The modern understanding of the concepts music, culture, and society already presupposes the historical process of secularization, that is, both objective and subjective secularization. Objective secularization refers on the one hand to the institutional emancipation of economic activity, political power, education, the law, and so on from religious authority, control, and influence; on the other, to ideological and cultural emancipation from religious explanations of the world. The complement to these objective processes is subjective secularization, the ongoing change of mentalities, accompanied by internal and external critiques of religion from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment, which together with the rise of the natural sciences lead to a retreat of the religious worldview, the relativisation of traditional religion and the privatisation of belief. Our three concepts not

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only presuppose secularization, they are correlates: music is an integral part of modern culture just as modern culture corresponds to modern, functionally differentiated society.

Let me approach my musical theme through five versions of the secularization of art, starting with Hegel’s founding account of the secularization of art, leading to Adolf Behne’s essay, “Rebirth of Architecture,” Proust’s essay, “The Death of Cathedrals” and concluding with Wagner’s manifesto for his last music-drama Parsifal, “Religion and Art” and its philosophical continuation in Ernst Bloch’s Spirit of Utopia.

Hegel presents the history of art as a process of spiritualization, in which Absolute Spirit unfolds its historical-logical progression from Greek art and Christian religion to its philosophical comprehension in Hegel’s Idealism, that is, from the sensuous manifestation of the Idea in the classical art of antiquity to its homecoming as philosophical concept, which supersedes the reflective romantic art of Christian Europe, bringing the essential history of art to an end. In becoming autonomous, that is, severed from Absolute Spirit, art reaches its terminus in and as art history. Art in Hegel’s eyes is now a thing of the past. It continues to exist as nothing but art, that is to say, the product of the cultural process of secularization within which art is comprehended as history. Its antithesis is the art-religion of the Greeks. Hegel’s Kunstreligion signifies that art is the religion. Art-religion must be distinguished from the religious art of the Middle Ages (art in the service of the higher, invisible truths of revealed religion) and the modern religion of art (which accords art the highest value). As opposed to ancient and medieval art, autonomous art precludes any essential or necessary relation between art and religion. It signals in this respect a fundamental break with the past: art no longer possesses or needs a legitimizing social function.

In Hegel the process of spiritualization correlates with a progressive devaluation of art’s essential religious purpose. Thus, rather counter-intuitively, secularization and spiritualization go together. As we shall see, Wagner will provide an interesting twist on Hegel’s equation of spiritualization and secularization. I am not sure if this makes Wagner’s theory of music a direct successor to Hegel’s philosophical theory of art or its dialectical rival. But when we turn to Behne, one of the founding members of the Bauhaus, secularization and de-spiritualization correlate. In “Rebirth of Architecture” (1919) he