

PART I

THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

II On the idea of progress

Man verlangt ein Stück von der Menschengeschichte, und zwar nicht das von der vergangenen, sonder der künftigen Zeit, [...]. Übrigens ist es auch hier nicht um die Naturgeschichte des Menschen (ob etwa künftig neue Racen derselben entstehen möchten), sondern um die Sittengeschichte, und zwar nicht nach dem Gattungsbegriffe (*singulorum*), sondern dem Ganzen der gesellschaftliche auf Erden vereinigten, in Völkerschaften vertheilten Menschen (*universorum*) zu thun, wenn gefragt wird: ob das menschliche Geschlecht (im Grossen) zum Besseren beständig fortschreite?¹

Dicebat Bernardus Carnotensis nos esse quasi nanos gigantium humeris insidentes, ut possimus plura eis et remotiora videre, non utique proprii visus acumine, aut eminentia corporis, sed quia in altum subvehimur et extollimur magnitudine gigantea².

1 Kant, Immanuel, *Der Streit der Facultäten*, in *Immanuel Kant's Sämtliche Werke*, Leopold Voss, Leipzig, 1838, p. 339.

2 John of Salisbury, *Metalogicon, a Twelfth-Century Defense of the Verbal and logical Arts of the Trivium*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1955, p. 167. «Bernard of Chartres used to compare us to [puny] dwarfs perched on the shoulder of giants. He pointed out that we see more and farther than our predecessors, not because we have keener vision or greater height, but because we are lifted up and borne aloft on their gigantic stature».

Introduction

L'imagination des poëtes a placé l'âge d'or au berceau de l'espèce humaine, parmi l'ignorance et la grossièreté des premiers temps; c'était bien plutôt l'âge de fer qu'il fallait y reléguer. L'âge d'or du genre humain n'est point derrière nous, il est au-devant; il est dans la perfection de l'ordre social: nos pères ne l'ont point vu, nos enfants y arriveront un jour: c'est à nous de leur en frayer la route³.

This quotation from Saint-Simon is relevant for at least three reasons: 1) it clearly illustrates the typical belief in progress of the 19th century; 2) the thought of Saint-Simon deeply influenced Liszt⁴; 3) since Liszt was influenced by Saint-Simon, and since the belief in progress was a common sentiment in the Europe of that era, it is possible to argue that the idea of progress influenced the musician, too. And, when an idea influences an artist, the production of this artist is somehow transformed by it, at least because ideas change one's perception of reality, which was the source of inspiration for artists of the 19th century. However, the present chapter does not focus solely on the figure of Saint-Simon, as Liszt was a curious reader and his interests ranged from music to religion, from philosophy to science. For this reason, a résumé of the main theories on progress, developed both by the German and the French reflection, works in parallel with the discussion of Liszt's reception of these works, and of his own writings.

It could be objected that the previously established scheme is a sort of speculative game, and that the most important thing concerning music is its analysis. How relevant is it whether Liszt really read this or that book? And, above all – and this is a matter of crucial relevance when one speaks of Liszt – how can we be sure that Liszt really read them? Are the quotations he made in his letters and writings an adequate source to support this statement? First of all, it is relevant to point out that it is not the aim of this dissertation to establish if Liszt read and understood the lectures he made. The point here is to outline the cultural background in which Liszt's mind was formed, and, consequently, to outline the atmosphere from which his music took form. Certainly, Liszt

3 Saint-Simon, *De la réorganisation de la société européenne*, p. 111.

4 During the 1830s Liszt attended for sure to many meetings of the Saint-Simonians circle in Paris, and there he met many artists and intellectuals, including Berlioz, Heine, Sand, etc. On the other side it is to remember that Liszt, already in the mid 1830s, denied any relation with this group, but, as reported by Locke, «This period of reaction, or apparent reaction, did not last; in his later years Liszt felt freer to admit again, at least privately, how significant the ideas of the Saint-Simonians had been and still were for him». See Locke, Ralph, *Liszt's Saint-Simonian Adventure*, p. 211.

was a “social animal”, and one cannot avoid taking into account the impact that society had on his mind. If one focuses on his music alone, what one creates is just a lesson on the history of music, a great one for sure, but a lesson in which Liszt would be separated from his environment and from history, making of him a “mere composer”. On the contrary, and since Liszt is the author of a certain number of writings, and since these concerned a great variety of arguments, we have to consider Liszt not only as a composer, but also as a writer, and what he read are doubtless fundamental to understand his own writings. The theories and ideas of the late 18th and the 19th century must be taken into account if one aims to give a complete depiction of the Hungarian composer. One of the most relevant ideas which was circulating among European’s salons during that time was the idea progress. The belief in the amelioration of the human condition was so strong that «the historian F.S. Marvin has somewhere referred to the nineteenth century as the Century of Great Hope»⁵. It is a word that needs a philosophical, historical, and sociological approach, and it brings with it several and unsolvable issues. However, since this is not a philosophical disquisition on the idea of progress during the 19th century, the focus will only be on the authors who belong to what it is here dubbed “the Lisztian pantheon”. But this discussion cannot be avoided, as the term *progress* occurs several times in his writings. Furthermore, and as already pointed out, dealing with Liszt means dealing with expressions like *Fortschrittspartei*, *Zukunftsmausik*, and even “war between progressives and conservatives”. Moreover, his conception of the musician as a prophet means that art is able to guide the masses towards the better and to relieve their suffering – the artist assumes thaumaturgical powers from this perspective. Music entered the fields of philosophy and history, and vice versa. Exactly for this reason a survey of this *Weltanschauung* appears to be mandatory.

Progress, a possible definition

The topic of the following section is not, for the reasons already explained, a complete comprehensive history of the concept of progress – since an entire life would not be enough to attain this goal –, but it is a brief summary of what the philosophical reflection produced on it. For the same reason the theories elaborated by those who denied any progress concerning the human condition

⁵ Nisbet, Robert A., *Social Change and History*, p. 125.

are here intentionally ignored, since Liszt was one of the most devoted persons to this concept. The use of the term “devoted” is not accidental, because, citing the historian Bury, «[...] the progress of humanity belongs to the same ideas as Providence or personal immortality. It is true or false, and like them it cannot be proved either it is true or it is false. Belief in it is an act of faith»⁶. Of course, it is quite an old interpretation of the idea of progress, and some scholars state that the theories of Bury are nowadays probably outdated, but they are surely closer to the 19th century sensitivity, and therefore they are to be considered more trustworthy than the more modern ones, at least for the purposes of this work. For example, the connection that Bury creates between the term *providence* and that of *progress*, is an extremely fruitful perspective to explain Liszt’s own idea of progress. Moreover, Bury’s words perfectly define the core of the idea of progress which was common during the 19th century. It was a medley of scientific knowledge and of personal belief, and almost everyone during that time was a believer, both in scientific and in a spiritual meaning. Therefore, this chapter is focused on the idea of progress as it was intended during the 19th century, and on the authors, who may have influenced Liszt and his conception of this process, with a brief historical excursus on the most relevant thinkers of the 17th and 18th centuries. The most suitable starting point is a definition of *Progress* as it is provided by two modern dictionaries:

1. movement to an improved or more developed state, or to a forward position⁷;
2. development towards an improved or more advanced condition⁸.

Aside from what these two dictionaries present, nowadays we have a clear, simple and widely accepted definition of what progress is. Furthermore, it is worth pointing out that there is a high level of agreement among the scientific community about the definition of this term, a position which is possible to summarize as follows:

Le progrès peut se définir comme un processus accumulant des étapes, dont la plus récente est toujours jugée préférable et meilleure, c'est-à-dire qualitativement supérieure à celle qui l'a précédée. Cette définition comprend un élément descriptif (un changement intervient dans une direction donnée) et un élément axiologique (cette progression est interprétée comme une amélioration). Il s'agit

6 Bury, John Bagnell, *The idea of Progress, An Inquiry into its Origin and Growth*, p. 4.

7 Cambridge online dictionary, <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/british/progress>.

8 Oxford online dictionary, <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/progress>.

donc d'un changement orienté, et orienté vers le mieux, à la fois nécessaire (on n'arrête pas le progrès) et irréversible (il n'y a pas globalement de retour en arrière possible). L'amélioration étant inéluctable, il s'en déduit que demain sera toujours meilleur⁹.

It is probable that the Liszt of the 1880s disagreed with the statement “tomorrow is always better than today”, but the preposition “improvement is inescapable” (*L'amélioration étant inéluctable*) is the core of the problem, and, as it will emerge, it is exactly what Liszt felt, and the reason for his musical isolation during his later years. Anyway, this matter will be further explored in the final two chapters. What is relevant to underline here is that this definition perfectly fits with the idea of progress of the 19th century, as it is possible to see from the subsequent quotation, taken from Herbert Spencer's *Progress, its law and cause*:

It is settled beyond dispute that organic progress consists in a change from the homogeneous to the heterogeneous. Now, we propose in the first place to show, that this law of organic progress is the law of all progress. Whether it be in the development of the Earth, in the development of Life upon its surface, in the development of Society, of Government, of Manufactures, of Commerce, of Language, Literature, Science, Art, this same evolution of the simple into the complex, through successive differentiations, holds throughout. From the earliest traceable cosmical changes down to the latest results of civilization, we shall find that the transformation of the homogeneous into the heterogeneous, is that in which Progress essentially consists¹⁰.

Actually, both statements contain a very old idea, which brings us back to Augustine of Hippo and his *City of God*. It is somehow embarrassing that the modern idea of progress finds its roots in the ancient thought of Augustine. It is very ironic, after all, that the most modern of the western ideas actually arose with the beginning of civilisation¹¹. But the link to the Christian theologian is

9 Benoist, Alain de, *Une brève histoire de l'idée de progrès*, in *Critiques théoriques*, p. 55.

10 Spencer, Herbert, *Progress, its law and cause*, p. 3.

11 The ancient Greeks already developed some theories on progress, even if they are related to a different conception of time and history. In any case, it is anyway undeniable that the idea of human advancement is a very old one: «The Greeks [...] were fascinated by change, its sources, properties, directions, and its relation to the principles of organic growth. [...] So, long before him [Aristotle], were the early physical philosophers of Miletus equally preoccupied by change. “All is change”» See Nisbet, Robert A., *Social Change and History*, p. 16. The same myth of Prometheus, so dear to Liszt for its multiple philosophical implications, involves the idea of

noteworthy for another reason, too. It is not useless to recall that Liszt, a fervent Catholic, was perfectly aware of the writings of the ancient philosopher, and undoubtedly, he was a topic of discussion with Carolyne, who was a profound connoisseur of the history of the church and of the Catholic creed – it could be useful to remember that she is the author of a monumental work in 24 volumes titled *Causes intérieures de la faiblesse extérieure de l'église en 1870*. In his *City of God*, Augustine wrote that

Sicut autem unius hominis, ita humani generis, quod ad dei populum pertinet, recta eruditio per quosdam articulos temporum tamquam aetatum profecit accessibus, ut a temporalibus ad aeterna capienda et a uisibilibus ad inuisibilia surgeretur; ita sane ut etiam illo tempore, quo uisibilia promittebantur diuinitus praemia, unus tamen colendus commendaretur deus, ne mens humana uel pro ipsis terrenis uitae transitoriae beneficiis cuiquam nisi uero animae creatori et domino subderetur¹².

This quotation already contains *in nuce* all the elements upon which is based the modern idea of progress, and, above all, the main features upon which Liszt would build his own view, namely the idea of progress as a teleological process towards the city of God, i.e. the eternal life. Nothing could explain this *Weltanschauung* better, than the last symphonic poem *Von der Wiege bis zum Grabe*, whose subtitles are: 1) *Die Wiege* (Andante), 2) *Der Kampf um's Dasein* (Agitato rapido), and 3) *Zum Grabe: Die wiege des zukünftigen Lebens* (Moderato quasi Andante). The sweet lullaby-like motive of the first movement is used again at the beginning of the last one. But this second statement of the theme is linked to a chromatic descending scale covering an interval of a major third, which creates a link with the second movement. These two moments could be explained through a cyclical conception of life, but it must not be confused with a general idea of history. What Liszt is telling us, is that life is a circle, and

progress, since it is the mythological description of the amelioration of human condition; the demigod brought to men the necessary knowledge to leave their ignorance and their pre-human condition behind. See Bury, John Bagnell, *The idea of Progress*, p. 8.

12 Augustinus, Aurelius, *De civitate dei*, Book X, ch. 14. «The education of the human race represented by the people of God, has advanced, like that of an individual, through certain epochs, or, as it were, ages, so that it might gradually rise from earthly to heavenly things, and from the visible to the invisible. This object was kept so clearly in view, that, even in the period when temporal rewards were promised, the one God was presented as the object of worship, that men might not acknowledge any other than the true Creator and Lord of the spirit, even in connection with the earthly blessing of this transitory life». *The City of God*, Hafner Publishing Company, New York, 1948, p. 402.

as it begins in a cradle surrounded by people singing a lullaby, it ends in the same way, on a bed surrounded by people singing a sad lullaby. The Christian ideal permeates the composition, and it tells us not to despair, because death is the beginning of the future life. Many interpretations could be given to this “future”¹³, but since the main focus here is on the idea of progress, it is necessary to state that, not surprisingly, Liszt alludes to life after death, to final peace in the eternal reign. This could be in heaven, represented by a chorale in the composition, as well as in hell, represented by a brief appearance of the theme of the second movement. The quotation from the second movement is made to remind the listener that it is exactly during the struggle for existence that one decides on one’s place in the future life. The Lisztian teleological view of life, which is perfectly consistent with his idea of progress – as both lie on the idea that our future is determined by what we do in the present –, find here a perfect musical application. This is just one, and very easy example of how artworks can rise from ideas.

Hence, progress is to be intended as something that happens in our lifetime, and there is no place for regressive theories. But other aspects of the Augustinian statement quoted above are relevant: first of all, the appearance of the terms “Education of the human race”, which immediately recalls the treatise of the same name written by Lessing in 1780 – who opened his writing, not accidentally, and not surprisingly, with a quotation from Augustine. This link is useful to show that the reasoning on the concept of progress is, in the course of history (from Christianity to the present day), strictly related to the idea of the perfectibility of the human race, which is constantly progressing towards an end, and this perfectibility is only attainable through education (in a broader sense). The “end” of this amelioration force is intended to be in a religious sense until the beginning of the 17th century, when a secularisation process of society began. Of course, that does not mean that the Christian teleological view is completely erased from the reasoning on the idea of progress. Quite the opposite, religion and science very often find a most fruitful union. The quotation from Augustine is relevant for another reason, too. The same passage is quoted by Robert Nisbet in his book about the Western theory of development to underline the relevance of the metaphor in the development of these theories. One of the

13 One meaning of the word “future” is, has already emerged, related to the sentence «Ich kann warten» spoken by Liszt on several occasions (see footnote 64 in *Chapter III* of this dissertation). In his essay on Berlioz, he wrote that Beethoven needed thirty years [after his death] to be recognised as a genius. So, Liszt, who was perfectly aware of this “sedimentation process”, refers to the future life as the period after the composer’s death, in which he will finally be recognised as a genius, and in which his musical works will finally find their place.

most successful metaphors, which has been exploited since the beginning of humanity, is the one according to which the ages of humanity are “like those of an individual”. Fontenelle elaborated one of the most beautiful and poetic depictions of this metaphor through an allegory – which contains the same concept of the metaphor of dwarfs on the shoulders of giants:

La comparaison que nous venons de faire des hommes de tous les siècles à un seul homme, peut s'étendre sur toute notre question des anciens et des modernes. Un bon esprit cultivé est, pour ainsi dire, composé de tous les esprits des siècles précédents, ce n'est qu'un même esprit qui s'est cultivé pendant tout ce temps-là. Ainsi cet homme qui a vécu depuis le commencement du monde jusqu'à présent, a eu son enfance où il ne s'est occupé que des besoins les plus pressants de la vie, sa jeunesse où il a assez bien réussi aux choses d'imagination, telles que la poésie et l'éloquence, et où même il a commencé à raisonner, mais avec moins de solidité que de feu. Il est maintenant dans l'âge de virilité, où il raisonne avec plus de force et a plus de lumières que jamais, mais il serait bien plus avancé si la passion de la guerre ne l'avait occupé longtemps, et ne lui avait donné du mépris pour les sciences, auxquelles il est enfin revenu. Il est fâcheux de ne pouvoir pas pousser jusqu'au bout une comparaison qui est en si beau train, mais je suis obligé d'avouer que cet homme-là n'aura point de vieillesse; il sera toujours également capable des choses auxquelles sa jeunesse était propre, et il le sera toujours de plus en plus de celles qui conviennent à l'âge de virilité; c'est-à-dire, pour quitter l'allégorie, que les hommes ne dégénéreront jamais, et que les vues saines de tous les bons esprits qui se succéderont, s'ajouteront toujours les unes aux autres¹⁴.

