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PREFACE

My thanks to my adviser, Professor Wolfgang Wittkowiski, for his unstinting assistance and timely advice at every stage of my work, to my readers, Professor Seidlin and Professor Bekker, for their thoughtful and welcome suggestions regarding "matter and form," and to the members of the German Department, who were a constant source of help and encouragement.
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Studies in Language and Philology.  Professors Wolfgang Fleischhauer and Ulrich Groenke
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INTRODUCTION

Friedrich Hebbel was a man who struggled intensely with the problem of the divine. In a century of dissolution of belief he set himself the task of pursuing the problem of the divine and associated questions to their ultimate solutions. The results of this self-educated man's thinking on these matters are scattered throughout his work, for it was a complex of problems central to him his life long. The object of the present study is Hebbel's relationship as a person and as a poet to the divine, for an understanding of Hebbel in this crucial area is the key to a deeper grasp of the man and his work, which deals unremittingly with this theme.

As this study was in first draft, the article Friedrich Hebbel's Conception of God by Günter Salter was published in the Hebbel-Jahrbuch 1969. Salter's interesting article was welcome for several reasons. For one, it underscored the currency, relevancy and central importance of an understanding of Hebbel's attitude toward religion and God. Further, it called attention to one of the key problems in Hebbel research: the nature of Hebbel's diaries and letters and their validity in assessing Hebbel's thought. Salter's article performs this task by correctly
paying heed to the most recent attack upon the credibility of the diaries\textsuperscript{1} and by agreeing with insights furnished by

\textsuperscript{1}Peter Michelsen, "Das Paradoxe als Grundstruktur Hebbelschen Denkens," in Hebbel in neuer Sicht, ed. by Helmut Kreuzer (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1963), pp. 80ff. Hereafter Hebbel in neuer Sicht will be given as HinS.

Müller\textsuperscript{2} to counter Michelsen's objections.

\textsuperscript{2}Joachim Müller, "Zu Struktur und Funktion von Hebbels Tagebüchern," in HinS, pp. 109ff.

The present study, while agreeing with several basic contentions of Salter, does not concur that either the question of the trustworthiness of Hebbel's diaries and letters has been sufficiently established or that Hebbel's concept of God has received its proper description on the basis of the diaries and letters alone. In addition, severe attacks by Ziegler and von Wiese upon the credibility of Hebbel's concept of the divine have not been met. These objections are all the more telling when one realizes that Hebbel's notion of God is for these two interpreters the peg upon which everything hangs. If any serious commitment on Hebbel's part to a God can be discredited, then an entire structure of values falls too, leaving Hebbel with only a value-less relativism, subjectivism, existential despair, even nihilism. Thus the present study must address itself not only to Hebbel's theoretical statements in his diaries and letters, but also to his much more crucial statements
made in the dramas, since the battle is being waged on both fronts. In this way a balanced and, it is hoped, a clearer understanding of Hebbel's God can be obtained.

In turning now to a detailed examination of the above-indicated criticism of Hebbel, which tends to see him as a man bereft of all genuine commitment, we find that the sluice gates were thrown wide open with Ziegler's declaration that the theoretical utterances of Hebbel and his dramatic works were incommensurable. A unity had been assumed between

Klaus Ziegler, Menschen und Welt in der Tragödie Friedrich Hebbels (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1966), p. 10. This work was originally published in 1938.

these two aspects of Hebbel's writings, but this correspondence did in fact not exist. In particular, whereas Hebbel often spoke of a God in his theoretical comments on his first drama, Judith, Ziegler saw no God at all in the drama. Rather the drama issued in a complete unmasking of the heroine's divinely-inspired mission with belief in God no more than a psychological delusion, "Ideenologie." For Hebbel the idea of "tragic" becomes synonymous with "nihilistic:"

Wesenhaft geht es im Phänomen des "Tragischen" um die Nichtigkeit alles individuellen Daseins als den tiefsten Kern seiner Existenz.


This radical "Entgotterung" of the world leads necessarily
to a dissolution of all values. All such "Ideologie" is a false and untenable structure of metaphysical-religious beliefs and ethical values which man has erected about himself. Hebbel thus effects

...die Auflösung aller objektiv gültigen Ordnungen durch die sich selber autonom und absolut setzende Subjektivität des menschlichen Bewusstseins—ein Emanzipations- und Destruktionsvorgang, mit dessen Vollzug der Mensch aber unweigerlich einem zutiefst ordnunglosen Chaos zum Opfer. fallen muss. 5


This chaotic situation comes about precisely because the ideal, divine order cannot be realized in real life.

Diese Menschen scheitern nicht im und am Empirischen, sondern sie scheitern am Missverhältnis der Empirie zu dem ihr sich verweigernden Absoluten. 6

6Ibid., p. 21.

"Das Göttliche" however does not disappear but somehow remains to be a comfort and solace to man, yet how this happens is not explained. Hebbel's drama consequently describes man as caught in a no man's land between "Glaubig-keit und Glaubenslosigkeit," unable to exist either in or outside of an ideal value system.

...so steht Hebbel zwischen der ethisch wie metaphysisch noch ganz unerschütterlichen Philosophie- und Vernunftgläubigkeit der deutschen Idealismus... und jenem weitanschaulichen Skepticizismus, Rela-
tivismus oder gar Nihilismus, der das spätere 19. und 20. Jahrhundert dann immer umfassender und machtvoller beherrschte. 7

For Ziegler, Hebbel's loss of belief in an omnipotent, harmonizing God becomes the loss of the keystone of belief in the entire arch of values. This same process of loss is demonstrated by Fricke. If for Schiller the divinity was the most certain fact of human life,

...so gibt es für Hebbel bereits nichts Ungewisses, Zweideutiges, dem Menschen ferneres als Gott. 8

To be sure the religious question, the religious need is still there, but the religious answer, the belief of Schiller has disappeared.

Der Mensch ist mit sich allein und mit der eher- nen Wirklichkeit, die von den ihr innenwohnenden Gesetzen und Notwendigkeiten gelenkt wird. 9

With the disappearance of belief in a transcendental starts the chain-reaction of the loss of values predicated upon any personal, guiding and supporting principle, and man is left under the heel of an impersonal, iron-clad necessity,
Von Wiese also sees Hebbel as rather far along the spectrum of secularization characterizing 19th century German drama, with the loss of a harmonizing God forming the prelude to a stark nihilism. Hebbel's own explanations of his dramas, he feels, have been falsely interpreted in the light of idealistic philosophy, while in reality they exhibit a tragic, mystical character and should be understood in a radically new religious sense.

Sie [Hebbel's statements] sind die Umschreibung eines Glaubensbekennnisses, das mit einem unerhörten Radikalismus das christliche Paradox, dass Gott Mensch geworden ist und für den Menschen starb, um ihn zu erlösen, in das tragische Paradox umkehrt, dass der Mensch für Gott sterben muss, nicht nur um sich, sondern vor allem, um Gott zu erlösen. 10


This insight into Hebbel's thought is derived from a close reading of diary texts and from a study of the dramas. Here the idea of Hebbel's definite belief in God, even if of a paradoxical nature, is given credence. But later, in an analysis of Judith, von Wiese detects a contradiction:

Besteht hier nicht zwischen Hebbels Selbstauslegung und seiner Tragödie ein merkwürdiger Widerspruch? Das Geschehen soll ins Symbolische erhoben werden, so dass am notwendigen, überpersönlichen Gang der Menschheit der Gang Gottes über die Nationen sichtbar werden kann. Aber darf hier überhaupt noch von einer Wirklichkeit Gottes in-
Thus von Wiese, like Ziegler, find a crucial incommensurability between Hebbel's theory and practice, with God being left out of the picture. Investigations of other dramas confirm this fact, for they are either outright examples of tragic nihilism or border on it. This nihilism which Hebbel experiences and casts into his dramas is basically the experience of the falling away of belief in God, corresponding to the general religious experience of his century. God has become so questionable that Hebbel remains

...doch mit der vorausgegangenen Entwicklung verknüpft, die das Problem des Tragischen in der Spannung von Theodizee und Nihilismus erlebte.

This renders all values inconsequential and leaves no room in this life for a genuine reconciliation.

Michelsen, basing his analysis solely upon the diaries and letters, discovers a relativism of values in Hebbel,
deriving from the structure of the poet's thought processes. The poet's mode of thinking adopts no fixed position, abandoning each mental position for its opposite and thus apprehending everything under the aspect of the paradox. This introduces a relativism of thought which admits no commitment to values of any kind.

Against this view of nihilism and total relativism of values Wittkowski, analyzing Hebbel's early works, especially the dramas *Genoveva* and *Judith*, speaks for a

commitment on Hebbel's part to an ethical value system and a non-Christian notion of God, while Müller attempts to

elucidate Hebbel's concept of God by gathering Hebbel's contradictory statements regarding God under the differentiated ideas of God as world-principle and as the divine. Salter, basing his description of Hebbel's concept of God exclusively upon the diaries and letters, arrives at approximately the same position as Müller, finding contradiction
in Hebbel's statement regarding God considered as the world-principle (Gott), but unity when God is taken as the divine (das Göttliche). The divine, as the ultimate objective value of the world, can be apprehended by feeling and intuition.  


Finally Kurt May, who even earlier adopted a critical stance toward the nihilism thesis, does not see nihilism as the youthful Hebbel's final insight. Rather May sees ...

...eine weltanschauliche Tiefenschicht Hebbels... sie [the deep layer] ist eine Glaubensschicht, die bisher für Hebbel am wenigsten gewürdigt worden ist. 18


On the basis of Hebbel's belief in an Old Testament God of rigorous justice May then suggests the worthwhileness of a study of this phenomenon of belief in Hebbel's dramas up to the figure of Mariamne in Herodes und Mariamne. 19

19Ibid., p. 364.

Thus several basic problems emerge. The conclusiveness of the diaries and letters has been thrown open to question, the lack of correspondence between theoretical commentaries
contained in the diaries and letters and Hebbel's dramas, and above all the pivotal position of God in Hebbel's thought has been brought to the fore. With his position regarding God stands or falls all else in Hebbel's value system. Critics have seen this clearly and have freely used either the character of the diaries or the lack of commensurability between diaries and dramas to attack and demolish Hebbel's God and thus to plunge Hebbel into relativism, nihilism and a lack of commitment to any values. Such a condition necessarily bars Hebbel from any reconciliation with the harsh determinism of a world forsaken by any harmonizing God. With God the key to so much, as clear an understanding as possible of Hebbel's position regarding the problem of the divine is mandatory. With a view toward speaking to this question the present study will pursue Hebbel's thought on religion, ethics, God and associated themes. Since it is from the diaries and letters that so much of the key supporting material in the present controversy is taken, the first three chapters will develop the evidence of these writings. The dramas will be consulted. Judith and Genoveva, where God actually takes part in the play and is himself the central question debated, will be investigated closely, and five succeeding major dramas will also be examined for the additional light which they cast upon Hebbel's concept of God and the divine. Finally, issue will be taken with the two above-described salient lines of negative
criticism, namely, disappearance or relativism of beliefs and values rooted in either nihilism or the paradox.
CHAPTER I.

RELIGION - PRO AND CONTRA

Only when one surveys all of Hebbel's diary and letter references to religion do the true proportions of this field in his thinking come into perspective. The references first of all indicate the extent, intensity and persistence of Hebbel's preoccupation with religion and ideas ancillary to or associated with it. The number of diary entries directly related to religion total at least fifty, with over twenty allusions in the letters, while associated topics (death, immortality, sin, good and evil, highest good, God, etc.) push the figure into the high hundreds. Hebbel's diary entries exhibit religious concern from beginning to end, with some notations reaching back beyond the inception of the diary to earlier childhood notions and experiences. The same is true for the letters, which at times furnish us with entire correspondences devoted exclusively to the subject of religion. Hebbel argued these religious ideas not only within himself but with those about him. Hardly a year passes without concern regarding the problem. Very few other themes are taken up with such regularity and tenacity.

Hebbel was given a strong religious upbringing from his earliest childhood. In a diary entry in Feb. 1838,
he recalled his early experiences as a choir-boy—the only one singing on an empty stomach (D 983). He continues

his musing, reflecting on an early attempt to immerse himself at the age of ten repeatedly in the reading of Christ's Passion to the point of shedding tears. When eventually the tears no longer could be brought forth, he sensed unconsciously the hollowness of this emotionalism and withdrew from it, although not without the greatest feelings of guilt. These abortive religious experiences during his childhood did not dry up the springs of religious feeling, but led to further, intellectual grappling with the problem of God. His knowledge of the Bible was thorough and intimate, as we learn from his second letter to Pfarrer Luck:

...ich weiss die Bibel, zu deren Lesung Sie mich ermahnen, von Jugend auf halb auswendig und mir ist auch schwerlich irgend eine der bedeutenderen protestantischen oder katholischen Kirchengeschichten entgangen,...

(L 702)

Hebbel was thus not only well-acquainted with the bible and church histories, but he also delved into studies of various church dogmas (D 319, 320, 321, etc.), and wherever possible he did not rely upon hearsay or report, but obtained authentic religious documents. In Sept. 1836, while in Heidelberg, he painstakingly entered into his
Such meticulous documentation, the obvious desire for official, not-easily-obtainable documents, the patience in copying out such a paper, all bear witness to an uncommon and intense desire to understand in minute detail, free from legend or prejudice, the essential tenets of a religion, here the Catholic faith. Hebbel pursued all avenues of information, including travelers' reports and even newspaper articles, such as the one in Munich regarding Mary, the Immaculate Conception, medals, scapulars, etc. (D 543).

In addition to studying particular religions from the written page, Hebbel visited and observed religious ceremonies wherever he was, not just out of curiosity, but as one earnestly seeking truth and genuine understanding. Thus he notes on June 2, 1836, in Heidelberg:

Heute, Fronleichnamsfest, Prozession in der Jesuitenkirche. Die Kirche rings mit Laub und Blumen geschmückt, der Hauptaltar mit tausend Lichtern... Ergreifende Ankündigung der Prozession durch Pauken und Trompeten-Geschmetter...Viel an Jesus gedacht...

(D 155)

For Hebbel it was clearly a passionate period of searching,
not only with his mind but perhaps even more so with his heart, and many other passages testify to his personal involvement with these religious questions, even to the point of wishing to be able to believe (D 228). Hebbel's conscientious and thorough investigation of religion on every level is again demonstrated near the end of his life in a letter to an old friend (and quondam disputant in religious matters), Friedrich Uechtritz:

Ich habe, da ich von meinem Jesus Christus nach Abschluss der Nibelungen lebhaft zu träumen anfange, und die Hoffnung, auch diese längst projektirte Tragödie trotz meiner bald erreichten fünfzig Jahre noch zu bewältigen nicht lasse, meine theologischen Studien recapitulirt, als ob ich noch examiniert werden sollte....

(L 828)

To be sure, these theological studies are directed toward a projected dramatic work. But the central figure of the proposed play is to be none other than the founder of Christianity. This fact is powerful testimony to the degree and depth of Hebbel's abiding concern with the problem of religion, for the poet's deepest and most coherent statement is that made in the drama.

Turning to a consideration of Hebbel's specific views regarding religion in general and positive religion, particularly Protestantism and Catholicism, one can distinguish an early, iconoclastic, negative, unreconciled phase and a later, conciliatory, optimistic phase, which however is not to be equated with any acceptance of revealed religion.
We shall examine the early phase first, bearing in mind that these two attitudes are in a sense present from beginning to end, as two sides of the same coin, with a shift in emphasis occurring as time goes on until the second attitude predominates almost exclusively.

This early, negative phase lasts approximately until Hebbel's marriage with Christine Enghaus and his experience of the 1848 upheavals in Vienna. It should be clear that these as well as other experiences are conditioning influences, bringing about marked moderation as time goes on.

What in particular does Hebbel criticize in religion and positive religion? There is an endless host of letter and diary entries attacking religion, and the intense hostility, bitterness and biting sarcasm in them could easily blur the overall picture. Hardly any aspect of religion escapes his censure.

To begin with, the every-day practice of religion, as Hebbel observes it, is constantly criticized. He is quick to note hypocrisy and call attention to it, such as in the report of the young girls of Mainz:

In Mainz gehen (nach ihm-Evers) die Bürgertöchter Abends mit ihren Gebetbüchern in's Absteigequartier; dann sieht es Morgens aus, als kämen sie aus der Messe.

(D 163)

The disapproval and intolerance evidenced to him by an old woman as he attended a mass is another example of the
narrowness he couldn't stand (D 1168). He often draws attention to the lack of interest of people, indeed their yawning in one instance during religious ceremonies, a mark of the hollowness and sham of so much external religious practice. At another time he notes the crassness and crudity of Christmas musicians, who, while playing carols for money during Christmastide, abuse each other and make advances to a passing girl (D 1840). Often the coldness of those supposedly exercising charity toward each other repels Hebbel, be it that of a priest during a Corpus Christi procession who hides, as Hebbel feels, behind the monstrance like a dog creeping into the niche of a saint's statue, carrying death high, in sharp contrast to the young boys and girls in the procession (D 155), or be it the coldness and total lack of sympathy he sees in the faces of a priest and bystanders at a burial (D 1050). Hebbel finds that the practical effect of Christianity is not to elevate and ennoble human nature, but to dehumanize it:

Das Christentum schlägt den Menschen tot, damit er nicht sündigen kann, wie jener verrückte Bauer sein Pferd, damit es ihm die Saat nicht zertrete.
(D 175)

These negative evaluations of behavior associated with religious practice are accompanied by an equally negative appraisal of religious dogmas. Hebbel sees various religious
beliefs and dogmas as having anything but a divine source. He questions, for example, whether transsubstantiation might not have arisen from a combination of Aristotelian matter and form philosophy, misunderstood biblical texts, duplicity and/or naivété on the part of the clergy, supported by the preponderant influence of the Roman councils (D 139). Purgatory is seen deriving from Platonic philosophy, pilgrims' tales of a fire-spewing volcano and simple superstition (D 320). The general use of indulgences is viewed as an outgrowth of the crusades (D 321). Confession too is based on a human need for demonstrated forgiveness (D 1574). This psychological basis of so much religious belief and practice, indeed of all religion itself, Hebbel finds particularly evident in the concept of original sin:

Der Gedanke der Erbsünde ist der natürlichste, auf den der Mensch verfallen konnte. Wie oft tut der Mensch etwas, was er schon, indem und bevor er es tut, bereut;...Es ist übrigens von der höchsten Wichtigkeit, Alles, was im Lauf der Zeit allgemeiner Glaube, unumstößlich schei-

nende Satzung geworden ist, auf das persönliche, individuelle Bedürfnis zurück zu führen; nur dadurch gelangt man zu einiger Freiheit der Er-
kenntnis. Man macht auf diesem Weg die merk-

würdigsten Entdeckungen, Z.B., dass Gottes Man-
tel aus dem Schlafrock des Menschen und aus dem Gespenster-Anzug seines Gewissens zusammen ge-
stückt ist.

(D 1335)

This psychological origin thus applies not only to individual doctrines and practices, not only to religion it-
self, but ultimately, it would seem, to God, or at least to the concept of God commonly held by religion. But this is a subject for later discussion.

Hence the many sources of dogmas and beliefs resolve themselves into old philosophy, misunderstanding of religious texts, either intentionally or accidentally, outright deception and political chicanery, superstition, but foremost perhaps psychological need issuing from man's own nature. So strong is this human drive that Hebbel can state:

Die Menschheit lässt sich keinen Irrtum nehmen, der ihr nützt. Sie würde an die Unsterblichkeit glauben, und wenn sie das Gegenteil wüste.

(D 1337)

Thus an innate desire to believe and even deceive oneself, as long as one construes it to one's own benefit, gives rise to an incongruous situation, which is most aptly described in Hebbel's quote from the historian, Gibbon:

Die verschiedenen Religions-Dienste, welche in der römischen Welt herrschten, wurden sämtlich vom Volk als gleich wahr, vom Philosophen als gleich falsch, von der Obrigkeit als gleich nützlich betrachtet.

(D 540)

A variation of this thought and its practical application to a more up-to-date religion is illustrated in one of Hebbel's earliest diary entries (July 1, 1835), his first significant one regarding religion, where he strikes his typical note of critical scepticism. After noting that Luther was a "Genius," belonging to the elite, the truly
great historical figures who can never be subservient to their age, Hebbel states that the great reformer set up his dogmas for the ordinary man, who is unable to face ultimate truth. But Luther himself could never venerate those dogmas. Why then had Luther promoted them with such ardor?

Eben, aber, weil er die Notwendigkeit der positiven Religion eingesehen hatte, kämpfte er für willkürliche Dogmen, als ob es für den Himmel selbst gewesen wäre.

(D 36)

Leaving aside for the moment the important element of the "Genius," we see Hebbel making room for positive religion, albeit for the common man only, for reasons of necessity, and this necessity derives from the weakness of ordinary man, his psychological need for deception in the face of the incomprehensibles of life. But these dogmas, these props for the weak, have no validity or claim upon Hebbel or others of any intellectual stature.

Religious practice, religious creed and prescription, religion itself are thus tried by Hebbel and found to be wanting, but he becomes vitriolic when he attacks and damns religion's utterly false view of reality and man, the resulting incalculable cruelty inflicted upon man, and finally religion's stubborn pride in promulgating its totally false set of values and priorities. This theme has already been broached in Hebbel's above-mentioned comment that Christianity destroys a man "...damit er nicht sündigen kann..." (D 175).
Hebbel's increasingly hostile attitude toward Christianity reaches its peak in the statement: "Ich hasse das Christentum und weiss wohl warum..." (L 45). We must turn to a series of earlier, emotion-filled letters to Elise Lensing in order to understand the reasons for this outburst.

In letter number 43, to which Hebbel appropriately prefixed his poem Dythirambus (sic!), a hymn to nature, he early makes the statement:

...und der einzelne Mensch wurzelt nur im Gefühl von der Würde der Menschheit, der Zweckmässigkeit des Lebens, des Reichtums der Welt.

This is a key thought for Hebbel. He next professes a belief in a higher being, the apex of all nature, of the entire universe, which he names God. He continues:

Ich beuge mich jedem Höheren und also gewiss dem Höchsten. Aber nur dadurch, daß ich ihn möglichst zu entbehren suche, kann ich mich in ein würdiges Verhältnis zu ihm setzen. Er will nicht die Krücke des Menschen sein, darum hat er ihm Beine gegeben.

