, and both occurrences are in reference to either Siddhartha or Gotama. The first of these is found in Siddhartha's own self-description to his lover, Kamala. After she asks Siddhartha how it is that he is so lucky and successful, why so many doors just seem to open up for him, he responds:

Wenn du einen Stein ins Wasser wirfst, so eilt er auf dem schnellsten Wege zum Grunde des Wassers. So ist es, wenn Siddhartha ein Ziel, einen Vorsatz hat. Siddhartha tut nichts, er wartet, er denkt, er fastet, aber er geht durch die Dinge der Welt hindurch wie der Stein durchs Wasser, ohne etwas zu tun, ohne sich zu rühren; er wird gezogen, *er läßt sich fallen*. Sein Ziel zieht ihn an sich, denn er läßt nichts in seine Seele ein, was dem Ziel widerstreben könnte.

When you throw a stone into the water, it hurries along the quickest route to the bottom. This is how it is when Siddhartha has a goal or intention. Siddhartha does nothing. He waits, he thinks, he fasts, but he goes through the things of the world like a stone through the water, without doing anything, without moving. He is pulled along, *he lets himself fall* [*er läßt sich fallen*]. His goal pulls him to itself, for he lets nothing enter his soul that could work against his goal. (662-63; emphasis added)

Siddhartha's statement holds true to the most important aspects of *sich fallen lassen* as presented in *Klein and Wagner*. He allows himself to be drawn along; he surrenders to the fall, paying little or no heed to the comforts of the world that would hinder him from attaining his goal or destiny. Siddhartha falls like a stone; he is one of those truly authentic individuals who go "eine feste Bahn, kein Wind erreicht sie, in sich selber haben sie ihr Gesetz und ihre Bahn" [a straight way, no wind reaches them, in themselves they have their law and their way] (671). Those who don't *let* themselves fall, on the other hand, who resist the pull of their destinies, "weh[en] und dreh[en] sich durch die Luft, und schwank[en], und taumel[n] zu Boden" [drift and turn through the air, [they] waver and whirl [their] way to the ground] (ibid.).

Siddhartha continues to explain to Kamala that he knows of only one other person who, like himself, lets himself fall: Gotama. He says,

Unter allen Gelehrten und Samanas, deren ich viele kannte, war einer von dieser Art, ein Vollkommener, nie kann ich ihn vergessen. Es ist jener Gotama, der Erhabene, der Verkündiger jener Lehre. Tausend Jünger hören jeden Tag seine Lehre, folgen jede Stunde seiner Vorschrift, aber sie alle sind fallendes Laub, nicht in sich selbst haben sie Lehre und Gesetz.

Among the many the scholars and Samanas I have known, there has been only one who was of this type, a Perfect One. I can never forget him. It was Gotama, the Sublime One, proclaimer of that doctrine. A thousand youths listen to his doctrine every day, every hour they follow his prescriptions<sup>27</sup>. But they are all just falling leaves, in their own selves they have neither law nor doctrine. (GD3 671)

Siddhartha sets up the same dichotomy between those who fall like leaves, resisting the tug of gravity, and those who fall like stones, fast and true to the ground. Whereas the former are mere emulators, following prescriptions they neither understand nor feel to be true, only the latter are courageous enough to enact the laws of their hearts, the doctrines and destinies they hold within themselves. As of this point in the novel, only Siddhartha and Gotama, whom we have seen to represent the opposing worldviews that tear *Siddhartha* apart, fall into the latter category.

The second passage in which *sich fallen lassen* appears – this time only in reference to Siddhartha – is a direct parallel to its occurrence in *Klein and Wagner*. Siddhartha has abandoned his home in the city where he lived for years, believing he could find there the happiness that eluded him in his time of study and asceticism. But dipping low in the lap of luxury and sensual delights, he finds himself still deeply unhappy. He is driven to despair, and attempts suicide by letting himself fall from a tree branch into the river:

Mit verzerrtem Gesichte starrte er ins Wasser, sah sein Gesicht gespiegelt und spie danach. In tiefer Müdigkeit löste er den Arm vom Baumstamme und drehte sich ein wenig, um sich senkrecht hinabfallen zu lassen, um endlich unterzugehen. Er sank, mit geschlossenen Augen, dem Tod entgegen.

His visage twisted, he stared into the water, saw his mirrored face and spit at it. In his profound exhaustion, he loosed his arm from the tree branch and turned his body slightly, to let himself fall straight down [*sich hinabfallen lassen*], to finally go under. He sank, with closed eyes, deathward. (GD3 683)

Siddhartha's suicide attempt is unsuccessful, but it reinvigorates his spirit. In the same instant his body sinks beneath the river's surface, he hears the sacred tones of the Om, the syllable common to Vedic prayer that symbolizes the "Namenlose" [nameless] and "Vollendete" [perfect] unity of all things (GD3 684). Later, in Siddhartha's ecstatic vision toward the end of the novel, the Om returns as the culminating harmony of the music of life, the unity of all the dissonant voices of created beings. The Om in *Siddhartha*, then, is symbolically identical to the house of god in *Klein and Wagner*. But whereas Klein's fall into the lake leads to his death, Siddhartha survives his fall; he falls into life, and is able to bring the transcendent knowledge he gains back to the world.

As we recognized in our analysis of *Klein and Wagner*, there is another characteristic element of the attitude of *sich fallen lassen* that distinguishes it from reckless abandonment. This is the idea that those who let themselves fall simultaneously heed the call of their true, innermost voice, the voice of destiny that addresses individuals directly and provokes them to live authentically. If, then, both Siddhartha and Gotama let themselves fall in the way prescribed at the end of *Klein and Wagner*, we will as well find instances where they heed their "truest, innermost" voice.

This is certainly the case with Siddhartha, whose inner voice always spurs him on to a nobler, more authentic path. This may be through supporting his present efforts; for instance, as a precocious youth studying the sacred texts of the *Vedas*, Siddhartha hears a voice in his heart that tells him, "Weiter! Weiter! Du bist berufen!" [Onward! Onward! You have been called!] (GD3 679). Or, the voice may encourage him to abandon an inauthentic or stale course of life; he notes that he heard the inner voice "als er seine Heimat verlassen und das

Leben des Samanas gewählt hatte, und wieder, als er von den Samanas hinweg zu jenem Vollendeten, und auch von ihm hinweg ins Ungewisse gegangen war” [after he had left his home and chosen the life of the Samanas, and again, after he had left the Samanas to go to the Buddha, and also after he left him and went out into the unknown] (679). The inner voice seems to have a distinct plan for Siddhartha; it guides him onward to some predestined goal that he feels to be outside of his control.

There are, however, times when Siddhartha resists the inner voice, and these times, tellingly, are when he has steeped himself in a life of comfort and control. For instance, toward the end of Siddhartha’s spiritually idle years spent as a merchant in the city, the narrator explains how Siddhartha has lost touch with

Jenes hohe, helle Wachsein, welches er einst, auf der Höhe seiner Jugend, erlebt hatte, in den Tagen nach Gotamas Predigt, nach der Trennung von Govinda, jene gespannte Erwartung, jenes stolze Alleinstehen ohne Lehren und ohne Lehrer, jene geschmeidige Bereitschaft, die göttliche Stimme im eigenen Herzen zu hören.

That high, bright wakefulness, which he had experienced once, at the height of his youth, in the days following Gotama’s sermon, after he had parted from Govinda, that tense expectation as he stood proud and alone without teachings and without teacher, that supple readiness to listen to the godlike voice in his own heart. (GD3 673)

Though Siddhartha once stood ready to heed the call of his inner voice, after years of decadent, inauthentic living, this same voice “war allmählich Erinnerung geworden, war vergänglich gewesen” [had slowly become a memory, had faded.] (673). In a direct repetition of the language of *Klein and Wagner*, Siddhartha at this low point in his life dreams of “einen kleinen seltenen Singvogel” [a small, strange songbird] (GD3 678; above, p. 48), symbol for his inner voice, that grows mute and dies. He is disregarding the inner call of his destiny; we can therefore reason that he is not letting himself fall.



The compatibility of the “inner voice” with *sich fallen lassen* is not limited to the case of Siddhartha, but extends to Gotama as well. As Siddhartha departs from the Buddhist camp, he thinks to himself,

Warum war Gotama einst, in der Stunde der Stunden, unter dem Bo-Baume niedergesessen, wo die Erleuchtung ihn traf? Er hatte eine Stimme gehört, eine Stimme im eigenen Herzen, die ihm befahl, unter diesem Baum Rast zu suchen, und er hatte nicht Kasteiung, Opfer, Bad oder Gebet, nicht Essen noch Trinken, nicht Schlaf noch Traum vorgezogen, er hatte der Stimme gehorcht. So zu gehorchen, nicht äußerem Befehl, nur der Stimme, so bereit zu sein, das war gut, das war notwendig, nichts anderes war notwendig.