The content of this quotation is of course nothing new. Nisbet himself points out that the metaphor was already used in this way by ancient civilizations. Words like *sick*, *decadence*, *degeneration* were already used by the ancient Greek to describe the character of an epoch, as well as the ages of human beings, *childhood*, *youth*, *manhood*, *old*, were used to describe the evolutionary level of a civilisation. Even the image of the dwarfs standing on the shoulders of giants is to be ascribed to the category of ancient and enlightening metaphors. Aside from that, Nisbet points out something more relevant in an inquiry on the idea of progress and its influence on Liszt. The historian states that the metaphor is «much more than a simple grammatical construction or figure of speech. Metaphor is a way of knowing [...]. It is [...] a way of proceeding from the known to the unknown. It is a way of cognition in which the identifying qualities of one

14 Fontenelle, Bernard le Bovier de, *Poesies pastorales*. p. 156.

thing are transferred in an instantaneous, almost unconscious, flash of insight to some other thing that is, by remoteness or complexity, unknown to us»¹⁵. Here it emerges how a metaphoric way of thinking and the emergence of the idea of progress are actually related, because the second can be seen as an expansion of the first, since they both describe a process which proceeds from the known to the unknown; namely, as Bury pointed out, progress «involves a synthesis of the past and a prophecy of the future. It is based on an interpretation of history which regards men as slowly advancing [...] in a definite and desirable direction, and infers that this progress will continue indefinitely. And it implies that [...] a condition of general happiness will ultimately be enjoyed [...]»¹⁶. Moreover, the words used in the metaphors give us more information: if someone, like Fontenelle in the aforementioned quotation, uses the human ages metaphor, then, one can infer that this person's view of history is linear. Furthermore, if someone, as Fontenelle did, state that men will never be old, and that humanity will constantly progress towards the better, then, not only is it possible to infer that this person's view of history is linear, but even that his view does not involve the idea of decline. Consequently, if someone uses the expression "old age", it means that his conception of history is either cyclical – this single man, intended as a precise epoch comes to an end, but new men, new epochs will begin –, or it involves the concept of degeneration and of the end of humanity. Even if the 19th century looked hopeful to the future, the theories on the end of history (History) and the related idea of the end of art (Art) were quite common among German intellectuals. Heinrich Heine wrote in 1833: «Meine alte Prophezyung von dem Ende der Kunstperiode, die bey der Wiege Goethes anfing und bey seinem Sarge aufhören wird, scheint ihrer Erfüllung nahe zu seyn»¹⁷. This statement would be incomprehensible without Hegel's idea of the end of Art, as it is expressed in his *Ästhetik*: «Man kann wohl hoffen, daß die Kunst immer mehr steigen und sich vollenden werde, aber ihre Form hat aufgehört, das höchste Bedürfnis des Geistes zu sein»¹⁸. Here Art is intended to be as beautiful Art and, above all, as a manifestation of the Spirit – which is the real topic of the *Lessons* –, and art is as yet unable to be the highest expression of the Spirit itself, which finds its home in the philosophy: «In solcher Weise sind in der Philosophie die beide Seiten der Kunst und der Religion vereinigt: die

15 Nisbet, Robert A., *Social Change and History*, p. 4.

16 Bury, John Bagnell, *The idea of Progress*, p. 5.

17 Heine, Heinrich, *Französische Maler*, in Heinrich Heine, *Historisch-kritische Gesamtausgabe der Werke*, Hoffmann und Campe, Hamburg, 1980, p. 47.

18 Hegel, G.W.F., *Lezioni di estetica – Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*, p. 388.

Objektivität der Kunst, welche hier zwar die äußere Sinnlichkeit verloren, aber deshalb mit der höchsten Form des Objektiven, mit der Form des *Gedankens* vertauscht hat, und die *Subjektivität* der Religion, welche zur Subjektivität des *Denkens* gereinigt ist»¹⁹.

Hence, the metaphor has to be intended not just as a communicative strategy, but even as a cognitive process from the known to the unknown, which can lead to concrete actions. The future is for sure unknowable, but progress could be, if not controlled, at least directed by human beings, who have the great responsibility of tracing the best path possible for future generations. Furthermore, continued Nisbet, one must not forget that between the word metaphor and metamorphosis, an idea which lies at the basis of progress, is more than just an etymological relationship. At this point it emerges that the metaphor is somehow the principle of the changing itself, because,

imagination could hardly do without metaphor, for imagination, is, literally, the moving around in one's mind of images, and such images tend commonly to be metaphoric. Creative minds, as we know, are rich in images and metaphors, and this is true in science and art alike.

Metaphor allies itself well with proposals for social action. Most of the millennialist visions of revolution that we find in the Western tradition spring from diagnoses of society that are at bottom metaphoric. If one believes that the society around him is a “sick” society, dying of poisons generated in its own being [...] what else but total action can remove the alien bodies or poisons? The metaphors of sickness and health, applied to society, are doubtless responsible for as much redemptive action as the labels of evil and good²⁰.

19 Hegel, G.W.F., *Lezioni di estetica – Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*, p. 392. On the other side, the idea of the end of history is probably based on a misconception of Hegel's ideas. It is true that in 1806 the philosopher saw in the victory of Napoleon the materialisation of the principles of the French Revolution and of the freedom (of thought), i.e. the victory of the Spirit, but it is even true that this thesis is just an interpretation – and a very disputed one – of Hegel's words. At the same time it is worth remembering that he used a metaphor of the sun, which rises in the east and sets in the west, to described the process of civilisation, which rose in the east, and it is now at its setting in the west. But the Spirit is like a phoenix, and it dies several times in order to be reborn somewhere else. This is the Hegelian idea of progress. However, it is even true that in his philosophy the present is regarded as the highest point of human civilization, and it is his own philosophical system which brought him to this solution, even if Hegel himself could not deny the possibility of a future for other philosophies.

20 Nisbet, Robert A., *Social Change and History*, pp. 5–6.

The idea that imagination calls for actions could be of Liszt's himself. But it is not the reason why these few lines are relevant in the speech on the Hungarian composer. The most relevant part is the one on the metaphor as a principle of change.

It is now necessary to digress on the main characteristics of the metaphor, to its differences with the allegory and its very close relationship with the symbol. Furthermore, since the metaphor configures itself as a fundamental aspect of the cognitive process, it would be useful to refer to some theories from cognitive psychology and to look at the theories of the *experiencing-as* elaborated by Peacocke. These theories will be useful in *Chapter III* – where the metaphor and the *experiencing-as* theory will be used to sustain what will be defined as a sort of “*Affektenlehre*”, elaborated by Liszt in his essay on Berlioz –, and in *Chapter IV* – where the symbolic conception of the form will be used to shed new light on the analysis of the *B minor Piano Sonata*.

Changing the paradigm

The metaphor

It is necessary to involve the metaphor here for several reasons. As already seen, it is 1) an efficient means to describe the progress, and for that reason it can be considered the 2) principle of human actions. If the world is sick one has to take action to recover it. But at the same time the metaphor is the 3) principle of innovation, because it lies at the basis of any imaginative thought, and it is at the 4) basis of our perception of some phenomena, or at least their description, music included. Finally, the metaphor could be considered as 5) the core of the symbol, intended as the result of a long sedimentary process, whose origins are lost in the mists of time, and therefore impossible to identify.

The starting point must be a definition of the term. The word *metaphor* comes from the ancient Greek μεταφορά (*metaphōra*), properly transfer, and it is commonly defined as «A figure of speech in which a word or phrase is applied to an object or action to which it is not literally applicable»²¹. Since this dissertation's aim is not to define the philosophical or linguistic implication of the metaphor, this definition can be considered adequate for the purpose,

21 Oxford online dictionary: <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/metaphor>.

namely to introduce the experiencing-as theory and thereafter its improved version, which shifts the paradigm from the metaphor to the symbol. It is undeniable that our experience of music is metaphoric. It is quite common to use specific words to describe music, such as “it sounds like”, “it seems that”, or other expressions that transfer to music some properties that music does not possess. Some composers used the metaphor to suggest to the player the effects they wanted to achieve. Just think about the beginning of the *B minor Piano Sonata* where Liszt suggested to his students, according to the Lina Ramann, that the repeated Gs have to be played as *Pauckenschläge*²², as muffled timpani-strokes. Hence, Liszt is applying to the piano a property that piano does not possess, and he suggests to the player to play “as if” the piano was a timpani. But metaphor could even be used to describe entire compositions. The so-called eschatological interpretation of Liszt’s *B minor Piano Sonata* is a perfect example of this process: it is possible to hear the work as if it was a depiction of the struggle between God and Lucifer – the interpretation is of course based on some musical symbols, and it is therefore not just to be considered a mere metaphor. This is of course a possible approach to the analysis of the work – the problem related to the eschatological interpretations of the *Sonata* will be discussed in *Chapter IV* –, but the truth is that it is a construction that happens in our mind, and not in the music itself. Moreover, the diverse suggestions somehow influenced our perception of music. As Peacocke points out, the metaphor is «exploited in the perception»²³ and, while it is certainly useful to describe our experience of music, it is not really helpful in describing its formal aspects. If someone asks us to describe a composition in its formal aspects, our task would be relatively easy: instruments, genre, structure, movements, harmony. But this operation could only be accomplished with the score before our eyes, and after brief analysis. Concluding, if the metaphor is very useful to describe our perception of the music, and if it could sometimes even be useful to solve some formal issues, it is at the same time a risky method, because metaphors occur in our mind, and not in music itself. The consequence of this process forces music to appear to be something that it is not.

Although Peacocke’s theory concerns music from a listener’s perspective, and even if some passages could be marked as questionable, it represents a perfect starting point for a more complicated version of the same theory, this

22 Ramann, Lina, *Liszt-Pädagogium*, V. Serie, No. 16, p. 3. The first bar «muß wie ein dumpfer Paukenschlag erklingen: man greife die Tasten nicht, wie gewöhnlich, vorne an, sondern ganz rückwärts, damit der Hebel geringer wird und der Ton die dunkle Färbung erhält».

23 Peacocke, Christopher, *The Perception of Music: Sources of Significance*, p. 257.

time applied to the formal aspects of music. Peacocke deals with a matter that puzzled ancient philosophers as well as contemporary thinkers: the relation between music and feelings, or, more generally, the statement that in music there is something to be heard. The theory is of course very interesting, and some aspects of it will be useful during the analysis of Liszt's essay on Berlioz, to underline the meaning and the use of the programme. But now it serves first to introduce Peacocke's work, and then to explain the meaning of the metaphoric experience. In turn this constitutes the necessary premises to introduce the symbol theory, and to shift from the perception to the analysis, and from what will be defined as the "category" paradigm of the 18th century to the "symbol" paradigm of the 19th. Peacocke presents his theory starting with an example from visual art. The painting *Bodegón con cacharros* of Francisco de Zurbarán (see *Annex I*) depicts four pieces of pottery which are seen as four people. The explanation is quite obvious:

This kind of experiencing-as in the visual case is seeing something metaphorically-as something else. [...] What does "seeing as" mean in this kind of case? In having this experience, it does not look to a person who enjoys it as if there are people in front of him. Nor is the painting experienced as a depiction of people. It is, and it is experienced as, a depiction of pieces of pottery. The classification that captures what is distinctive of the case is that it is a depiction of pieces of pottery that are perceived metaphorically-as people, but not as representational content, nor as what is depicted²⁴.

The metaphor is then something cognitive which somehow involves our imaginative power, but it is not the imagination itself. In this view metaphor is something basically non-linguistic:

Metaphor can enter thought; it can enter imagination; it can enter perception. [...] We have metaphors in language only because we need a device for expressing these mental states whose content involves metaphor. Understanding a metaphor expressed in language involves thinking or imagining whose content is a metaphor. There would be no metaphorical language if there were no mental states whose content involve metaphor²⁵.

24 Peacocke, Christopher, *The Perception of Music: Sources of Significance*, p. 258.

25 Peacocke, Christopher, *The Perception of Music: Sources of Significance*, p. 260.

The metaphor is seen as something that comes before the language, something pre-linguistic. Music, which is the less verbal art among the arts, is then the reign of the metaphoric. This is of course at the same time the weakest and the strongest point of music. It is the strongest point because, recalling the words used by Nisbet, every creative mind is rich in images and metaphors, which are not just a state of mind, but a cognitive process from the known to the unknown, and they consequently represent the principle of innovation, the impulse of change. This feature of the metaphor is of course true if one speaks from the composer's point of view. Something very different happens on the other side of the barricade, on the listener's side. In this category every single description of music based on personal ideas, or feelings experienced while listening to music are presented. For example, Peacocke reports that the Diabelli variations of Beethoven can be described as «an expression of the dignity that can be found even in the humble»²⁶. Everything is possible, and everyone can hear everything in music, but it does not mean that music really possesses what one proposes to perceive. This underlines here that the *experiencing-as* theory has to do (quite) exactly with the metaphoric experience one might have during the performance of a piece of music. Namely, it has to do with the cognitive process of music, not with music itself. The explanation of this theory, as already suggested, will be more useful to defend, *a posteriori*, Liszt's ideas on the programme. Once one establishes that the metaphor can be involved in the perception of music, it appears clear that it does not constitute a valid theoretical background for a new analysis theory, precisely because it brings nothing new. We involve metaphors to explain something, but this explanation does not add anything to the subject, since it is concerned with the phenomenon and not with the source of the phenomenon itself. When we describe a piece of music to someone who has never heard it, we are used to exploiting images and metaphors, such as “in this piano passage one can hear the left hand arpeggios *as waves*”, etc. This kind of approach is completely useless from the side of musical analysis.

The long 19th century was an epoch of profound change. It opens with the French Revolution and the first fifty years are a quite uninterrupted sequence of political turmoil, which culminates with the Revolution of 1848. The violent insurrections which characterised that time were a clear sign that society was changing. It was not just the beginning of the decay of the bourgeoisie,

26 Peacocke, Christopher, *The Perception of Music: Sources of Significance*, p. 263. Peacocke refers here to Maynard Solomon, *Late Beethoven: Music, Thought, Imagination*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 2003, and particularly to the first chapter.

but it also marked a change in the conception of history and time (and not only thanks to scientific progress). People started to believe that they have the power to act *in* history, and consequently to have the power to change their faith. Briefly, the social paradigm was changing. The role of music, of musicians and of composers was changing too, since they are all related to or a product of society. To underline how deep and how relevant this shift of paradigm was in the music field, it can be useful to recall the words Adorno used to describe the role of Beethoven as composer:

Reflektiert sei [...] auf Beethoven. Ist er schon der musikalische Prototyp des revolutionären Bürgertums, so ist er zugleich der einer ihrer gesellschaftlichen Bevormundung entronnenen, ästhetisch voll autonomen, nicht länger bediensteten Musik. Sein Werk sprengt das Schema willfähriger Adäquanz von Musik und Gesellschaft. In ihm wird, bei allem Idealismus von Ton und Haltung, das Wesen der Gesellschaft, die aus ihm als dem Statthalter des Gesamtsubjekts spricht, zum Wesen von Musik selbst. Beides ist bloß im Innern der Werke zu begreifen, nicht in bloßer Abbildlichkeit²⁷.

According to this view Beethoven is the composer of the revolutionary bourgeoisie, but at the same time his music was working against bourgeois society, because, as Adorno writes, music is not subdued any more. Namely, Beethoven's works destroy the quiet and sure relationship between music and society, working against hierarchy and slavery, and, consequently, freeing it. The musical genre which represents bourgeois society the most is the sonata form²⁸ – which was, since the beginning, the most beloved form of the amateurs –, as in 1793 Heinrich Christoph Koch already noted:

[...] allein bey Sonaten, die für das Publikum bestimmt sind, sollte man billig mehr auf allgemeine Brauchbarkeit sehen, denn nicht allein dem Dilettanten, sondern auch den mehreren Künstler selbst, ist mehr an ausdrucksvoollen, als an schweren Tonstücken dieser Art gelegen. Einen Beweis hiervon geben z.B. die Claviersonaten von Türk, die deswegen *allgemein beliebt sind*, weil sie nebst der

27 Adorno, Theodor W, *Beethoven, Philosophie der Musik*, p. 74.

28 The term “sonata form” is at this point to be intended as a «zweiy-, drey-, oder mehrstimmigen Instrumentalstück» (Koch, Heinrich Christoph, *Musikalisches Lexikon*, § *Sonate*, p. 1415), and not as a bithematic form as described by Marx.

treffenden Darstellung angenehmer Empfindungen den *Liebhaber* nicht durch allzugroße Schwierigkeiten abschrecken, [...]²⁹

Of course, to become the beloved form of the upper classes, namely the amateurs (*Liebhaber*), the sonata form needed to be easy to identify. For these reasons – namely a social one (the demand of the amateurs of sonatas increased) and a musical one (for the theory, it was impossible to avoid a confrontation with this form) – the theoreticians began to deal with the sonata, to describe its parts and to organise its material, which was therefore both aesthetically and hierarchically organised: keys, modulations, developments, everything responds to precise laws. Among them the most important, the centrifugal and centripetal motion, i.e., moving away from the tonic and coming back to it. One of the first theoreticians, who described this movement is the previously quoted Koch, who tried to solidify on paper the rules of phrase construction. Even if he did not deeply analyse the sonata as a form of musical expression – this was not his aim –, his reflections on musical syntax laid the basis for all future analysis of this genre. Of course, he did not speak of centrifugal and centripetal movements, but he defined the character of the sonata – «Dem ersten Allegro ist mehrrenteils der Charakter der Pracht und des Erhaben [...] eigen»³⁰ – and he organised its form in very well defined segments:

Die äußerliche Einrichtung der Sonate, [...] haben wir nicht nöthig hier besonders durchzugehen, denn die Sonate nimmt alle die Formen an, die schon vorhin bey der Sinfonie beschreiben worden sind. So hat z.B. das erste Allegro derselben zwey Theile, die gewöhnlich wiederholt werden. Der erste dieser Theile enthält einen, der zweyte Theil aber zwey Hauptperioden, welche den nemlichen Gang der Modulation beobachtet, wie die Hauptperioden der Sinfonie.³¹

This quotation needs elucidation, above all the term *Hauptperiode*, since it is the key concept which theoreticians of the 19th century used to define the rules of the sonata form:

Der „Hauptperiode“ besteht aus einer Folge von Phrasen („Absätze“), die ein „Schlußsatz“ mit einer Vollkadenz beschließt. Unter diese Definition fällt auch die schulmäßige 8-taktige Periode, die etwa aus einem 4-taktigen „Absatz“ und

29 Koch, Heinrich Christoph, *Versuch einer Anleitung zur Composition*, III, p. 318. Cursive is mine.

30 Koch, Heinrich Christoph, *Versuch einer Anleitung zur Composition*, III, pp. 301–302.

31 Koch, Heinrich Christoph, *Versuch einer Anleitung zur Composition*, III, pp. 318–319

einem 4-taktigen „Schlußsatz“ besthet. Koch nennt daneben aber auch die Hauptformteile der Sonatenform, soweit sie sich durch speziellen Ausprägung der harmonischen Führung unterscheiden, „Hauptperioden“, d.h. die in der späteren pragmatischen Sonatendefinition mit Exposition, Durchführung und Reprise bezeichneten Teile, obwohl diese sich in der Praxis oft aus mehreren „Perioden“ zusammensetzen³².