This is a pivotal position in Hebbel's thinking. Man's necessary autonomy establishes his dignity. A fierce independence is the prerequisite of honor in man. Turning then to Christianity, Hebbel continues:

Das Christentum verrückt diesen Grundstein der Menschheit. Es predigt die Sünde, die Demut und die Gnade. Christliche Sünde ist ein Unding, christliche Demut die einzig-mögliche menschliche Sünde, und christliche Gnade wär' eine Sünde Gottes.

Behind these words are ethical considerations which are
paramount for Hebbel, namely man's dignity, freedom to develop himself, express and assert his judgements rather then remain forever in mental, moral and spiritual tutelage. Christianity's values are upside-down, perverse and degrading, both to man and God. Hebbel then asks why greatest and significant men agree with him about Christianity being a curse upon mankind, and says that while these men see the cause of this in the church, that is, the human organization surrounding a particular religion, he sees it in the Christian religion itself:

Das Christentum ist das Blatterngift der Meschheit. Es ist die Wurzel alles Zwiespalts, aller Schlaffheit der letzten Jahrhunderte vorzüglich.

Hebbel cannot emphasize enough his basic belief in man's dignity. In a continuation of the same letter a few days later he draws Elise's attention to his crucial poem, Höchstes Gebot, and paraphrasing from it says:

Überhaupt hab Achtung vor Deinem Selbst, und höchste Achtung; jeglicher Mensch ist ein Spiegelbild der Welt.

This letter outlines the mainspring of Hebbel's view of man and the consequent disservice rendered by the Christian religion. Two months later on March 27, 1837, Hebbel breaks forth with an even more emotional letter to Elise and we see another source of his disenchantment with Christianity. He asks her:

An welcher Todeskrankheit ich und Gravenhorst in
Heidelberg darnieder gelegen wären? Liebes Kind, es gibt nur einen Tod und nur eine Todeskrankheit, und sie lassen sich nicht nennen;... es ist das Gefühl des vollkommenen Widerspruchs in allen Dingen;... Ob es für diese Krankheit ein Heilmittel gibt, weiss ich nicht; aber das weiss ich, der Doktor (sei er nun über den Sternen oder im Mittelpunkt meines Ichs) der mich kurieren will, muss zuvor die ganze Welt kurieren, und dann bin ich gleich kuriert.

Hebbel then attempts to describe this feeling more closely:

Es ist das Zusammenfließen alles höchsten Elends in einer einzigen Brust; es ist die Empfindung, dass die Menschen so viel von Schmerzen und doch so wenig vom Schmerz wissen;...

Thus we encounter "Widerspruch," both in himself and in the world, "Todeskrankheit," "Elend," "Schmerz," a lamenting "Misère." In this mood of "Weltschmerz" the despairing young poet, debilitated in spirit, broods upon the incurable, disjointed, contradictory condition of all human existence.

But then Hebbel turns abruptly, deliberately, to religion, and we hear some of his harshest condemnations:


Here Hebbel brings perhaps his heaviest batteries to bear upon religion and religious belief, "Glauben." He continues
on to doubt a God who would fit so well into the contradictory complex that is the world, a God, who, the Christian would assure us, most definitely is there and in full control. Hebbel despises the arrogance of the Christian in making such a claim:

Sollen in der Tat Leute, die sonst so blind sind, dass es für sie auf Erden überall fast keinen Unterschied gibt, gerade berufen sein, Himmelskarten zu verfertigen, oder die einmal gezeichneten zu approbieren? Sollten Augen, denen der Sperling entgeht, der ihnen nicht auf der Nase sitzt, Stand und Bahn der Zentralsonne (das ist doch Gott) zu entdecken und zu verfolgen Kraft haben?

Hebbel concludes:

Religion ist das Produkt höchster Ohnmacht und höchster Eitelkeit, beide miteinander multipliziert.

Hebbel's words here rise to a pitch seldom reached in his writing, and his radical, implacable opposition to Christianity is nowhere more starkly expressed than here, even if one makes allowance for the emotional overtones. They are not simply an excess of the moment, for he deliberately excerpts these lines into his diary (D 688). No, these reproaches against Christianity's false concept of man and of his rightful position and dignity, are at the heart of Hebbel's radical antagonism. Christianity does not have the answer to the omnipresent and depressing contradiction running through creation and visibly, palpably afflicting man both with mental anguish and pain, that is, the man who has
not closed his eyes and mind to the actual state of affairs. There is no point to reversing the argument and accusing Hebbel of presumption in his turn, for he in no way professes to have the answer either to this cleft in human nature and the world. His insight is that the radical contradiction is still there, that the human spirit suffers, and unaccountably so, with all religion providing man only with blinders and artificial balm, and beyond that he himself has not yet advanced. Later, as we shall see, a modus vivendi, rather than an answer as such, is achieved, but not at this point.

A final, serious thrust against religion is contained in Hebbel's third letter on March 21, 1961 to Pfarrer Luck:

...ich will nur nicht von dem rohen Zufall der Geburt, der dem Menschen seine Religion anweist und den er nicht korrigieren kann,...sein zeitliches und ewiges Heil abhängig gemacht wissen.

(L 714)

Again Hebbel speaks for an unfettered spirit, man with his destiny in his own hands. After conceding to Luck that perhaps Hegel's absolute philosophy does deny the validity of man's intelligence as an instrument to obtain ultimate knowledge, Hebbel refuses to acquiesce in any absolute religion, which attacks "den moralischen (Menschen)," for if a man is accused of

...die Sünde gegen den heiligen Geist...so gibt
es keine Rettung mehr, denn der absichtlichen Verstockung muss die Verdamnung folgen.

It is once again a question of the defense of man's moral autonomy. Hebbel had expounded earlier to Luck his ideas regarding great men, the class of "Genius," be they religious founders, military men or artists, and concedes that error and oppression could result from these men deriving their laws from themselves. Yet the power and sway of one man could and would eventually be overcome, were it injurious to the common good, whereas the power of a religious absolute is immeasurably worse:

...während, wenn man ein Absolutes für Millionen aufstellt, die schlimmsten Triebe der menschlichen Natur unter heiligem Deckmantel rasen und ungestraft von der einzelnen Ketzer-Verfolgung zur Bekehrung oder Vertilgung ganzer Völker durch Feuer und Schwert fortschreiten können, wie die Geschichte uns schaudernd lehrt.

In a letter to Friedrich Uechtritz (L 570), Hebbel emphasizes again his concern for individual moral freedom, particularly in coming to his conclusions regarding the deity: "Wo man dies bestreitet, da ist der Papst und mit dem Papst der Gross-Inquisitor fertig;...". Hebbel's moral man therefore remains central, and his freedom of inquiry and decision in all religious matters, particularly moral ones, must be preserved at all cost.

Up to this point our discussion has depicted the negative views of Hebbel relative to religion and it is now
necessary to discuss the positive aspects of religion, as Hebbel sees them. It must be borne in mind that although these ideas were seminally present from the beginning, their emphasis come sharply to the fore after Hebbel's above-mentioned Viennese experiences. In addition to noting the emergence of a tolerant, conciliatory attitude, it will be necessary to detail Hebbel's own views of religion, its origin, role and characteristics, as they appear principally in his later and final years.

Even in the previously quoted passage, concerning Luther, which is primarily to be construed negatively, we note the beginnings of Hebbel's later views. Positive religion was seen to possess a justification of sorts, and although this justification is personally unacceptable to Hebbel, it provides the basis for a later, burgeoning tolerance rooted in an understanding of its necessity for most people. Furthermore, Hebbel is now so strongly ensconced in the security of his own position and beliefs that positive religion is no longer a threat to anything he holds dear.

The prevailing mood of tolerance in Hebbel's later years can be sampled in numerous passages. Writing to his wife Christine Enghaus in October, 1861, Hebbel nostalgically reflects on his childhood singing in church and then continues that it is not a question of his being drawn to such things, he is simply beyond it all, for it is the how and
not the what that interests him as a dramatic poet, who

...zeigte sich in seiner vollen Toleranz, denn
der Prediger trug eine Weltanschauung vor, die
der meinigen, bis auf die Grundwurzel, in der
sie freilich mit der theologischen fast zusam-
menfällt, ganz und gar widerspricht und hatte
dennoch meinen Beifall, weil es mit Leben, Geist
und Konsequenz geschah.

(L 737)

It is not that Hebbel doesn't care; he has long since
arrived at his own world-view, and rather than violently
opposing other views, tolerantly takes them as they are.
On another occasion, an older teacher, reared with the
Bible, visits Hebbel, who comments: "Nicht um die Welt
hätte ich gegen diesen würdigen Alten ein Wort gegen Reli-
gion gesagt." (D 4416) "Gegen" is now a stance Hebbel
assiduously avoids, and this attitude stands in stark
contrast to his earlier, critical cavilling at the religious
practices he observed. A maturity is in evidence here,
differing markedly from former overbearing, condescending
remarks, such as in an early letter to Elise: "Ich gönne
Jedem seinen Wanderstab, mithin auch dem Christen." (L 43)

A new attitude reigns, a new willingness to see
value, goodness and utility wherever it may be found. Hebbel,
who has censured Christianity mercilessly, asks:

Wenn das Christentum sich auch nur als das zweck-
näsSigste und unwiderstehlichste Organisations-
und Zivilisations-Institut vor der Vernunft legi-
timierte, wäre es damit nicht genug legitimiert?
(D 5427)
Here Hebbel adopts a more positive attitude toward positive religion than was indicated in the earlier mentions of Luther and Gibbon. He is thinking in broader, historical perspectives, and the notion of mankind's development has appeared, to which we shall return. Soon afterward Hebbel enters a plea, as it were, for Christianity:

Die Gegner des christlichen Prinzips, die es aus Gründen der Schönheit sind, wie H. Heine, sollen sich doch fragen, ob denn die Welt der Resignation, der freudigen Entsagung, nicht ihre eigentümliche Schönheit habe und ob sie diese auslöschen möchten. (D 6003)

Such thoughts place Hebbel far from earlier intransigent positions. In one of his early letters to Pfarrer Luck, Hebbel refers to an earlier correspondence regarding religion with Friedrich Uechtritz and then states: "Ich stehe durchaus in keinem feindlichen Verhältnis zur Religion..." (D 5841), and regarding the Lord's Prayer he says in a later letter:

Auch ich halte es für schwerer, das Vaterunser zu beten, als alle Schlachten Napoleons zu gewinnen, ja ich bezweifle es stark, dass es auf Erden schon gebetet worden ist, aber freilich nur wegen seiner ethischen Voraussetzungen, die ich nicht ausschliesslich vom Christentum abhängig machen kann, wenn dieses ihnen auch in diesem Gebet für alle Zeiten eine unübertreffliche Fassung gegeben hat. (D 5891)

Hebbel is here displaying not an antagonism to what is wrong with Christianity, but an emphasis upon what there is of value in the teachings of Christ. A broader and deeper
Thus a harmonious cooperation is now the watchword, with the emphasis upon "Mass." Hebbel deliberately recommends cessation of rancor, invective and polemic. We shall discuss shortly the deeper relationships indicated above between religion and poetry.

From the outset we have noted the primarily ethical bent of Hebbel's thought with his insistence upon man, his worth and dignity, and it is now appropriate to take this up in greater detail. In an important letter to Uechtritz on May 23, 1857, Hebbel states his basic insight in definite terms:

Nicht, als ob ich glaubte, dass zwischen Ihrem absolut christlichem und meinem Standpunkt eine Vermittlung möglich wäre, wenn die ethische nicht ausreicht, die Christus selbst zu genügen schien, als er das Wort aussprach: "an ihren Früchten sollt Ihr sie erkennen!"

(L 570)
The uprightness of human behavior, this is the nexus, this is what Hebbel sees in Christianity, or perhaps more properly in the teachings of Christ, as he says elsewhere: "...dessen [Christianity's] sittlichen Kern ich hoch halte." (L 562) What is the source of right behavior?

Religion, positive religion with its dogmas and doctrines pale into unimportance, for crucial only is moral behavior, commanded by conscience. Hebbel emphasizes this again:

If then the ethical has such overriding and undisputed ascendance, what becomes of the dogmas and beliefs of positive religion? In answering Pfarrer Luck (D 5847), Hebbel states: "...aber Ihre religiösen Tatsachen sind und bleiben mir Anthropomorphismen." Hebbel never tires of making this charge, and in the above letter to Uechtritz...
he amplifies his thoughts:

Und nun frage ich Sie, ob mir die dogmatische Seite des Christentums mehr sein kann, als eine Mythologie neben anderen Mythologien?

Uechtritz had taken umbrage at Hebbel's lumping Christian beliefs together with such legends as the Swan of Leda, and Hebbel then clearly defines what he means by a mythology:

Mir ist die Mythologie eines Volks der Inbegriff aller seiner eligiösen Anschauungen, so weit sie nicht im Allgemein-Menschlichen aufgehen, und als gemeinschaftliches Ergebnis seiner historischen, philosophischen und poetischen Prozesse das Höchste, was es überhaupt in seinem ersten Entwicklungsstadium liefert.

This passage introduces us to another important element in Hebbel's considerations of religion and man, namely the fact of an organic, stage by stage, historical development of man, in which religion constitutes one of the results of the great movement upwards, along with man's historical and philosophical achievements. It is both a consequence of and agent of development. This idea is not original with Hebbel, who early in his diary copied down excerpts from Lessing's Erziehung des Menschengeschlechts. Hebbel quotes:

Warum wollen wir in allen positiven Religionen nicht lieber weiter nichts, als den Gang erblicken, nach welchem sich der menschliche Verstand jedes Orts einzig und allein entwickeln könne und noch ferner entwickeln soll;—Gott hätte seine Hand bei Allem im Spiel und nur bei unsern Irrtümern nicht?

(D 561)
This historical view is reflected in other entries such as his statement to Cotta: "...daß Herodes das Christentum als erhabenstes Kultur-Instrument feiert,..." (L 582a).

Thus we are face to face with religion and historical purpose, and Hebbel underlines the relation of religion and ethics and the conditioned nature of religion's usefulness in the historical process:


(D 5448)

Hence the ethical core that a religion nurtures is given to the world in pure form during one of the great upheavals in history, but this new ethic is quickly distorted. We also see Hebbel's view of the function of the great men in the historical process, but we must return to this later. Moreover, religion's reluctance to depart the scene after it has delivered its child to the world is noted again:

Auch bei der Religion muss man auf den Urgrund zurückgehen. Dieser ist ewig, aber er tritt nur in vergänglicher Erscheinung hervor, und darin, dass diese sich zu lange behaupten will, liegt hier, wie überall, der tragische Fluch. Das Sterben wird immer mit zum Leben gerechnet.

(D 5499)

Hebbel thus makes it clear that any given religion is a transitory phenomenon and to be superseded, while its
source is eternal. It is a temporary product of man, and Hebbel alluded to this earlier in his diary by noting that whereas nature can concentrate its power in each of its creative acts, man cannot, since mankind is but a collection of disparate individuals. For his own help man creates religions and states. (D 1795)

We have seen the ethical aspects of religion and its role in the historical development of mankind, and it remains now to reflect on religion's nature and meaning to Hebbel as a poet. He has already described it as one of three observatories, as it were, from which one studies man, life and the world, and he attempts to describe its essence in his letter to Luck:

...den Religion und Poesie haben einen gemeinschaftlichen Zweck, und alle Meinungsdifferenzen sind darauf zurück zu führen, ob man die Religion oder die Poesie für die Urquelle hält. Ich muss mich für die Poesie entscheiden,...

(D 5841)

Nature and purpose of religion and poetry stand in a close, mysterious relationship. They constitute a power to perceive and express inner realities, and whereas one can dispute the primacy between the two, Hebbel, being a poet, must decide for poetry. He had very early made note of this intimate relationship in a letter to Elise.

...Alles Dichten ist Offenbarung; in der Brust des Dichters hält die ganze Menschheit mit all ihrem Wohl und Weh ihren Reigen, und jedes seiner Gedichte ist ein Evangelium, worin sich irgend ein Tiefstes, was eine Existenz oder einen ihrer Zustände bedingt, ausspricht...Ich will,
wie ich es gerade kann, Dir sogleich einen Beweis geben. Ich hasse das Christentum, und weiss wohl, warum; ich habs einmal gesagt und sags noch einmal. Das hat mich aber nicht abgehalten, gestern die folgende Romanze zu schreiben: Vinum Sacrum.

(L 45)

This explanation, coming in 1837, is recapitulated more clearly four years before his death in his first letter to Pfarrer Luck:

Es ist freilich wahr, dass auch diejenigen Dichter, die uns hier allein beschäftigen dürfen, den religiösen Anschauungen und Empfindungen nicht selten einen Ausdruck verleihen, der den Glaubigen nicht allein befriedigt, sondern ihm sogar in seinem eigensten Wesen ganz ungeahnte Tiefen eröffnet. Das rührt aber nicht daher, weil der Poet in solchen Momenten gewissermassen mit ihm zum Abendmahl geht, sondern weil ihm das Geheimnis des Lebens anvertraut ist,...er ist einfach der Proteus, der den Honig aller Daseinsformen einsaugt (allerdings nur, um ihn wieder von sich zu geben), der aber in keiner für immer eingefangen wird. Wer diesen Standpunkt festhält, der würde sich nicht wundern, wenn der Hamlet und der standhafte Prinz einen und den nämlichen Verfasser hätten; wer ihn aus den Augen lässt, der muss über die Widersprüche des Poeten ausser sich geraten, und ihn in gut vulgärem Sinn für charakterlos erklären. Es sind aber die Widersprüche der Welt,...

(D 5841)

The poet is, then, Proteus, who fathoms the inner secret of life and communicates this heightened perception, understanding and appreciation to man. Yet the poet can be faithful to the religious insight and totally independent of it, creating a sense of contradiction in the person who cannot understand or accept this possibility. The poet can be party to and yet be not part of the religious experience, for religion is a related yet differentiated mode
of apprehension and partakes of poetry's efficacy due to a common origin and function. It is also a vehicle for truth and insight man could not attain otherwise. It, too, is a "Sternwart." But the curse of religion is that it wishes to remain after it has fulfilled its function, and it is the curse of man that he wishes to attach more importance to the shell than to the kernel of truth. A part of this truth for Hebbel is that true religion consists in the development of man's specific talent, and by so doing man establishes a worthy relationship with his creator (D 1211), as Hebbel had insisted previously in a letter to Elise.

What then is the motivating force behind all religions? Here Hebbel has recourse to a basic experience and insight that he characterized previously as the contradiction in all things, in the form of suffering, pain and death. Man's futile attempt to plumb the reason behind all this and to see final purpose, recompense and reconciliation gives rise to religion:

...denn den Urgrund aller Religion, die ängstliche grosse Frage nach dem Woher und Wohin, die der flache Rationalismus auch tilgen möchte, wird der Mensch nimmer los, nur in etwas Positives, das wohl mehr als Poesie sein will, muss er sie nicht umsetzen. (L 811)

Man never pierces the veils, or ever attains ultimate truth regarding these questions, for truth is not to be had. It is unattainable because in a sense a vicious circle obtains;
man's misery is a necessary condition of his existence, it is bound up by nature with his independence:

...der Abgrund menschlichen Elends...aber das ist eben die mit dem Menschen selbst gesetzte, nicht etwa erst durch einen krummen Geschichtsverlauf hervorgerufene allgemeine Misère, welche die Frage nach Schuld und Versöhnung sowenig zulässt, wie der Tod, das zweite, allgemeine blind zutreffende Übel.

(D 6287)

Hence, he concludes, neither Christianity's original sin concept, placing blame on all mankind, for which the individual makes amends, nor communism's belief in "Ausgleichung" genuinely answers to the real problems. All answers, be they religious or philosophical, are "Gedankentrauerspiele."

Religion's reply is "Ein sich schlafen legen" in the face of unanswerable questions, or:

Religion ist die Phantasie der Menschheit, das Vermögen alle Widersprüche nicht aufzuheben, sondern zu verneinen.

(D 1853)

One point must not be misunderstood. Hebbel adamantly insists upon the "Widerspruch" as ever-present and unbridgeable; "Versöhnung" in the sense of some actual, acceptable closing of the cleft, or of some counterweight or replacement for the misery of mankind is not to be had. But Hebbel comes to terms with these ultimate realities, accepting the immutable order as it exists, working with it in a positive manner and achieving inner peace. Thus Hebbel can speak of individual "Versöhnung" while steadfastly denying
any possibility of objective, external "Versöhnung." But this central discussion must wait.

There is a final facet of the problem of religion that bears noting. We have found a tolerant Hebbel, who has established the primacy of the moral imperative in man, and this derives from his conscience. Beyond this, belief is free:

...und dass es sein heiligstes Recht ist, sich den allmächtigen Pulsschlag, den er fühlt, auf seine Weise auszulegen.

(L 570)

But then Hebbel senses new danger to the ultimate inner citadel of conscience. Once one considers the historical revelations and the progress of the natural sciences in his day, the question of the relationship of one religion to another is no longer relevant, for now the attack of modern knowledge strikes deeper and it is now a question revolving

...um den gemeinschaftlichen Urgrund, aus dem sie [religions] alle im Lauf der Jahrhunderte hervorgegangen sind, um das Verhältnis des Menschen zur Natur und um seine Abhängigkeit von ihren unerbittlichen Gesetzen.

(L 570)

For modern knowledge seems to be able to explain all things according to rational laws and natural, material processes. It is now a question of whether in any sense man is really the noble exception he thinks he is, rather than just another material phenomenon of nature. Hebbel bids Uecht-
ritz not to object that materialism is old, for "er ist neu in den Gründen" and far more deadly. Hebbel then concludes:


(L 570)

Thus Hebbel reaffirms the primacy of the spirit against advancing materialism, and his chief defense remains the unique phenomenon of man's conscience, indeed, it is the last bastion. His initial quarrel with religion is that it has obliterated and falsified conscience, enslaving it to particular doctrines and mythologies, arbitrary dictums and anthropomorphic notions which have no relationship with conscience at all. Looking ahead now, he declares that in the coming battles the only real deterrent to materialistic dissection and dethroning of man is not a regression to the "Gedankentrauerspiel" of positive religion, but a new reliance upon the strength and witness of man's conscience.
CHAPTER II.