Why had Gotama once, in the hour of hours, set himself down under the Bodhi Tree, where he found enlightenment? He had heard a voice, a voice in his own heart that ordered him to find rest under this tree. And he had not put mortification, sacrifice, bath or prayer, nor eating or drinking before this. He had obeyed the voice. To obey in this way, and not some external command, but the voice, in this way to stand ready, that was good, that was necessary, nothing else was necessary. (*GD3* 652)

Gotama, just as Siddhartha, is singled out as a person who both lets himself fall and stands ready to heed the call of his inner voice. As there are no other characters to whom Siddhartha attributes these two qualities, it is most likely the case that they are inseparable parts of an attitude that Siddhartha and Gotama share.

It would be a mistake think that Siddhartha might just be projecting onto Gotama. Rather, he is presenting a concept central to Hesse’s work as a whole: *Schicksalbereitssein*, that is, being prepared for one’s destiny, no matter where it may lead or what the consequences might be. This idea is present in Hesse’s work as early as 1904, in his short biography of St. Francis, *Franz von Assisi* [Franz von Assisi] (cf. 9-12). Beginning with *Demian* (1917), however, which is written just two years prior to *Siddhartha*, the concept comes to full bloom. As a sign of things to come in *Siddhartha*, there is even a passage in *Demian* in which the Buddha is described as “prepared for destiny” (*schicksalbereits*):

Alle Menschen die auf den Gang der Menschheit gewirkt haben, alle ohne Unterschied waren nur darum fähig und wirksam, weil sie schicksalbereit

waren. Das paßt auf Moses und Buddha, es paßt auf Napoleon und auf Bismarck. Welcher Welle einer dient, von welchem Pol aus er regiert wird, das liegt nicht in seiner Wahl.

All humans who have affected the course of humankind, all without exception were capable and efficacious only because they were prepared for destiny. This applies to Moses and Buddha, to Napoleon and Bismark. Whichever surge they served, from whichever pole they were governed – that is not for them to choose. (*GD3* 239)

This passage is particularly important as it shows just how varied individuals who accept their destinies can be. The juxtaposition of Buddha and Bismarck, Moses and Napoleon, is certainly not meant to imply that these men have similar moral valuations or world visions. They are governed, in the words of *Demian*, from different poles, from different sides of the spirit. It is no surprise, then, that Siddhartha and Gotama, who hold opposite worldviews, can nonetheless stand united in their readiness to accept their destinies, that is, in their common attitude of *sich fallen lassen*.

### **The Smile as Symbol of *sich fallen lassen* in *Siddhartha***

We have yet to demonstrate that Siddhartha and Gotama's shared attitude of *sich fallen lassen* is, as in *Klein and Wagner*, the reason for their smiles. If this is the case, Gotama and Siddhartha should be seen to smile at moments when they let themselves fall. Specifically, they should smile at moments when they either abandon a stagnant way of life that prevents them from fulfilling their destinies, or when they heed the call of their inner voice.

In the case of Siddhartha, this trend is established from the first instance of the smile in the entire novel. At the end of the first chapter, Govinda joins Siddhartha as he flees from his home city to join the Samanas. In the final two lines, they have the following exchange:

»Du bist gekommen«, sagte Siddhartha, und lächelte.

»Ich bin gekommen«, sagte Govinda.

“You came,” said Siddhartha, and smiled.

“I came,” said Govinda. (GD3 625)

Despite its brevity and apparent banality, this passage is one of the most revealing in the entire work. For Siddhartha smiles, and Govinda does not. This small detail is not only paradigmatic of the main difference between Siddhartha's and Govinda's characters, but also the connection between *sich fallen lassen* and the smile. Throughout the novel, Govinda is repeatedly characterized as an emulator, one who, as Siddhartha describes, has neither law nor doctrine in his own self; he is no stone, but a leaf, wavering and whirling in the wind (above, p. 51). Govinda always takes after someone or belongs to some greater organization; his identity is always relative to someone or something other than himself, whether this be Siddhartha or Gotama's teaching (GD3 648-49). Siddhartha, on the other hand, is characterized by his autonomy and willingness to heed the call of his own destiny. As we saw above (p. 54), this includes this same moment, when Siddhartha “had left his home and chosen the life of the Samanas.” This small exchange between Govinda and Siddhartha, then, is crafted with a deliberateness that is not obvious at first glance. Siddhartha smiles because he – and he *alone* – has made the choice to let himself fall away from his life among the Brahmins. Govinda, on the other hand, is following Siddhartha along Siddhartha's own path; he is merely acting as Siddhartha's “Begleiter, ...sein Diener, ... sein Speerträger, ... sein Schatten” [attendant, ...his servant, ...his spear-carrier, ...his shadow] (GD3 618). Govinda cannot be granted the smile because he does not let himself fall, but catches himself in the net of Siddhartha's plan.

As Siddhartha later settles into his stagnant and inauthentic life in the city, his smile disappears. It does not reappear until he finally makes the decision to abandon this way of life and once again hears his dying inner voice. A longer scene from the chapter “Samsara” [Samsara] depicts this shift perfectly:

Da wußte Siddhartha, daß das Spiel zu Ende war, daß er nicht mehr spielen könnte. Ein Schauer lief ihm über den Leib, in seinem Innern, so fühlte er, war etwas gestorben.

...Jenen ganzen Tag saß er unter dem Mangobaume... Er saß noch als die Nacht angebrochen war. Als er aufschauend die Sterne erblickte, dachte er: „Hier sitze ich unter meinem Mangobaum, in meinem Lustgarten.“ Er lächelte ein wenig, – war es denn notwendig, war es richtig, war es nicht ein törichtes Spiel, daß er einen Mangobaum, daß er einen Garten besaß?

Auch damit schloß er ab, auch das starb in ihm. Er erhob sich, nahm Abschied vom Mangobaum, Abschied vom Lustgarten. ...[Er] dachte an sein Haus in der Stadt, an sein Gemach und Bett, an den Tisch mit den Speisen. Er lächelte müde, schüttelte sich und nahm Abschied von diesen Dingen.

Siddhartha knew that the game was up, that he could no longer play along. A shudder ran down his spine. He felt that something deep inside of him had died.

That whole day he sat under his mango tree... He was still sitting there as the day turned to night. As he looked up and beheld the stars, he thought to himself, “Here I am, sitting under my mango tree, in my pleasure garden.” He smiled slightly. Was it really necessary, was it right that he owned a mango tree and a garden? Wasn’t it all just a fool’s game?

He also brought that to an end, that also died in him. He stood and bid farewell to his mango tree, bid farewell to his pleasure garden. ...[He] turned his mind to his house in the city, to his chambers and his bed, to his table decked with food. He smiled tiredly, shook himself, and bid farewell to all these things. (GD3 680)

This is the first time Siddhartha smiles since beginning his stagnant, inauthentic life as a merchant in the city. His smile, then, represents his return to his destined path; just as he smiles for the first time in years, he shakes himself free of his attachment to the creature comforts that have stifled his inner voice and bids farewell. To borrow the words of *Klein and Wagner*, Siddhartha lets himself fall out of “his small, confined, artificially guarded life” (above, p. 46) and plunges freely back into the stream of his destiny. It is no coincidence that at just this moment when Siddhartha abandons his life in the city, his lover Kamala releases “einen seltenen Singvogel” [a strange songbird] – symbol of Siddhartha’s inner voice – from its cage and lets it fly free (GD3 681; cf. above, p. 54).

In the case of Gotama, the connection between *sich fallen lassen* and the smile is less apparent. Nonetheless, we can assume such a connection. For Gotama is a “Vollendete”

[Perfect One] (e.g., *GD3* 645), that is, one who has entrusted himself to and attained his destiny. He goes no one's way but his own (*Der Buddha ging seines Weges*) (637), in other words, he is constantly letting himself fall. Furthermore, he is constantly smiling. As well, the scenes in which Siddhartha sits under his mango tree (above, p. 58) and Gotama under the Bodhi tree (above, p. 55) are so similar that we must imagine Gotama, like Siddhartha, smiling. In this moment of his enlightenment, Gotama bids farewell to the unnecessary things that contain and guard his life. Just as Siddhartha, he shakes himself of the past and turns himself back to what is necessary: to heed the inner voice, to let himself fall into his destiny, and nothing else.

## *Chapter Four: The Chinese Smile*

Mein Heiliger ist indisch gekleidet, seine Weisheit  
steht aber näher bei Lao Tse als bei Gotama.  
[My saint is dressed like an Indian; his wisdom,  
however, is closer to Laozi's than Gotama's.]  
- Hesse to Stefan Zweig, Nov. 27, 1922

So far, we have viewed the smile of the two Siddharthas (Siddhartha Gotama and Siddhartha the protagonist) as the bodily expression of their shared attitude of *sich fallen lassen*. Furthermore, we have treated the latter as a concept peculiar to Hesse. There is, however, good reason to believe that *sich fallen lassen* is itself Hesse's reworking of a philosophical attitude which came into existence millennia before he was even born, namely, Chinese Taoism. At first glance, this claim might strike us as paradoxical. Considering that *Siddhartha* is Hesse's most unabashed appropriation of Indian themes and symbols, one could only expect that its message would remain true to the subcontinent. Yet, as we saw in the second chapter, Hesse rather ironically considers his "Indian Tale" to be his "emancipation from Indian thought" (above, p. 27). The missing half of this statement is that it was as well his flight to China.