Through this process, which in the beginning was merely an attempt at codification, the sonata form was forced into a very strict formal scheme, which after many adventures finds its first formulation with Adolf Bernhard Marx in the first half of the 19th century, a formulation which betrays the influence of Hegel: the composer starts with the tonic (exposition); then, through a centrifugal motion, he moves away from it (development), and finally he comes back to the tonic (recapitulation), in which the dialectical relationship between exposition – and the first and second theme – and development is quietly resolved. This fixed process – fixed only for the theory, because the compositional practice followed other paths – responds to the precepts of a static society in which everything is categorised. The first theme, with its male/strong character is opposed to the second theme, with its female/weak character, and they are followed by a development, which represents an unstable and tense moment – it is tempting to infer here that the development is the moment in which the composer can express himself and his freedom in a very controlled manner³³ –, that the composer must lead back to order. This process can be successfully described through the use of metaphors, and among the theorists who involved this communicative strategy to describe the sonata form, the description provided by Marx is particularly relevant:

In diesem Paar von Sätzen ist [...] der Hauptsatz das zuerst, also in erster Frische und Energie bestimmte, mithin das energischer, markiger, absoluter Gebildete, das Herrschende und bestimmende. Der Seitensatz dagegen ist das nach

32 Ritzel, Fred, *Die Entwicklung der »Sonatenform« im musiktheoretischen Schrifttums des 18. und 19. Jahrhunderts*, Breitkopf & Härtel, Wiesbaden, 1974, p. 175.

33 Wrote Marx about this section: «Ferner wird man sich eher zu den nächstverwandten und nächstnöthigen, als zu entferntem Tonarten hinwenden. Allein hiervon sind im Bewegungstheile mehr als irgendwo sonst zahlreiche – und die freiesten Abweichungen möglich und statthaft, sobald sie in dem Gang und Inhalt des Ganzen ihren Grund haben» (Marx, Adolf Bernhard, *Die Lehre von der musikalischen Komposition, praktisch theoretisch*, Vol. III, p. 297, italic is mine). So, the development shows the musical freedom at its highest degree, but it must well accorded with what precedes and follows, then a very controlled freedom.

der ersten energischen Feststellung Nachgeschaffen, zum Gegensatz Dienende, von jenem Vorangehenden Bedingte und Bestimmte, mithin seinem Wesen nach nothwendig das Mildere, mehr schmiegksam als markig Gebildete, das Weibliche gleichsam zu jenem vorangehenden Männlichen. Eben in solchem Sinn ist jeder der beiden Sätzen ein Andres und erst beide mit einander ein Höheres, Vollkommneres³⁴.

It is not the aim of this dissertation to trace the history of the evolution of the sonata form in theoretical discourse. So, returning to metaphor topic, the quotation from Marx is exactly what Peacocke calls the experiencing-as. In this case, Marx sees the two themes which compose the exposition of a sonata form as a male and a female character. However, it is worth stating again that the metaphor is not in music, but it enters our perception of it, as Peacocke state:

Thinkers about music are sometimes puzzled as to what it is that is really sad when we apparently truly describe the music as sad. The music itself is not literally sad (it is not a mind); the composer need not have been sad when writing it, nor need it have been an expression of his or anyone else's imagined sadness; the performer need not be sad; the listener need not be sad. The notion of sadness enters only as an essential element of the intentional content, more specifically the metaphorical intentional content, of the perception of the music³⁵.

The quotation from Marx is useful in demonstrating the typical mentality of the theorists of the 19th century, whose inclination was to categorize everything, and, subsequently, to force music into these categories. The problem of this operation is quite obvious: if the sonatas composed by Beethoven, even the ones of the first period, were not easy to place inside these categories, how could the sonatas composed some decades after them adhere to these rules? They do not. This incoherence gives rise to a theoretical and a terminological problem, which will be discussed in the following chapters – it is possible to state that the matter of the form and of its description is the background issue of this dissertation. What it is relevant to point out here is that the paradigm, both social and musical, changed between the 18th and the 19th century³⁶, as

34 Marx, Adolf Bernhard, *Die Lehre von der musikalischen Komposition, praktisch theoretisch*, Vol. III, p. 282.

35 Peacocke, Christopher, *The Perception of Music: Sources of Significance*, p. 263.

36 See, for example, Carl Dahlhaus, Absolute Musik, in *Europäische Musikgeschichte*, Vol. 2, pp. 679. «Paradigmenwechsel darf man sich also nicht als eine abstrakte Angelegenheit für Theoretiker vorstellen [...]. Im Gegenteil. Man muß sich klarmachen, daß der unbewußte,

proved by the French Revolution and the following uprisings throughout Europe³⁷. As a consequence, musical genres, styles, forms, etc. were no longer closed boxes in which the composer places his creations – genres were never closed boxes, and, as Rosen writes «[...] it is wrong to think of fixed models of sonata form for the eighteenth-century composer: useful stereotypes that could be employed or abandoned at will are what he probably worked with»³⁸. Conversely it is undeniable that the composers worked with stereotypes and models, because, if the sonata form did not have its theoretical foundation at that time, it already had a model, or better, several models (stereotypes). Genres are drafts that the composer is free to use and to modify. But when the theorists fix a form on paper, then this form ceases to exist, because once the form crystallises in a description, it loses its evolutionary possibilities through time, and it finally becomes meta-historical. This happens on the theory side, while on the practical side a form continues to live. Consequently, when it is said that during the 19th century genres and forms were falling, giving the beginning to the so-called decline of the tonal system, it is worth remembering that it is true from a theoretical point of view, because from the side of the composers one can speak of progress. Nevertheless, according to the 19th century view, it is said that during that time, not just the genres as categories were falling, but even all the structures related to them. Categories such as “theme”, “harmonic relationships”, “melody”, etc., were all subjected to a revision process, even the most stable basis of music, namely the perfect cadence V-I. It was the end of the “dictatorship of the tonic”. Of course, there were still composers who worked with these old categories, and nevertheless they still produced a sort of progress. The best example of this is represented by Brahms, who used the form in quite a traditional way, but, on the other side, produced an advancement, for example, in the field of the motivic transformation. And it is exactly for this reason he is to be included in the list of the innovators, in the list of the

alltägliche Umgang mit Musik, ja der scheinbar nur sinnliche Vorgang des Musikhörens selbst von begrifflichen Unterscheidungen geprägt wird, die im jeweils vorherrschenden Paradigma gebündelt sind. Ein Paradigma ist eine Art von Kollektiver Theorie, die [...] das praktische Verhältnis zum Gegenstand bestimmt».

³⁷ To deepen this matter from a historical perspective see Eric Hobsbawm's trilogy (*The Age of Revolution: Europe 1789–1848; The Age of Capital: 1848–1875; The Age of Empire: 1875–1914*). From a musicological perspective see Kalisch, Volker, *Studien zur “Bürgerlichen Musikkultur”*, Universität Tübingen, 1990, PhD dissertation.

³⁸ Rosen, Charles, *Sonata Forms*, p. 161.

young composers, who, as Umberto Eco reminds us, to bring their innovations tried to kill their own fathers³⁹.

When an old paradigm collapses, a new one takes its place; and the concept of symbol could be raised to the role of key concept during the 19th century, which allows for the embracing and explanation of many different social, cultural, and musical matters. The concept here is not intended to be as a melodic or a harmonic figure, interval or other structural feature that has a symbolic function – think, for example, about the so called “cross figure” in Liszt; it is a symbol, whose meaning is clear, and whose occurrences are easily identifiable in the score –; here symbol means that a musical structure possesses the same features as the symbol, namely, the musical structures do not have a structure fixed once for all, but they are open, and therefore susceptible of multiple interpretations. The symbol brings the idea of multiplicity as polysemy in the field of the arts. This concept will be clarified later on, and its relevance will emerge during the analysis of Liszt’s compositions presented in the following chapters. Anyway, as for the music of Liszt, we do not have to think about the definition of the human being as an animal *symbolicum* suggested by Ernst Cassirer⁴⁰ to explain the use of symbols in the 19th century, as most of the philosophical reflections on the idea of symbol emerged exactly within this century.

The symbol

The word *symbol* comes from the ancient Greek συμβάλλω (*symbállo*) and it means to hold together. But in the ancient Greek culture the symbol was not just an abstract concept, but it was even a concrete object, which «denotava [...] la “tessere dell’ospitalità”, ossia un oggetto spezzato in due parti, ciascuna delle quali veniva tenuta da un membro di una famiglia, di una comunità o di un’assemblea come segno di riconoscimento reciproco. Il simbolo, dunque, fin dalla sua origine, denota non soltanto un semplice oggetto, ma anche un’operazione particolare, la quale, estesa ad un livello generale, *significa il ricongiungimento in un tutto unitario di due parti separate*»⁴¹. The symbol, since its origins, denotes the

39 Eco, Umberto, *Sulle spalle dei giganti*, in *Sulle spalle dei giganti. Lezioni alla Milanesiana 2001–2015. La nave di Teseo*, Milano, 2017, p. 20. «[...] ogni atto d’innovazione, e di contestazione dei padri, avviene sempre attraverso il ricorso a un antenato, riconosciuto migliore del padre che si tenta di uccidere, e a cui ci si rifa».

40 Cassirer, Ernst, *Versuch über den Menschen: Einführung in eine Philosophie der Kultur*, Felix Meiner Verlag, Hamburg, 2007. Cassirer explains the concept of *animal symbolicum* in the second chapter.

41 Pasqualotto, Giangiorgio, *Figure di pensiero*, Marsilio, Padova, 2007, p. 11. Italic is mine.

“holding together” of two different things, which are at the same time a part of a unitary whole. After the “Greek experience” the symbol had to wait till the 19th century to enter again the realm of philosophical reflections. Goethe was one of the first men of letters who noted the great possibilities offered by this concept, and he is therefore to be thanked for the return to life after centuries in oblivion.

Die Allegorie verwandelt die Erscheinung in einen Begriff, den Begriff in ein Bild, doch so, dass der Begriff im Bilde immer noch begrenzt und vollständig zu halten und zu haben und an demselben auszusprechen sei. Die Symbolik verwandelt die Erscheinung in Idee, die Idee in ein Bild, und so, dass die Idee im Bild immer unendlich wirksam und unerreichbar bleibt und, selbst in allen Sprachen ausgesprochen, doch unaussprechlich bliebe⁴².

Here, Goethe expresses two very clear concepts. The allegory creates a fixed and closed relationship between signified and signifier, while the content of the symbolism cannot be exhausted by its signifier, and it remains inexpressible, even if “spoken out in all languages”. Goethe understood both the ambiguity and the “open to the future” character of the symbol, and he assigned to these features a positive role. It is worth remembering that Goethe was one of the most influential figures for the entire Romantic Generation, and not only for the literary value of his poems and novels, but even as a scientist and philosopher. His literary works and his aphorisms constituted the common knowledge of the Romantic Generation, who loved to speak with catchphrases and quotations, and whose aspiration was to experience the same adventures of their heroes – the Liszt-d’Agoult affair can be seen as a good example of this attitude. But the symbol entered again the philosophical field thanks to the attention another thinker gave to it, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, whose figure and works monopolised the conversations of the bourgeois salons during the entire 19th century. The philosopher devotes to this topic an entire section of his *Ästhetik*. From this section emerges how the symbol lies at the basis of the first artistic productions, or better, that it is something that appears (historically) before art. Therefore, according to the Hegelian view, it must be considered

42 Goethe, Johann Wolfgang, *Schriften der Goethe-Gesellschaft*, Verlag der Goethe-Gesellschaft, Weimar, 1907, Vol. 21, aphorisms nns.1112–1113, pp. 230–231. Coleridge contributed to this renaissance of the symbol, too, and wrote that «a Symbol is characterized by a translucence of the Special in the Individual, or of the General in the Especial, or of the Universal in the General. Above all by the translucence of the Eternal through and in the Temporal». Coleridge, Samuel Taylor, *The Statesman’s manual; or the Bible the best guide to political skill and foresight*, Printed for Gale and Fenner, London, 1816, p. 37.

as a typical manifestation of the ancient civilisations, which, in his division of history, occupy the pre-artistic stage:

Das Symbol in der Bedeutung, in welcher wir das Wort hier gebrauchen, macht dem Begriffe wie der historischen Erscheinung nach den Anfang der Kunst und ist deshalb gleichsam nur als Vorkunst zu betrachten [...]⁴³.

Hegel is referring here to the artistic productions of the ancient Persians, Indians, and Egyptians, which in his view represent the creed, the beginning of human artistic production, the youth of the civilization. It is interesting to note that the *metaphor* of the ages of the human being used to describe *progress* is still alive and healthy. But aside from that, from this first excerpt the idea that the symbol cannot be considered as art clearly emerges. But it is not just a matter of quality and meaning of the ancient productions. Hegel perceived with embarrassment the ambiguous character of the symbol:

Symbol überhaupt ist eine für die Anschauung unmittelbar vorhandene oder gebene äußerliche Existenz, welche jedoch nicht so, wie sie unmittelbar vorliegt, ihrer selbst wegen genommen, sondern in einem weiteren und allgemeineren Sinne verstanden werden soll. Es ist daher beim Symbol sogleich zweierlei zu unterscheiden: erstens die *Bedeutung* und sodann der *Ausdruck* derselben. *Jene* ist eine Vorstellung oder ein Gegenstand, gleichgültig von welchem Inhalte, *dieser* ist eine sinnliche Existenz oder ein Bild irgendeiner Art⁴⁴.

The first problem of this definition is that the symbol is seen as an object of intuition⁴⁵, of immediate intuition, and that it cannot therefore be the result of a reflection. Consequently, every human production which is the result of this immediate intuition cannot be considered art. On the other hand, Hegel noticed the most relevant aspect of the symbol, namely that the *signified* and its *expression* do not coincide:

43 Hegel, G.W.F., *Lezioni di estetica – Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*, p. 846.

44 Hegel, G.W.F., *Lezioni di estetica – Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*, p. 850.

45 This idea is derived from Kant, who in his *Kritik der Urteilskraft* wrote: «Es ist ein von den neueren Logikern zwar angenommener, aber sinnverkehrender, unrechter Gebrauch des Worts *symbolisch*, wenn man es der *intuitiven* Vorstellungsart entgegensemmt; denn die symbolische ist nur eine Art der intuitiven». Kant, Immanuel, *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, Verlag der Dürr'schen Buchhandlung, Leipzig, 1902, p. 222.

[...] das Symbol, obschon es seiner Bedeutung, nicht wie das bloß äußerliche und formelle Zeichen, gar nicht adäquat sein darf, sich ihr dennoch umgekehrt, um Symbol zu bleiben, auch nicht ganz angemessen machen muß. [...] Der Inhalt bleibt daher gegen die Gestalt, welche ihn vorstellt, auch *gleichgültig*, und die abstrakte Bestimmtheit, welche er ausmacht, kann ebensogut in unendlich vielen anderen Existenzen und Gestaltungen vorhanden sein. [...] Hieraus folgt nun, daß das Symbol seinem eigenen Begriff nach wesentlich *zweideutig* bleibt. a) Erstens führt der Anblick eines Symbols überhaupt sogleich den Zweifel herbei, ob eine Gestalt als *Symbol zu nehmen ist oder nicht*, wenn wir auch die weitere Zweideutigkeit in Rücksicht auf den *bestimmten* Inhalt beiseite lassen, welchen eine Gestalt unter *mehreren* Bedeutungen, als deren Symbol sie oft durch entferntere Zusammenhänge gebraucht werden kann, bezeichnen solle⁴⁶.

Hegel, exactly like Goethe, noted the open character of the symbol, and that the correspondence between the *form* and the *signified* is never guaranteed within it. The *signified* is always something more than its form, something that always exceeds it. Namely one has to speak about the *meanings* of a symbol, and not about the meaning. This is exactly the reason why the symbol is basically ambiguous, and Hegel pontificates that it is exactly for that reason that it is not possible to include it in the category of art, because we always feel uncomfortable in its presence, because «wir fühlen, daß wir unter *Aufgaben* wandeln»⁴⁷. These features, ambiguity and open character, far from being a limit, are the strength of the symbol, because they do not establish a closed relationship between the signified and the signifier, as pointed out by the philosopher Carlo Sini in more recent times:

Bisogna lasciare il significato nel nulla e nella distanza: identificarlo con una espressione equivale a cancellarlo [...]. Ma insieme non bisogna lasciare il significato in una separatezza assoluta rispetto alla sua espressione: escluderlo da ogni espressione equivale di nuovo a cancellarlo⁴⁸.

Summarising, the symbol does not have a decisively defined relationship between the signifier and the signified; this gives rise to ambiguity, namely to multiple interpretations. And here another fundamental feature of the symbol arises, which shows its double oriented opening, both to the future and to the past:

46 Hegel, G.W.F., *Lezioni di estetica – Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*, pp. 854–856.

47 Hegel, G.W.F., *Lezioni di estetica – Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*, p. 862.

48 Sini, Carlo, *Il pensiero e il simbolo*, pp. 109–110.

1) it is open to the future because, since its meaning is not singularly and categorically defined, it always accepts further and new interpretations. As Goethe said, recalling what Kant noticed, the symbol is a peculiar manifestation of the Universal, and this peculiar manifestation recalls the Universal itself. Of course, it is not possible to fix the Universal in just one figure, one concept. Therefore, this peculiar manifestation creates a never-ending mirror game between the multiple meanings and the single peculiar expression. When one looks at a symbol one grasps one meaning, and this meaning is consequently regarded as one peculiar manifestation of the universal. In this relationship between the observer and the symbol, the former is able to grasp, even if just for a moment, the Universal. However, this relationship is not unidirectional, but bidirectional: the Universal sends the observer back again to the peculiar manifestation, which is this time perceived from a new perspective, and, consequently, arises a new interpretation of it, an interpretation enriched by this contact with the universal. But through this new interpretation of the phenomenon the observer comes again in contact with the universal, which in turn sends him back again to the peculiar manifestation, from which arises a new interpretation, etc., and so on in a never-ending process; 2) the symbol is even open to the past, and precisely in two different ways: α) as the sum of all the previous interpretations of it; β) as the outcome of a long cognitive process of sedimentation. The symbol is the result of a tradition which elaborated it, but this outcome was not created with esoteric intentions, namely the symbol was not thought of for the adepts of a school, science, or religion. On the contrary, the symbol belongs to the entire community. Since the symbol and its interpretations are a part of a tradition, then one might think that a “dictionary of symbols” could be a useful solution. Even if there already exist a great number of decoded symbols, their meaning is still open, because they are by their own nature indefinable, and new interpretations are always possible. And these interpretations will enrich the tradition, and they will be the basis for new interpretations, and so on. Once again, an example from Hegel could be helpful to explain the process:

Der Löwe z.B. wird als Symbol der Großmut, der Fuchs als Symbol der List, der Kreis als Symbol der Ewigkeit, das Dreieck als Symbol der Dreieinigkeit genommen. [...] So ist der Löwe z.B. nicht nur stark, der Fuchs nicht nur listig, besonders aber hat Gott noch ganz andere Eigenschaften als diejenigen, welche in einer Zahl, einer mathematischen Figur oder Tiergestalt können aufgefasst werden⁴⁹.