IMMORTALITY - SECULARIZED

After having regarded in detail Hebbel's views on religion in general and aspects of positive religion, particularly Christianity, we consider next his thoughts on an intimately associated theme, immortality. The following discussion, based almost exclusively upon the letters and diaries, also illustrates well the problems inherent in an approach to Hebbel from a purely immanent interpretation of only part of his writings. More importantly it under­scores the "als-ob" element, the philosophizing seen in so much of the chapter on religion. This critical scepticism ultimately refuses any final intellectual commitment in so many areas because of Hebbel's conviction that final truth or certainty are simply not to be had, that one conceptual approach or set of termini are as good as another, since none brings one to any final resolution of the problem. We recall Hebbel's impatience with any system, religious or otherwise, claiming to have all the answers. Insights can of course be gleaned and positive gains scored, but always with the proviso of "als-ob"--it could be so and then again it could be otherwise. This attitude however does not de­tract from either sincerity of inquiry or concern; nor does
it lead to any final type of epistemological futility.

In Christian teaching the question of immortality is given a definite and unequivocal answer. But this and allied problems of death and the soul bedevilled Hebbel his life long, and he returned to them again and again, probing, attempting to get at a final synthesis from every possible angle. In the process we come to recognize some of the touchstones Hebbel falls back upon, since the Christian God can no longer be there as the author of the soul, the conqueror of death and the source of eternal existence.

Hebbel's diary and letter entries on these subjects reveal clear experimentation with the problems. Often an argument pro or con is prefixed with an "if," or the word "perhaps" crops up in the reasoning. By sheer weight of numbers, however, the entries supporting some sort of inclination of belief in or at least hope for immortality far outstrip those countering the rationality of any belief in life after death. Practically the first diary entries broach the problem in the statement: "Mir fehlt das absolute Bewusstsein meiner Unsterblichkeit." (D 75) In a previous notation we read: "Der Hauptbeweis gegen das Da-sein Gottes ist, dass uns das absolute Gefühl unserer Un-sterblichkeit fehlt." (D 74) Two items are immediately related: God's existence is tied to an absolute feeling of
one's immortality. Hebbel debates the first proposition under the banner of "if" and "perhaps," arriving at no final conclusions. But we can already see his proclivity for rational argumentation and a strong desire for absolute certainty in this matter. Both reason and feeling are relied upon by Hebbel in exploring the problem.

Another criterion which has meaning for Hebbel is that of consciousness. At one point he speculates that madness, looked upon as a loss of consciousness, at least rational consciousness, is perhaps the strongest argument against immortality, and that this extinguishing of consciousness is all that happens to man at death. (D 2681) Probing the idea further he reasons:

Bei persönlicher Fortdauer mit Bewusstsein ist eine Existenz in infinitum kaum dankbar, denn eins von Beiden: Langeweile oder Ekel müsste sich einstellen,...

(D 2920)

Assuming some sort of steady increase in being, powers and experience, one either looks back at each achieved stage and realizes that each stage is superseded, or one looks forward and sees no final end to the process. Thus the only condition rendering immortality bearable is unconsciousness, and hence one is faced with absurdity, no matter where one turns. Hebbel frequently practices this reductio ad absurdum. He later speculates that our chief mistake is our desire to expand our consciousness of the moment to the
entire future. (D 3030) Such a wish-life lies at the core of much man believes in. As he has said somewhat earlier:

Daraus, dass wir ein höheres Leben hoffen, dass wir ein Bedürfnis fühlen, das uns die Unsterblichkeit wünschenswert macht, folgt die letztere gewiss nicht, denn dies Bedürfnis deutet ja auf nichts Fremdes, noch Unbekanntes und Niebesessenes, das sich instinktartig ankündigte, sondern nur darauf, dass wir dem Gegenwärtigen ewige Dauer und höchste Steigerung verleihen möchten.

(D 2869)

Another source of this powerful wish is outside us, in nature. In a letter to Elise on March 27, 1837, Hebbel notes that we consider ourselves immortal because we consider nature to maintain a sort of conservation of being, which guarantees our continual existence. This is fortified by our seeing nature renew itself every spring, and we naturally hope for an analogous spring of the soul after death. (L 47) Later in his diary Hebbel dashes this hope:

An die Unsterblichkeit will ich glauben, wenn ich sehe, dass die Natur die Blätter, die im Herbst vom Baum abfallen, im Frühling wieder anleimt.

(D 3141)

Immortality then is impossible and illusory. To be any kind of worthwhile life after death it must be an immortality with consciousness, and this leads to rational absurdities. The insensitive immortality, say of a stone, does not interest Hebbel, and such an existential black-out may actually be the case. Feeling does not aid the case either, for Hebbel demands a feeling admitting of no
doubts, and these he obviously has. Further, any feeling, be it certain or indistinct, can be reduced to nothing but a wish-life on our part. Nor does the periodic rejuvenation of nature support any such hopes. The individual is always extinguished by nature, even in renewal.

These somber, negative notes are counterbalanced by a host of considerations supportive of immortality, resting principally upon a positive, "diesseits"-oriented view of life. This view was alluded to when Hebbel was discussing our mistaken desire to expand our consciousness to the entire future. He concluded:

Keine schöne Naturen, als diejenigen, die sich ohne Dumpheit und Frechheit in gläubigem Vertrauen an’s Leben hingeben.

(D 3030)

This idea received perhaps its best expression earlier in his diary, when, after repudiating Klopstock's contention that immortality is a great thought, he says: "Das Leben ist das Höchste, und dieses Höchsten Höchstes ist wieder die ruhige, reine Entwicklung." (D 2648) Thus not only is life itself the greatest good, but for man the highest endeavor is to utilize life as a means to a gradual, uninterrupted development of all one's powers and potentialities. Even if man is not immortal, his duty is to seek this highest good and in so doing he will participate in a mode of being that itself is eternal. (D 1154) Hebbel
felt rather definite about the promise inherent in such endeavor:

Das ist des Menschen letzte Aufgabe, aus sich heraus ein dem Höchsten, Göttlichen Gemässes zu entwickeln und so sich Bürge zu werden für jede seinem Bedürfnis entsprechende Verheissung.  
(D 584)

Shortly afterward Hebbel muses upon the possible connection between this life and one that may follow:

Vielleicht ist das erste Leben ein Probierstein fürs Zweite; was sich nicht goldhaltig genug zeigt, wird als Schlacke in die Grabhöhle geworfen und nur das Gediegene dauert fort.  
(D 622)

Such considerations in terms of purification and demonstrated worthiness as conditions for a possible afterlife occur again in the later discussion of Hebbel's quasi-mystical Glaubensbekenntnis, Maximilian Friedrich Hebbel an seine Mutter.

The death of his close friend, Emil Rousseau, occasioned similar thoughts in a letter to Rousseau's father. Hebbel speaks of an external and inner "Wirkung;" the external breaks itself upon the world, while the inner cascades back into the soul, from which it came, and this is in Hebbel's eyes:

...die eigentliche Bürgschaft der Verheissung, denn sie wirkt das Wunder, dass der Mensch aus sich selbst die Unsterblichkeit, aus der Zeitlichkeit die Ewigkeit schöpft...

(L 89)

True, the above passage is meant to comfort a bereft father,
but the ideas have been expressed often enough elsewhere so as not to be the effusion of the moment. We are basically looking at a restatement of the Goethean hope, expressed upon the death of Wieland, but much more profoundly in the Faustian hope for achievement of a continuation in some manner of higher existence after death, merited by the conscious development of one's abilities and powers in this life. Man thus achieves in himself a condition or higher state of being and worthiness, so that he is able to make the transition to the heightened existence and consciousness beyond death. This is not a gift from some divine hand, but the reward we merit and accomplish with our own powers and will. The new state we thus bring ourselves to is so heightened that Hebbel can call it "göttlich." It is divine, not as related to any divine source or deity, but in the sense of the highest achievement of man as an individual. It is the apogee of his present existence, which guarantees his ability and worthiness to exist in a new, higher state after physical death. Nature, as it were, owes him this new life. He has gained purchase upon this right solely by dint of his own efforts. This fact is a reaffirmation of man's dignity and autonomy, values dear to Hebbel.

Although the above remains Hebbel's most concrete basis for hope in immortality, he utilizes other avenues. He has already spoken of consciousness and this he links with
the above-described "Steigerung" and asks:

...Aber der Tod schliesst uns vielleicht nicht
den Weg zur Steigerung auf, sondern er löscht
nur das Bewusstsein aus und alles fängt von
vorne an.

(D 2463)

Another source of hope is that of art:

Die Kunst allein ist Bürge menschlicher Unsterb-
lichkeit. Alle übrigen menschlichen Kräfte ste-
hen mit den Geschicklichkeiten der Spinnen, Per-
lemuschehnen pp al pari; denn sie fangen nichts
Neues, Selbständiges an, sie flicken das Vorhan-
dene bloss aus.

(D 1986)

The artistic powers of originality and creativity set man
apart from the rest of the world, and their creative nature,
akin to the ever-regenerative power of nature itself, must
therefore endure. For Hebbel, however, the poet was only
one of a general class of individuals, those reckoned under
the title of "Genius," the great men of deed and thought.
Their very existence was significant:

Die Hoffnung der Menschheit auf ewige Fortdauer
gründet sich hauptsächlich auf die Bedeutung,
den unerschöpflichen Gehalt einzelner grosser
Männer. Umgekehrt gibt es aber auch Menschen,
deren Anspruch auf Unsterblichkeit sich einzig
und allein auf den Anspruch des ganzen Geschlechts
gründet.

(D 1108)

Not only has mankind a claim upon immortality by virtue
of the greatness of certain individuals, but also by vir-
tue of the claim of the whole human race. A great man,
as well as great poet, in Hebbel's eyes, was Ludwig Uh-
This last passage was written in November, 1862, near the end of Hebbel's life. That Hebbel harbored a similar hope for himself could hardly be denied.

In a passage which extols the artist and his special powers and function in life, that of linking us with "dem Ewigen" and of leading us "zu Ideen, d.h., zur Anschauung der Urbilder, die allem Zeitlichen zu Grunde liegen,...", Hebbel speaks of "die höhere Existenz, die wir alle vertrauend erwarten,..." (D 5387) This higher existence, which clearly was a central thought for Hebbel, recurs throughout the diaries. In a letter consoling Elise over the death of their son Maximilian, Hebbel reminds her that everything is from eternity, nothing becomes, he and she did call Maximilian into being, only the form changes and thus they will all be reunited in eternity. (L 169) Later, as she still grieves, he reminds her again that nature must tear her children away from each other, but that she, Elise, shouldn't grieve and oppose the motherly hand of nature, which

...doch in jedem die Ahnung einer höheren Wiedervereinigung, ja eines fortwährend bestehenden bleibenden geheimnisvollen Zusammenhangs zu er-
This concept of "Ahnung" achieves increasing prominence for Hebbel, and he finds the organ for this instinct to be a marvelous quality in man, for even if God and immortality were not so, then man's instinct would be even more marvelous to the materialist, for it discovered what alone made possible society and progress: the institutions of religion and the state. (D 5583) Earlier, after agreeing with Feuerbach that the reasons supporting God and immortality are refuted, he queries:

Ob es aber, was wenigstens die Unsterblichkeit betrifft, nicht noch andere gibt? Ich denke Manches, was ich nicht aufschreiben mag. In den Lebensgesetzen gibt es etwas Mystisches, in den Denkgesetzen nicht auch? (D 4453)

Soon afterward he remarks again:

Dem Menschengeschlecht, als solchem, mögen Eigenschaften innewohnen, deren der einzelne Mensch, als solcher, sich nicht bewusst ist und die doch über die letzten und höchsten Fragen entscheiden, die sich z.B. im Glauben an Gott und Unsterblichkeit manifestieren. (D 5662)

The vistas opened up by the preceding passages are interesting. Hebbel admits that discursive reasoning leads to a denial of the possibility of belief in God and immortality, but then he finds himself shifting to the possibility of intuition, where logical steps are abandoned and the realities are directly apprehended in some supra-rational manner.
He himself senses this as superseding normal modes of apprehension. Sometimes he speaks of it under the aspect of an instinct in man, either individually or in the race as such, or again he views it as a mystical quality in man's mind, operating independently of the normal faculties of grasping reality.

With this evidence before us, it is difficult, if not impossible to decide where Hebbel's philosophizing ends. Spurning the Judaeo-Christian framework, he has sought out every possible point of reference and support in attempting to solve the problem, such as nature, consciousness, logic, the poetic calling, the existence of great individuals, mystical approaches, etc. These touchstones sometimes provide evidence both ways. Yet a number of conclusions do emerge. Even if no final, binding answer lies before us, we do see abundant evidence of an abiding concern of Hebbel's part in pursuing the question, from the beginning of his life to the end. He does want an answer, if possible. To judge from the preponderance of positively-oriented considerations, we can say he would have liked an answer in the affirmative. He clearly places the emphasis upon the present, but not in any hedonistic sense. Rather, development of one's being takes precedence and this in itself is to become a guarantee, at least as much of a guarantee as one can have, of a hoped-for higher existence. Logic, cold reason speak pre-
ponderantly against immortality, but Hebbel seems to place increasing hope in non-logical approaches, such as instinct, feeling, intuition, even possibly mystical aspects of thought or preternatural qualities of the human psyche. Indeed, Hebbel's recourse to subjective, non-rational possibilities, not admitting of any logical or arguable refutation, tends to confirm the "als-ob" character of his thought, the scepticism we noted earlier, which, while it finds itself convinced of nothing, is nevertheless more than willing to explore all contingencies, particularly the non-rational ones. Yet, although no final commitment is made and the question remains moot, Hebbel continues to be the earnest seeker, the man of hope to the very end.
CHAPTER III.

GOD: WORLD-PRINCIPLE AND PERSON

As we have seen, Hebbel early abandons specific Christian notions regarding religion, man, nature and God. Penning the following words to Elise on Dec. 5, 1843, he decries the Christian God as an anthropomorphism:

Du weisst ich glaube nicht daran, dass ein guter Hausvater über den Sternen sitzt, der, zu ohnmächtig seine lieben Kinder gegen Wunden zu schützen, doch für jede Wunde einen Balsam bereithält, aber allerdings zieht sich ein Faden ewiger Weisheit durch die Welt, und diese Weisheit bestätigt sich gerade darin, dass das Leben sich aus sich selbst herstellen kann und also auch muss.  

(L 169)

These words indicate both the quarrel Hebbel has with the notion of a Christian God as an omnipotent being giving solace to his creatures, as well as the decisiveness of Hebbel's break with such a traditional God, who was nurtured in him from his very childhood. This categoric rejection of any anthropomorphic notion of God returns again and again throughout Hebbel's life, to be recapitulated in depth in the already-mentioned correspondence late in life with Pfarrer Luck. But it must remain clear that such a rejection is by no means a rejection of either the problem of God or even perhaps of a God in some form. This rejec-
tion basically forces Hebbel far afield in a labyrinthine search for some satisfying metaphysical and personal concept of the divine.

This chapter will therefore document from the diary and letter entries Hebbel's quest for a metaphysical definition of God, his philosophizing over the question, as well as the subtle undercurrent of possible commitment to the notion of a personal God. The succeeding chapter will turn to selected dramatic works of Hebbel to describe a final, broadly-conceived attempt to save the notion of a Judaeo-Christian God. This in turn will throw into sharp relief both the inherent contradictions in such a God in concrete historical and personal situations as well as the primacy of the ethical, anchored in the eternal order of nature.

Where then does Hebbel turn philosophically? Before going into detail, it is at the outset necessary to emphasize that the problem of God was very much a general problem for the nineteenth century and not for Hebbel alone. The secularizing trends of both Romantic and idealistic philosophies as well as the outright disposal of any divine being by the increasingly vigorous materialistic and positivistic movements, all these in a sense attempted the final settling or laying to rest of the residual belief in God which the preceding two millenia had so carefully cultivated. The problem of God, of a Christian God, of any God, was simply in the air, and any mind, great or small, which reflec-
ted on any problem of the time, simply had to grapple with the problem of God. Nor could one proceed safely without either accepting God as traditionally conceived or modifying him, reducing him, equating him with some natural force or principle, or denying him and thus purging the mind completely of the anachronous notion. Even Kant, from whom issued the great galaxy of idealistic philosophers, and who had supposedly set limits to what the mind can conceive of and rationally attain a knowledge of, and who had thus excluded any direct knowledge of any noumenal reality or being, felt compelled to, as it were, bring God in through the backdoor, as again a legitimate object of thought and consciousness. This he did by resorting to the validity of moral consciousness and freedom, which postulates moral perfectibility, happiness and a God to render virtue's reward of happiness commensurate with the degree of virtue attained through the performance of moral duty. God, once indirectly readmitted to con-

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consideration, became again a problem to which all succeeding idealistic philosophers addressed themselves. Hebbel, as we shall see, was very much indebted to the influences of these thinkers, particularly Schelling, and he saw reflected in their writings his own preoccupation with God. Indeed it is difficult to imagine how Hebbel could not be embroiled in the question. In general, as the first chapter illustrated, Hebbel opted for a view of religion dissociated from anthropomorphic deities and historical revelations. These ideas were part of the intellectual climate of the age and Hebbel, who was familiar with Kant (D 4112), almost certainly would have perused discussions of these ideas, such as Kant's widely known and disputed *Religion Innerhalb der Grenzen der Blossen Vernunft*.

But despite the pervasiveness of such a philosophical background it was long difficult for researchers to document precise points of dependence and inspiration between Hebbel and contemporaneous philosophical or theosophical thought. A stumbling block to a definite answer has long been Hebbel's pride in himself as a self-made man, expressed most clearly in a letter to Arnold Ruge. Proud of the fact that he has acquired his education on his own
initiative and effort, after being held back by various circumstances, he says that this has only lent intensity to his studies:

Und dann ist es unglaublich, was der Mensch, der gezwungen ist, sich der Welt gegenüber zu stellen, ihr mit eigenen Kräften abzugewinnen vermag. Ich habe seit meinem 22sten Jahre, wo ich den gelehren Weg einschlug und alle bis dahin versäumten Stationen nachholte, nicht eine einzige wirklich neue Idee gewonnen; Alles, was ich schon mehr oder weniger dunkel ahnte, ist in mir nur weiter entwickelt und links und rechts bestätigt oder bestritten worden. (Werke, V, p. 42)

What is to be done with such a claim to independence of thought? As Liepe\textsuperscript{24} says in his pioneering work on Hebbel, interpreters of Hebbel either conceded that Hebbel developed his world-view independently, speaking of an "Übereinstimmung Hebbels mit der Zeitphilosophie, nicht von Abhängigkeit," or spoke of an indirect dependence upon contemporary Romantic philosophy, absorbed somehow by Hebbel from the spirit of the times. It remained however for Liepe to demonstrate and illustrate Hebbel's direct dependence upon and use of three philosophers, namely, Gotthilf Heinrich Schubert, Ludwig Feuerbach and Friedrich Wilhelm Schelling. Although Hebbel

acknowledges a relationship of sorts to Schelling, he never admits his reliance upon Schubert and Feuerbach. Since the concepts of these men become central for Hebbel in his philosophizing and persist to the end of his life, we direct our attention in the following to the basic concepts absorbed by Hebbel from these three philosophers, as delineated in Liepe's above-mentioned works.\(^{25}\) Schubert's nature mysticism was accessible to Hebbel in three principal works.\(^{26}\)

\(^{25}\) The series of concepts now discussed derives from Liepe's analyses and will not be footnoted, except where lengthier text is quoted. Parallel diary and letter references of Hebbel are from the writer.


In Schubert's nature mysticism, "das höchste Lebendige," existing as the unconscious, underlies the visible world and both unites all beings and gives them life. A unified nature obtains. But this golden age of nature is succeeded by a period of fallen nature, where individual beings separate from the original "Allzusammenhang," thus incurring guilt and turning the originally fluid, living unity into a frozen "Nebeneinander." "Tagseite" of nature becomes "Nachtseite." Communication between divine nature and indi-
individual beings, once free and direct, is now only possible in a dark, indistinct manner during sleep through the medium of dreams. As Hebbel notes: "Der Schlaf ist die Nabelschnur, durch die das Individuum mit dem Weltall zusammenhängt." (D 4889)

On a higher level the divine speaks in a more distinct fashion through poetry, and the poet is the organ of this special kind of revelation. This is the basis of the exalted position of the poet in Romantic literature, and it remains central for Hebbel. Poetry and its source in the faculty of "Ahnung" perform a crucial function:

Ahnung und alles, was damit zusammenhängt, existiert nur in der Poesie, deren eigentlich Aufgabe darin besteht, das verknöcherte All wieder flüssig zu machen, und die vereinzelten Wesen, die in sich selbst erfrieren, durch geheime Fäden wieder zusammen zu knüpfen, um so die Wärme von dem einen zum anderen hinüberzuleiten.

(D 3140)

Expressions such as "verknöcherte All," "erfrieren," "vereist," "Eisflocken," etc., become part and parcel of Hebbel's vocabulary when dealing with man, nature and God, as we shall see later in this chapter. Schubert then goes on to develop the principle of opposition, of dualism as the creative, forming principle of the universe and of life. The positive, active principle of the "Weltgeist" is opposed by the negative, passive principle of created matter, "die ewige Mutter." A struggle ensues, where the world-
Spirit seeks to reunite the newly-created individual beings with himself again and the mother earth holds them back. To become a living individual is thus to fall victim to "Erstarrung," "Vereisung," and to be impelled to overcome this condition. There arises necessarily an "Existenzschuld," which however is a guilt attributable not to the individual, but to the "Weltordnung," since it is simply a given condition of existence and not willed or caused by the individual. As we shall see, the application of this primal dualism to ethics is fraught with consequence.

These basic concepts from Schubert form the philosophical, mystical nucleus Hebbel adopts in place of a Christian cosmogony and theology, and which lie at the core of his philosophical speculations.