In this chapter, we will dissect Hesse's assessment of Chinese, specifically Taoist, philosophy as both a middle ground between world-affirmation and denial, and a gateway to their reconciliation. We will then go on to show how Hesse's understanding of Taoism is reflected in the attitude of *sich fallen lassen*, and draw out the implications this has for our analysis of *Siddhartha*. This chapter, then, will serve to strengthen our primary claim: that *Siddhartha* can be read as Hesse's attempt to reconcile the Schopenhauerian and Nietzschean worldviews.

### **"Chinese" Thought Between the Poles**

As we saw above (p. 14), Hesse notes that after reading Schopenhauer and Karl Neumann, translator of the Buddha's *Discourses*, he "understood all of Buddhism as resignation and asceticism, as flight into wishlessness." Hesse continues to explain that it is not until he encounters the recently produced translations of the *Tao Te Ching* by Julius Grill (1910), and more importantly, Richard Wilhelm (1911), that his understanding of East Asian thought, in his own words, "erfuhr eine Bereicherung und teilweise Korrektur" [experienced an enrichment and partial correction]. Specifically, his previous fascination with the life-denying tendency of Indian thought begins to disappear more and more from his thinking (*MSI* 340).

Most important for us is how Hesse summarizes his transition from Indian to Chinese thought. He writes,

...Für mich bezeichnete ich diese Wendung zuweilen als eine Wendung von Indien nach China, d.h., von dem asketischen Denken Indiens zu dem bürgerlichen, »bejahenderen« Chinas.

...From time to time, I thought of this shift as a turning away from India toward China, that is, from the ascetic thinking of India toward the civil, "more affirming" thought of China. (*MSI* 340)

Hesse, that is, attempts to fit the unfamiliar thought of China within the binary scheme of life-affirmation and denial familiar to the philosophical heritage of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche. His use of scare-quotes around "more affirming" (»bejahenderen«) even suggests that he is aware of the superficiality of his interpretation. Furthermore, this binary scheme implies two poles: life-affirmation and life-denial, with ascetic Indian philosophy being associated with the latter. But Hesse does not assert that Chinese philosophy represents the other pole, that is, pure life-affirmation. Rather, it is "more affirming," that is, it lies somewhere between the two poles.

That Hesse needs to fit ancient Chinese thought into the familiar conceptual scheme of affirmation and denial becomes more understandable when we observe his first, utterly

disorienting encounter with a translation of Confucius' *Reden [Analects]* (1910). It is the first in a ten-volume series of canonical Chinese texts being translated by German missionary and sinologist Richard Wilhelm,<sup>28</sup> and Hesse reviews it as soon as it is released. He writes,

...So froh wir ähnliche Erschließungen, namentlich der indischen Altertümer, sonst begrüßen, so stehen wir doch gerade den Chinesen in vollkommener Fremdheit gegenüber. Wir empfinden alles, was von dort kommt, als fremd, anders auf einem anderen Rhythmus, ja Lebensgesetz beruhend als unser Sein und Denken.

...Immer wieder hat man die Gefühl, eine fremde Luft zu atmen, welche von anderer Art und Zusammensetzung ist als die, die wir zum Leben brauchen.

...Whereas we gladly greet similar insights, in particular those into ancient India, our confrontation with the Chinese leaves us feeling completely estranged. We receive everything that comes from there as strange, resting in another way on another rhythm, indeed, on another law of life than our own being and thinking.

...Again and again, one feels that he is breathing a strange air, one of another kind and composition as that which we require to live. (*MSI* 48)

Along with its orientalist sentiments, the passage reveals an important trend in Hesse's understanding of Chinese culture and thought. He hammers in the idea of otherness; almost every descriptor he uses is "strange" (*fremd*) or "other" (*anders*). The Chinese are different not only in their way of life, but in their very *being*. They breathe a strange air inimical to Hesse and his German audience. They are *other*, and as such, they are not understandable. In comparison with the works of ancient India, which have by this point already been subjected to the European frame of understanding – specifically, as Hesse himself notes, by Schopenhauer, who "prepared" Germany for Indian thought (*MSI* 73) – Chinese thought poses a new and dangerous other, a new threat to Europe's sense of self that has yet to be conquered and categorized.

Nonetheless, Hesse's still believes that Chinese thought, once integrated, could possibly serve as a corrective to the spiritual suffocation of a heavily industrialized,



capitalized, and war-hungry Europe (cf. *Aus Indien* 203f). As he writes in his review of the *Analects*:

Das nötigt uns, unsere eigene individualistische Kultur auch einmal nicht als selbstverständlich, sondern im Vergleich mit ihrem Widerspiel zu betrachten. Und dabei bleibt es nicht, sondern es entsteht im Lesenden manchmal für Augenblicke die seltsam aufleuchtende Vorstellung der Möglichkeit einer Synthese beider Welten.

We are obliged to consider our own individualistic culture for once not as self-evident, but rather in comparison with its opposite. But this is certainly not the end of the matter, for sometimes there are moments when the reader is struck by the possibility of a synthesis of both worlds. (*China* 158)

Of specific interest for Hesse in regard to this idea of a “synthesis of both worlds” is Laozi’s *Tao Te Ching*. In a newspaper article from the Summer of 1919, Hesse even claims: “Die Weisheit, die uns nottut, steht bei Lao Tse, und sie ins Europäische zu übersetzen ist die einzige geistige Aufgabe, die wir zur Zeit haben” [The wisdom we need most is to be found in Laozi, and to translate this same wisdom into European is the only spiritual task we have at the moment] (*MDI* 142). Hesse, then, recognizes that canonical works of ancient China like the *Tao Te Ching* are of no use to a spiritually impoverished Europe unless they are first translated into familiar words and concepts. This explains why he attempts to locate Chinese thought within the scheme of “life-affirmation and denial” supplied by Schopenhauer and Nietzsche: the latter are simply the terms used to understand and describe “Oriental” thought at the time.

For instance, a contemporaneous work on Indian philosophy by Albert Schweitzer (1875-1965), *Die Weltanschauung der indischen Denker* [*The Worldview of Indian Thinkers*] (1935), is anchored in the terms “world-affirmation/denial” and “life-affirmation/denial.” Hesse himself reviews Schweitzer’s book, describing the author as “tapfer” [bold] and “ein vorbildlicher Abendländer” [a model Westerner] (*MS I* 225). Schweitzer, Hesse continues,

betrachtet in einem lebendigen, kraftvollen und äußerst anregenden Buch »Die Weltanschauung der indischen Denker«... Er tut es mit Energie und mit großer Reinlichkeit... streng um Objektivität bemüht

observes “the worldview of Indian thinkers” in a lively, powerful, and utterly inspiring book... He does it with energy and great purity... concerned with objectivity. (ibid 225-26)

In the entire review, there is no suggestion that Hesse takes any umbrage at Schweitzer’s adherence to a Schopenhauerian-Nietzschean terminology. In fact, Hesse even criticizes Schweitzer because the latter “überbetont die »Weltverneinung« als eine rein indische Angelegenheit” [overemphasizes “world-denial” as a purely Indian concern]. In other words, Hesse considers “world-denial” to be a hermeneutic category that should be extended beyond studies of Indian thought.

As if to show how this theory can be put into practice, Hesse then uses Schweizer’s terminology of “world-denying” in reference to China. He writes that Schweizer

hat für den kontemplativen Grundsatz des »Nichttuns« (den auch die gar nicht weltverneinenden Chinesen so wohl kennen) zwar Verständnis und intellektuelle Anerkennung, nicht aber das eigentliche Einfühlungsvermögen.

undoubtedly has sympathy and intellectual appreciation for the contemplative principle of “non-action” (with which the Chinese, who are not all that world-denying, are quite familiar) but nonetheless lacks the capacity to empathize with the thought. (*MS I* 226)

It is difficult to tell if Hesse, in saying that Chinese thinkers are “not at all world-denying,” has taken a more extreme stance, departing from the view he held in 1919 that they are simply “more life-affirming” than the thinkers of India. That is, in saying the Chinese are *not at all* world-denying, he may be implying that Chinese thought is *absolutely* world-affirming. However, this is not necessarily the case, for if Hesse meant to express the thought in such positive terms, he could have easily done so. In line with his earlier estimation, then, there seems to be a hesitance on Hesse’s part as to where exactly Chinese thought fits within this binary. He is certainly seeking to distance it from the world-denying tendencies of ancient

Indian philosophy and religion, but he is not entirely dedicated to calling it world-*affirming*. In this sense, his judgment seems to have remained the same: the most that can be said about the strange and ambiguous thought of China is that it is “more affirming” than the Indian, and in particular the Buddhist, worldview.

Resting somewhere between the poles of world-affirmation and denial, Chinese thought, as Hesse understands it, offers a possible way to their reconciliation. That this is indeed the case will be seen in the following section. Specifically, we will observe how Hesse’s historical engagement with Chinese thought influences his development of both *sich fallen lassen* and the symbol of the smile. Both of these, as we have seen, are means of reconciling Siddhartha and Gotama, avatars of the Schopenhauerian and Nietzschean worldviews.