49 Hegel, G.W.F., *Lezioni di estetica – Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*, pp. 852–854.

For all these reasons the symbol is a key concept of the 19th century. It not only occupies a relevant place in the philosophical reflection, but it possesses some peculiarities typical of the character of the “century of progress”. The tension towards the future, and the importance of the past, the teleological character – since its fulfilment lies somewhere in the future, which is of course unattainable in history –, all these aspects cannot only be used to describe the symbol, but they are even apt to describe the concept of progress, at least the idea of progress which was forming during the 19th century. And progress, even if it can be represented by a straight line from one point to the future, possesses the same grade of ambiguity as the symbol. Even if humanity were able to describe with extreme precision what happened in the past and, consequently, to comprehend every aspect of the present, the future would still remain unpredictable and therefore open to many different interpretations, namely it would remain ambiguous. And ambiguity is one of the key concept for the Romantic Generation, and not just for writers and philosophers, but for musicians and for those music theorists who saw the ambiguity of some harmonies (diminished sevenths, augmented triad, etc.) as a fruitful means to expand the possibilities of the tonal system.

Progress and society. The Lisztian pantheon

An attempt to summarise all the different theories on progress elaborated during the 18th and the 19th centuries is not the aim of this chapter. The investigation focuses here only on those theories which were on Liszt’s cognitive horizon, and which he probably came into contact with during his lifetime. Some of these ideas deeply influenced him, and they became consequently the theoretical background upon which he built his own vision of progress and society. Moreover, this survey will be useful to analyse the essay on Berlioz, of which these ideas form the theoretical background, and from which emerge Liszt’s view on the musical evolution. Furthermore, and it will strongly emerge in the last two chapters, these ideas formed Liszt’s mind, and they are therefore to be considered as responsible for his future oriented aesthetics.

The idea of progress, as we nowadays know it, arises between the 16th and 17th century. According to the historian Bury, two thinkers “prepared the soil” for the emergence of such theories, and they were Jean Bodin and Francis

Bacon⁵⁰. But the origins of the idea of progress, as already pointed out, are to be found in antiquity. The philosophical reflection on the topic already began with the ancient Greeks. But the ancient thought, and it would be so until the Renaissance, was deeply influenced by religious beliefs, which involved the direct action of deities in human affairs. Hence, till then it was possible to speak of *providence* more than progress. The modern meaning of progress arises at the end of the Renaissance, and its emergence can be attributed to a change in the social paradigm. Until the 17th century a paradigm was in effect in which the past was the main source of laws – both for the physical and for the juridical world –, and the place where it was possible to find the truth. Basically, there were two authorities, who were allowed to answer any question: The Bible and Aristotle. These texts represented the sum of human knowledge, and there every answer to any question was to be sought, from philosophy to physics, from law to astrology. The past was the most relevant source of knowledge. It was the reign of tradition, and every innovation was regarded as a threat to social stability. It was between the 16th and 17th century that began what it is possible to call the “revolution against the past”. But even if everyone tried with all their strength to free humanity from the classical and medieval dogmas, the idea of progress during the 17th century is to be conceived «as [...] a modification [...] of the same largely *metaphoric view* of growth and development contained in classical and Christian ideas»⁵¹. Here lies one of the key concepts of Nisbet’s theory, namely that the reflections on the idea of progress of the 17th century only had an intellectual character and did not involve any social or moral theory. The famous *Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes*, which is quite often seen as a struggle between the *passeïsts* and the modernists, was actually the most evident fact to support his theory. The fight took place in the field of the intellect, and it was there where the *modernes* won the battle, where the intellect took its supremacy. No one wants to deny the relevance of this historical moment, but it is important to underline that it did not involve any immediate social reaction. The Cartesian ideas resumed with the motto *cogito ergo sum* became the new *Weltanschauung*. Here the change of paradigm is evident, since reality now fell under the control of reason, of pure reason, instead under of

50 Bury, John Bagnell, *The idea of Progress*, pp. 35–36. «In this last stage of the Renaissance [...] soil was being prepared in which the idea of Progress could germinate, and our history of its origin definitely begins with the work of two men who belong to this age, Bodin [...], and Bacon [...]. Both had a more general grasp of the significance of their own time than any of their contemporaries, and though neither of them discovered a theory of Progress, they both made contributions to thought which directly contributed to its subsequent appearance».

51 Nisbet, Robert A., *Social Change and History*, p. 106.

that of beliefs and religion. Of course, religion was not completely excluded from the process, but it was exactly during the 17th century that it left the field to the “dictatorship of reason”. This passage is extremely relevant, since it gives birth to two concepts that will be fundamental for most of the theories on progress: 1) the cumulative character of knowledge, and 2) the uniformity of this process. The first feature is easily explained, and it is well exemplified through the image of the modern as dwarfs on the shoulders of giants, where the giants represent the entire knowledge acquired by humanity through the past centuries, and the dwarfs are the modern, which stand on top of it, and for this reason they can say that they possess it. The second feature is based on the Cartesian theory of the uniformity of the laws of nature. These laws are certain and immutable, since God created them. Consequently, according to the combination of these two laws, «does it not follow with inexorable logic that the progress of knowledge must continue into the indefinite future?»⁵². This is the rationalist argument: knowledge is sure, cumulative, and endless. It constitutes the axioms upon which future philosophers will build their theories. Since it is not possible to analyse one by one all the thinkers who produced reflections on the idea of progress, it is considerably more useful to create four different groups. Every group represents a source (direct or indirect) of inspiration for Liszt's own ideas on society and progress: 1) the *Christian legacy*; 2) the *German reflections* (Goethe, Herder); 3) *Saint-Simon* and *Lamennais*; 4) *Thomas Carlyle*. These theories could be found here and there in Liszt's writings, even if the authors are not explicitly named. But one has to keep them in mind, if one wants to fully appreciate the writings of the Hungarian composer, aside from his bombastic style. A special place is reserved to Thomas Carlyle, whose theories affected Liszt so deeply that it is possible to state that «Carlyle serves Liszt during the 1850s in the same way that Schopenhauer later served Wagner: viz., as a vehicle of his own thoughts and feelings»⁵³.

The Christian legacy

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. [...] God blessed them, saying: “Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it. Have dominion

52 Nisbet, Robert A., *Social Change and History*, p. 108.

53 Winkler, Gerhard J., *Listz's “Weimar Mythology”*, p. 69.

over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and all the living things that move on the earth”⁵⁴.

These two excerpts taken from the Old Testament, are enough to point out that under the light of Christianity the conception of history is no longer cyclical – even if the idea of a golden age survived in some Christian views, according to which a return to the Garden of Eden is still possible. Eden, this original and perfect condition of men, lies in the past. Actually, it lies outside of the past, because the original condition of men is outside time and history, while the end of this condition, with the expulsion of Adam and Eve from Eden, represents the beginning of human history. Hence, according to the Christian view, history has a double beginning: 1) the physical beginning, i.e., the birth of the universe, when God created it and its laws, and 2) the beginning of human history, which coincides with the expulsion of the original couple from the Garden of Eden. From these two starting points time began to flow straight and continuously and it is this same stream that excludes the possibility of a return to the Garden of Eden, of a golden age. From the Christian philosophy emerge four main ideas, which constitute the premises of any further development: 1) history is a necessity, since God created it, and it has already been written, since there is a precise plan for everything and everyone since the very beginning – even if it is unknown and unknowable; 2) this involves a movement *in* and *through* time towards a destination; 3) the idea of progress is of course involved in this process, as well as the idea of perfectibility of mankind, which has to redeem itself after the fall; 4) since Adam and Eve are our ancestors, humanity has a common birth, and with them is born the idea of humanity as a brotherhood of man.

These ideas are not relevant just for the birth of the modern conception of progress. These ideas were very well known to Liszt, since he already felt a religious vocation from his early youth. The Bible and Augustine of Hippo (St. Augustine) constitute the basic readings for every Christian. It is possible to find a trace of these readings in many places in Liszt’s writings, above all in the letters he addressed to the princess Sayn-Wittgenstein. The figure of Augustine is particularly relevant because with him the idea of progress reached «masterful and lasting expression [...], endowed the idea of progress with new attributes which were bound to give it a spiritual force [...]»⁵⁵. The figure of Augustine is relevant for another reason too. His *City of God* is not just the glorification

54 Bible, *Genesis*, 1.1 and 1.28.

55 Nisbet, Robert, *History of the Idea of Progress*, p. 47.

of God's creation, but it is even an exaltation of human intellect, able to invent everything that human beings needed, and, at the same time, to produce art. This idea is strictly related to the figure of the genius, with which Liszt was fascinated for his entire life. Therefore, it is possible to state that the Christian thought represents the first and oldest source of Liszt's concept of progress.

The German reflection: Goethe and Herder

Christianity laid the foundations for the western idea of progress. And this idea, namely a religious idea of progress where Providence plays the most relevant role, survived during the entire Middle Ages, and, as already said, only the secularisation process begun during the 18th century was able to free the idea from its religious meanings. Of course, that does not mean that the action of providence was completely excluded from any reasoning on the topic. Quite the opposite. The majority of thinkers and philosophers professed both a faith in science, namely in the scientific progress, and in God, and they were able to combine these two beliefs in a very fertile way. Along this path towards the definition of the idea of progress, the German reflection deserves particular attention, and not just because it is fundamental in the history of ideas, but because one encounters the thinkers who constitute the cultural background in which Liszt lived. Furthermore, some of these thinkers belong to what Winkler called the *Weimar Mythology*⁵⁶, namely a sort of Liszt's personal pantheon. It is sufficient to read some of the titles that appeared during the 18th century in Germany to understand what was new during that time: *Auch eine Philosophie der Geschichte zur Bildung der Menschheit* (Herder, 1774), *Die Erziehung des Menschengeschlechts* (Lessing, 1780), *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit* (Herder, 1784), *Idee zu einer allgemeinen Geschichte in weltbürgerlicher Absicht* (Kant, 1784), *Zum ewigen Frieden. Ein philosophischer Entwurf* (Kant, 1795). Theories on progress needed theoretical justification, and the only way to provide one was to analyse the entire history of humanity. It appears to be a sequence of forward steps, from the primitive and ancient civilizations to the present-day, driven by the same natural laws. The necessity to find the laws of progress in order to build a science upon them (here lies the origin of sociology) was felt following scientific discovery, such as Newton's law of universal gravitation. But there is another aspect to underline, and it clearly emerges with Kant, namely the idea that progress is to be found not

56 Winkler, Gerhard J., *Listz's "Weimar Mythology"*, pp. 61–73.

only in science, art, political institutions, but progress is possible, or better, progress means above all *moral* improvement⁵⁷. These are the main aspects of the German reflection on the idea of progress. It is not possible here to focus on all of them, and therefore an account will be given of the contributions of two of the most relevant thinkers of the *New Athens*, Herder and Goethe, who were very well known to Liszt, and who inspired him both new compositions and new “social” writings.

Goethe is usually seen as the symbol of German poetry. In any case, we cannot forget his deep interest in biology, and his essay on the metamorphosis of plants is a clear indication of this. Metamorphosis is a concept which lies at the basis of that of progress. Therefore, one «might have expected to find him interested in theories on social progress»⁵⁸, since his essay opened the door to the evolutionary hypothesis. Furthermore, Bury states that the speculations on progress «did not touch his imagination», and that «they left him cold and sceptical»⁵⁹. Goethe certainly represents one of the sceptical voices, however he did have a precise vision on progress. On one side he identifies a positive and inexorable rule of progress, represented by nature, which advances continuously without breaks⁶⁰; on the other side there is human progress:

“Die Entwicklung der Menschheit”, sagte ich, “scheint auf Jahrtausende angelegt.” / “Wer weiß”, erwiderte Goethe, “vielleicht auf Millionen! Aber laß die Menschheit dauern so lange sie will, es wird ihr nie an Hindernissen fehlen, die ihr zu schaffen machen, und nie an allerlei Not, damit sie ihre Kräfte entwickele. Klüger und einsichtiger wird sie werden, aber besser, glücklicher und tatkräftiger nicht, oder doch nur auf Epochen. Ich sehe die Zeit kommen, wo Gott keine Freude mehr an ihr hat, und er abermals alles zusammenschlagen muß zu einer verjüngten Schöpfung. Ich bin gewiß, es ist alles danach angelegt, und es steht in der fernen Zukunft schon Zeit und Stunde fest, wann diese Verjüngungsepoke eintritt. Aber bis dahin hat es sicher noch gute Weile, und wir können noch Jahr-

57 The idea of progress related to the moral advancement of humanity is analysed by Saint-Simon too. See the paragraph of the present work, *Different religions: Saint-Simon and Lamennais*.

58 Bury, John Bagnell, *The idea of Progress*, p. 258.

59 Bury, John Bagnell, *The idea of Progress*, p. 258.

60 Goethe played a relevant role even in the field of science, and not just in botanic. Through cooperation with Herder, who was at that time writing his *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*, Goethe came in contact with scientific literature on physiognomy and anatomy, which brought him to relevant scientific discoveries.

tausende und aber Jahrtausende auch auf dieser lieben alten Fläche, wie sie ist, allerlei Spaß haben”⁶¹.

From these lines Goethe’s idea clearly emerges: progress, intended as a natural development, in a biological sense, will always exist. And consequently it is possible to infer that he believed in the cumulative process of knowledge. Humanity will be even more intelligent, and its knowledge will always be larger. Nevertheless, states Goethe, more intelligence and a wider knowledge will never make mankind happier. Too many obstacles and demons lie across their path, and humanity will always meet new ones. For the German poet progress means moral advancement towards a happier condition, which is nevertheless unattainable. But there is another important aspect to underline here about Goethe’s statement, namely his idea of God. Although he was a believer, he thought that God does not interfere with human affairs, but in the end, when he will decide to recreate the world. Aside from this Christian idea of the Last Judgement, Goethe identified the very character of progress:

Die Welt soll nicht so rasch zum Ziele, als wir denken und wünschen. Immer sind die retardierenden Dämonen da, die überall dazwischen- und überall entgegentreten, so daß es zwar im ganzen vorwärts geht, aber sehr langsam⁶².

Humanity is surely progressing, even if very slowly, and always through new obstacles. We think and desire for a better condition, and we work and fight to obtain it. This is of course a very long process, and it is undeniable that the world will come to an end before we reach such a goal. So, progress is a matter of faith. Finally, it is noted that Goethe had this conversation when he was already old, and a bit of disappointment surely contributes to his reflections, and it is probably his denial of the possibility of a happier condition for humanity in this world. It is impossible not to draw a link between the late thoughts of Goethe and Liszt in his final years.

Alongside Goethe, one cannot ignore the other great man of Weimar, Johann Gottfried Herder. Not only did they work together at the Weimar Hoftheater, but they were even two of the most relevant figures in Liszt’s pantheon during his experience as Kapellmeister, and during his entire life. The Goethe and Herder celebrations in 1849 and 1850 are the cause of new compositions and writings. It was in fact for these anniversaries that Liszt composed his first

61 Eckermann, J.P., *Goethes Gespräche mit J. P. Eckermann*, pp. 60–61.

62 Eckermann, J.P., *Goethes Gespräche mit J. P. Eckermann*, p. 60.

version of *Tasso* and *Prometheus*, and he wrote his essay *De la fondation-Goethe à Weimar* (1850). The first chapter of this bureaucratic and historical essay is devoted to the history of the princes of Weimar, and it includes an ode to the glorious past of the *Minnesänger*, as the first peak reached by German literature⁶³. The second peak, probably the highest, is reached at the end of the 18th century with the beginning of the government of Carl August, and is represented by the era of Goethe, Herder, and Schiller – but it had already begun with the ten years service of Johann Sebastian Bach at the court of Weimar (1708–1717):

Goethe était loin encore de cette solennité, de ce calme olympien, dont le Duc si riche de bon sens, disait avec belle humeur: «Es ist ganz possierlich, wie der Mensch feierlich wird!» - Goethe n'avait fait que commencer la série de ses créations en écrivant Goetz von Berlichingen, lorsque Charles-Auguste chercha à se l'attacher, en s'attachant à lui. En 1776, il le nomma conseiller de légation. [...] Les esprits d'élite qui flottaient sur les vagues onduleuses des divers états de l'Allemagne, se trouvèrent peu à peu rapprochés et retenus par ce centre attractif. Herder fut appelé (1776) à Weimar, en qualité de prédicateur de la cour, [...]. Quelques années après, Schiller y arrivait aussi; [...]⁶⁴.

This celebration of the great men who were in Weimar during the 18th century has the purpose of glorifying the duchy of Weimar and above all the Duke Carl-August, father of Carl-Friedrich and grandfather of Carl-Alexander. These last two men were the patrons of Liszt during his Weimar period. But aside from this tribute to the family of Sachsen-Weimar, and to the historical reconstruction of the relevance of literature in it, there is a passage which deserves to be quoted, since from it one can deduce the Lisztian idea of history and progress and of the role that providence plays in this game:

Il sut identifier à jamais le souvenir de son règne avec celui de la plus florissante période de la littérature allemande. Était-ce chez lui un but prémedité? Nous ne le croyons pas. Qui peut préjuger des moissons que prépare la Providence? Qui peut prédire l'ingratitude ou la reconnaissance du cœur humain? Qui peut prévoir les bouleversements destinés à dévaster ou à découvrir les vallées où s'abritent les

63 Liszt, Franz, *De la Fondation-Goethe à Weimar*, pp. 10–ff. «En Allemagne, la littérature arriva deux fois à cette importance qui lui assure une place éminente dans les fastes de l'esprit humain. Au moyen âge, les *Minnesänger* firent surgir dans la poésie, un sentiment nouveau. L'amour que l'antiquité n'avait considéré que comme une volupté, fut peu à peu identifié par eux avec un tendre respect et un admiration émue. [...]»