The second key influence upon Hebbel during his Wes selburen period was Ludwig Feuerbach. In the young Feuerbach's naturalistic work on death and immortality, *Gedanken über Tod und Unsterblichkeit*, Hebbel encounters a development of Schubert's theory of the individual's fall from nature. The soul, understood as "Kraft," and compared to the oil in a lamp, consumes the body, the wick. When the body is consumed, the individual dies, and the soul, as a particular soul, ceases to exist and reverts to the original reservoir of the general soul and continues to exist forever. Therefore the individual soul is mortal, while the "Welt-
"seele" is immortal. Feuerbach goes on to develop the idea of the "Neigung zur Sünde" as a necessary condition of individual existence, for were the individual soul totally virtuous, it would be perfect and as such identical with "das Allgemeine, das Ganze, das Sein." Imperfection in the form of "Sünde" is a basic condition of individual being. This thought forms a link from Schubert's "Abfalltheorie" through the "Freiheitstheosophie" of Schelling to Hebbel's concept of "einer metaphysischen Urschuld." Feuerbach's views concerning immortality and the existence of God made a deep impression upon Hebbel. For Feuerbach's naturalism did away with any persistence of the individual soul after death. All that remains is the great force of consciousness—no individual, no transcendent God. But in the preceding chapter Hebbel hinted at reasons and possibilities transcending Feuerbach's argumentation which might support a belief in immortality and God. (D 4453)

That which deepened and refined the views Hebbel gained particularly from Schubert was his encounter with Friedrich Wilhelm Schelling, initially through one of the latter's works, Philosophische Untersuchungen über das Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit, and later through personally hearing his lectures. Schelling undertook to treat the problem of theodicy within a cosmogony frame of reference which was basically understood as the self-realization of God or his
coming to fullness of being. A dark "Urgrund," or "Urgrund" or "Abgrund," absolute indifference, is the original unity. From the "Urgrund" arises the will to self-consciousness, understood as God seeking to break forth from unconsciousness to full consciousness of himself, to light, to the "Logos." A "Scheidung" occurs between the darkness of the unconscious and light, or consciousness and gives rise to the world, which is divided between the darkness of unconscious nature and the light of the spirit. Man partakes of both. As exemplifying a particular will, he can either subordinate his will to the universal will or oppose it; his freedom to choose produces good and evil, which are not differentiated as such in the "Urgrund." Hebbel formulates this primal condition in his essay Mein Wort über das Drama in 1843, where the function of drama is to illuminate this basic truth, in that

...es uns das bedenklich Verhältnis vergegenwärtigt, worin das aus dem ursprünglichen Nexus entlassene Individuum dem Ganzen, dessen Teil es trotz seiner unbegreiflichen Freiheit noch immer geblieben ist, gegenübersteht.

Man has a special position in this cosmogony. His spirit is intermediary between nature and God. Nature culminates in man, and man culminates in God. Hebbel then adapts Schelling's intuitive intellectual cognition into poetic, intuitive cognition. This mystical cognitive act of the poet overcomes all individuality and directly bindshim to
the absolute. Thus Hebbel, beginning with Schubert's idea of "Ahnung," fashions the cornerstone of his existence, namely his calling as a poet. This power binds him to the absolute, and he is one of the chosen, the representative of the world-soul, able to enter into the "Weltall." All poetic acts are creative acts, reflecting the creative power of God. Nature is a hieroglyph, the frozen "Gestaltensprache Gottes," and it becomes the poet's function to transmit the "Wärme," the love, from one being to the other, to decipher and release nature for its final assimilation to God.

The individual in his acts is bound to the laws of a higher necessity, that of the realization of God through human history. Schelling maintains that even though the individual acts for what he considers his own ends and is thus free, the act must of necessity further the greater needs of God, his rebirth to himself. Freedom and higher necessity exist simultaneously in human actions. An individual can thus act out of his own motives, and be driven, as it were, to do so, and yet serve the higher divine principle and purpose. Further, no matter whether the individual act is good or evil, it furthers the higher necessity, and if it is evil, even God himself cannot protect his instrument from the inexorable moral laws. This will be the fate of Judith. Evil derives solely from man,
from his will, though not from the direction of his will.

Hebbel phrases this crucial problem of guilt in Mein Wort über das Drama:

Hiebei ist nicht zu übersehen, dass die drama-
tische Schuld nicht, wie die christliche Erb-
sünde, erst aus der Richtung des menschlichen
Willens entspringt, sondern unmittelbar aus dem
Willen selbst, aus der starren eigenmächtigen
Ausdehnung des Ichs, hervorgeht...

Subjective guilt cannot then be blamed upon the "Welt-
ordnung," and the individual must bear the responsibility.
Yet the ultimate cause of this condition is rooted in the
objective world-order, although no guilt can be assigned
to it. This is the dualism that man must see and bear, and to
which he is inescapably subject. In Mein Wort Hebbel remarks

...dass das Leben als Vereinzelung, die nicht
Mass zu halten weiss, die Schuld nicht bloss
zufällig erzeugt, sondern sie notwendig und
wesentlich miteinschliesst und bedingt...

The result of this is pain in man, which Schelling
takes as the separation of the "Einzelwille" from the "All-
wille." Pain arises from man's realization of this condi-
tion in the world, wherein he must persist in his own being
and thus necessarily incur guilt. Individuation is ipso
facto robbery from God as well as from other beings. Life
is by definition "eine Spannung" between the part and the
whole, the individual and God. But man, through whom God
achieves ever greater reality, has a choice of view. He
can look upon his immediate, frustrating, dualistic condition
and be overcome by it, or he can raise his eyes to the final
outcome of this theogony, the fullness of being for God, in which all nature, man included, will become one. Thus man can either narrow his gaze to the present and experience "Gottferne" or behold the ultimate outcome and experience "Gottnähe."

Reflections of the above-sketch basic "Weltbild" have already been seen, particularly in Hebbel's statement of the function of drama in illuminating the human condition. A great number of additional statements by Hebbel of these realities can be gleaned from his diaries and letters, corroborating and substantiating the above view, but perhaps the best integrated presentation of these concepts is contained in a long poem, included in his letters and diaries. This poetic précis of Hebbel's metaphysical God was occasioned by the news of the death of his first son by Elise Lensing, Maximilian, on the 2nd of October, 1843 in Hamburg. Again Hebbel was confronted with the specter and riddle of death, that unremitting object of so much of his speculation. Sorrow weighed heavily upon him and was compounded by the fact that he was absent in Paris and didn't have the money to join Elise and comfort her. Thus he had recourse to letters to assuage both his own and Elise's sorrow. Elise however remained inconsolable, and after an outburst of impatience in a letter on Nov. 21, 1843, Hebbel finally sent to her on Dec. 17, 1843 a poem of consolation, supposedly a communication from their son to Hebbel, to be passed on to
Elise (Maximilian Friedrich Hebbel an seine Mutter).

The obvious intent of the poem is to bring solace to a person very much under the control of her feelings and thus not readily accessible to rational formulations, and it is penned by a person also subject to great emotional pressures. The device of a voice from beyond the grave contributes to the feeling that we are perhaps dealing with only a tendentious piece, wholly concocted and conjured up by Hebbel in order to have an ameliorating effect upon Elise, and who knows, perhaps upon himself, thus hinting at possibilities of double deception, both of Elise and Hebbel.

Hebbel does not admit it, but this ostensible insight into the ultimate truth and realities is a montage of ideas and concepts, poetically heightened, which he has garnered largely from the previously mentioned philosophers, with the intention of evoking nebulous, poetic sources of pseudo-comfort for himself as well as Elise. Five years after the poem's composition, when Hebbel was married to Christine Enghaus in Vienna, he wrote again to Elise on the occasion of the death of his second son born to her:

...Lies die Briefe wieder durch, die ich Dir aus Paris bei einem eben so schmerzlichen Anlass schrieb, das Gedicht, worin ich für Dich die Frucht meines Ahmens, Empfindens und Denkens zusammendrängte. Es steht kein Wort darin, das nicht schon mehr als einmal an mir selbst seine beschwichtigende und versöhnende Kraft bewiesen hätte; jedenfalls gibt es nichts Höheres! Nicht augenblicklich wird die Liebe den
Egoismus los, der sie das, was sie selbst leidet, dem Gegenstand unterschieben lässt, um den sie leidet, aber bald!

(L 236)

The poem therefore is not a philosophical credo, but a poetically heightened distillation of concepts with the avowed purpose of soothing and reconciling. But apart from these reservations the poem does develop a definite concept of God, and for this we turn to the poem proper.

The initial lines give testimony to the child's happiness and immortality, with the child describing a children's heaven of light and ethereal spheres where "Die Kinder hüpfen um die Weihnachtslichter, Die ihre Mütter ihnen angezündet,..." The thought could hardly be better tailored for Elise. The certainty of such immortal bliss is "das Wort der Worte" which the child wishes to communicate to his grieving mother. Certainty? Hebbel had phrased it somewhat more guardedly in a November letter to Elise:

Dein Kind lebt und ist mehr, als er war; Du wirst es nicht um den Weihnachtsbaum tanzen sehen, aber dafür tanzt es vielleicht um einen Baum, auf dem jedes Licht ein Stern ist, um den Baum der Welt,...

(L 169)

But certainly it should be this time, and her grief is a "Misslaut" that should dissolve itself into the "ew'ge' Harmonien." The child remonstrates:

O, hadre nimmer mit den Urgewalten,  Die, ruhig thronend über allen Zeiten,  In festen Händen jeglich Schicksal halten!
Hebbel's term "Urgewalten" recalls another term, "dunkle Mächte," contained in a previous letter to Elise very shortly after Maximilian's death:

...so muss man sich auch nach dem schmerzlichsten Verlust wieder in sich selbst und die verödete Welt zu finden suchen und die dunklen Mächte nicht durch ungebändigtes Anklammern an das Einzelne reizen, das Ganze zu nehmen, und den Menschen, der sie grausam schilt, dadurch zu belehren, dass sie gnädig waren, indem sie ihm noch etwas liessen.

(L 165)

Subsequent to the poem, Hebbel refers to Elise's continued grieving and draws her attention again to the poem:


(L 173)

It is clear that Hebbel's intention was to divert Elise from her grief, for this was the only psychologically sound path for her to follow. The "Urgewalten" and "dunkle Mächte" lend vividness to the urgency of his entreaties and the disaster Elise's behavior was courting (at least as Hebbel impatiently imagined it). They also intimate a starker picture of reality than the harmonious panorama of the poem.

After admitting his own fears, misconceptions and misunderstanding of death, the child confirms the fact that
communication would be possible through the medium of dreams. Hebbel had long held this conviction: "Mich, wie ich war, in Träumen Dir zuweilen....". The child then gives a sort of metaphysical description of the steps leading to immortality, the glorified state where one is pure spirit, unattached to matter or any form at all. Then come the oft-quoted and famous lines:

Denn, alles Leben ist gefrorne Liebe,
Vereister Gotteshauch in tausend Flocken
Erstickt, und Zacken, drin er starren bliebe,
Wenn nicht, obgleich die Wechselkräfte stocken,
Im Tiefsten ihn ein dunkler Drang erregte,
Ihn fort und immer weiter fort zu locken,
Bis er den Kreis, in dem er sich bewegte,
Den weiteren Ring stets um den engern tausend,
Zurück bis auf der Ringe letzten legte,
Und nun hinaus in's Unbegrenzte lauschend,
Entgegenharrt mit Guten und mit Bösen,....

As soon as these lines fall upon the reader's ear, Schubert's conceptions well up again. An original state of harmony and union with the God-principle ("einst wieder mischt") is described which is inexplicably disrupted, and is to be gradually reestablished. A groping attempt is later made to assign a reason to the disruption, but let us first consider these lines in more detail.

Hebbel's lines echo Schelling at every step. Through some unfathomable catastrophe original harmony of being is destroyed, and the God-principle is separated into a myriad of disparate elements, which is the world with all its individual beings. The unifying love force, which originally
held all together is in large part snuffed out and must be laboriously reconstituted by all the individuals. Thus they exist in a frozen state, are "gefrorne Liebe, vereister Gotteshauch, Flocken, Zacken." But implanted within each of them is a reminiscence of their former state and of the love-force that once suffused their being: "Im tiefsten ihn ein dunkler Drang erregte,". This desire for reunification then becomes the motive force behind their struggle to advance to successively higher stages of being ("Den weitern Ring stets um den engern tauschend"), until they reach the stage where the God-principle is sufficiently revivified by their concerted efforts to infuse them with his breath of life ("Odemzug") and bring about the final reunion.

We see that both the individuals and the God-principle need each other; there is an interdependence for the purpose of ultimate realization of being on both sides. Yet, as we shall soon see, the God-principle has the ascendance over the individuals. Momentarily, however, let us advance to the poems conclusion, which is the description of the final parousia:

Wenn wir zurück in ihn, den Urgrund, treten
Und wieder werden, was wir einst schon waren,
Den Tropfen gleich, die, in sich abgeschlossen,
Doch in der Welle rollen, in der klaren,
So rund für sich, als ganz mit ihr verflossen!

Hebbel returns to his basic image of water, and concludes in a fashion that is not entirely pantheistic. For although
intimate, total union occurs, the individual somehow remains an individual ("so rund für sich") as well as completely suffused with the God-principle ("als ganz mit ihr verflossen"). This retention of individuality, of consciousness of one's specific being, is a signal characteristic of Hebbel's thought, and bears witness to his conviction of the notion of personality. That is, an individual can share being with a higher principle (both in an individualized form, separated by matter, in this world, as well as in a non-individualized form hereafter) and still be distinct in some mysterious way from the higher principle.

Hebbel's teleological view is therefore original union, disruption and final reestablishment of the original unity. It is in this central disrupted phase that we find our being now, and it has several characteristics that are highly disquieting to the inquiring mind. Why did it occur in the first place ("Wozu im Ewig-Einen dies Zersplittern;")? If all was originally good and permeated with love, why suddenly the existence of good and evil individuals, of good and evil per se in the form of happiness as opposed to earthly suffering, wrong, injustice, pain, etc., what is the nature of good and evil, with whom does the blame or guilt for this division and suffering lie, and above all what is the role of the God-principle in this seemingly unfathomable confusion?

In attempting to give a coherent answer to these questions,
Hebbel probably advances to the deepest levels of thought he has given us on any of these subjects up to this point. The problem of good and evil is approached twice. Hebbel first turns his attention to establishing the distinction between good and evil individuals:

...Entgegenharrt mit Guten und mit Bösen,
Die sich auf Erden darin unterschieden,
Dass jene, groß und klar, sich, als erlesen
Von Gott erkennend, ihm sich schon darnieder
Entgegen drängten aus der toten Zacke,
Wenn diese, klein und dumpf, zu ew'gem Frieden
Sich gern verschlossen hätten in die Schlacke,
Damit er, den sie nur mit Schaudern ahnten,
Sie nicht, vorüber wandelnd, plötzlich packte!

From these lines the explanation seems to lie in the direction of the will with regard to the general regenerative process incumbent upon all individuals. Those who willfully choose (Elise!) not to participate in the gradual rebuilding of the edifice of love by developing their beings from original imprisonment in matter ("Schlacke") to the successively higher, more-purified states are evil. Also a certain element of recognition of this duty, of the call of the God-principle to this purifying activity in the interest of the whole of creation seems to play a role. The good clearly sense the call, the evil do not, even though they do have an instinctive, indistinct knowledge of this, which they obviously have chosen not to develop. They accordingly live in fear of the God-principle, aware that he have shirked their sacred obligations. The good, who are also described as "erlesen,"
have responded to the call.

Thus two notions emerge: development of one's consciousness of duty, and active pursuit of this development. Hebbel has previously touched upon these obligations of the individual. It is basically a duty ethic. This emphasis is constantly upon the individual relying upon his own strength and endeavoring mightily ("Entgegenharrt,...ihm sich schon darniederden Entgegen drängten aus der toten Zacke, Und so, durch eigene Kraft heraus sich schäleld, Wenn dieser auch, sich mühsam aufwärts quälel, gekraftigt ist, mit empor zu dringen").

Then Hebbel attacks the problem at its root: "Wozu im Ewig-Einen dies Zersplittern;". Here he tenders two possible answers, and it is worthwhile to realize at the outset that they are possibilities, and are thus offered as hypotheses, not final answers. Both answers are carefully initiated with the word "Ob," which directs us not toward sure knowledge, but to presentiment, poetic searching for metaphysical truth. For to Hebbel ultimate, certain reasons are not to be found, or perhaps too many answers present themselves, the mind puzzles and boggles and must in the final analysis admit that the solutions transcend all its speculative, intuitive and poetic powers.

Ob einzig, um das Böse zu verzehren,
Das, wenn es sich in tausend Ungewittern
Entlud, vor seiner eignen Ohnmacht endlich
Erschrecken wird und still in sich zerzittern;
Significantly, "das Böse" is introduced without any statement as to its origin being given. Hebbel skirts the problem and presents it to us as a de facto situation. Yet if its origin is shrouded in mystery, the hope is that it will by attrition, by constantly discharging its bolts, eventually wear itself out, subside and disappear. It appears that the ultimate and final eradication of evil is a necessary prerequisite to establishment of the final universal love union of being. The force of evil must somehow be allowed to dissipate itself, for there is no place for it in the third phase.

The second conditional answer reaches into metaphysical depths on the nature of God, to which Hebbel has previously penetrated:

Ob mit, weil Gott, sich selber unverständlich,
Wie unser Geist in Worte, in Figuren
Zerfliessen musste, um sich dadurch kenntlich
Zu werden, und aus allen Signaturen
Die einige zusammen sich zu stellen,
Sodass die Welt, trotz ihrer finstern Spuren,
Ihm Fackel war, sein Innres aufzuhellen,
Und dass nicht uns're Schuld, nur sein Bedürfen
Den Gegensatz, dem Trotz und Hass entquellen,
Hervorrief, der nach mystischen Entwürfen
Uns, die wir leiden, quält, als ob wir täten,
Um so, indem wir all sein Bittres schlürfen,
In uns ihn bis zur Wurzel auszujätten
Und das Geheimnis erst zu offenbaren
Wenn wir zurück in ihn, den Urgrund, treten...

These lines link up the imponderables of evil, suffering and earthly dissonance with the nature of the God-principle.
It was perhaps necessary that the original disruption of
harmony, of union take place in order that the God-principle be able to come to its own full development and self-realization, both in the sense of fullness of being and fullness of self-knowledge. This of course presupposes that during the original union of being the God-principle was not conscious of itself, had not achieved identity. We are thus faced with the view of the universe as a progressive unfolding of consciousness, both in the God-principle investing it and in the individuals constituting it. God, "sich selber verständlich," had to achieve consciousness of identity by constantly projecting outside himself forms derived from his own nature, in order to see his own being mirrored outside himself and thereby become what he potentially was. The image Hebbel chooses here to clothe this thought, though not original, is truly apt. It is the analogy of the mind expressing itself in words, and in that it expresses itself, it becomes aware of what it is—externalized form leads to internal form. Hebbel's use of language in this connection is not accidental, but is consciously in line with his own deep convictions regarding the function of language in the development of the human being in general and of the poet in particular.

Thus the disharmony, the chasm in the universe, whence derive the truculence, hate, evil and individual suffering, becomes an inexorable necessity for the sake of the God-
principle. An inner law of the deity's being is relentlessly working itself out. The individuals, by drinking to the dregs the cup of suffering, somehow purge the universe and the divine principle of all the evil and bitterness, becoming sacrificial victims to the emergence of the divine as well as for their own emergence.

There remains still the question of guilt. Hebbel clearly states that it is not the individuals' fault, either singly or collectively ("...Uns, die wir leiden, quält, als ob wir täten,---Und dass nicht uns're Schuld, nur sein Bedürfen..."). It begs the question even to ask about guilt, for guilt is not assignable—the very nature of things imposes a suffering that cannot be traced to any transgression. Suffering is posited with the existence of the world. Thus a fearful "Riss" exists in the "Weltordnung," and the deity, participating in and even benefitting from this awesome dialectic, is himself caught up in this inexplicable "Riss."

Clearly the ultimate reason for all of this is cloaked in mystery ("mystischen Entwürfen"). What is the source of these ancient designs? It is not said, probably because it cannot be said, for it seems that it is given neither to man nor the most perceptive poet to penetrate beyond these mysterious veils. In any event the main issue is not who is to blame, but rather the specific attitude of man, now that he is immersed in the flux of suffering.
The metaphysical analysis of the universe and the divine principle which Hebbel proffers here to Elise must be faulted in its sincerity and credibility on several accounts, and in the first place for its elaborate detail. Hebbel allows himself to do precisely what he will not allow Christian theology to do: to make speculative, exact statements regarding the metaphysical. We recall the "Hochmut" of which he accuses the Christian who dares to prepare "Himmelskarten" and put his seal upon God's handiwork. (L 48)

Nor are his concepts original. They are simply Schelling in rhymed form. An additional argument against these ideas being at all binding upon Hebbel (or upon us) is the fact that he never published the poem. Hebbel was not the one to be reticent about publishing anything, particularly not when he felt it had a message for his fellow man, for of his poetic function and mission as a prophet among men he was thoroughly convinced. Further we noted often the tendentiousness of the piece, how at every turn it is oriented toward consoling Elise. Thus it is written principally for effect, not content. Finally the very vehicle chosen, a poem, militates against acceptance of its ideas as binding for Hebbel. The poetic vehicle does not lend itself to precise interpretation, and we know well already that such unfettered, unbinding statement is the medium in which Hebbel is at home. The poem provides clear evidence of the highly provisional
character of Hebbel's philosophical God.

This God is a pantheistic God lacking substance or personality. Such a being is obviously not, especially for Hebbel, the object of a personal relationship, yet we do find a disconcerting number of entries in Hebbel's writings which would seem to point toward a possible involvement (or at least hoped-for involvement) with a personal God, distinct from the above-delineated philosophical God. These entries take the form of direct appeals to God, made in times of distress and crisis, or in times of hope, elation and fulfillment, all couched in a Christian form of address to the deity. Also open defiance is clearly present, and we shall now examine these entries in detail for indications of any sort of belief in a theistic concept, a personal, transcendent being.