### **God as *Tao*, *Wu Wei* as *sich fallen lassen***

Before we can draw parallels between Hesse’s vision of Chinese, and specifically Taoist, philosophy and his concept of *sich fallen lassen*, we need to familiarize ourselves with the primary tenets of Taoism. First, there is the concept of the *tao* itself. The *tao*, which literally means the “way,” is the unutterable, primal source of all things. In Richard Wilhelm’s translation of the *Tao Te Ching*, which Hesse admires (*MSI* 53), Laozi writes, the *tao* is the “Anfang der Welt” [beginning of the world], the “Einheit” [oneness]. It is “des Geheimnisses noch tieferes Geheimnis: / ...Die Pforte der Offenbarwerdung aller Kräfte” [the mystery nestled in a mystery: / ...The gateway to the revelation of all powers]. In Julius Grill’s translation of this same verse, he equates the *tao* with Kant’s “Ding an sich” [thing-in-itself], the incomprehensible essence of the world as representation. In 1911, Hesse himself refers to the *tao* as the “Urprinzip alles Seins” [the first principle of all Being] (*MSI* 50).

The *tao*, as the primal source of all things, is also the point of harmony between everything that we, creatures trapped in time, regard as oppositional. In the forty-second verse of the *Tao Te Ching*, Laozi writes,

Der SINN erzeugt die Einheit.  
...Alle Geschöpfe haben im Rücken das Dunkle  
und umfassen das Lichte,  
und der unendliche Lebensatem gibt ihnen Einklang.

The Tao<sup>29</sup> produces the oneness.  
...All creatures have darkness at their backs,  
and encompass the light,  
and the endless breath of life gives them harmony.

In this sense, the notion of the *tao* likely influences Hesse's portrayal of god in *Klein and Wagner*, and of the Om or the river in *Siddhartha*. All of these represent meeting points of opposites and the transcendent harmony of life and nature, in which all voices come together – voices of pain and love, good and evil, war and peace, yes-saying and no-saying voices. Indeed, the *tao* is even described as a river in the *Tao Te Ching*, for instance, at verse thirty-two (Hsia 243).

The second Taoist concept we need to address is *wu wei*, or non-action, which is the main practical doctrine of Taoism. We should note first, however, that the common translation of *wu wei* as “non-action” is misleading. The idea is not to remain completely inactive, but rather, as American Taoism scholar, Livia Kohn, nicely puts it, “to do things the natural way, by not interfering with the patterns, rhythms, and structures of nature, without imposing one's own intentions upon the organization of the world” (*Encyclopedia of Taoism*, vol. 2, 1067).

Considering that Hesse studied every available German translation of Laozi's *Tao Te Ching* (MS I 341), he is undoubtedly aware of the Taoist concept of “non-action.” In Richard Wilhelm's translation, for instance, we find in the third verse: “Das Nicht-Handeln üben: / so kommt alles in Ordnung” [Practicing non-action: / Thus everything comes into order]. In the

second verse: “Also auch der Berufene: Er verweilt in Wirken ohne Handeln” [Thus, too, the chosen one: / He abides in doing-without-acting]. In his explanatory notes to the second verse, Wilhelm writes,

Die Lehre des »Wirkens ohne Handelns«, die das ganze Buch durchzieht, ist hier zum erstenmal ausgesprochen. ...Es ist das Wirkenlassen der schöpferischen Kräfte im und durch das eigene Ich, ohne selbst etwas von außen her zu wollen.

The doctrine of “doing without acting,” which pervades the whole book, is enunciated here for the first time. ...It is when one lets creative powers work in and through his own self, without interposing anything self-willed.

*Wu wei*, then, is the deliberate giving-forth of the self to the *tao*. One allows the “creative powers” of the *tao* to express themselves through the self, without resisting. But this is not a mere surrender of the will; it is to attune oneself to a more authentic way of living. As contemporary Taoism scholar, Russel Kirkland, notes, the *tao* is “a natural guiding force that leads all things ineluctably to their fulfilment,” and as such, “the true matrix of authentic life in this world” (*Encyclopedia of Taoism*, vol.1, 305, 309). To assert one’s individual will against the *tao* and resist giving oneself forth to its power: *that* is the source of inauthenticity.

The conceptual similarity between *wu wei* and *sich fallen lassen* is striking. Just as *wu wei* is a way of acting that is attuned to the rhythms of nature, the goal of *sich fallen lassen* is to fulfill one’s destiny, to cease resisting god’s will and find one’s ownmost voice in the divine chorus of the world. In both cases, individuals act authentically by giving themselves forth to god or *tao*; the root of inauthenticity, accordingly, is to *resist*, to interpose the individual will between the self and the divine source. The connection between the two concepts becomes even stronger when we recall Hesse’s claim that “The wisdom we need most is to be found in Laozi, and to translate this same wisdom into European is the only spiritual task we have at the moment” (above, p. 63). Hesse writes this in July of 1919, that is, just as he is completing *Klein and Wagner* and just before beginning work on *Siddhartha*.

Considering the enormous similarity between the two concepts, it is reasonable to conclude that *sich fallen lassen* is Hesse's translation of *wu wei* into "European."

Strengthening this conclusion, we see Siddhartha himself juxtapose the concept of non-action with *sich fallen lassen*. He says to his lover, Kamala,

When you throw a stone into the water, it hurries along the quickest route to the bottom. This is how it is when Siddhartha has a goal or intention. *Siddhartha does nothing* [*Siddhartha tut nichts*]. He waits, he thinks, he fasts, but he goes through the things of the world like a stone through the water, *without doing anything* [*ohne etwas zu tun*], without moving. He is pulled along, *he lets himself fall* [*er läßt sich fallen*]. His goal pulls him to itself, for he lets nothing enter his soul that could work against his goal. (above, p. 51; *GD3* 662-623; emphasis added)

Judging by the way Siddhartha uses *sich fallen lassen* as a stand-in for non-doing (*Nichts-Tun*<sup>30</sup>), we can reason that he means to establish the concepts' identity or indiscernibility. He is certainly correct, for as we have seen, both concepts have the same goal, namely, that one, such as Siddhartha, harmonizes his actions with god, *tao*, or the "music of life." Just as those who adopt the Taoist attitude of *wu wei* "do things the natural way, by not interfering with the patterns, rhythms, and structures of nature" (Kohn, above, p. 66), those who let themselves fall cease to resist the will of god and find their destined voices among the choruses of the world.

The connection between *wu wei* and *sich fallen lassen* is further strengthened when we note that the smile, as a symbol, is developed by Hesse in direct connection to his engagement with Chinese philosophy. Just as the smile is the objective correlative of *sich fallen lassen* in both *Klein and Wagner* and *Siddhartha*, it is also an ever-present motif in Hesse's early Chinese and Chinese-influenced tales, for instance in "Der Dichter" [The Poet] (1913), *Flötentraum* [Flute Dream] (1913), and "Der Europäer" [The European] (1917-18). In these works, which draw heavily from Taoist thought, the smile takes on the significance of a moment of fulfilled destiny or a fusion of opposing forces. In "The Poet," for instance, the

protagonist Han Fook smiles in the final lines, as he realizes that he has finally fulfilled the call of his heart and become a “vollkommener Dichter” [perfect poet] (*GD3* 286). In “Flute Dream,” a smiling boat man sings a song in which “Der Tod war Leben, und das Leben war Tod, und sie waren ineinander verschlungen... und dies war das Letzte und der Sinn der Welt” [Death was Life, and life was death, and they were engulfed in one another... and this was the final truth and the meaning of the world] (*GD3* 300). All of these early works point to a common ancestry between Hesse’s use of the smile and his burgeoning interest in Taoism, particularly its tendency to reconcile opposing concepts.

### **Vasudeva: Falling, Smiling Taoist Sage**

It is time to introduce the third and final<sup>31</sup> smiling figure in *Siddhartha*, Siddhartha’s friend and mentor, Vasudeva. As is well noted by Hesse scholars, specifically Adrian Hsia, Vasudeva is a deliberate representation of the Taoist sage (Hsia 244ff). Vasudeva even paraphrases the *Tao Te Ching* to Siddhartha at times, saying, for example, “Du weißt, daß Weich stärker ist als Hart, Wasser stärker als Fels” [You know that soft is stronger than hard, water stronger than rock] (*GD3* 707-08). When we look to Wilhelm’s translation of the *Tao Te Ching*, we see that Vasudeva’s thought and language are lifted from the seventy-eighth verse:

Auf der ganzen Welt gibt es nicht Weicheres als das Wasser.  
Und doch in der Art, wie es dem Harten zusetzt, kommt nichts ihm gleich.  
...Daß Schwaches das Starke besiegt  
und Weiches das Harte besiegt,  
weiß jedermann auf Erden.

In the whole world there is nothing softer than water.  
And yet nothing compares with the way it erodes the hard.  
That the weak conquers the strong  
And the soft conquers the hard,  
everyone in the world knows this.<sup>32</sup> (78)

Not only Vasudeva's words, but also his characterization is in accordance with the Taoist sage. Just as the very first verse of the *Tao Te Ching* shows Laozi to be dubious of language, Vasudeva is described as "kein Freund der Worte" [no friend of words] (GD3 698). He lives by the river, spending his days mostly in silence, leaving his heart open to the rhythms of nature. He admits,

Ich bin kein Gelehrter, ich verstehe nicht zu sprechen, ich verstehe auch nicht zu denken. Ich verstehe nur zuzuhören und fromm zu sein, sonst habe ich nichts gelernt. Könnte ich es sagen und lehren, so wäre ich vielleicht ein Weiser.