64 Liszt, Franz, *De la Fondation-Goethe à Weimar*, pp. 48–49.

gloires pacifiques? Charles-Auguste satisfait à sa propre passion, en recherchant l'intelligence, en rapprochant de lui tant d'hommes remarquables; et comme cette passion était noble, celle lui rapporta des fruits précieux, qu'il sut ensuite cueillir et faire germer de nouveau⁶⁵.

There are two relevant matters to point out in this passage: 1) the faith in Providence, namely in the divine intervention in human affairs, and, consequently, the impossibility to foresee the future – there is a plan, but only God knows it –; 2) great men, such as the Grand Duke Carl-August, always pursue their objectives, and, if their aims are noble, they will be rewarded, in this life or in the future one. Liszt's mind had, at that time, already absorbed several theories on progress, but the Christian beliefs are still strongly evident in the background. Contrary to the title, the figure of Goethe is not the main topic of Liszt's essay. It is a mystified mythicisation of the relationship between Goethe and the court of Weimar. This from Liszt is without any doubt a propaganda essay, written to pursue his project of a New Weimar. Therefore, the real homage to Goethe is to be found in his music, more than in his writing. His symphonic poem *Tasso: Lamento e Trionfo*, even if it was composed on commission for the 100th anniversary of Goethe's birth, contains in its programme more ideas than the writing itself. The first version of this work is clearly bipartite; the first part, *Lamento*, and the second one, *Trionfo*. The programme is as a *Spiegel im Spiegel*, since Liszt looks at his own condition through the work of Goethe, and through the work of Torquato Tasso, who in turn reflects on the condition of artists in society⁶⁶. Here lies the key to reading Liszt's work. But if Goethe and Tasso are oppressed by their role, by their loneliness, Liszt looks to the future with other eyes. It is true that the artist leads a life of sacrifices (*Lamento*), but it is even true that the genuine artist will be rewarded with eternal glory, even if it will come after his own death (*Trionfo*). Liszt's *Tasso* is not just a glorification of the most relevant German poet, but it is a hymn to all the poets (*Tondichter*), who are still awaiting their glory. The extra-musical programme here is not a specific poem or poet, but *la condition des artistes dans la société* itself.

This topic is a perfect link to the other symphonic poem, *Prometheus*, which works in turn to link to the other author in this section, Herder. Liszt was

65 Liszt, Franz, *De la Fondation-Goethe à Weimar*, p. 47.

66 Goethe, after his *Werther* and his journey to Italy, came back to Weimar with a feeling of disappointment. He perceived that his works were not fully appreciated and understood. His *Tasso* focused on the moment in which Tasso finishes his *Gerusalemme Liberata*, and he experiences a sense of frustration, marginalisation and disappointment. The artist is alone in society. This same condition will be experienced by Liszt during his late years.

attracted to this work for two reasons: 1) Prometheus, with his «defiance against authority, his suffering for his ideals, civilizing contributions to – indeed, arguably the founder of – humanity, and tragic fate made him a popular figure among artists in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries»⁶⁷, is the archetype of the artist, who sacrifices himself for the good of the people; 2) Herder's revisited version of the myth was very attractive for Liszt, because there the poet «reintroduces the idea of *Humanität* under a wealth of Greek symbolism»⁶⁸. Liszt, composed for the occasion a series of choruses «moving between “suffering and apotheosis”»⁶⁹, but in which the apotheosis plays the main role as in *Tasso*. But if in *Tasso* Liszt glorified the artist as individual, with his *Prometheus* he glorified both the artist and the people, which, finally freed, represent the glorious victory of the artist's sacrifice. Liszt himself gives us an account of the relevance of these ideals, when he wrote in his *Lohengrin* that, for the celebration of Herder, «un des premiers philosophes de *l'humanitarisme*», the court⁷⁰ decided to perform *Prometheus* «par un coloris de sentiment et un groupement d'idée, dont le majestueux et harmonieux ensemble peut être regardé comme un des meilleurs tableaux, conçu par une des plus nobles et des plus hautes inspirations de ce poète»⁷¹.

Herder surely occupies a privileged position in the history of ideas, since «there is almost nothing that would be contained a century later in the so-called “historical” schools of the social sciences that cannot be found systematically stated by Herder»⁷². It is with him that the paradigm of the linear conception of history of the Enlightenment is turned into something more complicated. A first essay on this topic appears in 1774 with the title *Auch eine Philosophie der Geschichte zur Bildung der Menschheit*, where the philosopher outlines his organicistic view of history, and his idea, in opposition to that of the *philosophes*, that «one epoch should not be judged by the standards of another», because in doing so, on one side «they lose sight of the workings of Providence, whose wondrous works are manifest throughout history, a testament to the existence of a grand design», and on the other side «they also sin doubly against mankind by belittling entire ages, and thereby providing a false education to subsequent

67 Kregor, Jonathan, *Program Music*, p. 113.

68 Clark, Robert Thomas, *Herder: His Life and Thought*, p. 427.

69 Williamson, John, *The revision of Liszt's 'Prometheus'*, p. 381.

70 Liszt uses in this passage the French impersonal pronoun “on”, and later the plural “il nous a paru”. It is clear that it is a *pluralis maiestatis*, since Liszt's word, as the director of the *Hoftheater*, was more relevant as it appears in the writing.

71 Liszt, Franz, *Lohengrin, Grand opéra romantique de R. Wagner*. pp. 25–26.

72 Nisbet, Robert, *Social Change and History*, p. 122.

generations»⁷³. This statement itself represents a little revolution, and it stays in open opposition with the (presumed) superiority of the Enlightenment intellect:

Der beste Geschichtsthreiber der Kunst des Alterthums, Winckelmann, hat über die Kunstwerke der Aegypter offenbar nur nach griechischem Maasstabe geurtheilt, sie also verneinend sehr gut, aber nach eigner Natur und Art so wenig geschildert, daß fast bey jedem seiner Sätze in diesem Hauptstück das offenbar Einseitige und Schielende vorleuchtet. So Webb, wenn er ihre Literatur der Griechischen entgegensetzt: so mache andre, die über ägyptische Sitten und Regierungsform gar mit europäischen Geist geschrieben haben – und da es den Aegyptern meistens so geht, daß man zu ihnen aus Griechenland und also mit blos griechischem Auge kommt – Wie kanns ihnen schlechter gehen? Aber theurer Griech! diese Bildsäulen sollten nun nicht weniger (wie du aus allem wahrnehmen könntest) als Muster der schönen Kunst nach deinem Ideal seyn! voll Reitz, Handlung, Bewegung, wo von allem der Aegypter nichts wuste, oder was sein Zweck ihm gerade wegschnitt⁷⁴.

Hence, under the light of this new perspective, the idea of progress changes. If it is impossible to judge an ancient society by the standards of a modern one, consequently, in order to analyse the achievements of our ancestors it is necessary to take an imaginative step, namely the effort to understand them with the eyes of our ancestors, and not with our own modern eyes. This change of point of view, doesn't just represent a revolutionary perspective on history, but it is also representative of the change of paradigm. Contemporary culture, art, technology, are certainly better (more advanced) than in the past. But it does not mean that we are cleverer or better than an ancient civilisation, because our achievements are made possible thanks in great part to the accomplishments of the previous generations. This new perspective could be useful to understand what Liszt means with the word “progress” in relation to music, and to explain his worship of the ancient masters – something that wouldn't be possible for a maniac of progress. Anyway, what probably made Herder the most important thinker under Liszt's eyes is the relevance of Providence in history, and the idea of humanity, namely a process that moves from Menschenheit to Humanität. Both these ideas find their formulation in his capital work, *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*, written between 1784 and 1791. It is composed of twenty books, in which Herder deals with all the themes of

73 Herder, Johann Gottfried, *Another philosophy of History, and Selected Political Writings*, Hackett Publishing Company, Indianapolis and Cambridge, 2004, p. xxvi.

74 Herder, Johann Gottfried, *Noch eine Philosophie zur Bildung der Menschheit*, p. 27.

human knowledge. The first part of his work is devoted to the analysis of the physical world, and from the analysis of these physical phenomena he developed a symmetrical history of human beings, one of the first attempts in this field. The natural outcome of his theories is a conception, according to which the entire humanity is progressing towards a common goal. Every civilisation represents a further step. But history, from humanity's perspective, seems to be an endless sequence of unrelated events, which do not make sense. During the era of reason (the modern one), humanity understood that there is a higher plan. Nevertheless, they will never be able to grasp its meaning, since it is only possible from the outside to embrace the history in its entirety.

Ich wünschte, daß ich in das Wort Humanität alles fassen könnte, was ich bisher über des Menschen edle Bildung zur Vernunft und Freiheit, zu feinern Sinnen und Trieben, zur zartesten und stärksten Gesundheit, zur Erfüllung und Beherrschung der Erde gesagt habe: denn der Mensch hat kein edleres Wort für seine Bestimmung als Er selbst ist, in dem das Bild des Schöpfers unsrer Erde, wie es hier Sichtbar werden konnte, abgedruckt lebet. Um seine edelsten Pflichten zu entwickeln, dürfen wir nur seine Gestalt zeichnen⁷⁵.

The main reason for this inability to comprehend history as a whole, is that humanity is and acts inside history, while only those who can elevate themselves outside history can grasp it, and consequently understand the entire process. According to this view, the only philosopher of history is God, because he is the only being who can see the entire process of human development, and, since he is infinitely good and wise, he can guide humanity in history through divine Providence. Progress is then an act of faith in the existence of this greatest philosopher. And faith is exactly what connects Herder and Liszt. The German philosopher was not just a fervent Christian, but he was a pastor and a preacher, sure that «[...] die Religion soll nichts als Zwecke durch Menschen und für Menschen bewirken»⁷⁶. This statement recalls the idea of the great men. Liszt himself was, from his point of view, a pastor and a preacher, and he tried to carry the Christian message through his art. It is still possible to doubt whether Liszt actually read all the philosophical books he quoted here and there, but it is undeniable that he was an expert on religious matters, as his interest in spiritual things is dated long before his encounter with Father Solfanelli in

75 Herder, Johann Gottfried, *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*, Volume I, Book IV, p. 244.

76 Herder, Johann Gottfried, *Noch eine Philosophie zur Bildung der Menschheit*, p. 76.

1865. It is therefore very plausible that he could be inspired by Herder's idea of humanity as a brotherhood of men, masterfully described in this passage:

Dieselbe nun, so sonderbar entstandene Religion sollte doch das ist unleugbar, nach dem Sinne des Urhebers [...] sie sollte eigentliche Religion der Menschheit, Trieb der Liebe, und Band aller Nationen zu einem Bruderheere werden – ihr Zweck von Anfang zu Ende! Eben so gewiß ists, daß sie [...] die Erste gewesen, die so reine geistige Wahrheiten, und so herzliche Pflichten, so ganz ohne Hülle und Aberglauben, ohne Schmuck und Zwang gelehret: die das menschliche Herz so allein, so allgemein, so ganz und ohne Ausnahme hat verbessern wollen. Alle vorigen Religionen der besten Zeiten und Völker waren doch nur National, [...] kurz, Religionen eines Volks, eines Erdstrichs, eines Gesetzgebers, einer Zeit! diese offenbar in allem das Gegentheil. Die lauterste Philosophie der Sittenlehre, die reinste Theorie der Wahrheiten, und Pflichten, von allen Gesetzen, und kleinen Landverfassungen unabhängig, kurz wenn man will, der menschenliebendste Deismus⁷⁷.

But Herder is, alongside with Goethe⁷⁸, the founder of the aesthetics of Romanticism, which emerged as an act of rebellion against the supremacy of the intellect, which was the main future of the Enlightenment.

Der scheinbare epistemische Vorteil von Gefühlen ist, darauf hat etwa Herder schon in seinem frühen fragmentarischen Text *Versuch über das Sein* aufmerksam gemacht, dass sie selbstevident sind: „Aber sind nicht sinnliche Begriffe gewiß!“. Das führt Herder zu der erkenntnistheoretisch paradoxen Formel vom „theoretische[n] Instinkt“, der allen „anderen Erfahrungsgriffen“ vorgängig ist. Diese Form der Selbstgewissheit setzt er dem theoretischen Selbstbewusstsein entgegen, von dem die Erkenntnistheorie im Anschluss an Descartes ausging: „Ich fühle mich! Ich bin!“, schreibt Herder in *Zum Sinn des Gefühls* – eine Formel, die die Leib/Seele-Trennung des cartesischen *cogito* aufhebt: „Hier würde eine Physiologie der Seele und des Körpers kommen, die wir noch nicht haben“. [...] Mit der Selbst-

77 Herder, Johann Gottfried, *Noch eine Philosophie zur Bildung der Menschheit*, p. 72–73.

78 The words «Gefühl ist alles», spoken out by Faust, are a sufficient example to prove the existence of this new aesthetic conception already in Goethe. Even if Faust is just a character of a play, its relevance in the history of literature, above all that one of the Romanticism, makes of him a quasi-real figure or, at least, a figure capable to influence the aesthetic conception of a century.

evidenz des Gefühls stellt Herder der kritischen Vernunft eine anthropologische Alternative an die Seite⁷⁹.

Under these revolutionary forces the Cartesian motto *cogito ergo sum* becomes *Ich fühle mich! Ich bin!* This is the birth of a new anthropocentrism in which not only the intellect, but the entire human body is at the centre of the universe. The intellect is not excluded, but it is no longer the only actor on the stage. The proposition *Ich fühle mich* bears a double interpretation: 1) it means that “I can feel myself through my senses, and that I can perceive myself through emotions, and that I myself can feel emotions”. That leads to a 2) deeper self-awareness, and at the same time, it opens the door to the process of recognition of “the others” as human beings. Consequently, the word “feel” describes a double movement: inwards, to perceive the self, and outwards, to recognise the others. Without this new perspective it would be impossible to perceive people as a brotherhood of men. For Liszt, feelings are not just a “justification” to distort the form, but it is a belief, a totalising *Weltanschauung*, since the aim of the composer, according to Liszt, is to express his feelings. This wasn’t just a precept of the Romantic Generation, but it was for them an inner necessity. Progress and religion, themes of the highest relevance to Liszt, have a common ground: faith, and any act of faith begins with a feeling. These themes are fully recognisable in his writings, and this perspective sheds new light on his compositions, as it will be shown in the following chapters. For now, it suffices to keep in mind that Herder’s ideas are fundamental to understanding the Lisztian aesthetics.

After a résumé of the contributions of Goethe and Herder to the cause of progress, and to the development of the Lisztian aesthetics, some words on Kant and Hegel would be necessary in order to complete the chronological development of this idea. However, since this dissertation is not a treatise on the idea of progress, and since it is quite impossible to summarize the ideas of the two most important philosophers in German history, it has been decided here just to focus on the names of Goethe and Herder, as they are the two thinkers which influenced Liszt the most, and they are sufficient to complete the frame. Aside from this, it should be stated that, as it will clearly emerge in the third chapter of this dissertation, the intellectual relationship between Hegel and Liszt is at least problematic. In its place is preferred a more exhaustive analysis of the French thinkers, which Liszt had already encountered during the 1830s,

79 Jost-Fritz, Jan Oliver, *Erkenntnis unter Blättern: Affekt und Selbstgefühl in Arnims Gedicht “Waldgeschrey”/”Stolze Einsamkeit”*, in *Emotionen in der Romantik, Repräsentation, Ästhetik, Inszenierung*, De Gruyter, Berlin, 2012, pp. 227–228.

who without a doubt influenced him more deeply than Kant and Hegel. The Lisztian association with the Saint-Simonian in Paris during the 1830s and the acquaintance with Lamennais constitute the fertile ground upon which Liszt developed his own ideas on society and on the role of artists.

Different religions: Saint-Simon and Lamennais

The association of Liszt with the Saint-Simonians in Paris caused some trouble for musicologists, because of his quite immediate dissociation from the group: «[...] during the late 1830s, 40s, and 50s, Liszt disassociated himself repeatedly and hefty from the movement, most prominently in an open letter to Heinrich Heine which he published in the *Revue et Gazette musicale*»⁸⁰. This point deserves a little parenthesis, because if Heine's opinion of Liszt's intellectual faculties is assuredly negative⁸¹, worse still is the opinion he had of the music of the Hungarian composer. According to the poet, Liszt wrote corrupted music as direct consequence of his confused mind. That means that a mind which cannot produce its own ideas cannot produce either art, nor beautiful art:

Mais on ne peut refuser des éloges à cette infatigable soif de lumière et de divinité qui témoigne de ses tendances vers le choses sacrées et religieuses. Qu'une tête aussi inquiète, tiraillée en tous sens par toutes les doctrines et toutes les misères du temps, qui sent le besoin de se tourmenter de tous les intérêts de l'humanité, qui aime à fourrer son nez dans tous les pots où le bon Dieu fait cuire l'avenir du monde; que Franz Liszt enfin, ne soit pas un pianiste calme à l'usage de paisibles citoyens et de sensible bonnets de coton, cela se comprend. Quand il s'assied au piano, qu'il rejeté plusieurs fois eu arrière sa longue chevelure et qu'il commence à improviser, il se jette souvent avec furie sur les touches d'ivoire; alors surgit une forêt de pensées chaotiques, à travers lesquelles les fleurs des plus doux sen-

80 Locke, Ralph, *Liszt's Saint-Simonian Adventure*, p. 211.

81 See Heine, Heinrich, *Lettres confidentielles II*, in *Revue et Gazette Musicale de Paris*, No. 5, 4 February 1838, where he wrote: «[Liszt] est un homme d'un caractère mal assis, mais noble, désintéressé et sans détour; Ses tendances intellectuelle sont for remarquables : il a un goût très-vif pour le spéculation et les intérêts de son art le préoccupent moins encore que les recherches des différentes écoles où l'on discute la grande question qui embrasse le ciel et la terre. Il fut pendant longtemps tout ardeur pour les beaux aperçus Saint-Simoniens; plus tard, il se perdit dans les pensées spiritualistes ou plutôt nébuleuses de Ballanche. Il extravague aujourd'hui pour les doctrines catholico-républicaines d'un Lamennais, qui a planté sur la croix le bonnet du jacobinisme... Le Ciel sait dans quelle écurie philosophique il trouvera son prochain dada!».

timents répandent leur parfum. Il vous oppresse et vous enflamme tout à la fois, mais la part de l'oppression est la plus forte. Je vous avoue que, quelle que soit mon amitié pour Liszt, sa musique n'affecte pas agréablement ma sensibilité, d'autant plus que malheureusement je suis un voyant, et que je vois les spectre que d'autre ne font qu'entendre⁸².