The very first recorded entry is a prayer of request, and reveals concerns that are to engender further appeals:

Der Himmel wende das Unglück in Gnaden ab, denn aus zwei Gründen möcht ich noch nicht gern sterben. Einmal der Mutter wegen; dann hab' ich mich oft über des Lebens Ungerechtigkeit gegen mich beschwert, und möchte durch einige Hervorbringungen, denen ich mich gewachsen fühle, zeigen, dass ich vielleicht angemessener Verhältnisse verdient.

(D 408)

These are personal concerns, regarding his mother and himself. His feelings toward his mother were warm and deep, and it is not surprising that her death evoked not only a heartfelt eulogy but also a thankful realization: "Sie...ist, was ich
Hebbel's relationship with his father oscillated between hate and love, and his father's death became the occasion for an experience almost of a mystical nature on Hebbel's part. As his father lay dying, Hebbel recalls:

"...da fleht' ich krampfhaft: nur noch 8 Tage, Gott; es war, wie ein plötzliches Erfassen der unendlichen Kräfte, ich kann's nur mit dem konvulsivischen Ergreifen eines Menschen am Arm, der in irgend einem ungeheuren Fall, Hilfe oder Rettung bringen kann, vergleichen. Mein Vater erholte sich sogleich; am nächstfolgenden Sonnabend, Abends um 6 Uhr, starb er!"

(D 483)

Although this was a childhood experience, which Hebbel relates nine years later, its significance lies in the fact that Hebbel relates it at all and more particularly in its tone of wonder, even awe, at the unspoken realization of perhaps a miracle wrought by prayer, of an intimate, personal confrontation with the deity, of having directly reached and influenced the "unendlichen Kräfte."

Again and again persons dear to Hebbel cause him to implore a higher power for their welfare. About to leave Munich, he remarks: "Auch für meine kleine Beppi habe ich den Segen des Himmels herabgerufen." (D 1528)

A serious sickness of Elise causes Hebbel to cry out in remorse and desperation:

Gott! Sie ist die letzte, dir mir die Welt er-
traglich macht! Und ich hab' so viel, so unendlich viel gegen sie gut zu machen! Der Gedanke—ich will ihn nicht denken—er könnte mich vernichten! Es ist fürchterlich, dass man so innig miteinander verflochten sein und doch allein sterben kann! Gnade! Gnade! 
(D 1933)

And a few days later comes further anguish: "Gott, wenn ich Dir irgendetwas gelte, so stelle sie wieder her." (D 1936)

In later entries regarding Elise, Hebbel asks that God might put him in a position to provide a tolerable existence for her (D 2402) and expresses his eternal gratitude to God for the happy days spent with her during Christmas. (D 2404)

But then, with obvious pride, he addresses God at year's beginning:

Gott, Du weisst es: ich bitte Dich nicht um Tand...nur um das, was zu meiner und meiner Teuersten Erhaltung notwendig ist...
(D 2416)

Practically in the evening of his life, after he has long since broken with Elise and married Christine Enghaus, his utterances assume a more conventional flavor: "Gott schütze die Meinigen." (D 5776) and

Gott sei Dank, ich kann von diesem Jahre sagen, dass es gesund verlaufen ist, bis auf kleine Störungen; gesund für Frau und Kind, gesund für mich!
(D 6052)

A second and equally persistent concern behind Hebbel's turning to God is his desire for personal development and fulfilment. This overriding consciousness of his poetic talent, his own worth, God's unfairness in not affording
him the opportunity to develop his capabilities free of financial duress was the second major element in the initially quoted diary entry. It was to recur time and time again under various aspects. In one entry Hebbel chides himself:

Ich habe heute einen Entschluss gefasst, zu dessen Ausführung Gott mir Kraft verleihe. Ich habe bisher all mein Tun und Treiben zu einseitig auf Poesie bezogen;...

(D 746)

But his overpowering desire to be a poet, coupled with the knowledge that through no fault of his own he has been denied the opportunity of developing these powers, throw him into a desperate quandary:

Ich fühle es nur zu deutlich: die Handhaben, die Hebel durch die sich meine Kräfte in Bewegung setzen lassen, sind zerbrochen, und ich bin viel reicher, als mir je gelingen wird, zu zeigen. Nur wer sich in einem ähnlichen Fall befindet, vermag zu fühlen, was dies heisst. Es ist wahr, bei dem ewigen Gott, es ist wahr...

(D 1323)

Although this has the character of a conventional exclamation, Hebbel does view his life as intertwined with the providence of a personal God, a God whom he holds responsible for his lot and to whom he often complains. In Munich he calls upon God to witness his horrible inner frustration: "... wie oft fleh' ich aus tiefster Seele: o Gott, warum bin ich, wie ich bin! Das Entsetzlichste!" (D 582) This dissatisfaction with himself and with God for having made him the way he is, is evidenced again upon the death of his friend, Rousseau, when Hebbel, depressed over his lack of
feeling and sorrow, cries out to Rousseau:

...bitte Gott, das er dies verfluchte, starre
Herz so zerquetsche, zerdrique, martre, bis es
wieder zu fiihlen anfängt oder zu schlagen auf-
hört.

(Werke, Vol. I, p. 328)

Hebbel's bitterest outburst against God occurs in Munich:

Nein, wenn ich bedenke, was ich unter anderen
Umständen geworden wäre,...weil ich in der Ju-
gend,...in Block und Eisen lag, wahrlich, da
beiss' ich die Zähne zusammen, und ich kann
es der allwaltenden Macht kaum vergeben.

(L 88)

But this peak of bitterness subsides and when Hebbel
leaves Munich his mood becomes more hopeful and balanced:

Ich hab dort gebetet, um Segen für München, das
mich in seinem Schoss so freundlich aufnahm, und
um Segen für mich selbst. 'Mach etwas aus mei-
nem Leben—rief ich aus—es sei, was es sei!"

(D 1528)

Here certainly the degree to which Hebbel on occasion could
feel himself in God's hands, or the extent to which, according
to his feeling, God exercised direction and providence over
his life, receives strong expression. A mood of trust, of
thankfulness has superseded earlier frustration and impa-
tience, and the day after Hebbel begins his first major
poetic effort, Judith, he cries out: "Gott, wenn das gin-
ge!" (D 1677) Several days later, after continued progress
the earnest prayer is breathed: "Gott verhüte dass nicht
Alles plötzlich wieder ins Stocken gerate." (D 1677)

Hebbel's continuing development of his poetic powers
becomes for him the breakthrough that gives meaning to his
whole existence, and as another drama, Genoveva, takes shape under his hands, he cries out: "Thränen des Danks, nimm sie, Ewiger! Aus allen Tiefen meiner Seele steigt Genoveva hervor!..." (D 2133) The unspeakable joy now filling his entire being stabilizes Hebbel and later in a calmer, reflective mood he says:

Gott ist unverdientermassen unendlich gnädig gegen mich, und wohl wird es sich ziemen, dass ich dies in meinem Tagebuch, worin so viele Klagen und Ausbrüche der Verzweiflung stehen, einmal mit freudiger Seele ausspreche.

Hebbel then describes the nature of this grace:

Der einzige Wunsch meiner Jugend, derjenige, in dem ich nur lebte, war, dass ich ein Dichter werden möchte. Ich bin einer geworden und jetzt erst erkenne ich, was das heisst. Höhere Naturen können nur dann, wenn ihnen das schöpferische Talen verliehen ist, zum vollen Ausdruck, ja zum vollen Gefühl ihres Daseins kommen, und dies ist doch das höchste, das einzige Glück.

Now in the fullest consciousness of himself, of his being and of his talent, he concludes by referring all to God:

"Jetzt wieder, nun ich von Genoveva voll bin, fühle ich mich so ganz—Dank, tiefen Dank dem Ewigen!" (D 2143)

At this point another prayer of Hebbel's begins to be answered: the alleviation of his financial misery. Before he goes to bed on the day when he receives ten Louis d'or from Campe for his Judith, he writes:


(D 2308)
Now that Hebbel has achieved initial success in his poetic calling and has come to an inner equilibrium and has seen the first material fruits of his poetic talent, he has basically solved his most pressing problems. His interest is now directed to preserving and building upon these achievements. As he begins the year 1842, he is humble and suppliant, and casting aside any detailed ruminations, turns his gaze to God and his relationship to his new-found life:

Statt alles Übrigen steht hier am besten das Wort Vertrauen. Ja, Vertrauen! Mit Vertrauen will ich das Jahr anfangen, denn daran fehlt es mir oft gar sehr.

(D 2416)

He then describes what he desires from God:

Gott, Du weisst es: ich bitte Dich nicht um Tand, nicht um Ehre und Ruhm...um Überfluss, nur um Fortdauer der inneren und äusseren Existenz, nur um das, was zu meiner und meiner Teuersten Erhaltung notwendig ist und um Deinen Segen für mein geistiges Leben. Darum will ich auch glauben, dass Du mich erhören wirst!

(D 2416)

Hebbel has arrived at a first stage of happiness, contentment and security, and as new desires and plans emerge, this time the possibility of a travel stipend from the king of Denmark, Hebbel speaks of his new hopes:

Gott, Du siehst mein Herz, Du weisst, dass es keine eitle Wünsche nährt, dass ich nur das begehre, was ich begehren muss, wenn ich Mensch unter Menschen bleiben soll, Du weisst auch, dass, wenn ich oft mit Dir über mein bisheriges Lebenslos haderte, dies nur wegen der unsicheren Zukunft geschah, steh' mir bei!

(D 2545)
Hebbel can reach Copenhagen, whereupon he embroiders this step forward with the remark:

...So sehr bin ich noch bei keinem einzigen Unternehmen begünstigt worden, die Gnade Gottes waltet sichtbar über mich, nun will ich auch nicht wieder kleingläubig mäkeln und meistern, sondern mich dem Wellenschlag des Lebens mit freudigem Vertrauen überlassen.

(D 2586)

Hebbel's trust, of a religious nature and oriented toward a providential deity, issues in a double success, for he receives both the promise of forty Louis d'or from Campe and a letter notifying him that his audience with the king has turned out favorably:

Der Ewige sieht mein Herz, er weiss, dass ich für seine hohe Gnade um so dankbarer bin, je weniger ich mich ihrer würdig fühle; ich habe vor tiefster Rührung geweint, als ich den Brief las.

(D 2640)

Yet it is not only concern for his loved ones, for his own personal and poetic development, fruition and recognition, for material security that inspires Hebbel to prayer. On one occasion an old acquaintance, particularly disagreeable to Hebbel, comes on a begging mission and Hebbel, at first cold, melts and then remarks: "Ach man sollte nie, nie über einen Menschen urteilen. Alles Gott anheimstellen."

(D 2154)

On another occasion the sight of nature suffices to turn Hebbel's thoughts to God. While waiting in Copenhagen for the audience he relates:
...Das Waldchen von Düsternbroock war vergilbt, Millionen von Blättern lagen am Boden. Ich ging und betete zu Gott. (D 2617)

A few years later Hebbel learns in Vienna of a law allowing criminals to be condemned by eyewitnesses. Reflecting on his own inability to recall accurately details regarding even his best friends, he cries out, appalled: "...Gott, Gott, auf welchem Fundament ruht die menschliche Gerechtigkeitspflege!" (D 4234)

Not only such isolated incidents but also graver political events later in Hebbel's life impel him to turn to God. In Vienna in 1851 he notes:

Die Weltlage hat eine feste Gestalt wieder gewonnen, die letzten Ereignisse in Frankreich sind entscheidend gewesen, es tritt eine Periode ein, wo die Gegensätze sich ins Auge fassen und unter Benutzung der auf beiden Seiten gemachten Erfahrungen auf dauernde Vermittlung angehen können. Dazu gebe Gott seinen Segen. (D 5036)

Hebbel has by this time become conservative politically and it is only natural that he reacts as follows to an assassination attempt against the emperor:

...Das ruchlose Attentat hat seinen Zweck Gott sei Dank verfehlt, die Majestät, die nach dem Dichterwort den Gesalbten des Herrn umfliesst, hat ihre Unnahbarkeit nicht verleugnet;... (D 5076)

Thus the entries in detail. On the one hand it is quite evident that in many of them we are dealing with conventional modes of expression. This usage appears to predominate in the later entries. Yet at times the element of
sincerity is clearly present, and one has the definite feeling that Hebbel does turn directly to some superior being, regardless of how this being is to be conceived. The feeling on Hebbel's part is genuine, and we are not dealing only with simple convention, and certainly not deception. Joachim Müller comments:

Es ist kaum anzunehmen, dass Hebbel in diesen Gebeten sich nur in die Rolle des christlich-frommen Gotteskindes hineinspielt, der Ton ist völlig echt, und das Erlebnis zittert bis in die Sprachform hinein nach. 27

Also the objection against the indirect prayers as being simply a conventional manner of speaking is given no credence:

Auch in den indirekten Wiedergaben von Gebeten hat man nicht den Eindruck, dass es sich um gedankenlose Konvention, blosse Formel oder unaufrichtige Tarnung handle... 28

for this principle, this power that Hebbel has such respect. But earlier Hebbel had said:


(L 43)
Müller concludes:

Gott ist also durchaus nicht etwa pantheistisch mit Natur oder Universum gleichgesetzt; ... Das ist eine sehr eigentümliche und eigenwüchsige Gottesauffassung, die mit den geläufigen philosophiegeschichtlichen Begriffen Theismus oder Pantheismus nicht recht zu decken ist. ... Hebbels Gott ist weder immanent noch transzendent, er ist in der Welt existent, ohne sich zu konkretisieren. Er ist das Weltprinzip. Er ist nicht nur Sein, sondern auch Wesen, das der Mensch im Geist und in der Wahrheit anbeten kann und soll: 29

Such a being, if indeed he is to be called such, is difficult to conceive of, and Müller admits that Hebbel's God concept is "ausgesprochen philosophisch," "Hebbel philosophiert über Gott," and suggests:

Tut Hebbel nicht besser daran, bei seiner Gottesauffassung statt von Gott überhaupt nur vom Göttlichen zu sprechen? 30

Hebbel has often made use of this term. One of its first occurrences has already been quoted in the context of his thoughts on immortality:

Das ist des Menschen letzte Aufgabe, aus sich heraus ein dem Höchsten, Göttlichen, Gemässes zu entwickeln und so sich selbst Bürge zu werden für jede seinem Bedürfnis entsprechende Verheissung.

(D 584)
This reference could apply to a God, conceived of as an ideal being, and man is to approximate that ideal being in his own life as the condition of his own continuation.

What in particular is to be imitated?

Es gibt keinen Weg zur Gottheit, als durch das Tun des Menschen. Durch die vorzüglichste Kraft, das hervorragendste Talent, was jedem verliehen worden, hängt er mit dem Ewigen zusammen und so weit er dies Talent ausbildet, diese Kraft entwickelt, so weit nähert er sich seinem Schöpfer und tritt mit ihm in Verhältnis. Alle andere Religion ist Dunst und leerer Schein.  
(D 1211)

Positive development of one's powers and talents makes one "göttlich" and places one in a worthy relationship to God. But then Hebbel notes that the divine and God can be in opposition: "Das Göttliche lehnt sich gegen Gott auf, weil es seines Gleichen ist." (D 1698) and:

(D 1739)

Here the view changes radically and "das Göttliche" in man is viewed as having no origin outside man, and any attempt to assume such an origin or ideal source is pure deception, for man himself is the author of his "Göttlichkeit."

Müller attempts to utilize the term "das Göttliche" particularly in the meaning of an ethical value or ideal:
Das Göttliche ist ein sittlicher Wertbegriff, während Gott ein religiöser Urbegriff ist, auch wenn er als kosmisches Prinzip verstanden wird. Das Göttliche ist das Höchste in der dem Menschen überhaupt zugänglichen Wertskala des Seins, während Gott jenseits der Wertungsmöglichkeit steht. 31

31Ibid., p. 132

The term "God" remains an indistinct existential principle. The emphasis on the ethical implications of "das Göttliche" is definitely applicable in Hebbel's case, but Müller's remarks admit of a cleavage between the two concepts of "Gott" and "das Göttliche," and thus the adoption of "das Göttliche" does not lead to any greater elucidation of Hebbel's God. He is defined more negatively than positively. Certainly the reason for this persistent difficulty in defining Hebbel's God lies in a statement already made by Müller and repeatedly underscored by this study: Hebbel continually philosophizes about God, and in such a procedure the term "God" is susceptible to endless, even contradictory interpretations and developments. We have seen how Hebbel's philosophizing has taken him far afield from any distinctly theistic notions, from which he early cast himself adrift, along a path of secularized speculation. His searching has brought him to rely upon theosophical notions of Schubert and Schelling, with their emphasis upon an emergent deity.
and the key role played in this theogony by the poet. Yet Hebbel's God remains an "als-ob" construct and cannot be accorded the honor of genuine conviction. Hebbel has tried various approaches to God, and has relied strongly upon poetic intuition, "Ahnung," and a concomitant distrust of mental concepts in fathoming reality. The world-picture (and "picture" is used deliberately) of a Schelling more approximates Hebbel's own manner of apprehending the world, particularly with the stature it affords the poet.

Unwavering conviction and commitment are therefore not to be sought from Hebbel for the philosophical God we have delineated. It must be emphasized again, however, that this in no way diminishes Hebbel's sincerity in his search for a final formulation nor his hope that there might be some ultimate, unifying metaphysical reality. Genuine commitment on Hebbel's part is possible, and we shall direct our attention to these values in the next chapter.

There is the final facet of the problem of God evinced by the personal character of the preceding diary entries. For all the conventionality of expression there still remains an undercurrent of felling pointing in the direction of some sort of indistinct but personal God. Moreover Hebbel's quarreling with God, be it for reasons of personal grief or difficulties, or for God's being somehow responsible for the contradictory nature of the universe, or for God's
not showing himself clearly if he does indeed exist, all
this negative jousting suggests an opponent, perhaps the
only worthy one at that, in whom Hebbel would like to believe,
if only to have someone with whom to argue and prove him-
self against. This is reminiscent of a similar reaction
in that great challenger of God, Nietzsche, in the chapter
"Zauberer" of Also sprach Zarathustra, where the old man
complains of the fact that God, the hunter behind the clouds,
stalks him incessantly. The old man cries out defiantly:

Du Blitz-Verhüllter! Unbekannter! Sprich!
Was willst du, unbekannter—Gott?

As soon as the old man asks the question, he realizes the
answer:

Haha!
Mich—ganz?

But then the old man makes his counter-demand:

Gib Liebe mir—wer wärmt mich noch?
Gib, ja ergib,
Grausamster Feind,
Mir—dich!—

But at that moment God disappears:

Davon!
Da floh er selber,
Mein letzter einziger Genoss,
Mein grosser Feind,...
O komm zurück,
Mein unbekannter Gott! Mein Schmerz! Mein letztes
Glück!

Hebbel's personal God documents the fact that his search was
a search of the heart as well as of the mind. But at the
same time it is undeniable that God, "Mein grosser Feind," assumes the role of adversary in Hebbel's mental and emotional sparring. Hebbel had a need to measure himself against someone great, to lend dramatic stature to his struggles, and what greater opponent than God could he choose? This use of God for dramatic purposes forms a natural prelude to the next chapter and will be seen to be a hallmark of Hebbel's drama. In the very first drama examined, Genoveva, we will encounter in the figure of Golo a logical extension of Hebbel's propensity to utilize God as a dramatic foil.
CHAPTER IV.

THE DRAMAS: DUALISM IN GOD AND THE DIVINE

While Hebbel's formulations of his ideas in his diaries and letters remain provisional and non-binding, sometimes repeated with increasing emphasis, sometimes canceled out by an opposing idea, his dramas are of an entirely different character. Hebbel was well aware that the dramatic statement is of a far more conclusive and binding nature. His theoretical work, Mein Wort über das Drama—1845, identifies the seriousness and depth of drama's purpose: "Das Drama stellt den Lebensprozess an sich dar..." in that it calls attention to the eternal truths governing man's innermost condition and relationship to the great organism of which he is part and to which he is inescapably subordinate. As he says in his Vorwort zur Maria Magdalena a year later:

Das Drama, als die Spitze aller Kunst, soll den jedesmaligen Welt- und Menschzustand in seinem Verhältnis zur Idee, d.h. hier zu dem Alles bedingenden sittlichen Zentrum, das wir im Welt-organismus, schon seiner Selbsterhaltung wegen annehmen müssen, veranschaulichen.

(Dramen I, p. 307) 32

32 This and all succeeding drama quotations are taken from the Carl Hanser edition of Hebbel's works, volumes I and II. Lines will be identified by act, scene and line number or by act and page number.
This inner relationship of his drama to the moral center will emerge as a central part of the following discussion of the dramas and deserves to be underlined at the outset. Drawing attention to his "dramatic" statement, Hebbel comments to Cotta, his publisher, after having sent him four dramas in 1857:

...Mehr als irgend Einer habe ich für das Grundfundament der menschlichen Gesellschaft, das in unseren Tagen auf allen Seiten bedroht ist, gekämpft...lesen Sie sie die dramas dann, nicht als dichterische Werke, sondern als Aktenstücke, die das hier Gesagte beweisen sollen...

(L 582)

Hebbel's dramas, his "Aktenstücke," in contrast to the diary and letter statements, are and must be to a high degree carefully considered statements, position papers, as it were. For inherent in each drama is a formal necessity which encompasses all the relevant factors relating to the given problem complex in the particular drama. This affords a total view, a "Gesamtzusammenhang," bringing together all significant details affecting the metaphysical realities under scrutiny and thus creating within the drama its own correctives. Each drama considered is by its very nature a balanced, carefully weighed presentation of man in his relationship not only to his fellow man but also to history and all other forces within and without man.

The role of God and the divine in Hebbel's dramas will be the focus of the following discussion. All relevant
dramas will be examined for the evidence they furnish regarding the role, significance and any change of viewpoint vis-à-vis God and the divine. Those which will be most fruitful are Hebbel's two early dramas, Genoveva and Judith. In these crucial pieces God himself is actually the problem debated. The characters speak with him, argue with him, and God in his turn plays and active role both in their lives and in the action of the plays. These two dramas will furnish key aspects of Hebbel's concept of God and his role in the destiny of the individual and the world.