I am no learned man. I do not know how to speak, nor do I know how to think. All I know is how to listen and be devout, otherwise I have learned nothing. If I could say it and teach it, then perhaps I would be a wise man. (GD3 697)

Again, Vasudeva's words can be traced back to Wilhelm's translation of the *Tao Te Ching*, specifically the eighty-first verse, which reads: "Der Weise ist nicht gelehrt / der Gelehrte ist nicht weise" [The wise man is not learned, the learned man is not wise] (81; Weber 82).

Vasudeva's action, too, perfectly captures the Taoist principle of *wu wei*, non-action. For instance, as Siddhartha chases after his runaway son, Vasudeva tries to persuade him to let the boy go, for he "geht seine Bahn" [goes his own way] (712). When Siddhartha then ignores Vasudeva's advice, Vasudeva still "hinderte [Siddhartha] nicht" [did not hinder Siddhartha] (712), though he knows that Siddhartha will only cause himself pain. Vasudeva, that is, lets the world take its course, without, in Livia Kohn's words, "interposing his own intentions upon the organization of the world" (above, p. 66).

Vasudeva, then, as a representation of the Taoist sage, would, by Hesse's own interpretation of Taoism, occupy a middle ground between life-affirmation and denial. What is so interesting, then, is that he, just as Siddhartha and Gotama, is granted the symbol of the smile. Indeed, almost every description of Vasudeva makes reference to his smile or beaming face. Considering that Hesse's symbolic use of the smile has a deep historical connection to



his engagement with Taoist philosophy, we can reason that Vasudeva is not simply, as Hesse describes him in a letter to a friend, “ein freundliche[r] alte[r] Trottel, der immer lächelt und heimlich ein Heiliger ist” [a friendly old halfwit who is always smiling and secretly a saint] (*MS I* 163; Weber 82). He is, rather, the key to understanding the reconciliation of Siddhartha and Gotama. When we recognize that their smiles have the same symbolic significance as Vasudeva’s, we can trace these smiles back to Hesse’s specific engagement with Taoist thought, which is centered on the underlying unity and reconciliation of opposing forces.

Furthermore, we can tell that Vasudeva’s smile signals that he, like Siddhartha and Gotama, lets himself fall, for at the very moment when he departs from his home and fulfills his destiny, his body dissolves into a beaming smile:

»Ich gehe in die Wälder, ich gehe in die Einheit«, sprach Vasudeva strahlend.  
Strahlend ging er hinweg; Siddhartha blickte ihm nach... sah seine Schritte voll  
Frieden, sah sein Haupt voll Glanz, sah seine Gestalt voll Licht.

“I’m going into the forest, I’m going into the oneness,” said Vasudeva, beaming.  
Beaming, he went away; Siddhartha watched him go... saw his strides filled  
with peace, saw his face filled with radiance, saw his figure filled with light.  
(*GD3* 721)

This moment, when Vasudeva, now the smile incarnate, takes his final step into the “oneness,” into the *tao*, into the house of god, is a perfect example of *sich fallen lassen*. It presents the culmination of Vasudeva’s destiny, the final heeding of his inner voice. As he says to Siddhartha,

Ich habe auf diese Stunde gewartet, Lieber. Nun sie gekommen ist, laß mich  
gehen. Lange habe ich auf diese Stunde gewartet, lange bin ich der Fährmann  
Vasudeva gewesen. Nun ist es genug.

[I have waited for this hour, friend. Now it has come. Let me go. Long have I  
waited for this hour, long have I been the boatman Vasudeva. Now it is  
enough] (721).

Vasudeva has anticipated this destined moment for a significant length of time, and now that it has arrived – now that his destiny has displayed itself – he knows that he cannot resist its

call, even if this means abandoning his home and friend of twenty years,<sup>33</sup> abandoning even his long-cherished identity. Smiling, he lets himself be drawn to his destiny and asks of Siddhartha to let him go.

### **Vasudeva as Siddhartha's Mentor**

Vasudeva, the smiling Taoist sage who lets himself fall, also plays an important role as Siddhartha's mentor. He teaches Siddhartha to listen to the river, to hear the "music of life," the *tao*. Eventually, Siddhartha's attunement to the world becomes indiscernible from Vasudeva's:

Oft saßen sie am Abend gemeinsam beim Ufer auf dem Baumstamm, schwiegen und hörten beide dem Wasser zu, welches für sie kein Wasser war, sondern die Stimme des Lebens, die Stimme des Seienden, des ewig Werdenden. Und es geschah zuweilen, ...daß sie beide im selben Augenblick, wenn der Fluß ihnen etwas Gutes gesagt hatte, einander anblickten, beide genau dasselbe denkend, beide beglückt über dieselbe Antwort auf dieselbe Frage.

During the evenings, they often sat together silently on the river bank on the tree branch, and both would listen to the water, which for them was not really water, but the voice of life, the voice of being, the voice of eternal becoming. And from time to time it happened... that both of them in the same moment, just as the river had said something good to them, would look at each other, both thinking the exact same thing, both delighted over the same answer to the same question. (699)

For Siddhartha and Vasudeva, the river is a symbol of the fusion of opposites, of the interpenetration of being and becoming, of god or *tao*. It is, however, important to note that this passage does not make any claims as to their expressed worldviews. Siddhartha and Vasudeva remain silent and attune only their inner selves to the music that pours forth from the river: the music of life, of god, of the sacred Om that Siddhartha once heard as he let himself fall into these very same waters.

Just as Siddhartha's inner experience of the world becomes more similar to Vasudeva's, so does his appearance. Most notably, his smile begins to approximate that of the boatman:

Und von Mal zu Mal ward sein Lächeln dem des Fährmanns ähnlicher, ward beinahe ebenso strahlend, beinahe ebenso vom Glück durchglänzt, ebenso aus tausend kleinen Falten leuchtend, ebenso kindlich, ebenso greisenhaft. Viele Reisende, wenn sie die beiden Fährmänner sahen, hielten sie für Brüder.

And from time to time his smile became more like the boatman's, became almost as beaming, almost as permeated with bliss. Like the boatman's it shined out of a thousand tiny folds, like the smile of a child, like the smile of an elder. Many travelers, when they saw the two boat men, mistook them for brothers. (699)

This passage is particularly important in demonstrating the correlation between the inner attitude of *sich fallen lassen* and the symbol of the smile. Just as *sich fallen lassen*, or *wu wei*, implies a recognition of the underlying unity of god or *tao*, the corresponding smile is a fusion of opposites: it is "like the smile of a child, like the smile of an elder."

Under the mentorship of Vasudeva, Siddhartha finally ceases resisting and fulfils his destiny. Certainly, Siddhartha lets himself fall at earlier points in the book, but he always catches himself on something, be it his own pride, his life in the city, or his grief for his runaway son. It is not until Vasudeva encourages Siddhartha to truly listen to the river that Siddhartha finally "hörte auf, mit dem Schicksal zu kämpfen" [ceased to fight his destiny] (GD3 721). It should come as no surprise that in this same moment Siddhartha's smile reaches its culmination: "Auf seinem Gesicht blühte die Heiterkeit des Wissens, dem kein Wille mehr entgegensteht" [On his faced bloomed the serenity of the knowledge against which no more will was opposed] (721). At this moment, too, Vasudeva's mentorship is no longer needed. Siddhartha has harmonized his will with the transcendent harmony of nature. He has become a Perfect One, he has attained the goal, and Vasudeva can take his leave from his home, from the novel, and go into the woods, into the oneness.

Despite their attitudinal similarities and identical smiles, it would be imprudent to claim that Vasudeva and Siddhartha *express* their worldviews in identical fashions. Whereas Vasudeva is heir to the Taoist tradition of silence, or what Adrian Hsia refers to as “schweigendes Nichtstun” [silent non-action] (MS2 202), Siddhartha lays out a well-defined teaching in the final chapter. That is to say, when Siddhartha gives his final sermon, he is not acting as Vasudeva’s mouthpiece, for the latter’s worldview is tied up with his refusal to speak. In giving positive expression to his worldview – namely, a world-view of world-affirmation – Siddhartha distances himself from Vasudeva, who silently takes no side. Vasudeva’s worldview, then, remains somewhere between or even outside of the poles of affirmation and denial; because it is not expressed, it cannot be precisely located. Nonetheless, Siddhartha and Vasudeva remain united in their inner, unexpressed relation to the world and its symbolic expression in the smile.