After this direct and public attack against his person, the young Liszt could not keep quiet; therefore the answer he gave to the German poet is noteworthy. It is written, as usual, with the typical extravagant and bombastic style of Liszt, but one will not find there any denial of his engagement with the group. Quite the opposite, he writes that he participated in the “*prédictions Saint-Simonniennes*”, but from the obscurity of a remote corner, as if he was an anonymous listener. Nevertheless, this is a deliberate lie. As Locke informs us « [...] at the beginning “he not only was among the most ardent visitors to their meetings but also considered joining them as a member”. In the end, though, he never did join but only “embraced their essential philosophical ideas”»⁸³. Hence, Liszt’s aim was not to discredit himself and his ideas, and he followed two paths to this purpose: on one side he minimised the influence of the movement on him, and his engagement with them, and on the other side he responded to the attack of his critic stating that Heine was a more active member of the community⁸⁴ – the same community whose ideas were at the beginning of the 1830s already considered dangerous, and whose leader, *Père Enfantin*, was imprisoned in 1833. The Saint-Simonians «were accused of having raised money upon a wholly fictitious security, [...] of having formed associations with a view to overthrow the existing order of society, of having declared against the existence of private property, and thereby inciting a war of classes; they were accused, moreover, of cheating doctrines subversive of public morality, and incompatible with the

82 Heine, Heinrich, *Lettres confidentielles II*, in *Revue et Gazette Musicale de Paris*, No. 5, 4 February 1838, p. 42.

83 Locke, Ralph, *Music, Musicians and the Saint-Simonians*, p. 101.

84 Liszt wrote about Heine’s relationship with the Saint-Simonians: « Si je ne me trompe, alors que je suivais obscurément les *prédictions saint-simonniennes* à côté de beaucoup d’autres, [...] je vous voyais de loin, vous le poète illustre, introduit jusque dans le sanctuaire, et vous ne craignîtes pas de le confesser plus tard, en dédiant au père Enfantin un beau livre, dans lequel vous lui demandiez de COMMUNIER AVEC LUI A TRAVERS LE TEMPS ET L’ESPACE. [...] Plus tard encore, la bienveillance dont m’honora M. Ballanche me permit de me rencontrer avec vous chez lui, et de me faire quelquefois l’humble écho des témoignages d’admiration qui, dans votre bouche, pouvaient le flatter ». Liszt, Franz, *Lettres d’un bachelier ès musiques VII*, in *Revue et Gazette Musicale de Paris*, No. 27, 8 July 1838, p. 280.

existence of a well-ordered state»⁸⁵. It is consequently not surprising that both the poet and the musician tried to distance themselves from a dying movement, which was furthermore considered a menace to public security. Above all, the accusation of immorality did matter for Liszt, who, in 1833, was on the run from Paris with Marie d'Agoult. The following year Liszt had to defend himself from the accusation of Saint-Simonism, namely to defend himself from the accusation of immoral conduct. He had to distance himself from the movement. In doing so, probably with the help of the countess d'Agoult, he used a strategy which finds its strength in the weakest point of Liszt. It is well known that Liszt felt his education inadequate in comparison with that of the bourgeoisie. And it is exactly for this reason that he advocates for his right to explore all the philosophical schools, and to follow his own intellectual curiosity. As a mere musician, the intellectual *pèlerinage* cannot lead to dangerous consequences.

Vous m'accusez d'avoir un caractère *mal assis*, et pour preuve, vous énumérez nombreuses causes que j'ai, suivant vous, embrassées avec ardeur; [...] Mais, dites? cette accusation, que vois faites peser sur moi tout seul, ne devrait-elle pas, pour être équitable, peser sur notre génération tout entière? Est-ce donc moi seul qui suis *mal assis* dans les temps où nous vivons? ou plutôt, malgré nos beaux fauteuils gothiques et nos coussins à la Voltaire, ne sommes-nous pas tous assez mal assis entre un passé dont nous ne voulons plus, et un avenir que nous ne connaissons pas encore? Vous-mêmes, mon ami, qui paraissez en ce moment prendre si gaiement votre partie des misères du monde, avez-vous toujours été très-bien assis? [...] Vous qui avez une haute mission de penseur et de poète, avez-vous toujours bien discerné les rayons de votre étoile? [...] Oh! mon ami, croyez-moi, point d'accusation de versatilité, point de récrimination: le siècle est malade; nous sommes tous malades avec lui, et, voyez-vous, le pauvre musicien a encore la responsabilité la moins lourde, car celui qui ne tient pas la plume et qui ne porte pas l'épée peut s'abandonner sans trop de remords à ses curiosités intellectuelles, et se tourner de tous les côtés où il croit apercevoir la lumière⁸⁶.

From this quotation, the social and philosophical view of Liszt clearly emerges. On one side, as already seen, to state that *le siècle est malade* means that there is the possibility to recover it, and that men have to act in a precise direction if they aim for the amelioration of their condition. And Liszt clearly stated that

85 Booth, Arthur John, *Saint-Simon and the Saint-Simonism*, p. 162.

86 Liszt, Franz, *Lettre d'un bachelier ès musique VII*, in *Revue et Gazette Musicale de Paris*, No. 27, 5 July 1838, pp. 280–281.

the artists have a prominent role in this process some years later on the pages of the *Gazette*: «Que fera l'art, que feront les artistes en ces jours mauvais? [...] les musiciens donneront des concerts au bénéfice des pauvres. Sans doute ils feront bien d'agir ainsi, ne fût-ce que pour témoigner d'un vouloir toujours présent de servir la cause de prolétaire. [...] l'heure est venue pur eux de relever le courage du faible et de calmer les souffrances de l'opprimé. Il faut que l'art rappelle au peuple les beaux dévouements, les héroïques résolutions, la fortitude, l'humanité de ses pareils; [...]»⁸⁷. Saint-Simon insists in almost all of his writings on the fact that the world is sick. In his last work, *Nouveau Christianisme*, this idea is still alive, and it is reinforced by the conviction that progress means *moral* advancement⁸⁸. These ideas come from Kant, but if the German philosopher believed that humanity is (slowly) progressing, the French thinker believes that science is always progressing, but that « [...] la morale a suivi une marche absolument opposée à celle des sciences physiques et mathématiques », statement that confirms that Rousseau's idea of the decay of the human morality was still alive in the middle of the century of progress. But if Rousseau sees the decay as an intrinsic property of humanity, Saint-Simon thought that the moral was declining in the modern world, because priests and religion were already corrupted, and that is the reason why «their prerogatives have passed to the scientists»⁸⁹. The obvious result of this reasoning is a theory whose aim is to found a new religion, to form new priests, who can finally regain their role as spiritual guides.

Behind the sick-world metaphor lies the idea of men's perfectibility⁹⁰. Liszt surely supported this idea, and he underlines several times that the world is sick, but, on the other side, he stated that there is no medicine capable of curing it, because the moral is corrupt, and only a priest can show the way to salvation. The theme is then Liszt's favourite one, namely the role of artists in society. But again, Liszt felt if it was his responsibility to speak the truth. For this reason, he creates two categories of artists: on one side those who have the power, and,

⁸⁷ Liszt, Franz, *Lettre d'un bachelier ès musiques III*, in *Revue et Gazette Musicale de Paris*, No. 6, 11 February 1838, p. 61.

⁸⁸ Saint-Simon, *Nouveau Christianisme*, p. 99 : « [...] il est une science bien plus importante pour la société que les connaissances physiques et mathématiques; c'est la science qui constitue la société, c'est celle qui lui sert de base; c'est la morale».

⁸⁹ Murphy, Ella M., *Carlyle and the Saint-Simonians*, p. 97.

⁹⁰ It is to note that Saint-Simon believed in the scientific progress, but he was sceptical about the moral advancement of humanity. Then, Liszt's faith in future and in the possibility of amelioration comes from his Christian spirit, and from the words of Lamennais «La terre est triste et desséchée, mais elle reverdira». Lamennais, Félicité Robert de, *Paroles d'un Croyant*, p. 29.

on the other side, those who are powerless. Of course, he didn't mean political power, but the capacity to influence the masses. Consequently, the writers and poets are to be found in the first category, because they can use their *plume* to influence the people. In the second category are the musicians. In this social analysis Liszt has to note – of course with a touch of sadness –, that they are still the less influential kind of artists, and therefore they have less impact on what happens in society. The theme of the role of the musician constitutes the backbone of his literary work or, at least, the first relevant topic on which he expressed himself in a literary form. But, even if those ideas came from the mind of a young man, and even if they were probably modified by the intervention of Marie d'Agoult, they still represent Liszt's true beliefs, and this creed was so strong that it entered Liszt's own music. And this is exactly what makes his compositions so interesting, and at the same time so difficult to analyse. Liszt's music is supposed to possess thaumaturgical powers.

The influences on Liszt of the theories of the *Comte de Saint-Simon*, are clearly visible in almost all the writings of the 1830s, such as the *De la situation des artistes et de leur condition dans la société* of 1835. Furthermore, Locke points out, «in his later years Liszt felt freer to admit again, at least privately, how significant the ideas of the Saint-Simonians had been and still were for him»⁹¹. Liszt came in contact with the ideas of Saint-Simon through the Saint-Simonians in Paris. According to Lina Ramann, he was introduced to the circle by Emile Barrault⁹², soon after the July Revolution. Many musicologists, among them Alan Walker, deny any serious involvement of Liszt with the movement. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that the thought of Saint-Simon deeply affected the musician. More generally, it is undeniable that, even if this socialist movement did not last long, its influence on the intellectual France was very relevant, as Iggers points out:

It would be difficult to write the intellectual or social history of nineteenth-century France without an evaluation of the impact of Saint-Simonian ideas and personalities. As a movement Saint-Simonianism was short lived, but considerable bits of its attitudes were to be reflected in widely varying patterns of social, literary, and artistic thought. Not only socialists but also the founders of modern French capitalism drew inspiration from the faith in order and planning. Almost

91 Locke, Ralph, *Liszt's Saint-Simonian Adventure*, p. 211.

92 It is not surprisingly that Liszt was fascinated by the figure of Emile Barrault, who was, according to Walker the «leading aesthetician and finest public orator», which «placed art at the centre of life and elevated the artist to a new priesthood». See Walker, Alan, *Franz Liszt: The Virtuoso Years, 1811–1847*, p. 154.

all of the non-Marxist French socialist leaders of the last century as well as Marx himself had been influenced to a greater or lesser extent by the Saint-Simonian doctrine. The religious socialists, Buchez and Pierre Leroux, and Jules Chevalier among the later Fourierists had been associated with the movement at one point or other; [...] From Auguste Comte, the student and secretary of Saint-Simon, to Emile Durkheim, French sociology was to be colored by the conception of society as an organic, developing unit subject to strict lawfulness. Augustin Thierry, Saint-Simon's "adopted son", was to write the history of the masses, while Carlyle's antiliberalism and his philosophy of history were markedly influenced by the reading of the *Doctrine de Saint-Simon*. The writers who marked the transition from romanticism to social realism in literature, George Sand, Sainte-Beuve, Balzac, Heinrich Heine, and the Young Germans closely and sympathetically watched the movement. The terrestrial morality and the sanctification of the flesh were to effect the transformation of morals and mores and the rise of feminism⁹³.

In this quotation the strong impact which Saint-Simon had on many intellectuals is summarised. Unsurprisingly, in the list Iggers's provides, we read names who were very close to Liszt, from George Sand, to Heinrich Heine, and even the name of Thomas Carlyle, who influenced Liszt the most. Aside from some internal divisions and some shift of emphasis «the most basic of the movement's beliefs remained constant, for they derived directly from the Saint-Simonian "Old Testament": the writings of Saint-Simon»⁹⁴. The *Comte* wrote above all about economics, and even if Liszt was an omnivorous reader, it is not sure if he actually read these writings too. More probably he came in contact with some of the Saint-Simon's social writings, and for sure he read his last and most influential essay, *Nouveau Christianisme*. Walker reports that Liszt even read «Saint-Simon's *Lettres d'un habitant de Genève*»⁹⁵. These writings are the only ones in which Saint-Simon developed his religious thought. But if in the first one, the idea of a new religion and of its spiritual guide (Newton) seems «une sorte de fantaisie demi-ironique»⁹⁶, in the latter this idea became more concrete, and Christianity, even if reduced to a sole principle, is outlined as the religion of the entire world. The "mystical crisis" of Saint-Simon is at the basis of the Saint-Simonian movement, which arose as a sect: at his summit there is a *Père* (a Father) who has to rule the ceremonies. Anyway, what the Saint-Simonians

93 Iggers, George G., *The Cult of Authority*, pp. 1–2.

94 Locke, Ralph, *Liszt's Saint-Simonian Adventure*, p. 211.

95 Walker, Alan, *Franz Liszt, The Virtuoso Years, 1811–1847*, p. 152.

96 Janet, Paul, *Saint-Simone et le saint-simonisme*, p. 60.

became is probably the most obvious evolution of the thought of Saint-Simon: «The étatisme of his followers, their anti-rationalism, as well as their radical conceptions of property and women, were not found in Saint-Simon's work, even if to an extent they were developments of certain concepts found there»⁹⁷.

Liszt's knowledge of the writings of Saint-Simon is consequently to be reduced to the two essays previously quoted, and it is possible to assume that he did not read any other works of the *Comte* directly from a letter the composer wrote to George Sand in 1835, in which it appears clear that he took part in some Saint-Simonians meetings, and that his Saint-Simonian ideas derived from the disciples assemblies, among which only the famous *Nouveau Christianisme* were well known⁹⁸:

En arrivant ici, je me suis mis à relire plusieurs ouvrages St Simoniens – et j'avoue à ma honte que j'en ai été encore plus frappé, plus profondément ému que par le passé. Incontestablement, le père Enfantin est un grand homme, nonobstant toutes les plaisanteries et quolibets de bonne et mauvaise compagnie. Vous le dirai-je?... Ce qui m'a surtout étonné c'est la réserve si digne, si sage qu'il a gardé dans la fameuse question de la femme. [...] J'ai sous les yeux la Brochure "Réunion de la famille", suivie d'une note su le mariage et le divorce, [...]. Un ancien article de la revue encyclopédique sur les mystères chrétiens m'a aussi très vivement intéressé⁹⁹.

From this excerpt it clearly emerges that Liszt came in contact first with the thought of the Saint-Simonians, and not directly with that of Saint-Simon, who, as stated by Iggers, «did not produce a systematic philosophy. Nor is there a clear unity in his thought, which was formulated in pamphlets and journal articles, often in response to immediate political problems. His work underwent constant development»¹⁰⁰. It is impossible not to read this description of the figure of Saint-Simon without thinking of Liszt himself. And the two even

97 Iggers, George G., *The Cult of Authority*, p. 7.

98 The writings of Saint-Simon remained quite unknown till the end of the 19th Century, because his writings «[...] très nombreux, mal disséminés à tous les vents, publiés au jour le jour, commencés souvent sans être finis, [...] étaient devenus presque introuvables. Le seul recueil connu et à la portée de tous [...] était le choix d'écrits publiés en 1832, par Olinde Rodrigues, choix qui contient bien [...] l'essentiel des idées de notre prophète, ma ne nous apprend nullement le détail de ces idées, [...]». Janet, Paul, *Saint-Simone et le saint-simonisme*, pp. 3–4. From this quotation emerges the reason why at the beginning of the 19th century the only guardian of the rite was Father Enfantin.

99 Liszt, Franz, *Letter to George Sang*, quoted in Marix-Spore, Thérèse, *Les Romantiques et la musique*, p. 466.

100 Iggers, George G., *The Cult of Authority*, p. 7.

share the same problems concerning the analysis of their production. Since their production underwent a constant development it is difficult for scholars to find a *fil rouge* in it, and it consequently appears as a multitude of unrelated works. For the same reason their production can easily be used to sustain the most different interpretations, and this is the perfect source of mystifications. Aside from their similar personality, it is sure that Liszt was deeply affected by the social theories of the Paris group. But that is not enough, and a distinction is necessary at this point, because, if on one side Liszt was certainly affected by the social theories concerning the role of the artists in society, on the other side he did not support the theories about the general organisation of it. The ideas in the early works of Saint-Simon¹⁰¹ and those of the Saint-Simonians were a mix between the request of order originated during the enlightenment, and the request for a more equal society in socialism. This leads to the conception of an extremely organised and hierarchical society, in which the most capable must govern the others, but in which there is no place for democracy: « [...] La théorie des droits de l'homme, qui a été la base de tous leurs travaux en politique générale, n'est autre chose qu'une application de la haute métaphysique à la haute jurisprudence. [...] »¹⁰². These words were written by Saint-Simon in 1821, and they are clearly opposed to Liszt's position, who, in 1830 and soon after the July Revolution had already composed a *Symphonie révolutionnaire* dedicated to La Fayette, which contains a clear reference to the *Marseillaise* and then to the democratic values, and to the right of men to pretend the same rights for everyone.

The Saint-Simonian influences are expressed by Liszt in his series of articles appearing in the *Revue et Gazette musicale de Paris* in 1835 and titled *De la situation des artistes, et de leur condition dans la société*. If the writing appears sometimes naïve, and lacks a solid theoretical background, it is worthwhile remembering that Liszt wrote it when he was twenty-four. Since the beginning, Liszt made his intentions clear, and his declaration of intent alone contained all the key words of the Saint-Simonian thought:

Déterminer aujourd'hui avec largeur et précision quelle est la situation des artistes dans notre ordre social; – définir leurs rapports individuels, politiques et religieux; [...]

101 The ideas of his late works are more socialist than the previous ones. During the last years of his life Saint-Simon rediscovered the role of religion in society, and he stressed the miserable life condition of the poor masses.

102 Saint-Simon, *Du système industriel*, in *Oeuvres de Saint-Simon et d'Enfantin*, E. Dentu Éditeur, Paris, 1869, Vol. XXI, pp. 83.

ce que sont ces hommes d'élite qui semblent choisis par Dieu même pour rendre témoignage aux plus grands sentiments de l'humanité et en rester les noble dépositaires... Ces hommes prédestinés, foudroyés et enchaînés qui ont ravi au ciel la flamme sacrée, [...] ces hommes initiateurs, ces apôtres, ces prêtres d'une religion ineffable, mystérieuse, éternelle, qui germe et grandit incessamment dans tous les coeurs¹⁰³.