We turn first to Hebbel's second major drama, Genoveva. This drama introduces us to the problem complex which forms perhaps Hebbel's initial and central idea of tragedy: dualism in the divine between values conceived of as divine. Although Genoveva was completed on March 1, 1841, (D 2282) almost a year later than Judith (January 28, 1840), (D 1893), Hebbel had summarized the Genoveva material in his diary on February 2, 1839, (D 1475) fully eight months before he even began Judith on October 3, 1839. (D 1677) That this problem of dualism in the divine was at the root of his dramatic plans and thinking is attested to by an even earlier development of these ideas in the play Mirandola. Wittkowski\(^{33}\) has illustrated Hebbel's attempt in Mirandola to construct a

\(^{33}\)Wittkowski, Der junge Hebbel, pp. 79ff.
dualism between physical desire (considered as natural and thus divine) and the commands of the moral law in conscience, also taken as divine. But this early attempt is unsuccessful. In Genoveva Hebbel again takes up the problem and tries to project a similar rift into the divine by means of Golo's sophistic argumentation with God. God appears throughout the drama, both as a partner to Golo's monologues and as a directly intervening figure. In Golo Hebbel thrashes out the problems of passion and conscience:

In Golo schildere ich die innerste Natur der Leidenschaft, die, wenn sie auch die bösen Triebe, die sie unterstützen könnten, nicht gerade entfesselt, doch wenigstens die guten, die sich ihr entgegenstellen, so lange unterdrückt und hemmt, bis das Übel da ist.

(D 2211)

Golo has been entrusted with the care of Genoveva, the young and beautiful wife of his master, Siegfried. Golo burns with passion for her, yet realizes the sinfulness of his desire. In an effort to free himself from his scruples, he attempts to gain God's assent to his passions. He tries to wrest from God a sign that he, Golo, is by nature a scoundrel and not responsible for his actions against the moral order. This he does by placing himself in jeopardy on the edge of the castle tower. If God, knowing full well Golo's intention, does not topple him, then, Golo reasons, "Brech ich nicht Hals und Bein zu dieser Stund', So leg' ich's aus: ich soll ein Schurke sein." (Gen., II/1, 470-71)
But God does not cast Golo down, nor does Golo feel he must be his own executioner, and since God does not strike him, Golo concludes: "Er aber tat ein Wunder—und warum? Damit in mir der Schurke reifen kann." (Gen., II/2, 512-13) Golo convinces himself that he has won God's consent for the moral relativism he wishes to follow. 

This pattern of shifting responsibility for his own actions to others by making them, rather than himself, choose between irreconcilable alternatives is Golo's standard procedure. In act III, when alone with Genoveva, he threatens to commit suicide to prevent himself from taking her. He construes any cry from her that he not commit suicide as tantamount to permission to possess her. She is also to be the mouthpiece of God in his contorted logic: "...hat er Golo himself dann Das Recht, sich selbst zu toten? Sprecht für Gott!" (Gen., III/10, 1450-51) This sophistry, while

34 Gert Kleinschmidt, Die Person im frühen Drama Hebbel's (Lahr/Schwarzwald: Moritz Schauenburg Verlag, 1965), p. 42. Kleinschmidt identifies this as an "ideological function of the religious" and correctly says: "Und gerade das Religiöse als Bestimmungsgrund des Gesollten muss besonders geeignet sein, das Gewollte zu legitimieren." But succeeding statements, such as: "Keinesfalls dürfen wir jedoch Golo als religiöse Existenz ansprechen." (p. 42) and "Und eben dadurch erhält auch das Drama überhaupt seinen Stellenwert zwischen 'Theodizee und Nihilismus'..." (pp. 43-44) adopt an ultimate evaluation of the drama in terms of von Wiese's categories. The present interpretation disagrees with this and sees precisely in Golo's continued attempts (and ultimate failure) to silence the voice of conscience, the moral law, through a pretended relativization of values in God, the principal support for a
persisting and triumphing consciousness of the moral. Golo's apparent tragedy is that he cannot blot out the divine, no matter how he tries to subvert its power and efficacy. The divine is not a fictitious force, but a powerful, objectively-conceived moral order.

repugnant, bears testimony to the strength of conscience in Golo, a consciousness of right and wrong which he vainly tries to smother. It will not allow him to blunt this sensitivity, as a true scoundrel perhaps would, and illustrates Golo's overriding need to justify himself ethically.

In the final scene, when Golo can no longer endure the structure of lies and deceit with which he has clothed his actions, he takes action against himself in his typically exaggerated fashion.

Im Angesicht des Himmels heb ich jetzt
Die Hand als Richter auf, ich steh zugleich
Als Kläger und Beklagter da,...
(Gen., V/9, 3546-48)

He then puts out his eyes, with the request that Caspar tie him to a tree in the woods and leave him to his well-deserved suffering and eventual death. Previously Golo had attempted to twist the law of God to his own ends and thus to relativize it. Now he goes to the opposite extreme and arrogates to himself the roles of judge, plaintiff, accused and even executioner to some extent, in order to wreak full vengeance upon himself. Overdone as it is, it is still a final subordination to the moral order with its unchanging, unchangeable validity. This partial moral purification of
Golo was of prime importance for Hebbel. He remarks that Golo has advanced morally and is a man

...der seine Dialektik, sein Belauschen der Zwie­spaltigkeit unserer Natur allerdings zu weit treibt, der aber doch am Schluss sittlich höher steht, trotz Blut und Schuld, als am Anfang,... (L 607)

Golo's full moral purification in the final scene, or his full atonement for his guilt is somewhat vitiated, as noted above, but why? It is because his sincerity becomes somewhat diluted through the roles he adopts. This has the effect of charging the blame for his actions to some external bar of justice which chastises a hapless creature, namely Golo. It is as if he says, "I do not punish myself; this cruel law punishes me." But the entire procedure is initiated by Golo's conscience, his clear consciousness of monstrous guilt and its inescapability. Golo's theatrical manner of reacting, his final attempt somehow to cast responsibility onto another party, is a final illumination of the central issue of the play. This is Golo's attempt to create artificially a conflict between the moral values and God and thereby to absolve himself of guilt. From the very beginning of the play it was Golo's consistent strategy to obtain, through sophistry, of course, God's consent to his immoral desires. Once this was effected Golo could easily disclaim all responsibility for his acts, for the conflict between values then existed in God Himself. This corresponds to Heb-
bel's avowed intention of creating drama which

...die dramatische Dialektik nicht bloss in
die Charaktere, sondern unmittelbar in die Idee
selbst hineingelegt, dass also nicht bloss das
Verhältnis des Menschen zu der Idee, sondern die
Berechtigung der Idee selbst debattiert werden
wird.

(D 2864)

In Genoveva the attempt to maintain such a dualism between
God, as author of Golo's nature and thus of his passion for
Genoveva, and God as author of the moral restriction upon
this passion utterly fails. The supposed conflict to be
sure is present, but it is by no means insoluble. The answer
is plainly for Golo to master his own desires, and no amount
of sophistry can project a dualism into the divine. In the
end Golo can no longer maintain this self-deception and
escapism and must acquiesce in the command of conscience with­
in him. Golo's "Schein-Tragödie" collapses about him in the
light of this final realization.

God's role in the play is three-fold. In the eyes of
the characters of the play, God is synonymous with the moral
order and presides as the judge of moral action. He is
allied with conscience and is instrumental in effecting the
preservation of the moral order.

Secondly, God is an agent of historical development.
Genoveva is after all a saint, whose physical beauty reflects
an even more radiant inner moral beauty deriving from her
faithfulness to her husband despite the tribulations visited
upon her by Golo. In a broader context she is to be a selected vessel of salvation for mankind, as the spirit of Drago proclaims. (Gen., IV/6, 2880ff.) God will not destroy the world for its wickedness as long as one worthy servant of God emerges once every thousand years to delight his eye. That destined figure is Genoveva, and after she has suffered seven years, she will enter into her reward and be a model of virtue for all mankind. In anticipation of this Drago's spirit commands Margaretha:

\[
\text{Du aber reinigst ihr beflecktes Bild,} \\
\text{Damit die Welt die neue Heilige} \\
\text{Erkennt und preist, zu der sie beten soll.} \\
\]  
\text{(Gen., IV/6, 2988-90)}

An important historical juncture has been reached. On the personal level she is in Siegfried's eyes a reflection of the divine:

\[
\text{Verbirg errötend nicht an meiner Brust} \\
\text{Dein Angesicht, es ist der Widerstrahl} \\
\text{Von allem, was auf Erden göttlich ist.} \\
\]  
\text{(Gen., I/2, 187-89)}

But Siegfried is not aware of the dangers confronting his wife through Golo's machinations, and at one point God must intervene to preserve Genoveva. As Golo's henchmen are preparing to execute Genoveva and her child, a finger is raised to the heavens by Klaus, the crazy one. The sun has turned black and red, which the executioners interpret as a sign of displeasure from God. But they do not consider this to apply to Genoveva, who is an adulteress in their
eyes. Yet when Hans, now unsure of himself, gives the sword to Klaus to perform the bloody deed, Klaus unexpectedly turns upon Hans and kills him. Genoveva, sensing the intervention of God, cries: "Ewger Gott, bist Dus?" (Gen. V/6, 3318) and thereupon prevents Klaus from also killing Balthasar. In the confusion she escapes into the forest with her child, whereupon Balthasar disarms and kills Klaus. Hebbel was keenly aware of Klaus' significance:

...und den tollen Klaus,...halte ich mit seinem zur Zeit der gänzlichen Verlassenheit aufflammen-den Gottesbewusstsein für die höchste Spitze des Werks.

(L 607)

Klaus becomes an instrument in the hands of God for the salvation and escape of Genoveva, that she might live to fulfill her divinely-appointed religious mission. At the decisive moment God excites Klaus' sensitivity to the immorality of Genoveva's imminent execution and Klaus intervenes. (Gen., V/6, 3315ff.) But as soon as Genoveva's rescue is effected, God does not prevent Klaus from falling victim to Balthasar's sword. Indeed, Genoveva inadvertently seals Klaus' fate and causes his death. God does not prevent his instrument from being crushed once Klaus' usefulness is at an end.

Is this God of history valid in Hebbel's eyes? The action of the play substantiates such a God and we know that Hebbel did not consider it impossible that God could
have acted directly upon human events in earlier epochs, when people believed in such interventions. Hebbel is content to utilize this belief, and indeed we shall see a much more direct intervention by God in history in the next play, *Judith*. Hebbel allows his dramas to have their own laws.

A third and final consideration regarding God is Golo's (or Hebbel's) use of God for dramatic effect. Golo constantly argues and quarrels with God, which we have already seen reflected in Hebbel's argumentative relationship to the deity in his diaries and letters. Previously we noted Golo's attempt to use God to justify his own immoral acts. Simultaneously this use of God has the effect of lending an artificial stature both to Golo (in his own eyes) and to his supposed moral dilemma and consequent suffering. Golo adopts a heroic posture which heightens and intensifies the discussion of the entire problem complex. It is patent over-dramatization on Golo's part, but he maintains this posture to the very end (cf. his solemn "...Im Angesicht des Him-mels..."). Hebbel is quite willing to utilize the figure of God, once it is admitted to the play by the beliefs of the characters, to achieve dramatic intensification of the figures and their problems. Succeeding dramas will furnish additional examples of this purely dramatic use of God.

Hebbel's *Judith* was a polemical piece in answer to Schiller's *Jungfrau von Orleans*, with which Hebbel had a long-
standing quarrel. Commenting on this in a letter to Elise, he says:

Zudem ist Schillers Jungfrau eine echte Theater Jungfrau; neben diesem Pfau wurde ein einfach-edles Mädchen, das, nachdem Gott durch seinen schwachen Arm ein Wunder ins Leben gerufen, vor sich selbst, wie vor einem dunklen Geheimnis, zurückschauderte, schlecht figurieren.

(L 43)

Schiller has created an ostentatious, unreal, superficial heroine:

Johanna durfte unter keiner Bedingung über sich selbst reflektieren, sie musste, wie eine Nacht-wandlerin, mit niedergeschlagenen Augen ihre Bahn vollenden...

(Werke, XI, p. 192)

Johanna is rejected on two accounts: she does not remain true to her nature as a woman nor does she reflect, that is, exhibit any real sensitivity to the deep moral issues bound up with her action. For the same reason Hebbel rejects the biblical Judith. She displays no sensitive, womanly nature and her callousness to the moral element makes her deed "die einer Katze."

Die Judith der Bibel kann ich nicht brauchen... sie freut sich, als sie seinen Kopf im Sack hat und singt und jubelt vor und mit ganz Israel drei Monate lang. Das ist gemein...Meine Judith wird durch ihre Tat paralysiert;...

(D 1872)

Hebbel's Judith is to be a genuine, psychologically real heroine, who remains thoroughly human, subject to doubt and anguish. Thus Hebbel begins his sally against the Christian God,
What then is Judith's harrowing experience? It is primarily a religious experience with unparalleled consequences for herself, for the Judaeo-Christian God and the system of ethical values predicated upon him. Judith's first words of the play, recounting the dream of a failing, weeping God, presage for us and for her the ultimate realization regarding God:

This dream depicts what is to be the nature of the succeeding play: Judith is to be placed in a situation of duress at God's own behest. She is to fall back upon her ancestral God, as she has been taught to do from childhood, but her God fails her, he cannot support her or shield her from the impending suffering, and he weeps bitter tears --
are they for Judith or in disappointment at his own impotence? At any rate, the crucial point of the dream is the illumination of an inadequacy, of a limitation of the power, a radical cleavage in the being of God Himself.

The basic concepts behind this poetic canvas are reiterated by Hebbel in harsh, unmistakable prose in his famous diary entry of March 6, 1838:

Die Gottheit selbst, wenn sie zur Erreichung grosser Zwecke auf ein Individuum unmittelbar einwirkt und sich dadurch einen willkürlichen Eingriff (setzen wir den Fall, so müssen wir die ihm korrespondierenden Ausdrücke gestatten) ins Weltgetriebe erlaubt, kann ihr Werkzeug durch dasselbe Rad, das es einen Augenblick aufhielt oder anders lenkte, nicht schützen. Dies ist wohl das vornehmste tragische Motiv, das in der Geschichte der Jungfrau von Orleans liegt. Eine Tragödie, welche diese Idee abspiegelte, würde einen grossen Eindruck hervorbringen durch den Blick in die ewige Ordnung der Natur, die die Gottheit selbst nicht stören darf, ohne es büßen zu müssen.

(D 1011)

The power in the ascendancy is "die ewige Ordnung der Natur," before which even God must make his obeisance. Indeed, it is not so much Judith, but the deity who stands before the bar in this play, and Hebbel intended it so. We have already noted his intention to cast "...die dramatische Dialektik... in die Idee selbst..." (D 2864) and we must now ask what "die Idee" is. It is the complex of forces\(^{35}\) coming to bear upon


Judith's act, principally however the divine power which
initiates the entire sequence of action. It is the efficacy and pre-eminence of the divine prerogatives that is to be debated, it is God himself who is to be scrutinized. In fine, the Judaeo-Christian God, with the attendant subordinate view of nature, human responsibility, and moral culpability is on trial in Judith.

But what train of circumstances leads to this restructuring of the Christian world-view? The Jewish nation faces extinction at the hand of the Assyrian infidel, Holofernes. The indecision and impotence of her countrymen goad Judith into action. Convinced that she has a divine directive, she leaves Bethulien to assassinate Holofernes in his own camp. But once she is face to face with Holofernes she realizes that he is the one man in the world equal to her, and senses herself drawn irresistibly to him, senses that she belongs to him. But Holofernes rejects her as in any way his equal and demeans her by using her, such as he might any woman, for his own pleasure. In a fit of rage at being rejected and abused, Judith decapitates Holofernes and thereby, without at the moment realizing it, accomplishes the divine mission entrusted to her. She is crushed:

(langsam, vernichtet) Nein...das war's nicht, nichts trieb mich, als der Gedanke an mich selber...mein Volk ist erlöst, doch wenn ein Stein den Holofernes zerschmettert hätte--es wäre dem Stein mehr Dank schuldig als jetzt mir! Dank? Wer will den? Aber jetzt muss ich meine Tat allein tragen, und sie zermalmt mich!

(Jud., V, p. 68)
Traditional interpretation of these lines has taken two directions. One view sees Judith suffering, experiencing the pangs of guilt, because she performed the deed of murdering Holofernes not out of love for God, but from personal motives.

This realization on her part of the last-minute shift in her motivation crushes her.\footnote{Friedrich Sengle, Das deutsche Geschichtsdrama (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 1952), p. 158; Liepe, Beiträge, p. 239.} This view is essentially the application of the standard Christian view of morality: an act, even murder, if done upon divine command and out of love for God, carries no guilt even though it normally would, since God sublimates the deed. But to the extent that one acts out of personal motivation rather than out of pure love of God, one becomes progressively tainted with guilt, both for the deed and for the departure from the purity of one's motivation. Judith, in this interpretation, is keenly aware of the shift in her motivation and is correspondingly guilty and feels this acutely.

shift in Judith's motivation, sees this as revealing to Judith that both her belief in her mission from God and her belief in God himself were simply a mask and illusion covering up her own secret, inner desires. Thus only her own desires were at work in the sequence of events. God, far from being any real entity, was nothing but an illusion, "Ideologie."

The Christian God has been exposed and deposed. In sum,

\[38\] Michel Vanhelleputte, "La Modernité de la Judith de Hebbel," in Études Germaniques (1963), Vol. 18, p. 429. This interpretation is based upon an existential assumption by Judith of guilt as her own guilt. For a criticism of this interpretation cf. Wittkowski, Der junge Hebbel, p. 279.

the first interpretation preserves the existence and omnipotence of the Judaeo-Christian God, while the second radically demolishes any viable concept of God. He becomes a phantom, a delusion.

Yet Hebbel's own commentary points in a different direction.

Eine Kritik, die nicht zum Kern meines Werkes vor­drängte, könnte fragen, wie Judith durch eine Tat, die Gott durch seinen Prophet verkündigte, und da­durch zur Notwendigkeit stempelte, in ihrem Gemüt vernichtet werden könne, sie könnte hierin einen Widerspruch erblicken.

(D 1958)

We have already heard Judith cry out: "Aber jetzt muss ich meine Tat allein tragen, und sie zermalmt mich!" The deed itself\[39\] produces Judith's feelings of guilt, and not before

\[39\] Wittkowski, Der junge Hebbel, pp. 230-31.
God, but before Hebbel's previously-mentioned "ewige Ordnung der Natur." This order is the objective moral order, created by the God of Deism, resembling in its autonomy physical nature and its laws. This concept, developed by the Renaissance, extended through the Enlightenment to Romanticism and was understood as an independently posited, inviolable code of ethics. The stern moralism evidenced here has its roots in Hebbel's traditional religious upbringing, which was imbued with the spirit of Old Testament righteousness.  

Even God, in Hebbel's eyes, is bound by this order, "...die die Gottheit selbst nicht stören darf, ohne es büßen zu müssen." This is Judith's numbing realization. As in her dream, God cannot hold her, cannot prevent her from falling into the abyss of guilt and suffering, for her deed is contrary to this eternal order.

Yet much is gained. Judith's degree of anguish is the measure of her greatness and sensitivity. Great as the loss
is on the one hand of a comforting Christian morality which would sublimate her guilt, greater yet is the grandeur of the newly-won vision of man which opens up. It is a lofty view of man, who autonomously hearkens to the moral order and decides good and evil from his own resources, his own conscience.

What then are the implications of this new state of affairs? The Christian notion of a totally sovereign God is shattered, yet God retains a definite, clearly powerful role. He can interject himself into events and effect a change in direction in historical development, and as such he is the master of history. But morality is autonomous, and God, in his elevated role as protector of the eternal order of nature, enforces the moral law even when he must cause it to be violated. He is master and judge of an ethic which does not allow itself to be relativized or held in abeyance upon occasion. Hebbel's aim was not to diminish God, but to assert the crucial fact of man's moral autonomy. From the fact that Hebbel completed the last act first, we can see that his overall aim from the inception of the drama was to reject the easy solution of a Christian concept of God as a final, harmonizing force in human life and destiny. In fact, the entire sequence of action was initiated precisely because of the assumption that God was a final harmonizing principle, that he could and would remove guilt. At the decisive moment when Judith ponders whether or not to embark upon the assassi-
nation of Holofernes she jumps up from her knees and cries out:

Er [the thought of murdering Holofernes] kam von dir! Der Weg zu meiner Tat geht durch die Sünde! Dank, Dank dir, Herr! Du machst mein Auge hell. Von dir wird das Unreine rein,...

(Jud., III, p. 29.)

But the burden of the play is that God doesn't make the unclean clean. This is the bitter insight. Even the divine exhibits the "Riss" that cleaves the universe. This paralyzing fact cannot be explained, only accepted, for it is the point where "...das Drama sich mit dem Weltmysterium in ein und dieselbe Nacht verliert."

God's stature is impressive. After all, in his function as master of history he effects the salvation of the Hebrew nation, thus advancing the historical process that is to deliver to the world one day the ethical core of Christianity. God advances this purpose not only through his agent, Judith, but also through another figure, Daniel. When the townspeople are about to be persuaded by Assad to open the gates to the Assyrians, thus nullifying God's plan, a miracle occurs and Assad's brother Daniel, who is blind and dumb, cries out: "Steiniget ihn! Steiniget ihn!" (Jud., III, p. 35) Although Daniel admits being taken care of for thirty years by Assad, he continues to exhort the crowd to stone Assad, who would deliver them to the Assyrians. Assad concurs: "Wehe! Wehe! Der Geist des Herrn spricht aus dem Stummen Mund! Steiniget mich!" (Jud., III, p. 36) The
multitude promptly accomplishes this. Another townsman, Samaja, then attempts to discredit Daniel for having caused the death of such a devoted brother: "Was gegen die Natur ist, das ist gegen Gott." (Jud., III, p. 37) Events are to prove him wrong, for when he later tries privately to persuade Daniel to commit suicide, Daniel suddenly strangles him and immediately offers the knife to Samaja's wife, that she might kill him. This frightening constellation reflects Judith's quandary. God uses Daniel twice to remove those who would thwart his designs, yet Daniel in both cases realizes the immorality of his deeds and tenders the knife to anyone to punish him. What is against nature must be punished, even though God has inspired it to further the great historical process.