We see again that two figures in *Siddhartha*, who give expression to their worldviews in different and even contradictory ways, are united by the symbol of the smile. Bringing Gotama back into the picture, there are in total three characters with differing worldviews who nonetheless represent a similar inner attunement to the world. Theodore Ziolkowski, one of the most formidable American interpreters of Hesse’s work, notes this as well, writing in his *Novels of Hermann Hesse* (1965):

The smile is the symbol of inner perfection, but inner perfection for Hesse means the awareness of the unity, totality, and simultaneity of all being. It is thus appropriate that the three men [Siddhartha, Gotama, and Vasudeva] who share this perception should also share the same beatific smile, even though each reached his goal by following a completely different path. (172)

Such an interpretation of the smile, though accurate, does not go far enough. For it is not simply that those who smile the divine smile possess knowledge of the transcendent unity of all things; what is most important is that they then adopt a particular attitude in relation to it. Furthermore, this attitude is not necessarily one of affirmation and love, as Ziolkowski

suggests (170). This is certainly true of Siddhartha, but it would be unfair to abstract from this one character alone. For as we have seen, Gotama, who advises his followers to detach themselves from and deny the world and its sufferings, smiles in same way as Siddhartha. What the smile represents must then be an attitude that carries within itself the potentiality to be expressed as both world-affirmation *and* denial. Within the frame of *Siddhartha*, this can only be said of *sich fallen lassen*, or *wu wei*, as both of these imply only a willingness to heed the call of destiny and find one's voice within the chorus of the world. Yet, as we have seen, Hesse's world chorus is not united in one pure and blissful note – akin to the final stanza of Walt Whitman's "Mystic Trumpeter" – but is rather a cacophonous harmony, filled with voices of love, hate, suffering, joy, affirmation, denial, and everything in between.

### **Gotama and Siddhartha as Taoists?**

Our identification of *sich fallen lassen* with the concept of *wu wei* would seem to lead to the conclusion that Gotama and Siddhartha are Taoists and therefore, in Hesse's terms, neither world-denying nor world-affirming. This is true in a sense, but nonetheless compatible with our overall analysis of *Siddhartha*. Specifically, *sich fallen lassen* represents an agential attitude – that is, an attitude that guides one's actions – and not an expressed worldview. This means that Siddhartha and Gotama can *act* similarly, yet *express* themselves oppositely.

This interpretation, furthermore, is in line with both *Siddhartha* and Hesse's own view. During Siddhartha's sermon to Govinda in the final chapter, he says, "With your great teacher [Gotama], the thing is more dear to me than the words, his doing and his living more important than his speaking, the gestures of his hand more important than his opinions" (above, p. 43). That is to say, Siddhartha recognizes that he and Gotama are vastly different as regards their expressed beliefs, but what they hold in common is a particular way of going about, of acting in the world. He is setting up a categorical distinction between word and

deed; in regard to the former, they are opposites, to the latter, equals. Because their similarities and differences belong to different categories, they can coincide without contradiction.

Hesse himself is in complete agreement with Siddhartha's distinction between word and deed. In a review of Karl Neumann's *Discourses*, which Hesse writes just as he is completing the final chapter of *Siddhartha* (cf. *MSI* 42), he explains: "Der Gedankeninhalt der Buddhalehre ist nur eine Hälfte des Werkes Buddhas, die andere Hälfte ist sein Leben, ist gelebtes Leben, geleistete Arbeit, getane Tat" [The thought content of the Buddha's teaching is only a half of the Buddha's work. The other half is his life, his lived life, his accomplished work, his done deed] (*MSI* 69). Without this distinction between word and deed, *Siddhartha* would collapse into a heap of contradictions. It is what allows Siddhartha to recognize the opposition of his and Gotama's words, yet nonetheless say, "I know that Gotama and I are united" (above, p. 43). Siddhartha the protagonist *says* he affirms the world and Siddhartha Gotama *says* he denies it, but both are united in that they let themselves fall and live authentically, heeding only the call of their own individual destinies. The distinction between word and deed, then, is what reconciles the two opposing worldviews that tear *Siddhartha* apart.

## *Conclusion* *Siddhartha's Smile: Solution or Aporia?*

The irony of *Siddhartha* is that the title itself is ambiguous. On the one hand, it signifies Siddhartha Gotama, the Schopenhauerian, *nirvana*-seeking Buddha; on the other, it signifies Siddhartha, the Nietzschean, *samsara*-affirming protagonist. Yet, simultaneously, the title points to the reconciliation of this very ambiguity. For the name “Siddhartha” means “one who attains the goal” (cf. *Dictionary of Buddhism* 266). And as we have seen, in the context of the novel *Siddhartha*, those who attain the goal, those who fulfill their destinies, are those who let themselves fall toward god, Om, or *tao*. The expression of their goals may certainly be different: Gotama describes his goal as *nirvana* and Siddhartha describes his as the affirmation of *samsara*. Nevertheless, they are united in that they spring from a common urge to live authentically, to heed the divine call of their own hearts and enact the laws they find therein.

This is where *Siddhartha* breaks free of Georg Simmel's conclusion in *Schopenhauer and Nietzsche*. For just where Simmel finds two fundamental, opposing urges of the soul, *Siddhartha* presents only one urge expressed by opposite worldviews. But a worldview must be expressed with words, and words are often misleading, as Siddhartha himself recognizes (*GD3* 724f.). They are nothing but half-truths, violent distortions of a felt wisdom that evades utterance. For this reason, two expressed worldviews can stand opposed to one another, yet grow from the same kernel of insight, just as one half of a sapling grows out of its seed and reaches upward toward open air and light, while the other digs downward into the dark and suffocating soil. Despite the apparent opposition of its appearance or expression, however, the sapling, the kernel of insight, remains a single organic whole. This is the realization that allows Siddhartha to exclaim to Govinda, “von jeder Wahrheit ist das Gegenteil ebenso wahr!” [For every truth, the opposite is just as true!] (725).

But there is another side to this realization, a shadow to Siddhartha's smile. As we have seen, the smile is not just granted to Siddhartha, Gotama, and Vasudeva, relatively rational and pacifistic figures. It is also granted to the psychotic Wagner, whose "smile told that [his] deed had also been a way to salvation, a breath, a symbol" (above, p. 50). The smile, then, is indifferent to the moral character of those who wear it, be it those who preach love, compassion, and self-overcoming, or those who slaughter innocents. The Dalai Lama stands shoulder to shoulder with Dylan Roof.

The trouble is, we cannot simply turn a blind eye to the case of Wagner. For, as we have seen, a reading of *Klein and Wagner* enriches our understanding of *Siddhartha* enormously, and both works complement each other so well in theme and language that they can be considered parallel texts. We seem, then, to have reached an aporia, an impasse in our understanding of the text: drawing from the concept of *sich fallen lassen* as presented in *Klein and Wagner*, we can understand Hesse's reconciliation of the antithetical worldviews of Siddhartha and Gotama, yet simultaneously, the concept of *sich fallen lassen* may undermine the viability of this same reconciliation.

Hesse himself recognizes the paradoxical nature of his aesthetic vision at the time of *Siddhartha*, as well as the unwelcome conclusion to which it leads. In a long journal entry from February 17, 1921, after ruminating on *sich fallen lassen* (MSI 21), he writes,

Ich weiß nicht, ob ich, mit meinem Versuch zu Freiheit und Eingehen auf das Chaos... [eine] große Gefahr, ein... großer Schädling bin. Ich verlange von mir Zurückgehen hinter die Gegensatzpaare, Annehmen des Chaos. ...Wenn nun einer diesen Weg geht, ...so ist durchaus nicht gesagt, daß er nun über kurz oder lang eine bessere, wahrere, höhere Moral oder Lebensordnung finden werde! Er kann ebensogut, sogar weit wahrscheinlicher, ...wahnsinnig und Verbrecher werden.

I don't know if I, with my attempt at freedom and entering into chaos, ...am [a] great danger... a great pest. I demand of myself the retreat behind the pairs of opposites, the indulgence in chaos. ...Yet when one goes this way, ...it is not a given that he will sooner or later find a better, truer, and higher morality



or way of life! Just as well – indeed, what is more likely to be the case – he can... go crazy and become a criminal. (*MSI* 25)

The end of this passage is certainly a reference to Wagner, as Hesse establishes the latter's killing spree – just as the Buddha's week-long meditation under the Bodhi Tree, Siddhartha's flight from his stagnant life in the city, and Vasudeva's final steps into the woods and the oneness – as an instance of letting himself fall, of casting away his inherited valuations and heeding the call of his perceived destiny.

Still, to dismiss Hesse's vision of *sich fallen lassen* as nihilistic because of Wagner might be too rash a response. For in the same journal entry, Hesse continues to add,

Ich weiß selber noch nicht recht, woher ich den stillen Glauben habe, daß es trotzdem nicht so gehen werde, wenn ein Mensch in meinem Sinn jenen Weg ins Chaos geht – vielleicht ist es nur ein Rest von... Moral in mir.

I still don't know where I got the tacit belief that it nevertheless won't happen that way if and when a person, in my sense of the term, travels that path into chaos – perhaps it's just a remainder of... morality in me. (*MSI* 25)

Hesse wants to embrace a way of understanding that can reconcile the opposition of “Ja und Nein, Gut und Böse” [yes and no, good and evil] (*ibid.*), but he knows that this might leave us with no way to filter the noble from the despicable. His vision, he recognizes, demands some moral ground, some basic sense of goodness; otherwise, it leaves us falling, in Nietzsche's words, “through an eternal nothingness” (above, p. 48). In these pages, then, we are presented with a Hesse who, at the time of the composition of *Siddhartha*, is struggling to come to terms with his own aesthetic ideal.