The first Saint-Simonian reference occurs at the very beginning of the article, where the words “*ordre social*” appear. According to the doctrine of the Saint-Simonians, society has to be organised in a very precise and strict way. When Saint-Simon first spoke about the theory of society around 1797, he was living close to the *École polytechnique*, and he was therefore surrounded by physicists and mathematicians. It is in this environment that he conceived his social theory, based on the beliefs that «the problem of society were soluble by scientific study and social engineering, planned action based on scientific knowledge»¹⁰⁴. Under the light of his scientific studies, he conceived a hierarchical society with a fixed structure. There were three main groups in this construction: 1) the intellectual (scientists, artists); 2) the owners and the workers; 3) the rest of the population. Of course, the first group had to guide the nation, because they possessed the knowledge, since they received the correct education in order to do that. The society conceived by Saint-Simon is a place where the aristocracy of birth does not exist anymore, replaced by the aristocracy of talent, in which «democracy and autocracy were finally merged in the person of the “great man” or “father”, who, while not chosen by ballots, was to be the concrete representation and expression of the people’s will, spontaneously recognized by them»¹⁰⁵. Liszt could surely not have supported this reactionary idea of society. He was nevertheless fascinated by the relevance which the artists assumed in this new social conception, a role which would lead them to a better condition, a dream in comparison with the actual situation in which musicians were living – described by Liszt as miserable, exhausting, and disappointing. Finally, a political and social role were allocated to artists, and a quite prominent one. It is now necessary to briefly focus on the matter of society and the role of the artists in it both from the Saint-Simonians’ and from Liszt’s perspective. The term “society” recurs several times in the writing *De la situation*, but Liszt does not provide any precise definition of it. What clearly emerges is that the artists

103 Liszt, Franz, *De la situation des artistes*, in *Revue et Gazette Musicale de Paris*, No. 18, 3 May 1835, p. 155.

104 Iggers, George G., *The Cult of Authority*, p. 10.

105 Iggers, George G., *The Cult of Authority*, p. 3.

and, among them, the musicians, have the right to claim a leading position in society. Nowadays, says Liszt, the musicians live in a condition of poverty and subalternity, even if philosophers, intellectuals, and politicians are elaborating even newer social theories in which the role of the arts is even more relevant. The reality, the facts as Liszt writes¹⁰⁶, are under everyone's eyes, and the numerous charity events for the needy musicians are a proof of it – and Liszt gave countless concerts in favour of this social category. Liszt's words on the topic even assume the tones of propaganda, when he claims that the artists will lead more than a revolution:

Cette homme pourra faire aussi une question, non plus à la classe moyenne, mais aux deux classes qui ont mission et puissance de réconcilier toutes les classes, de les vivifier et de les diriger dans un commun amour vers le but assigné à l'humanité, les PRÊTRES et les ARTISTES; il leur demander, comme Sieyes aux membres du tiers, CE QU'ILS SONT et CE QU'ILS DOIVENT ÊTRE, et leur réponse sera plus qu'une révolution¹⁰⁷.

The call for action contained in this quotation is worthy of note. As already seen, the metaphor of the sick world involves the possibility of a cure, and the cure consists of the action of men – in a desirable direction. But not everyone can, or is able to take action, because, in Liszt's view – who in this case follows the idea of the Saint-Simonians –, the masses need to be guided. The most suitable figures for this role are the priests and the artists, because both of them have both a social and a religious power. From this point of view, Liszt's thought is perfectly Saint-Simonist. The individual, as a single unit, disappears, because a single human being is defenceless. The individual can exist as a group, and this group, namely the masses, needs to be guided by the great men, namely the artists, the only relevant individuality. It is the birth of the cult of personality – even if it is to be said that, in Liszt's view, the prophet assumes a relevant role only through the masses. Hence, even if Liszt distanced himself from the Saint-Simonians – not only through the previously quoted letter to Heine, but

106 Liszt, Franz, *De la situation des artistes*, in *Revue et Gazette Musicale de Paris*, No. 30, 26 July 1835, p. 247: «Non, cent fois non! Je n'exagère ni ne déclame. Mes paroles sont la traduction d'un FAIT, et vous savez que rien n'est entêté comme un *fait*. Au surplus, il est visible, palpable, vérifiable pour quiconque veut s'en donner la peine». Liszt used these words to answer to those people who claimed that his description of the social condition of the musicians was an exaggeration.

107 Liszt, Franz, *De la situation des artistes*, in *Revue et Gazette Musicale de Paris*, No. 30, 26 July 1835, p. 249.

writing, even if ironically, that «la trinité nouvelle de la science, de l'industrie et de l'art», namely the Saint-Simonian trinity who has to rule the world, is a «idée étrange, inouïe» carried on by «des nouveaux apôtres qui prétendaient réaliser gouvernementalement des fiction, [...]»¹⁰⁸ – nevertheless he never criticised their idea of an extremely organised society, in which the individual is absorbed by the collective, and there he lose his personality. If Liszt quite often uses words such “equality” it is not to be intended in a “socialist” way; there are men who deserve to lead, and others who have to follow the leaders. And Liszt would like to see the artists «à la tête du gouvernement», because they are «PRÊTRES de L'ARTE, chargés d'une mission et d'un enseignement sublime»¹⁰⁹. The brotherhood of men is not a mere aggregation of human beings, but it is an organised and hierarchical society guided by enlightened leaders, who know perfectly what is better for the masses.

A threefold hierarchy was to rule all human activities. A “general” or “social” priest was to head a religious hierarchy consisting of governors, educators, and artists. The function of the artists was to popularize the basic social doctrine for the public¹¹⁰.

However, if Liszt could support the idea of a hierarchical society, he could not agree with the role Saint-Simon assigned to the art. According to the view of the Comte, art is just a means of expression of religion and politics, and it serves then to guide and to control the masses. In this view, in which «the artist. was merely a functionary of the hierarchy», the socialism of Saint-Simon «reminds» more «of the Soviet “new socialist realism”»¹¹¹, than that of a liberal and progressive society. The collective body, the united individuals, is then seen as a threat to power, for that intellectual bourgeoisie who claimed to have the right to govern the uncultivated people: «The great power is the power of intellect. The learned classes and artists possess this power in an eminent degree; they should therefore become part of the governing body, for the object of government is to keep the ignorant in dependence upon the higher classes»¹¹². But Liszt, as a musician, could not accept that the role of art, and of the artist, is again subjugated to other forces. That is the reason why he promoted the artists to the same

108 Liszt, Franz, *De la situation des artistes*, in *Revue et Gazette Musicale de Paris*, No. 35, 30 August 1835, p. 285.

109 Liszt, Franz, *De la situation des artistes*, in *Revue et Gazette Musicale de Paris*, No. 20, 17 May 1835, p. 166.

110 Iggers, George G., *The Cult of Authority*, p. 32.

111 Iggers, George G., *The Cult of Authority*, p. 61.

112 Booth, Arthur John, *Saint-Simon and the Saint-Simonism*, p. 23.

(hierarchical) level of the priests. Here lies the biggest difference between Liszt and the Saint-Simonians. The latter saw the artistic production as something useful to control the masses, and to address the individual forces towards the collective. On the other side, Liszt sees the artist as a guide of the masses, not to control them, but to guide them towards «le but assigné à l'humanité»¹¹³, because, as Saint-Simon himself ironically wrote, «Jésus [...] avait recommandé en même temps à son église de n'employer que les voies de la douceur, que la persuasion et la démonstration pour atteindre ce grand but»¹¹⁴. Concluding, Liszt's aim was to free the masses in a religious sense, and not to subjugate them to another power, even if enlightened. This deviation from the course of the Saint-Simonian thought could be ascribed to the influence of Lamennais social Catholicism on him. Unsurprisingly, the first meeting of Liszt with the abbé dates back to 1834, namely the year before Liszt's series of articles about the situation of the artists. It is again Lamennais that inspired him with the paragraph *De la musique religieuse*¹¹⁵ and it is therefore undeniable the influence of the abbé's ideas on the musician. Anyway, the articles published during the 1830s are evidence that in Liszt's mind there coexisted the authoritarianism of the Saint-Simonians and the social Catholicism of Lamennais.

The thoughts of Saint-Simon and of Lamennais could appear incompatible, but they share some elements. First of all, it is worth noting that some of the intellectuals who were close to the Saint-Simonian group, were also close to Lamennais, and they wrote both for *Le Globe* or *Le Producteur*, and for *L'avenir*¹¹⁶. Secondly, and more relevant, both schools of thought assign to the artists a leading role in society. As already noted, the Saint-Simonians conceived of the artist as a bureaucrat, just another link in the command chain. Furthermore, Saint-Simon speaks about religion and puts the priest at the top of his organisation. But the priest here has nothing to do with God and spiritual matters, because the only true religion is the State and the good of the collective. It is with his last work, *Nouveau Christianisme*, that Saint-Simon again faced spiritual problems. Actually, his aim is to reduce Christianity to a sole divine principle: «Les hommes doivent se conduire en frères à l'égard les uns des autres»¹¹⁷. This principle leads automatically to a State Religion, because this sole divine

113 See footnote 108.

114 Saint-Simon, *Nouveau Christianisme*, p. 49.

115 It is the last paragraph of the sixth article of *De la situation des artistes*, published in *Revue et gazette musicale*, No. 35, 30 August 1835, p. 291.

116 The first two are Saint-Simonians' journals, the latter is the journal founded by Lamennais.

117 Saint-Simon, *Nouveau Christianisme*, p. 10.

principle asks more for social organisation, than for spiritual precepts. And it is Saint-Simon himself who stated that: «Ainsi le système industriel scientifique n'est autre chose que le christianisme lui-même devenu constitution politique; car la doctrine de la fraternité ne peut pas être établie tant que le pouvoir restera entre les mains des guerriers et des théologiens»¹¹⁸. But the critic of Christianity is the first link between Saint-Simon and Lamennais. The latter came into conflict with the Vatican because of his revolutionary idea, according to which he conceived the separation between the State and the Church. The book *Paroles d'un croyant* is the result of this conflict, and it is the book which even led Liszt to La Chênaie in the summer of 1834. The words here written by Lamennais are the second, and most important, link between the two thinkers. The similarity between the *Paroles d'un croyant* and the *Nouveau Christianisme* is self-evident. In the preface of his writing, Lamennais wrote: «[...] aimez-vous les uns les autres comme le Sauveur de la race humaine vous a aimé jusqu'à la mort»¹¹⁹. This is clearly a reference to the Christian commandments, but Lamennais is undertaking the same operation here that Saint-Simon already had, namely to reduce the Christian Doctrine to a sole and unifying principle, and probably the most "divine" one. Despite many theological quotations, the abbé reiterates this principle for the entire book, which opens, not surprisingly, with the dedication *Au peuple*. People, religion, and art are in fact the three ingredients of the writing of both Saint-Simon and of Lamennais, and the most relevant topic in the mind of the young Liszt, whose dream was to create a more just society. The entire book of the abbé is a call for the unity of the people to fight against everyone who would try to subjugate them. It is undeniable that the thought of the abbé is more revolutionary than that of Saint-Simon. But it is between the call for a revolution of Lamennais and the industrial-hierarchical system of Saint-Simon that Liszt found his path. Starting from the assumption «réformez ce qui a besoin de réforme»¹²⁰, which can be read as a call for action if read through the sick-world metaphor, Liszt found the reform's plan of the Saint-Simonians a good answer to the call of Lamennais. The Saint-Simonians wanted to conquer power peacefully, and did not want to rule over people. Their aim was to convince people to recognise the illuminated minds as superior, and consequently to recognise them as their natural leaders. Liszt's mind merges the Lamennais's idea of a brotherhood of men without any leader, with the Saint-Simonians' idea of a people capable of recognising the great men, who

118 Janet, Paul, *Saint-Simone et le saint-simonisme*, pp. 65–66.

119 Lamennais, Félicité Robert de, *Paroles d'un Croyant*, p. 29.

120 Lamennais, Félicité Robert de, *Paroles d'un Croyant*, p. 29.

have the right to guide them in an organised society, in which the artists have the most prominent (spiritual) role.

The relevance of the individual: Thomas Carlyle

The last figure of Liszt's pantheon which here deserves to be mentioned is Thomas Carlyle. It is of course anachronistic to speak about his *On heroes* in relation to Lisztian writings of the 1830s since the book first appeared in 1841. But Liszt's writings of the 1850s are without doubt in debt to this essay. For this reason, Winkler mentions the Scottish philosopher among the most influential figure of the *Weimar Period* in what he called the *Weimar Mythology*. The pantheon outlined by Winkler in his essay is extremely relevant, but its name could be a source of misunderstandings, because the expression "Weimar Mythology" alludes to a very precise place and time. Consequently, it seems that Lisztian cultural Olympus arose in that place during that time, whereas it has older and wider origins. Therefore, it is conceivable that instead of a *Weimar Mythology* it would be more correct to speak of a *Paris Mythology*, since it is during the French years that Liszt created his pantheon which would last till the end of his life – Paris is of course just the birthplace of this mythology, which included thinkers from all over Europe. Aside from this brief but necessary clarification, the link between the 1830s and the relevance of Carlyle's book is that, as already said, the Scottish philosopher came in contact with the Saint-Simonian too, even if, as reported by Murphy¹²¹, his interest was limited to their ideas, and to their organisation, and not to their thoughts, which he labelled as "nothing new". Furthermore, Carlyle translated into English the Saint-Simon's *Nouveau Christianisme*, which he found an interesting lecture containing «several strange ideas, not without a large spice of truth» even if it «is ill-written»¹²². Aside from the relationship between Carlyle and the Saint-Simon's thought, what should be underlined here is the prominent role of great men in the two theories. Carlyle read some of the Saint-Simon's and Saint-Simonians' writings at the beginning of the 1830s, and, even if he found some good ideas there, he could not agree with the role they assigned to the individual. In their view, as already noted above, the individual disappears because he is absorbed by the collective (the state). Even the great men – the learned men, the artists, the musicians –, namely those people who have theoretically to lead the masses, are fully absorbed into

121 Murphy, Ella M., *Carlyle and the Saint-Simonians*.

122 Murphy, Ella M., *Carlyle and the Saint-Simonians*, p. 106.

this mechanism, and they do not exist outside this social organisation. That is to say that the collective is the source of their own existence, and vice versa. Carlyle could not agree with this view, because the great men exist even if they live as hermits. His faith in the individual forces acting in, and transforming society found a systematic exposition in his *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and The Heroic in History* published in 1841. Liszt only read the book in 1850¹²³. After this enlightening lecture, he would exploit its content in several articles, but he would never make direct quotations. But before entering an analysis of the extent of Carlyle's influence on Liszt, it is necessary to open a brief parenthesis on the idea of great men, because it is present in Liszt's mind long before 1850. The figure of the hero, of the man who is able to do extraordinary things is of course a very old one. Since the beginning of time, writers and philosophers created myths and tales, whose protagonists were uncommon figures. Just think of Homer and his epic poems: one of the first examples of western written literature is about an extraordinary man, a hero. And it is not by chance that the name of Homer appears several times in Carlyle's book. But if during the ancient times the majority of heroes were invented to be moral examples in order to create models of social virtues for the people, during modern times they became something more complex, giving birth to what can be called a "canon". Carlyle himself, aware or not, through his book created a canon, because, if his aim was to describe the universal history as «the History of the Great Men who have worked here»¹²⁴, the (unforeseen) effect is the birth of a model. According to Carlyle, the great men were «the modellers, patterns, and in a wide sense creators, of whatsoever the general mass of men contrived to do or to attain». Hence, in the exact moment in which the great men became models to follow, there arose a canon (moral, aesthetic, social). The idea of a canon is still very relevant nowadays. The book *The Western Canon*¹²⁵ is the most relevant example of it. In his book the author attempts to «isolate the qualities that made the authors canonical, that is, authoritative in our culture»¹²⁶. If Bloom's aim is to find the aesthetic value in literature, Carlyle's aim was to find the features of the great men throughout history, and a different kind of hero-worship. Liszt, showing an incredible historical awareness, did the same operation in the musical field, becoming in this way one of the founders of

123 Winkler, Gerhard J., *Liszt's "Weimar Mythology"*, p. 68: «A small notice-book of 1850, [...] contains extracts from Carlyle's work in the hand of the Princess Sayn-Wittgenstein».