In Judith, as well as in Genoveva, Hebbel allows God to be palpably felt in the play's action. But after these two dramas God does not visibly affect the course of historical events, regardless of attempts to make him responsible for value conflicts. God becomes a means for dramatic intensification of the conflicts. An important aspect of Judith's greatness in her reaction to her own historically conditioned, dualistically broken situation is that she is able personally to make a moral, ethical advance. She turns in revulsion from her fellow townsmen as they madly rush to butcher the leaderless and demoralized Assyrians and says: "Das ist Schlächter-Mut!" (Jud., V, p. 74) Nor will the cycle
of retribution fulfill itself upon her through a son she might possibly bear Holofernes. The elders and chief priests take an oath to grant any wish she might have, and her wish is: "So sollt ihr mich töten, wenn ichs begehre!" (Jud., V, p. 75) Judith diavows the existing revenge ethic, based on the Old Testament dictum of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, and chooses the more humane ethic of mercy and forgiveness.

In Maria Magdalena, Klara's growing crescendo of appeals to God has the character of both petition and complaint. Her outcries serve to underscore the fact of God's inaccessibility, her loneliness in her attempt to cast the dialectic, albeit unsuccessfully, into God. Klara's increasing revulsion at being inextricably caught up in the machinations and moral inflexibility of those about her causes her to say: "O mein Gott, an diesen Menschen bin ich gekettet!" (MM., I/4, p. 340) Her anguish at the knowledge that her father's earlier rebuff to the court bailiff eventually cost her mother her life presses from her the words:

Gott, Gott! Was ist alles möglich auf der Welt! Das hat meine Mutter mit einem jähn Tod bezahlen müssen! (MM., II/3, p. 360)

The disproportion between cause and effect, this discrepancy in justice, brought on by the bailiff's desire for revenge and the allegiance of her mother to an unbending, narrow code of honor, is to enter her life and precipitate in a
radicalized form a value conflict which will crush her also. Her desperation over being forced to go to Leonhard and ask him to marry her and thereby preserve her honor in the eyes of her father wrings from her the cry: "Gott im Himmel, ich würde mich erbarmen, wenn ich du wäre, und ich du!" (MM., II/5, p. 364) These words bring a great deal into focus and serve several functions. Klara finds it incredible that the world is as it is and yet God is supposed to be in charge. She attempts to bring God into the agonizing problem complex to effect a solution. Klara believes God should act. The fact that he doesn't is a failure on his part which she feels keenly. She complains to God, although not in the specious mann of Golo. Whether he can or not: he does not resolve the conflict. He neither releases her through an act of mercy nor resolves the unbearable situation in which she is caught. God recedes into the distance. If he fulfills any role here at all, it is only that of the final judge. But that does not help Klara to find a solution to the conflict which would leave her without guilt. Thus God's appearing in Klara's words dramatizes and sharpens the conflict in her soul. She had tried to avoid the worst by swallowing her womanly pride and offering herself to Leonhard. But she is rejected and finds herself faced with the terrible choice which martyrs her soul:

Leonhard. Du kannst Gott Lob nicht Selbst-Mörderin werden, ohne zugleich Kindesmörderin zu werden!
Klara. Beides lieber, als Vater-Mörderin!  
(MM., III/4, p. 372)

Klara's crushing realization is that she transgresses the moral code no matter what she does. Hers is truly a dualistic conflict within the divine. For her part she is willing to make an agonizing choice between the immoral alternatives, while still clear in her mind "...dass man Sünde mit Sünde nicht büsst!" (MM., III/4, p. 372.) But she will have a defense when she must finally answer for her crime:

Aber ich bins nicht allein, und leichter find ich am Jüngsten Tag noch eine Antwort auf des Richters Frage: warum hast du dich selbst umgebracht? als auf die: warum hast du deinen Vater so weit getrieben?  
(MM., III/2, p. 369)

Thus although the value conflict is projected into God, there is no intervention by God. Klara goes to her death.

Meister Anton, a catalyst in the entire catastrophe, cannot dislodge himself from a commitment to his own reputation in the eyes of others. Their opinion becomes decisive for him and even causes him to sacrifice his own daughter to salvage a vestige of self-respect. When the secretary says: "Sie hat getan was sie konnte--Er wars nicht wert, dass ihre Tat gelang!", Meister Anton answers: "Oder sie nicht!" (MM., III/11, p. 382) Once having paid this frightful price, Meister Anton has lost all and can only murmur: "Ich verstehe die Welt nicht mehr!" (MM., III/11, p. 382.) He cannot advance beyond his own narrowly
conceived morality. But the secretary's words, "Er wars nicht wert,...", show that he has overcome the narrow morality founded on public opinion, "...an die Zungen, die...herzischeln würden,...". (MM., III/11, p. 381) Klara, in overcoming her feelings of shame and deciding the issue solely between her own or her father's life, rises to a higher plane of values which transcend her narrow, bourgeois world. This is achieved by Klara through her own strength and insight. God becomes less a God and more a symbol of the divinity of the values of human dignity and a morality deriving from it. This is due to the fact that the concept of God, by being bound up with the value conflict, intensifies the conflict. The latter probably will not return in the future in the same form, for it is derived from the existing moral code, which gives indications of impending change.

The constellation of man in the historical situation as always lodged in a conflict between values, divinely conceived, from which one cannot emerge guiltless receives perhaps its best presentation in Hebbel's incomplete last play, Demetrius. Demetrius, believing himself to be the rightful Czar of Russia, has with the help of his Polish comrades toppled Czar Iwan. But the day before his coronation in Moscow as Czar of Russia he learns that he is not the legitimate heir to the Russian throne. His conscience bids him decline the crown, since it is not his by right despite all the blood spilled to bring him to the throne. He wishes to return
with a pure conscience to a simple life in Poland. But then
Mniczek, commander of his Polish troops, knowing full well
the enmity of the Russians would destroy them all, plunges
Demetrius into the awful conflict of values:

Doch ich? Und wir? Wir alle, die dir blind
Gefolgt sind in das unwirtbare Land,
Weil uns dein plötzlich aufgetauchtes Haupt
Erglänzte, wie ein neu entdeckter Stern.
Was wird mit uns?
(Dem., IV/10, 2976-2981)

He reminds Demetrius that he cannot remain unblemished, much
as he would like.

Hast du den Mut, bloss um dich rein zu halten
Vom kleinsten Hauch, der Seelen trüben kann,
Die große Wechsel-Rechnung durchzustreichen,
Die uns verknüpft, und Lieb und Treu zu opfern,
Und glaubst du, dass du rein bleibst, wenn dus tust?
(Dem., IV/10, 2985-2989)

There is no resolving this dilemma without incurring guilt.
It is value against value, illegitimate usurpation of a throne
in order to preserve the lives of those who fought in good
faith to gain it for Demetrius. Mniczek projects this disso-
nance between values on the human plane onto the highest level
possible as he continues:

Der Himmel selbst ruht auf gespaltenen Kräften,
Die ganze Welt auf Stoss und Gegenstoss:
Denkst du, der Mensch ist davon ausgenommen?
Pflicht gegen Pflicht, das ist auch sein Gesetz!
Du sinnst, mein Sohn! Lass das Gespenst der Nacht
Und wende dich dem Leben wieder zu:
Du bist der Zar, denn du bist Iwans Spross.
(Dem., IV/10, 2990-2996)

This, in Hebbel's last drama, is the clearest, most abstract
expression of the ultimate dualism on the plane of human
action. Duty against duty. This is but a reflection of the ultimate dissonance which is the law of being of heaven itself. Hebbel's use of the term "Himmel" callsto mind the concept of God and yet by not directly naming him keeps him out of the picture. Thus the idea of God for Hebbel fades into insignificance. For Demetrius and Mniczek, the concept of God is a viable, relevant factor. Hebbel makes use of it, but only in the most delicate way, as a symbol for the final worth, validity and necessity of human moral values. They are indeed the highest things we have, to be called divine, and yet in a given historical context they can and do conflict, despite their exaltedness.

Demetrius makes his choice—he will ascend the Russian throne and protect his comrades, but this horrible decision has cost him his own inner peace and strength. His situation is analogous to that of Herzog Ernst, whom we shall consider shortly, for he is a broken man.

Doch nimmer werd ich meinen Karneval
Mit Blut beflecken, keinen Missäter
Bestrafen, da ich selbst der grösste bin.
(Dem., IV/13, 3065-67)

As with Herzog Ernst, Demetrius' consciousness of the terrible decision he must make, the terrible guilt he thereby assumes, crushes him and this is the mark of his greatness. His sensitivity to the implications of the moral situation stamps him as noble. But the weight of the guilt will not allow him to bear it long. He knows he is now incapable
of ruling long:

Ich bin der Kapitän von einem Schiff
Das scheitert; rasch ins sichre Boot mit Euch,
Dann zünde ich die Pulverkammer an.
(Dem., IV/13, 3071-73)

All of Hebbel's truly great, tragic figures are ultimately crushed by their realization of the merciless dualism inherent in the human moral condition.

The political decision which costs Demetrius personally so dearly becomes a much more costly and involved decision for Herzog Ernst in Agnes Bernauer. For him it becomes not only a matter of violating his own conscience, but of condemning to death his son's wife, Agnes, in order to avoid the scourge of civil war and its accompanying devastation. But Ernst had attempted to prevent this final step by disinheriting his son Albrecht in favor of his other son, the young, sickly Adolf. In answering Preising's objection that it is terrible that Agnes should die solely because she is beautiful and good, Ernst states:

Da ist es auch! Ja! Darum stellt ichts
Gott anheim. Er hat gesprochen. Ich
warf mein eignes Junges aus dem Nest
und legte ein fremdes hinein. Es ist
tot!
(AB., IV/4, p. 736)

Thus Ernst was frustrated in his effort to avoid the frightful final decision. He was motivated by the realization of Agnes' basic innocence and had hoped God would solve the problem. But the problem is thrown back into his
hands by Adolf's death. Ernst refers again to this after Albrecht accuses him of inhumanity:

Ich bin ein Mensch, und hätts wohl verdient, dass es mir erspart worden wäre. Aber wenn du dich wider göttliche und menschliche Ordnung empörst: ich bin gesetzt, sie aufrecht zu erhalten, und darf nicht fragen, was es mich kostet!

(AB., V/9, p. 760)

In this passage Ernst remonstrates gently with God. This is reminiscent of Golo's complaints to God, but without Golo's sophistic insincerity. Here greatest sincerity is expressed. God does not free Ernst from the necessity of violating the highest value, namely from the execution of the innocent "Engel Gottes," Agnes Bernauer. The fact that Ernst had tried to have God solve the dilemma, and sees himself constrained to act in God's name and yet take the guilt upon himself identifies the conflict as existing in the divine order. Again it is also a dramatic intensification of the situation.

The values which clash here are personal values interlocked with secondary, ideological values. Agnes, the "Engel Gottes" is in Ernst's eyes "das reinste Opfer, das der Notwendigkeit im Lauf aller Jahrhunderte gefallen ist."

(AB., V/10, p. 764) Her virtue, her unblemished love for Albrecht, all these stamp her as innocent. Hebbel intended that she be understood as a victim of historical necessity,
as Kreuzer illustrates in the language used by Agnes. Her words are practically the same as those uttered by Christ as he entered upon his passion and death.\footnote{Helmut Kreuzer, "Hebbels 'Agnes Bernauer'" in HinS, pp. 281-82.}

Her life as a value clearly assumes divine character. On the other side of the balance stand the lives of those entrusted to Ernst's protection, and it is a question of these lives against Agnes' life. Ernst decides for the former and signs Agnes' death warrant:

...aber im Namen der Witwen und Waisen, die der Krieg machen würde, im Namen der Städte, die er in Asche legte, der Dörfer, die er zerstörte: Agnes Bernauer, fahr hin!

(AB., IV/4, p. 738)

What is the catlyst which brings these two divine values into confrontation? It is the contingent, historically conditioned values of the state, the laws of inheritance, the customs prohibiting intermarriage between commoners and nobility. Although many about him narrowly uphold these values for their own sake, Ernst sees beyond these artificial, historically-conditioned constructs of society and recognizes both their arbitrariness and yet their temporary necessity:

Wir müssen das an sich Wertlose stempeln und ihm einen Wert beilegen, wir müssen
den Staub über den Staub erheben, bis wir wieder vor dem stehen, der nicht Könige und Bettler, nur Gute und Böse kennt und der seine Stellvertreter am strengsten zur Rechenschaft zieht.

(AB., V/10, p. 764)

The state and its complex structures are but "Pflastersteine" with the image of God arbitrarily stamped upon them. But these arbitrarily divinized values must be preserved at any cost as the indispensable instrument for the maintenance and preservation of mankind. It is Ernst's crushing responsibility to uphold this ideological structure, hallowed as a necessary expression of God's will, at the price of an equally divine value: Agnes' life. Having made the terrible decision he abdicates the throne to Albrecht. Yet Ernst is fully conscious of his necessarily-incurred guilt, and goes to a monastery to await the judgment of his son. Ernst has had to make a fearful commitment and perhaps it was even wrong and must be punished. The scales of justice may yet tip against him. It is Ernst's greatness that he is aware of the unavoidable dualism between the values and the consequences attendant upon his decisions, no matter which way he chooses. In this he resembles Demetrius and Judith.

A final consideration in this play is the historically-conditioned, temporary nature of the conflict between the divine values. The times are in flux. Caspar
Bernauer recalls that commoners could not even appear at tourneys as late as fifty years previously, (AB., I/18, p. 698) that commoners may now mix with nobility at public dances. Further he makes it clear to Törerring that the common folk have achieved a certain power for themselves through the "Feme," (AB., II/8, p. 708). Also Albrecht has the support of the peasants. Thus a new social order is in the offing, one which would perhaps bring its own conflicts, but not the former ones. Hebbel will have us understand that value conflicts are historically conditioned. The individual versus the collective will endure, and it is the dualistic nature of the world which makes itself felt in the recurring constellation of value conflict.

Whereas Agnes Bernauer manifested the hallowedness of conditional institutions of society in Christian times, Gyges und sein Ring presents the same complex in antiquity. Kandaules is the innovator, the progressive ruler, who wishes to do away with the old forms and symbols of power and dynasty. In preparing to appear at the festival of Heracles, whose descendant he is, he disdains the old, traditional diadem for the new one. This elicits Thoas' impassioned comment:

Seit fünf Jahrhunderten
Erschien kein König anders bei den Spielen,
In Thoas' eyes as well as in the view of the people, the ancient symbols are holy in nature and are intimately bound up with their religious beliefs. The sword too is sacrosanct, having been fashioned by the god, Hephaestus. The people consider the external signs of royal prerogative and power to be synonymous with their divine origin. So interwoven are these royal accoutrements with the people's religious beliefs that to discard the one is to blaspheme the other. The political, moral and religious identity of the people and their ruler is one, fused whole. Kandaules does not appreciate the supposedly divine character of this complex, and diadem and sword are only "Schmuck" to him, as Kreuzer points out, simply externals that have no meaning beyond their ornamental function and can thus be readily and harmlessly replaced.

Kandaules' failure to evaluate properly the deeper religious significance of externals applies also to inner, personal values. His overweening pride in the beauty of
his wife, Rhodope, leads him to the fateful step of allowing his friend, Gyges, by means of a magical ring rendering the bearer invisible, to view Rhodope in her bedchamber with Kandaules. Kandaules does not realize the magnitude of the shamefulness of this act, this violation of Rhodope's person. But Gyges does, as evidenced by his reaction, which is to turn the ring and render himself visible in the bedchamber, that Kandaules might kill him immediately for his crime. But Kandaules does not have this insight and does not avenge his wife's compromised honor. Rhodope's suspicions, aroused by Gyges' sigh, are eventually confirmed and force the final confrontation between Gyges and Kandaules.

Rhodope, as Kreuzer remarks,\textsuperscript{44} bears her veil as part of her very being, and it is the sign that she is not present for the world, but is fully present for her husband. This intimate gift of her person is what Kandaules does not properly value and violates. Her veil derives from the ancient customs of her Indian homeland and is part of the social fabric sustaining her personality. This external is thought of as divine. As with the people and the dynastic symbols, so too do all levels of Rhodope's existence coalesce: traditional customs, the divine, her personal dignity as a human being, woman, spouse and queen. Guided

\textsuperscript{44}Ibid., p. 297.
by this rare and complete unity of values, she grasps clearly the obligations of her husband in the face of her dishonor:

Ein Gatte sieht
Sein Weib entehrt—entehrt? Sprich gleich: getötet—
Getötet?—Mehr, verdammt, sich selbst zu töten,
Wenn nicht des Frevlers Blut zur Sühne fliesst!
Der Gatte ist ein König, trägt das Schwert
Der Dike, braucht von der Erinnys nicht
Den Dolch zu borgen, hat die heilige Pflicht,
Den Greuel zu strafen, wenn die Liebe ihn
Nicht antreibt, ihn zu rächen, muss den Göttern
Das Opfer bringen, wenn ers mir versagt!
Und dieser Gatte, dieser König zückt
Nicht Schwert, noch Dolch, er lässt den Frevler fliehn!

(GusE., III, 1145-56)

Rhodope sees herself defiled in her innermost being and also that Kandaules does not revenge the dishonor either in his role as spouse or as divinely-ordained king. Rhodope sees the entire matter of her personal defilment under the aspect of the divine ("Frevler, heilige Pflicht, Opfer"), indeed all relevant personal values are clothed in the raiment of the divine. Conversely Kandaules' failure to avenge her is of the same magnitude and character and makes him totally unworthy of her. She is in the position of having eventually to commit suicide to reinstate her honor before the tribunal of the gods. Cursing Gyges she says:

Er hat gefrevelt
Am Heiligsten, er hat den schwersten Fluch
Auf mich herabgezogen, jenen Fluch,
Den alle Götter wider Willen schleudern,
Weil er nur Menschen ohne Sünde trifft,
Er ist es, der mich töten lehrt!

(GusR., III, 1224-29)

But it is to Kandaules' credit that he eventually re-
alizes the enormity of his errors with regard to the externals
of his kingship and the personal honor of his wife. In his
correspondence with Gyges, who has come to do battle and avenge
Rhodope, Kandaules admits to his guilt regarding her:
"Drum dinge mir des Werkzeugs wegen nichts Vom Frevel ab,
die ganze Schuld ist mein!" (GusR., V, 1801-2) Hand in
hand with this guilt goes his error concerning the symbols
of power:

Kandaules' insight is similar to that of Herzog Ernst, in
that Kandaules realizes both the intrinsic valuelessness of
veils, crowns and rusty swords as well as the extrinsic va-

cue placed upon them by man. These externals link man with
the preceding age of the gods and are of divine mint. He
who would rule must respect this belief of the people, for
precisely this unites and holds them together. Kandaules' failing was not to realize this until too late. He is not strong enough to offer a new age new divine symbols and so goes to his death. It is the measure of his greatness that he distinguishes not only the real difference between external and inner value, but also the necessity to uphold the externals "als-ob" they were divine, since for his subjects and his wife they are coterminous. Ideology takes on the character of the divine and must be respected as such. As Walter Naumann aptly observes:

Wir sahen, dass für Hebbel jede Religion und Gesellschaft, die höchsten nicht ausgenommen, eine zu einer bestimmten Zeit herrschende Konvention ist, zu Veredlung und Schutz des Menschen unendlich wertvoll.

and: Ich glaube, wir haben hier den Kern von Hebbels religiösem Weltbild erreicht. Die höheren Religionen geben Vorschriften, lehren den Menschen sich veredeln. Sie schützen ihn auch, in dem sie die Institutionen der Kultur, die Majestät des Königs, verpflichten, das Unrecht zu sühnen. ...Eine absolute religiöse Urschicht fordert diese Sühne,...Es ist die Natur selbst,... 45

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45 Walter Naumann, "Hebbels 'Gyges und sein Ring'," Monatshefte, XLIII (October, 1951), 265, 266.

Gyges und sein Ring illuminated the problem of the divine in a time of great antiquity, and the final two dramas to be considered, Herodes und Mariamne and Die Nibelungen, treat the problem profiled against the announced inception
of the Christian era at the end of the dramas. In *Herodes und Mariamne* the great ethical issues of man's dignity and the consequent openness and trust that should obtain between the partners in the marriage relationship receive a drastic reconfirmation in Mariamne's death. The vicious circle of distrust that eventually costs her her life and deals Herod a crushing blow arises out of a situation that calls for openness. Herod, after being forced by power politics requirements to instigate the murder of Mariamne's brother, the high-priest Aristobulus, realizes that Mariamne has serious reason to distrust him. At this moment Mariamne cannot bring herself to swear to Herod she will choose death herself if he does not return from his meeting with Antony. Herod needs the sign and when he does not receive it, he takes the first fateful step: "Mir schwurst du nichts, dir will ich etwas schwören: Ich stell dich unters Schwert." (*HuM.*, I/4, 506-7)

Both partners have such an intense feeling of their own personal value that they expect the same intensity in demonstrations of love from each other. After Mariamne learns of Herod's act of placing her life in jeopardy there is no return. Both fortify themselves in their wounded pride. Mariamne complains bitterly:

...Kann ich noch leben?
Kann ich mit dem noch leben, der in mir
Nicht einmal Gottes Ebenbild ehrt?
(HuM., V/6, 3105-7)

Her sense of personal dignity, while couched in the words of Hebrew tradition, is nevertheless a view of human dignity that goes beyond the Old Testament concept. So intense is this feeling that she conceives of it in terms of the divine. Herod's seeming hardness, his treatment of her as "Ding," as a chattel instead of a person, contrasts sharply with her exalted image of herself. This prevents her from rising above the culturally harsh situation and exercising forgiveness. She does not accord proper consideration to the fact that Herod too is enmeshed in a cultural and political situation which uses him as a thing (cf. his relationship to Antony). Yet even his era is a step beyond earlier epochs (cf. Artaxerxes being used as a human clock at the Persian court, where human torches were used to illuminate the royal gardens at night). She not only does not forgive, but persists to the end in a most devastating act of revenge. Thus, as Ryan notes,\(^46\) we cannot view her

\(^{46}\)Lawrence Ryan, "Hebbels 'Herodes und Mariamne': Tragödie und Geschichte," in HinS, p. 262.

as an exemplary representative of a freer humanity, pointing forward to the dawning Christian era. She and Herod have both incurred guilt, but it is an inevitable conflict,
occasioned and conditioned by the harshness of the historical context which renders a Christian solution impossible.