Thus to make an apodictic claim about the viability of Hesse's vision in *Siddhartha* – to praise it as a triumphant synthesis of the human spirit or scorn it as nihilistic – would be to do violence to a text so rich in ambiguity. For *Siddhartha*, as Laozi would put it, is “a mystery nestled in a mystery” (above, p. 65). It is the product of a lived life, the work of a human who drew inspiration from all corners and facets of human culture, regardless of their

apparent opposition: from antiquity and modernity, “Orient” and “Occident,” Wagner and Buddha, Schopenhauer and Nietzsche. The opposing worldviews expressed in *Siddhartha* – Gotama’s and Siddhartha’s, Schopenhauer’s and Nietzsche’s – are but the various branches of Hesse’s own thought. Their reconciliation is a groping in the dark, an attempt – a search, not for the solution to a philosophical problem, but for the self.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Hesse never mentions Simmel's *Schopenhauer and Nietzsche* in his published work, but only refers to Simmel in reference to the latter's pupil, Martin Buber (W18 475; W19 302, 500). As Hesse would certainly have much to say about Simmel's lectures if he had read them, we can assume that he is not familiar with them. I thank Ulrich von Bülow and Volker Michels for this insight.

<sup>2</sup> So much has been written on the history of Hesse's engagement with Nietzsche that I do not feel a detailed exploration is necessary. For a concise treatment of this topic, see Hong. For English speakers, see Reichert's essay "The Impact of Nietzsche on Hermann Hesse" in *Nietzsche's Impact*.

<sup>3</sup> Adrian Hsia questions this time frame (36ff.), suggesting that Hesse's primary engagement with Schopenhauer is at least seven years prior to 1904. The strongest evidence Hsia presents for this claim is a remark Hesse makes about reading a small book with passages from pessimistic authors, including Schopenhauer. As we have seen, however, Hesse claims to have read *The World as Will and Representation* in 1904, and there is no evidence to suggest that this is not the case. Indeed, when we look at evidence Hsia himself uses, specifically a letter from December of 1903, in which Hesse, like Schopenhauer, compares Christ with the Buddha (38), it becomes clear that he is having very Schopenhauerian thoughts at the time. Also, Hesse's poem "Wir leben hin" ["We Live Forth"] from 1907 is filled with Schopenhauerian imagery and language. We will grant Hsia's claim that Hesse is aware of Schopenhauer sometime in the 1890s, but maintain that his primary engagement with the latter's philosophy is, in line with Hesse's own claim, sometime around 1904.

<sup>4</sup> Schopenhauer is the first to establish pessimism as a legitimate philosophical doctrine. It is a direct response to the optimism of Leibniz (1646-1716), who claims that the world in which we live is the best of all possible worlds. Schopenhauer, however, sees our world as the worst of all possible worlds, his argument being that if the world were any worse, it simply could not exist or sustain life (WWV2 §46). "Pessimism" and "optimism" come from the Latin *pessimus* and *optimus*, meaning "worst" and "best," respectively. Thus the terms do not refer to hope or the lack thereof, as in contemporary usage, but rather to the quality of the world.

<sup>5</sup> Schopenhauer does, however, reason that Christ's teaching was influenced by Indian thought, writing, "Christentum... hat indisches Blut im Leibe" [Christianity has Indian blood in its veins] (SvG §34).

<sup>6</sup> The importance of the law of causality within Buddhist doctrine is also stressed in Hermann Oldenberg's *Buddha*, which Hesse studied. For instance, in a chapter titled "Das Nirwana" [Nirvana], Oldenberg translates the Buddha as saying, "Schwer wird es der Menschheit zu erfassen sein, das Gesetz der Kausalität, die Verkettung von Ursachen und Wirkungen" [It will be difficult for humanity to grasp the law of causality, the concatenation of causes and effects (*Verkettung von Ursachen und Wirkungen*).] The question of whether Hesse's description of the Buddha is drawn from Oldenberg's work, though of interest, is not at stake. What we are doing is simply drawing out the similarities between the worldviews of Gotama and Schopenhauer.

<sup>7</sup> A representation is, simply put, a reworking of raw sensory data into a mental picture of the world (hence *representation*). In this regard, it is similar to the use of the word "idea" in the works of English philosopher John Locke (1632-1704) and Scottish philosopher George Berkeley (1685-1753). However, as Schopenhauer has his own specific use of the word "idea" (*Idee*), it is best to avoid this translation. I stick with E. F. J. Payne's translation of *Vorstellung* as "representation," as Schopenhauer's use of the word is borrowed from Kant, and Kant's use of the term is most commonly translated as "representation." *Vorstellung* can also be understood as a theatrical "presentation," and Schopenhauer himself often describes the world as a stage. Cf. Shapshay's discussion of translating *Vorstellung*.

<sup>8</sup> There is a certain absurdity in the proposition that receiving "external" sensory information occurs "prior to" the action of the *a priori* laws of space and time. Nietzsche hints at this in *JGB* §15.

<sup>9</sup> Schopenhauer's reference to Kant at this point is actually a distortion of the latter's philosophy. Kant does not think of the things of the world as "mere appearances," but simply as "appearances." That is, Kant does not consider phenomena to be less ontologically valid than the "thing-in-itself" of which they are representations. The point of Kantian transcendent idealism is that both realms – the realm of the thing-in-itself and the realm of the phenomena or representations – are equally true in reference to themselves. In fact, the point of his philosophy is to allow us to understand the realm of phenomena *better* so that we can live and think more

authentically and morally. As Simmel recognizes (196-98), Schopenhauer seems to have misunderstood this point or transformed it according to his pessimistic outlook.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Schopenhauer: “*Alles Leben [ist] Leiden*” [All life is suffering] (WWV I §46). This may also be an iteration of Oldenberg, who writes in his *Buddha* (1881), “Alles Leben ist Leiden: dies ist das unerschöpfliche Thema, das immer wieder bald aus den begrifflichen Erörterungen, bald aus der poetischen Spruchweisheit der Buddhismus uns entgegenklingt” [All life is suffering: this is the inexhaustible theme that we hear again and again in the conceptual discussions and poetic proverbs of Buddhism] (239).

<sup>11</sup> Though Gotama does not use the word thirst (*Durst*) in *Siddhartha*, we see the term used in previous chapters to connote attachment and desire (GD3 619, 627), so we may assume that Hesse is familiar with the concept. Furthermore, entire sections of Hermann Oldenberg’s *Buddha* and Neumann’s *Discourses* are dedicated to the Buddha’s exposition of thirst.

<sup>12</sup> The German is *Kreislauf*, which simply means cycle or circuit. In this context, it is probably being used in reference to the Buddhist concept of *bhavacakra*, literally the “wheel of becoming,” but more commonly referred to as the “wheel of life” (*A Dictionary of Buddhism* 31).

<sup>13</sup> I am admittedly simplifying things here, for Schopenhauer himself is ambivalent about whether the Will is or is not transcendent. At many points, he seems to assert that the Will is the Kantian thing-in-itself, that is, the object = x that exists prior to perception and is (debatably) non-temporal and non-spatial. Schopenhauer, when he is being more attentive, says that the Will is only the thing-in-itself in a qualified sense (WWV 2 §18). Specifically, he means that the Will is still subject to the *a priori* law of time. Schopenhauer’s point, then, is that the Will is the closest thing to the Kantian thing-in-itself that we can experience, and thus, the thing we need to study if we want to come to the best possible understanding of the world.

<sup>14</sup> In Schopenhauer’s mind, matter itself is merely the immediate spatial manifestation of the Will (WWV2 §24). From a modern perspective, this may be understandable in terms of Einstein’s  $E=MC^2$ . Just as Einstein’s theorem demonstrates that energy and matter can be thought of as convertible terms, Schopenhauer thinks of Will and matter as the same entity in two different forms. In both cases, we can have direct experience of one of the terms (matter) and cannot have a direct experience of the other (energy or Will).

<sup>15</sup> The translation of *Wille zum Leben* presents an interesting challenge. *Leben* can mean both “life” or “living.” In Schopenhauer’s philosophy, *Leben* implies rather an extremely dynamic state of being that is much different from the mere existence (*Dasein*) of a stone. In my view, “life” would imply a static state or object, so I have maintained Payne’s translation of “will to live,” which captures the dynamism of the concept.

<sup>16</sup> See especially Schopenhauer’s description of Javanese sea turtles who are annually eaten alive by wild dogs, who are then eaten by tigers (WWV2 §28, pp. 458-59). As he ends the description: “Dieser ganze Jammer nun wiederholt sich tausend und aber tausendmal jahraus, jahrein. Dazu werden also diese Schildkröten geboren. Für welche Verschuldung müssen sie diese Qual leiden? Wozu die ganze Greuelszene? Darauf ist die alleinige Antwort: so objektiviert sich der *Wille zum Leben*” [All this misery repeats itself a thousand and again a thousand times, year in, year out. It is thus to this fate that the sea turtles are born. For what guilt must they suffer this torture? To what end is this whole horrifying scene? There is only one answer: this is how the *Will to Live* objectifies itself.]