124 Carlyle, Thomas, *On Heroes*, p. 1.

125 Bloom, Harold, *The Western Canon*.

126 Bloom, Harold, *The Western Canon*, p. 1.

what could possibly be called the modern western musical canon. In 1852, Liszt wrote a famous letter to Wilhelm von Lenz, in which one reads that «pour nous, musiciens, l'œuvre de Beethoven est semblable à la colonne de nuée et de feu qui conduisit les Israélites à travers le désert – colonne de nuée pour nous conduire le jour –, colonne de feu pour nous éclairer la nuit “*afin que nous marchions jour et nuit*”. Son obscurité et sa lumière nous tracent également la voie que nous devons suivre; elles nous sont l'une et l'autre un perpétuel commandement, une infaillible révélation»¹²⁷. These words not only resemble the ones used by Carlyle – when he wrote that «we cannot look [...] upon a great man, without gaining something by him. He is the living light-fountain, which it is good and pleasant to be near. The light which enlightens, which has enlightened the darkness of the world; [...] a natural luminary shining by the gift of Heaven»¹²⁸ –, but they affirm a theoretical principle, namely that Beethoven is a pole star for the musicians; i.e., these words affirm the Lisztian canon. During the 19th century composers began to rediscover the masterpieces of the ancient masters – they started to study them as artworks –, following the fascination for the past raised during the previous centuries, and they found in the musicians of the past models to follow, and upon which it was possible to build new paths, and to find new compositional possibilities. Such a simple operation lies at the basis of our Western Canon. Liszt contributed to its birth, and his concert programmes are the best evidence of this tendency. But his action was not limited to the composers of the past¹²⁹. His consideration for the music of Wagner, Berlioz, Chopin, Schumann, and many others, and his efforts to spread their music throughout Europe is one of the reasons why today we have such a high consideration of these authors. Proof that Liszt was following a plan, and consequently that he intentionally created this canon, is given by

127 Liszt, Franz, *Franz Liszt Briefe, Von Paris bis Rom*, Vol. I, pp. 123–124.

128 Carlyle, Thomas, *On Heroes*, p. 2.

129 Liszt acquaintance with the ancient master is a very old one. Walker reported that his father «had a broad musical background» and he was «familiar with a wide range of repertoire, including much of the keyboard music of Bach, Mozart, Hummel, and early Beethoven. We know that he introduced Liszt to their works, for he was prepared publicly to exhibit his son playing them». Walker, Alan, *Franz Liszt: The Virtuoso Years, 1811–1847*, pp. 59–60. But the relevance of the masters of the past is not just the result of his education, but it is part of a greater plan, that of the musical canon. Under this light the huge number of transcriptions and paraphrases Liszt wrote assumes a new quality. They are not just (above all the early works) virtuoso pieces, but they are a means through which Liszt spread culture. He transcribed and paraphrased masterpieces which deserved to be heard by everybody. The foundation of the canon, or, following the nomenclature used by Winkler, the Lisztian Mythology, had already been born a long time before Weimar.

his 1835 essay *De la situation des artistes* in the paragraph *Du conservatoire*. Giani noted that «Già nel 1835 Franz Liszt, andando in un certo senso contro i suoi stessi interessi di compositore desideroso di veder affermate le proprie creazioni, suggerì una serie di riforme per promuovere la conservazione e la conoscenza capillare del patrimonio musicale del passato recente e più remoto»¹³⁰. Actually, Liszt did not work against himself, because in his idea the composers of the past lived side by side with modern musicians, creating a sort of evolutive line, or a chain, which linked all the men of genius¹³¹:

Des concerts plus fréquent, plus complet, et par cela même plus variés, fondés dans un *double but* de conservation et de progrès, des concerts dont le programme se partagerait entre le chefs-d'œuvre de Weber, Beethoven; – sans oublier comme en le fait que trop, ceux de Mozart, Haydn, Haendel, Bach, et de tous les grands maîtres [...]; et les productions nouvelles ou peu connues des compositeurs et des contemporains: – Cherubini, Spohr, Onslow, sans mettre tout-à-fait de coté les plus jeunes: Mendelssohn, Berlioz, Hiller, etc., etc.¹³².

This quotation alone is enough to show what the idea of canon was for Liszt. The idea of canon is itself based on the idea of great men. The artistic production of these men deserves to be preserved, but, at the same, the work of the contemporary composers has to be spread, because they will be the ancient masters for future generations. The essay of 1835 was entirely based on Liszt's own ideas (even if it was probably written with the help of Marie d'Agoult), and it already contained some of the ideas that Liszt would find some years later in the great men theory of Carlyle. The first paragraphs of his 1851 essay *Lohengrin* are an ode to the great men, without doubts inspired by Carlyle's

130 Giani, Maurizio, *Canone retrogrado*, p. 201. «Already in 1835 Franz Liszt suggested, somehow going against his own interest of composers who claims for the success of his own creation, a series of reforms, whose aim was to promote the preservation and the knowledge of the musical heritage of the past.»

131 The idea of a chain – that is anyway related to a specific idea of progress that sees knowledge as a cumulative process – is expressed by Liszt in his Mozart essay: «Kann seine Virtuosität auch nicht mehr unmittelbar von uns empfunden werden, so besitzt sie dennoch einen Anteil an dem Einfluß, den Mozart auf seine Zeitgenossen, sowie auf seine Nachfolger ausgeübt hat». Liszt, Franz, *Mozart. Bei Gelegenheit seiner hundertjährigen Feier in Wien*, in *Franz Liszt. Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Lina Ramann, p. 153.

132 Liszt, Franz, *De la situation des artistes*, in *Revue et Gazette Musicale de Paris*, No. 35, 30 August 1835, p. 288 (italic is mine).

book¹³³. Winkler complains that «[...] several of these excerpts» – which are in the diary of the princess Sayn-Wittgenstein (see footnote 123) – «were cited by Liszt in *Lohengrin et Tannhäuser*, unfortunately without being identified correctly»¹³⁴. But what is relevant to note in Liszt's essay is not the number of the exact quotations one can identify in it. What is really relevant are the ideas which are there exposed, and which create a direct link with Carlyle who, even if Liszt did not name him directly, clearly represents the theoretical background of the writing:

Les hommes qui se sont élevés au-dessus de leurs semblables par l'éclat de leur génie ou l'empire de leurs talents, et si bien appelés *les grands hommes*, ont de tout temps été l'objet d'un culte qui a pris des formes diverses selon le degré de civilisation des époques où ils ont vécu¹³⁵.

Carlyle surely represents one of the most fruitful sources for Liszt of the 1850s, but, even if his theories deeply influenced the Hungarian composer, their reasoning path diverges at a simple, but fundamental point. The philosopher aimed to analyse the qualities of the great men during the different phases of the human evolution; namely he wanted, as philosopher, to identify the perse features of the great men. On the contrary, Liszt aimed to glorify the past (Mozart, Beethoven, Herder, Goethe, etc.), and to add a link to this chain of great men: Wagner and, consequently, himself. To give to this idea a theoretical foundation, Liszt exploited Carlyle's construction to build his own tripartition of the human epochs. At the beginning, during the childhood of men «le culte porta naturellement le caractère d'une religieuse adoration»¹³⁶. These great men, Liszt says, walked among normal people, and they were called *demigods*. But this

133 Liszt's essays of the 1850s are all quite an ode to the great men. «Welcher Musiker stimmt nicht mit ganzer Seele ein bei dem Triumph dieses Genies, dem wir den größten Theil dessen, was wir als Musiker sind, zu verdanken haben». Liszt, Franz, *Mozart. Bei Gelegenheit seiner hundertjährigen Feier in Wien*, in *Franz Liszt. Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Lina Ramann, p. 153. This kind of enthusiasm in describing the work of Mozart could be seen in almost all Liszt's writings, on Schumann, on Berlioz, on Wagner. It is further evidence of the Lisztian canon, and a further warning to those people who pretend to limit the circle of Lisztian influences to few composers. «Liszt owed the greater part of what he was as a musician to the Viennese master». Wright, William, *Liszt and the Mozart Connection*, p. 300. What Wright says is right, if one repeats the sentence several times, every time replacing the complement with the name of a different composer.

134 Winkler, Gerhard J., *Liszt's "Weimar Mythology"*, p. 68.

135 Liszt, Franz, *Lohengrin. Grand opéra romantique de R. Wagner*, p. 11.

136 Liszt, Franz, *Lohengrin. Grand opéra romantique de R. Wagner*, p. 11.

old age is behind us and «in the history of the world there will not again be any man, never so great, whom his fellowmen will take for a god»¹³⁷. Thereafter, as human knowledge increased, and with the birth of institutions, men ceased to believe in miracles, and they started to glorify more human heroes. During the boyhood of humanity a new wind blew across the earth, and it brought secular and spiritual divisions. Nevertheless, the division between great men and deity was not completely affirmed. It was the Middle ages, about which Liszt devoted some attention, which changed this tendency. Liszt's view on the Middle Ages is able to clarify his view of history, and his idea of progress:

Ce malheur, qui était cependant un progrès, car Il donnait au sentiment une supériorité sur l'intérêt matériel, devait nécessairement diminuer le prestige du génie et du talent, et l'on continua à profiter de leur dons, mais en négligeant de leur en rendre grâces. En proie aux horreurs d'une confusion, que rendaient également épouvantable les brutalités de la barbarie nouvelle et les raffinements de la dépravation antique, le moyen âge ne put voir la grandeur que dans la piété, ne voulut adorer que la sainteté, n'admira que la pureté. [...] L'excès de la douleur rend insensible à tout ce qui ne lui apporte pas un soulagement immédiat, et lorsque les vicissitudes du sort sont fréquentes, ni le génie, ni le talent n'ont à donner de soulagement aussi efficace que celui d'une espérance transmondaine. En outre, dans cette mêlée de tant d'éléments contraires, qui devaient par leur fermentation et leurs bouillonnements faire surgir du fond de ce chaos une civilisation plus belle, la puissance individuelle dans les souverains eux-mêmes, était singulièrement resserrée par la puissance des choses. Le génie n'avait que peu à accomplir. Il ne pouvait que luire. Mais l'immortel rayonnement de son flambeau, ne devait être reconnu que longtemps après. Ce n'est que dans les calmes contemplations d'une existence paisible, qu'il fut possible de lui reporter l'hommage dû aux bienfaits des lueurs qu'il avait répandues sur les ténèbres de tant de luttes sanglantes. Quand des trêves suivirent enfin ces luttes, alors il appartint aux hommes éclairés qui considéraient le Passé pour y démêler la genèse des troubles et des infortunes au milieu desquels les idées et les problèmes s'étaient si longtemps aheurtés comme des astres errants, lumineux ou éteints, de rappeler ce culte primitif des grands hommes, non plus dans sa *mythologie* grandiose et poétique, mais dans la juste reconnaissance qui revient à ces élus, porteurs des dons et des bienfaits que la Providence répand sur l'humanité par leur entremise, alors même qu'ils ignorent le sens de leurs mystérieuses missions, et la qualité des fruits que doivent porter les branches nouvelles, qu'ils greffent sur le vieil arbre

137 Carlyle, Thomas, *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and The Heroic in History*, p. 51.

de la Science du Bien et du Mal, lequel après nous avoir tant appris, nous laisse encore tant ignorer¹³⁸.

The Middle Ages is seen as the era of the selfishness and of the brutality of men, in which the individuals, too focused on their own affairs, forget the existence of the genius. As already seen, it was a common idea to identify the Middle Ages as a dark period in which reason left the earth, replaced by pure inhumanity. But it was even a common idea to state that the forces of progress were still working in obscurity. Liszt was a supporter of this last idea, and he affirmed that during this bloody era the intellectuals could just see the «grandeur [...] dans la piété» and the great men could just admire «la sainteté, [...] la pureté». But the achievements of this dark era would only be recognised long after its end, as Liszt already noted. These are the modern times, and, even if Liszt does not use this expression, it appears clear that he is referring to his present times, and that he is using the metaphor of the three ages of men (childhood, boyhood, maturity¹³⁹) to reach his objective. Luckily, writes Liszt, we are living in a time in which admiration and enthusiasm is devoted to those men «dont la vocation était d'agrandir le cercle des idées, de réveiller les beaux sentiments, de révéler de grandes aspiration, de provoquer d'heureuses améliorations, d'inciter aux nobles désirs, [...]»¹⁴⁰. This speech serves Liszt to glorify Weimar – which were the New Athens and the city of Goethe, Schiller, Herder, Hummel –, and then to promote his project of a New Weimar¹⁴¹ – in this project the city should have been the centre of European culture –, and, again, to promote his personal canon: the great men of the past had to be glorified, but we have to

138 Liszt, Franz, *Lohengrin, Grand opéra romantique de R. Wagner*, p. 15–16.

139 As already seen the last age is the more complicated one. Liszt, who really believed in progress and in its eternal flow, cannot use the expression “old age”. Humanity is, and will always be, in an everlasting maturity. Stating that humanity is in an “old age” is to state either that time is cyclical or that history will come to an end, and both options are inadmissible.

140 Liszt, Franz, *Lohengrin, Grand opéra romantique de R. Wagner*, p. 17.

141 «*Non pas Delenda Carthago, mais Aedificanda Vimaria*. Weymar était sous le grand-duc Charles-Auguste une nouvelle Athènes, songeons aujourd’hui à construire la nouvelle Weymar. Renouons franchement et hautement les traditions de Charles-Auguste. Laissons les talents agir librement dans leur sphère. Colonisons le plus possible et tâchons d’arriver peu à peu à ce triple résultat qui doit être toute la politique, tout le gouvernement, l’Alpha et l’Oméga enfin de tout Weymar : une Cour aussi charmante, aussi brillante, aussi attractive que possible ; un théâtre et une littérature qui ne pourrisse pas dans le combles du grenier et qui ne se noie pas dans les soupentes des caves ; et enfin une Université (Iéna). Cour, Théâtre. Université, voilà la grande trilogie pour un état comme Weymar qui ne saurait tirer d’importance ni de son commerce, ni de son industrie, ni de son armée de terre, ni de son armée de mer, etc., etc...» Liszt, Franz, d’Agoult, Marie, *Correspondance*, Grasset, Paris, 1934, letter dated 23 January 1844.

recognise and then to glorify even the contemporary masters, namely Wagner, whose *Lohengrin* is the perfect tribute to the memory of Goethe, because the German composer «aussi poëte que musicien, a donné au livret de cet opéra tout l'intérêt, toute la perfection littéraire d'une tragédie [...]. Cet opéra [...] méritait certainement de figurer aussi à titre d'une des plus poétiques productions que la muse de l'antique Germanie ait inspiré dans ces derniers temps, à la solennelle célébration d'une fête dont Goethe était l'objet»¹⁴².

Now, the reason why Liszt did not quote Carlyle directly is clear. The Scottish philosopher served him to build the theoretical background, as a reference, as a support for his own ideas. Liszt, even if it is often said the contrary, created here a system, in which music, literature, art, poetry, of the past and of the present, are gathered together, and together they shine thanks to the men of genius. And this is not just a theoretical statement. Liszt, following the suggestion of Féétis, tried to keep together past and present (and future) according to the principle of the unity of multiplicity. From the beginning of the Wagner essay it appears clear that the names of Herder, Goethe, Schaller (the sculptor of Herder's statue), Wagner, Haendel, and indirectly that of Liszt himself, are on the same level – or at least on the same evolutionary line –, because «les grands hommes» bring to light «les dons et les bienfaits que la Providence répand sur l'humanité»¹⁴³. As Carlyle wrote, it is not relevant with which name we call them, because they can be, and somehow, they always will be, all these names at the same time:

Hero, Prophet, Poet, – many different names, in different times and places, do we give to Great men; [...]. I will remark again, however, as a fact not unimportant to be understood, that the different *sphere* constitutes the grand origin of such distinction; that the hero can be Poet, Prophet, King, Priest or what you will, according to the kind of world he finds himself born into. I confess, I have no notion of a truly great man that could not be *all* sorts of men. [...] The Poet who could merely sit on a chair, and compose stanzas, would never make a stanza worth much. He could not sing the Heroic warrior, unless he himself were at least a Heroic warrior too. I fancy there is in him the Politician, the Thinker, Legislator, Philosopher; – in one or the other degree, he could have been, he is all these¹⁴⁴.

142 Liszt, Franz, *Lohengrin, Grand opéra romantique de R. Wagner*, p. 35.

143 Liszt, Franz, *Lohengrin, Grand opéra romantique de R. Wagner*, p. 16.

144 Carlyle, Thomas, *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and The Heroic in History*, pp. 92–93.

There is no privileged means of expression of the genius, and if the glorification of the ancient masters is necessary to remember their teachings, it is to underline that their cults do not have to darken the lights of our own times. Liszt, as Carlyle, understands that the genius is everywhere, but it is something very vulnerable when alone. The men of letters have to search for, and to defend, the genius of every epoch. These guardians of the cultural heritage are to be considered as great men too, because in doing that they become *vates*¹⁴⁵, they are the spiritual guides of humanity. They have the greatest honour and responsibility, because their choices will determine what the future generations will learn from the past. The theoretical construction of Liszt is a warning too: during the Middle Ages humanity risked losing its path, and the creation of a canon – which of course does not have to become a dogma –, which has to be continuously updated, could represent the only salvation of our culture. In more recent times Giani has pointed out the importance of the canon, stating that «Dire [...] che Beethoven si difende da solo, o che non ha bisogno di difendersi, assume in questo contesto un significato preoccupante. Se davvero la grande arte potesse difendersi da sola, Dresda non sarebbe mai stata distrutta. Certo è impossibile nel mondo occidentale bombardare effettivamente Beethoven, [...] ma può essere trascurato, relativizzato, dimidiato, deriso [...], infine dimenticato»¹⁴⁶. The education of the human race, the role of artists in society, and the defence of our heritage, are not just theoretical discourses for Liszt, but they are the ground upon which he built his own aesthetics.

Conclusion

Concluding here it is important to underline, again, that this chapter is not an exhaustive presentation of every single aspect of every theory on progress elaborated during the 19th century, nor is it a complete overview of Liszt's cultural environment. It is a résumé of the main theories which, directly or indirectly, influenced Liszt and which have left an evident trace in his writings. The next chapter focuses on one of these, the Berlioz essay, which represents one of the

145 «In some old languages, again, the titles are synonymous; *Vates* means both Prophet and Poet: [...] they have penetrated both of them into the sacred mystery of the Universe; what Goethe calls “the open secret”. “Which is the great secret?” asks one”. – “The open secret”, – open to all, seen by almost none!». Carlyle, Thomas, *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and The Heroic in History*, pp. 94.

146 Giani, Maurizio, *Canone Retrogrado*, p. 207.

most dense writings of the literary production of the Hungarian composer, and in which all the matters that emerged here are recognisable. It is again vital to underline that the theories presented in this chapter, and which deeply affected Liszt, were not used by him to show the readers his erudition. Liszt went through these ideas, he immersed himself in them, and he elaborated upon them to give form to his own thoughts. The analysis of the idea of progress – the idea according to which the men will never degenerate and that growth is unlimited – during the 19th century creates a lot of trouble, because it is, even with all its opponents and its facets¹⁴⁷, still alive, even if the events of recent history have made the idea of the perfectibility of human beings even more unsustainable, and the idea of progress a mere illusion. It is therefore very hard to separate our perception from the 19th century perception of progress. All the themes exposed in this chapter – the idea of progress, the symbol as a paradigm, etc. – are the theoretical basis upon which Liszt built his own ideas, and they are at the same time the evidence that Liszt possessed a systematic thought, even if it is not systematically expressed – somehow his thought is systematically organised. But this is perfectly coherent with his idea of the role of the musician as a guide. He could not convey his thought in a complex system, otherwise the masses would not be able to understand them. On the other side, the theories outlined in this chapter have one common element: they all contributed to the emergence of an anti-dogmatic thought which involved the idea of multiplicity and of ambiguity, without which Liszt would not have been able to create some of his most intriguing composition.

147 «For every Abbé de Saint-Pierre, every Kant, every Condorcet fascinated by the marks of progress alone, there was a Voltaire to point to the melancholy fact “that in the course of many revolutions, both Europe and Asia, peoples which once were well organized have fallen into a state of near savagery”. See Nisbet, Robert A., *Social Change and History*, p. 128.