<sup>17</sup> Schopenhauer’s hereditary theory is undoubtedly one of his weakest points. His evidence for the assertion – that the will of the father and the intellect of the mother are passed on to the child – is grounded on the flimsiest evidence from biographies and literary works. It is nonetheless an important point of his philosophy to study, as it connects him to the heritage of philosophies and religions – for instance India’s Samkhya school – which see salvation as the escape of the (masculine) soul from the (feminine) world.

<sup>18</sup> In a move out of line with his typical self-aggrandizement, Schopenhauer even lets Buddhism get the very last say of the work. Following the last sentence of WWVI, which is meticulously crafted to mirror the very first (the entire work can be abridged to read: “Die Welt ist... nichts” [The world is... nothing]) Schopenhauer adds a footnote about the Buddhist concept “Pradschna-paramita, d.h. der Punkt wo Subjekt und Objekt nicht mehr sind” [*prajnaparamita*, that is, the point where subject and object no longer exist].

<sup>19</sup> The German is *Zurückkehren*, and later *Rückkehr*, which may also be rendered as “returning” and “return,” respectively. However, for the sake of clarity, it is necessary to reserve the use of “return” for the German *Wiederkehr*, as this will be discussed extensively in the next chapter. Furthermore, the context of the passage does justify the somewhat negative sounding “reversion,” as Hesse continues, “Wenn Gott mich in die Welt hinaus wirft und als Einzelnen existieren läßt, Ist es dann meine Aufgabe, möglichst rasch und leicht wieder zurück ins All zu kommen...?” [If god throws me out into the world and lets me exist as an individual, is it then my task to come back to the All as fast and easily as possible...?] (*MSI* 21) Hesse is describing the (perhaps pathological) desire to return to a previous state of oneness with god, an idea which is captured by “reversion.”

<sup>20</sup> Cf. *Z* “Vor Sonnen-Aufgang” [Before Sunrise]: “Ich aber bin ein Segnender und ein Ja-Sager” [I, however, am a consecrator and yes-sayer]; *Z* “Vom Kind und Ehe” [On Children and Marriage]: “Bist du der Siegreiche, der Selbstbezwinger, der Gebieter der Sinne, der Herr deiner Tugenden?” [Are you the victorious, the self-conqueror, the commander of the senses, the master of your virtues?]; and *FW* §276: “Ich will irgendwann einmal nur noch ein Ja-sagender sein!” [Someday I want to be only a yes-sayer!]

<sup>21</sup> I conflate here Nietzsche’s “pessimism of strength” and “Dionysian pessimism.” For a detailed analysis of the similarities differences between the two, see Dienstag 161-200.

<sup>22</sup> The placement of this first iteration of the eternal return is deliberate: it comes directly before the final aphorism, which is simply the opening section of Nietzsche’s “jasagendste” [most yes-saying] work, *Zarathustra* (*EH* “Zarathustra” §6). Indeed, the eternal return represents, as Nietzsche admits in *Ecce Homo*, “den Grundgedanken des Zarathustra” [the principal thought of *Zarathustra*] (*ibid.* §1).

<sup>23</sup> Nietzsche does not explicitly state here that he is thinking of the *Übermensch*. However, this interpretation is made clear by the placement of the aphorism in question. As noted, it comes directly before the introduction of *Zarathustra*, whose first public sermon begins, “Ich lehre euch den Übermenschen” [I teach you the *Übermensch*]. Furthermore, in works following *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, Nietzsche would establish the affirmation of the eternal return as a defining characteristic of his new ideal, the *Übermensch* (e.g., *JGB* §56).

<sup>24</sup> For this reason, Nietzsche formulation of the question, “Willst du diess noch einmal und noch unzählige Male?” [Do you want this again and uncountable times thereafter?] uses the German modal verb “wollen” (to want), which is the root of the word *Wille*, the will.

<sup>25</sup> Govinda’s vision deliberately harks back to the eleventh chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita*, in which Krishna gives Arjuna the power of divine sight so that the latter may see and describe Krishna’s divine form. Just as the narrative purpose of Arjuna’s ecstatic vision is to clothe the abstract sermon of Krishna in understandable images, Govinda’s vision is to be read as the visual representation of Siddhartha’s previous attempt to teach Govinda his worldview with words and concepts. As Siddhartha’s teaching is itself drawn from his ecstatic vision on the riverside, it is clear that all three events – Siddhartha’s vision, his teaching, and Govinda’s vision – are different narrative explorations of the same idea or experience. This being the case, we will draw from all three simultaneously, as it would be redundant to go into each one individually.

<sup>26</sup> Hesse is likely using *Wiederkehr* in reference to a passage from “Von der Schenkenden Tugend” [“On the gift-Giving Virtue”] (§3) which is not in direct relation to the thought of the eternal return. Nonetheless, Hesse’s own use of “ewige Wiederkehr” in reference to the Buddha’s escape from rebirth (above, p. 40) shows that he is familiar with Nietzsche’s more radical use of the term and even conflates the latter with the Indian concept of reincarnation.

<sup>27</sup> Hesse uses the German “Vorschrift,” which is the etymological equivalent of the English “prescription” and carries the same ambiguity. Both can be taken in the sense of either a prescribed rule or prescribed medication. The word is well chosen, for the historical Buddha is often described as a physician, in that his established rules of conduct are directed toward the alleviation of suffering, both spiritual and physical.

<sup>28</sup> Among the other works in the series are, as we will see, Laozi’s *Tao te king*, Zhuangzi’s *Das wahre Büch vom südlichen Blütenland* [*The True Book from the Southern Flower-Land*]. As well, Wilhelm’s translation of the *I Ging* is included in this series, which is not only a stimulus for Hesse’s own *Glass Bead Game*, but also for the work of Carl Jung. The English translation of the *I Ching* popular among the hippie-movement in America

during the 1960s and '70s, which includes an introduction by Jung, is actually an English translation of Wilhelm's translation (*China* 25).

<sup>29</sup> Wilhelm renders "Tao" as "Sinn", the German word for "sense" or "meaning," but acknowledges the arbitrary nature of his choice. See his "Vorwort" to *Tao te king*.

<sup>30</sup> Richard Wilhelm translates *wu wei* as *Nicht-Handeln*, whereas Hesse uses the term *Nicht-Tun*. However, we can be sure that Hesse is referring to the concept of *wu wei* because in his review of Schweizer's *Worldviews of Indian Thinkers* he makes mentions the Chinese principle of "Nichttun" (see above, p. 7). Indeed, we can be fairly certain that Hesse himself is aware of the concept as *wu wei*, as Julius Grill even points out the translation of "wū wēi" as "nichts tun" in the notes to his translation of the *Tao Te Ching*, the first translation of the work that Hesse reads. Grill does, however, go on to warn that this choice is "verfehlt und irreleitend" [misguided and misleading] (p. 126). But he then clarifies this warning, stating that *wu wei* means "der Heilige verharrt in einer Tätigkeit, die nichts *macht*" [the saint perseveres in an action that *does* nothing]. Grill, then, is simply warning against the common mistake of thinking that *wu wei* implies absolute non-action, instead of an activity that is in line with the course of nature.

<sup>31</sup> Actually, there are two others: Kamala and an unnamed village woman. However, neither are granted the same divine smile that proceeds from an attitude of *sich fallen lassen* (cp. Ziolkowski at *MS* 2 153). Their smiles are, rather, mundane and ephemeral. For instance, as Siddhartha abstains from sex with the village woman, "Da wich vom lächelnden Gesicht der jungen Frau aller Zauber, er sah nichts mehr als den feuchten Blick eines brünstigen Tierweibchens" [All the magic vanished from the young woman's smiling face. He saw nothing more than the dank look of a bitch in heat] (*GD* 3 654). This passage in particular leads one to believe that the lack of divine female smiles in *Siddhartha* is due to Hesse's well-noted misogyny.

<sup>32</sup> Berthold Brecht also makes use of this verse in his "Legende von der Entstehung des Buches Taoteking auf dem Weg des Laotse in die Emigration" [Legend of the Genesis of the Book *Tao Te Ching* on Laozi's Way into Exile]. He writes, "Daß das weiche Wasser in Bewegung / Mit der Zeit den harten Stein besiegt. / Du verstehst, das Harte unterliegt" [That the motion of the soft water / comes to conquer the hard stone. / You understand, the hard succumbs] (*Gedichte* IV 52).

<sup>33</sup> Here I adopt Siegfried Unseld's interpretation that *Siddhartha* is split into three periods of roughly twenty years: Siddhartha leaves the Brahmanic village at about the age of twenty; he then remains in the city until he is about forty; and finally, his last meeting with Govinda is another twenty years after that (*MS* I 371). I would add to this that the structure of the novel may be based off a Confucian aphorism titled "Stufen der Entwicklung des Meisters" [Steps of the Master's Development], specifically the lines: "Ich war fünfzehn und mein Wille stand aufs Lernen, ...mit fünfzig war mir das Gesetz des Himmels kund, mit sechzig war mein Ohr aufgetan" [When I was fifteen my will was set on learning, ...when I was fifty I knew the law of Heaven, when I was sixty my ear was opened] (*China* 159). Hesse was familiar with the latter aphorism and even quotes it in the article "Confucius deutsch" (*ibid.*).

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