The final scene, bringing the Three Wise Men to Herod, announces a newly dawning ethic.47 But Herod, unable to embrace the new ethic as a result of his experience with Mariamne, sees only a new threat to his crown and orders the slaughter of the innocents. Yet his iron will can be no match for the inexorably advancing wheel of history. The "...Wunderknabe, Den die Propheten längst verkündet haben,..." (HuM., V/8, 3295-6) will triumph. Joab confirms this in his remark: "...Doch Moses ward gerettet, Trotz Pharao!" (HuM., V/8, 3311-12)

This last scene has a historically relativizing effect upon the entire preceding conflict. The revenge ethic of the preceding era will be superseded by the more humane morality of Christianity. The conflict between Herod and Mariamne is a historically-conditioned one, from which there is no escape. On the horizon however in the form of the coming Messias, the son of God, appears the new value of forgiveness, which was impossible in the old context. This is seen to be a value of divine character, to be brought into the world by a God. Indeed every advance in morality
partakes of the divine, and Hebbel's use of God in the final scene symbolically shows the nobility, the divinity of the new ethic. As to whether a genuine God is actually at work is moot. The people of the era believe so and Sameas prophesies, yet this in no way hinders the propagation of the new, divine value. If anything it promotes its dissemination and acceptance.

The final drama to be considered, Die Nibelungen, affords the same vista on an imminent new age of higher morality as does Herodes and Mariamne. The world of the Nibelungen, although ostensibly a Christian world, is in truth harshly pagan, and an intractable revenge pervades and propels the action of the play. The bitterness of this ethic is illustrated most aptly in the figure of Rüdiger. He is torn between his oath of allegiance to Kriemhild and Etzel and his ties to the Nibelungen, both through his duty to provide the Nibelungen safe escort and protection while in Etzel's domain and through imminent ties of marriage. He hopes to be spared the cruel choice between these alternatives, as he remarks to Dietrich before the banquet: "Es steht in Gottes Hand, Doch hoff ich immer noch." (Nib., IV/7, 4809-10)

But the confrontation eventually comes, and when Etzel commands him to engage the Nibelungen in battle and honor his oath of fealty, Rüdiger cries out in anguish: "Barmherzigkeit!" (Nib., V/9, 5174) But Kriemhild's desire for
revenge brooks no granting of mercy, and she answers him unfeelingly: "Du tust mir leid, allein du musst hinein!"
(Nib., V/11, 5311)

The coming era of mercy was previously foreshadowed to the man who is to eventually initiate it, namely Dietrich. Recounting to Rüdeger mysterious prophesies he heard at the "Nixenbrunnen," he recalls the voices telling

...Vom grossen Sonnenjahr,
Das über alles menschliche Gedächtnis
Hinaus in langen Pausen wiederkehrt.
...Von einem letzten Herbst,
Der alle Formen der Natur zerbricht,
Und einem Frühling, welcher bessre bringt.
(Nib., IV/17, 4824ff.)

Dietrich, made privy to the coming of the new age of morality, is the one destined to assume power from Etzel's hand and to rule "Im Namen dessen, der am Kreuz erbleich!" (Nib., V/14, 5456)

But it is Etzel who makes the crucial decision. He says:

Nun soll ich reichten--rächen--neue Bäche
Ins Blutmeer leiten--Doch es widert mich,
Ich kanns nicht mehr--mir wird die Last zu schwer--
Herr Dietrich, nehmt mir meine Krone ab
Und schlepp't die Welt auf Eurem Rücken weiter--
(Nib., V/14, 5451-55)

Etzel is able to make the ethical step forward which Herod couldn't. Herod will mire himself deeper in blood, but Etzel, aware of the enormous bloodshed the old revenge ethic has exacted, projects it ad absurdum and sees in the
envisioned rivers and sea of blood the utter futility of the outworn ethic. It and Etzel with it must pass.

The blanched figure of Christ supersedes the blood ethic. He is a divine figure, as is the ethic he embodies, and as in *Herodes und Mariamne*, he profiles the harsh conflict inherent in the previous ethic as well as the historically-conditioned nature of the conflict. No guarantee is given that new conflicts will not arise, indeed, such is the condition of the world that new conflicts will arise, and these, clothed in divine garments, will again have the character of a dualism in the divine.
CHAPTER V.

DAS PARADOXE, NIHILISMUS, VERSÖHNUNG

There now remains to turn to the specific objections of various interpreters which were rendered in our introduction and which argued against a viable concept of God or any attendant commitment to values on Hebbel's part.

Michelsen undertakes a thorough and painstaking analysis of Hebbel's statements, restricting himself deliberately to the diary entries, indicating only in footnotes parallels in either letters or other prose works. Thus it is an exclusive interpretation of the diaries. An investigation of the various themes occurring reveals a series of equally possible positions on a multitude of problems, with the following result:

Die Unvereinbarkeit, in der die verschiedenen Positionen als gleichberechtigte "Entschlüsse" sich nebeneinander darbieten, ist nicht aufzubeheben. 48

48 Michelsen, Tagebücher, p. 119.

Viewpoints are irreconcilable, no systematic structure can be erected which can unite or cancel out the contradictory positions adopted by Hebbel. This fact has its source in a basic epistemological problem and in a reflexively
This fact leads perforce to a relativization of all traditional values, be they sociological, ethical or religious. Hebbel, however, cannot give up his demands for "das Höchste," but in the end the Highest turns out to be nothing and this drives Hebbel to nihilism: "die Einsicht in das Nichts." (D 689) But this is not the final statement of Hebbel. He experiences all reality under the form of dualism, be it on the level of the individual themes noted and studied earlier, or on the basic level, where the world is opposed to the individual.

Die Struktur des Hebbelschen Dualismus erweist sich also als paradox...Das Paradoxe--zu definieren als Heterogenität des Homogenen--ist die Form des die Extreme in sich selbst fassenden Seins. Die aus ihm in Antithesen herausgefallenen Masslosigkeiten, als deren jeweiligen Einsichtigkeit es sich scheinhaft gibt, haben wahrhaft nur als paradoxe Spannung Seins-Bestand. 50

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49 Ibid., p. 120.

50 Ibid., pp. 152-53.
The end result of this ultimate insight is that there can be no genuine "Versöhnung," either on the level of being between the conflicting forces, or on the personal level in the sense of a resignation to the dualistic, dialectic nature of reality. On the ethical level, it is im-

\[51\] Ibid., pp. 153-56.

possible to talk of serious, clear commitments to values by Hebbel, or to criticize his vehemence in representing one or the other position,

...weil ihm ein Wertgebäude, gegen das er verstossen könnte, ja gerade fehlt, und es ihm sogar mit einem fiebrigem Ernst um die Konstituierung eines absoluten ethischen Massstabes zu tun ist. \[52\]

\[52\] Ibid., p. 158.

The central problem involved in the above interpretation is perhaps that of the basis of the interpretation: the limitation to diaries. Two points should be considered. In the first place, the basic character of the diaries is that of experimentation. The entries are often "Gedanken-Splitter," ideas thrown out and considered for the moment and by themselves, without relation to others or to a more encompassing system of logic. Ideas are often driven to a logical extreme, even absurdity, to see where they lead. We have seen Hebbel doing this constantly, testing possi-
ilities, probing with his everpresent "als-ob," "wenn" and "vielleicht" and remaining non-committal. This philosophical speculation makes it questionable to see in the diaries the sum total of Hebbel's thinking, or a systematization (or lack of it) of his thought. Nor can the reader regard them as proving conclusively his ultimate thought or commitment or non-commitment to concepts, beliefs or values. This is not to say that they do not contain a wealth of information about Hebbel's thinking, or that they do not furnish valuable, even decisive indices to the direction of his thought. They simply cannot be used exclusively. The experimental character of the diaries militates against adopting them as representing the whole fabric of Hebbel's thought, and seriously weakens any conclusions based solely upon them.

Further, Hebbel's utterances are an attempt at self-knowledge and self-realization as well as self-expression. As a "Notenbuch meines Herzens" they are not an attempt at a systematic presentation of a world-view, but the record of reflections, feelings, ideas, all expressed with a view toward the poet coming to a better understanding of himself, the world and his position in it and toward it. Consistency or systematization would stifle and render impossible such and emergence of the poet. It would presuppose and adopted form rather than aid the development of an eventual form in the poet and in his world-view.
Given the nature of Hebbel's approach to himself and the world, his way of grasping, understanding and expressing all this, we cannot expect any final, air-tight system, for this would never issue from Hebbel, who

...seiner Anlage nach kein philosophischer Kopf, sondern ein dichterisches Gemüt war, mehr jedenfalls ein philosophierender Dichter als ein dichtender Philosoph. 53

Additionally, the fact that opposing viewpoints are given on a particular theme does not necessarily point to or prove a relativism of thought canceling out the validity of the opposing entities in a polarized conflict. Such dualism is, as Wittkowski notes,

...ein Struktur-Phänomen, das gewiss psychologische Voraussetzungen und gehaltliche Konsequenzen hat—aber eben weder Subjektivierung noch Relativierung bedeutet, sondern umgekehrt Spannungen, Kontraste, Kollisionen akzentuiert, wie sie in solcher Stärke nur zwischen Polen auftreten können, die für objektive, unaufhebbare, unabgeleitete, insofern absolute Grössen gehalten werden. 54

It is perhaps crucial to realize that the demands of absolute-oriented philosophical thinking cannot be applied to Hebbel. It is incorrect to look in Hebbel for one absolute truth, around which cluster logically all other truths.
There is the question of whether absolute, ultimate, incontrovertible truth can be attained. Hebbel would demur at this. In replying to Friedrich Uechtritz regarding the latter's objection to Hebbel's seeming indifference to revealed religion. Hebbel says: "Die Wahrheit wollen wir alle Beide; Sie glauben, sie zu besitzen, ich suche sie...". (L 570)

This is in the spirit of Lessing, who felt that man's task was to seek truth, with full attainment of it being ultimately withheld. Secondly, truth is not necessarily to be found in a single absolute. Truth may also co-exist in dialectic opposites simultaneously, with each opposite possessing its own validity and truth. In writing to Elise from Paris on Dec. 19, 1843, Hebbel gives eloquent expression to this:

Der Dichter...wird die Ideen immer nur dialektisch und zwar in dem Sinne, worin Welt und Leben selbst dialektisch sind, und jede Erscheinung unmittelbar in und durch sich selbst ihren Gegensatz hervorruft, aussprechen, und wenn man den Shakespeare einmal zum Zeugen für die Nichtigkeit des Lebens aufruft und nicht hinzufügt, dass er an einem anderen Ort mit gleichem Ernst von dem hohen und einzigen Wert des Lebens redet, so sündigt man gegen ihn...der wahre und ganze Dichter macht gar bald die Erfahrung, dass Ideal und Gegensatz, Licht und Schatten sich nicht gegenseitig aufheben, sondern sich gegenseitig bedingen, und dass sie nur in den ersten Stadien so weit auseinanderfallen, sich später auf höchst beunruhigende Weise ineinander verlieren.

(D 2947)

Truth exists in diversity, and to recognize this is by no means to abdicate belief in truth altogether, but to see
clearly and strip away the over-simplicity attendant upon an absolute-oriented mode of thought.

Thirdly, as has been indicated earlier, Hebbel's manner of apprehending reality does not admit of absolutely clear definitions, encased in a concept claiming to grasp and express fully the truth. Hebbel's vehicle of apprehension utilizes another criterion. Early in his diary he had identified this touchstone:

Gegen jede sog. neue Wahrheit bin ich misstrauisch, die nicht in mir ein Gefühl erregt, als hätte ich ihr Existenz schon lange zuvor geahnt. 

(D 1092)

Soon afterward he reemphasizes the point:

Es ist die Frage, ob wir jemals eine ganz neue Wahrheit erfahren werden, eine solche, von der wir nicht von Anfang schon eine Ahnung gehabt hätten,...

(D 1227)

Further:

Gott teilt sich nur dem Gefühl, nicht dem Verstande mit; dieser ist sein Widersacher, weil er ihn nicht erfassen kann. Das weist dem Verstande den Rang an.

(D 1268)

"Gefühl," "Ahnung" are for Hebbel the only valid modes of apprehension of the realities that are. Reality, God, the great truths are not to be strait-jacketed into a neat, well-tailored concept. The poet's manner of apprehending and representing is clearly superior:

Denken und Darstellen, das sind die zwei verschiedenen Arten der Offenbarung. Das Denken

(M 1284)

Müller, in his analysis of Hebbel's diaries and specifically in answer to Michelsen's conclusions about them, makes a useful observation:

Ich stehe nach wie vor zu meinem Vorschlag, Hebbel einen Gestaltdenker zu nennen, der im Gegensatz zum Systemdenker sein Weltbild weniger im Begriff als in Bild und Symbol ausspricht. 55

The poet is not to be harnessed to philosophical, harmonious systems of clear concepts. Knowledge is to be had, but not endowed with the clarity of systematization. Poetic feeling, while apprehending perhaps more diffusely, reaches deeper.

This fact has been correctly identified and utilized by Salter to substantiate the validity of Hebbel's commitment to a personal God of his prayers, conceived of also as the world principle:

Feeling, emotion, intuition vary and change; they defy rational, logical development and conclusion. If Hebbel, in the exaltation and exuberance of the moment, did choose the Christian form of prayer to address the Absolute, he makes no apology for it. He conceived of God

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55 Müller, Zu Struktur und Funktion, p. 109.
as the World Principle; God is not only existence but also essence which man can and shall worship in spirit and in truth. 56


This is a conclusion which Salter shares with Müller, and while it has its validity within the diaries and letters, it does not afford any clearer definition of Hebbel's concept of God. Essentially the conclusion deals not so much with God as with Hebbel's manner of apprehending God, with his relationship to God. 57 Further while the study os-

57 The inclusion of the words "worship in spirit and truth" has perhaps an unfortunate side-effect upon the study. A stated major purpose of the study is to "conclude whether Hebbel's God is the 'Hausvater' who decrees, guides, and directs, meting out deserved rewards and punishment according to his absolute will and power, limiting man's free will and freedom of choice, and reserving to himself the right of divine, direct and universal intervention." (p. 123) This is found not to be so: "The God of Hebbel does not conform to the concept of a 'Hausvater'." (p. 141) The concluding phrase, from the New Testament, seems to have the effect of an implied rescue of Hebbel for the Christian camp, even if he is only on the very periphery, after Hebbel's God is found not to correspond to the perhaps overly long list of attributes belonging to the Christian God. Such an implication is wholly unjustified, for while the present study also supports the idea of a personal God for Hebbel, that God has no confessional character at all.

tensibly is a refutation of Michelsen, it suffers from the same drawback: sole reliance upon the diaries and letters. Finally it does not address itself to the serious criticism of Ziegler and von Wiese, nor does it draw upon the addition-
al, decisive information furnished by a perusal of the dramas. The dramas have consistently demonstrated the dualistic nature of the divine in the realm of ethical values. Müller's and Salter's contention that "das Göttliche" is not subject to contradiction in the diaries and letters does not hold true in Hebbel's drama.

In an earlier quote, we saw Hebbel's orientation toward a dialectic view of reality. But when the poet comes down from the philosophical plane to that of human action and decision, a choice must be made:

_Damit ist aber keineswegs gesagt, dass er als Mensch verlegen zwischen den Extremen umher schwanken soll._

(D 2947)

Hebbel's chief thrust in the dramas was to illuminate and demonstrate the existence and demands of the moral order, which does not brook relativization or abrogation, even by God.

The second major objection to a valid concept of God for Hebbel is the supposed disappearance of God in the dramas (Ziegler, Fricke, von Wiese). Examination of the dramas has not confirmed these viewpoints. God is clearly and effectively present in his functions as master of history and guardian of the moral order in _Judith_ and _Genoveva_. Succeeding dramas allow God to function as a belief of the characters and as a symbol for the divinity of ethical values. Nor does Hebbel succumb to an ethical relativism or nihilism.
Hebbel vigorously supports not only fundamental values, but also those which are of a contingent nature, yet necessary for society:

Man reisst das Pflaster des Staats und der Gesellschaft auf. Ich habe dabei ein eigentümliches Gefühl. Mir ist, als ob dem Bau, der jetzt zerstört wird, uralte Erfahrungen zugrund lägen, aus Zuständen gewonnen, wie sie jetzt wieder im Anzug sind, als ob jeder Pflasterstein auf dem umgekehrten Seit die Inschrift trüge: auch wir wissen, dass dies ein Pflasterstein ist, wenn wir gleich das Bild eines Gottes aufgeprägt haben; seht Ihr zu, wie Ihr ohne Pflastersteine, die man für mehr als Pflastersteine hält, fertig werden wollt.

(D 4411)

Hebbel understands only too well that the progress of man and civilization is dependent upon institutions, which while artificial, are necessary and must be given allegiance as if they were of a higher order. It is not self-deception, but an admission of practical expediency necessary for the preservation of human society.

What then of "Versöhnung?" The above-detailed accomplishments do not revoke the basic dualistic nature of the universe, and Hebbel had to come to terms with this. His initial reactions reflected a preoccupation with the immediate pain and frustration engendered by these insights:

Unsere Zeit ist schlimme Zeit. Das grosse Geheimnis, die letzte Ausbeute alles Forschens und Strebens, die "Einsicht in das Nichts," war ehemals hinter Schlosser und Riegel versteckt, und der Mensch sah sich und das Rätsel zu gleicher Zeit aufgelöst. Die alten Schlosser und Riegel sind schadhaft geworden...die Idee der Gottheit reicht nicht mehr aus...das Leben ist ein Kampf, ein Rausch oder eine Opiumsonnmacht.

(D 688)
These thoughts seem to admit of no possibility of reconciliation in 1843 for Hebbel. But by 1847, the contemplation of these same inexorable realities has led to the following declaration:

Wenn der Mensch sein individuelles Verhältnis zum Universum in seiner Notwendigkeit begreift, so hat er seine Bildung vollendet und eigentlich auch schon aufgehört, ein Individuum zu sein, denn der Begriff dieser Notwendigkeit, die Fähigkeit, sich bis zu ihm durch zu arbeiten und die Kraft, ihn festzuhalten, ist eben das Universelle im Individuellen, löst all den unberechtigten Egoismus aus und befreit den Geist vom Tode, indem er diesen im Wesentlichen antizipiert.

(D 4274)

This represents a radical shift of view. The unchanging dualism between "das Individuum" and "das Universum," between individual "Egoismus" or freedom and "Notwendigkeit" remains as stark as ever, but Hebbel's new attitude embraces the dualism willingly, whereas he had earlier accepted it with inner protest. So important is this passage that Hebbel quotes it fully in a letter to Amalie Schoppe, his benefactress, on May 1, 1848 and explains:

Dies schrieb ich einmal in einem der schwersten Momente meines Lebens, eine unendliche Reihe von Gedanken in mir abschliessend. In dem Begriff dieser Notwendigkeit, die freilich von der blinden, nicht in Vernunft aufgelösten, der sich jeder beugt, weil er muss, sehr verschieden ist, wohne ich seitdem, wie in einer Burg. ... Von ihm allein gehen Ver-
söhntung und Frieden aus, denn wenn ich die Grundbedingungen aller individueller Existenz in ihrer Unabhängigkeit erkannt und eingesehen habe, dass nur aus den mir auferlegten Beschränkungen die Freiheit des großen Organismus, dem ich eingegliedert bin, hervorgehen kann, so ist in mir die Möglichkeit, ihnen auch nur trotzen zu wollen, aufgehoben.

(L 268)

There can be no doubt of the final, personal reconciliation achieved by Hebbel. But it is not only a passive acceptance of realities beyond one's control. Hebbel also directs his energies toward an inner goal, already mentioned, and this is personal "Steigerung" and poetic achievement. In discussing with Eduard Janinski the one-sidedness of human nature, the dependence of the human condition upon accident, he remarks that despite the discouragement caused by this realization there is consolation:

Der einzige Trost, der bleibt, ist der, dass man sich durch redliches Kämpfen und Ringen innerlich steigert.

The poet in particular must fall back upon this solace when the world rejects the poet's insights. Otherwise, dire consequences can result for the poet. He cites the example of Kleist:

Auf dieser Stufe der Erkenntnis blieb Kleist stehen und erschoss sich. Man soll aber weitergehen und erkennen, dass der wahre Lohn in der Entwicklung selbst liegt und dass die Tat, die nicht erkannt wird, das Kunstwerk, das ins Wasser fällt, den Vollbringer und Urheber veredelte, erweiterte und erhöhte. Seit ich zu dieser Erkenntnis durchgedrungen bin, kann mich Nichts mehr verwirren.

(L 254)
Thus Hebbel's private reconciliation is a consciously willed subordination of his own interests to those of the greater organism, of which he is an integral and necessary part, coupled with an insistence upon personal, poetic, inner ennoblement. This is highest wisdom and simultaneously the source of peace and genuine freedom. Although Hebbel believes in this intensely, he is keenly aware of his reconciliation being personal and private and declares in a letter to Arnold Ruge:

...aber ich würde mich schämen, der objektiven Welt, die ich darstelle, meine Privat-Versöhnung als eine allgemeine aufzudrangen, ich würde mich deshalb schämen, weil sie auf Resignation beruht, und ich als Individuum wohl für mich resignieren darf, nicht aber für die Menschheit mit ihren ewigen Rechten und Interessen.

(L 255)
CONCLUSION

In attempting to arrive at a balanced and accurate notion of Hebbel's concept of the divine, this study first notes the persistent and renewed interest in Hebbel's view of God evidenced in present-day Hebbel research. Practically all negative criticism hinges on the pivotal notion of God. To the extent to which any commitment to a God can be diminished or done away with, Hebbel's commitment to any other values correspondingly vanishes. Interpretations discern either a tragically-conceived deity in the diaries and letters, who does not appear in the despair of the dramas, thus establishing incommensurability between theory and practice, or a total relativism of thought in the diaries, which renders all belief in either a God or values inconsequential. A balanced and accurate understanding of Hebbel's position on the problem of the divine requires an examination of the diaries, letters and dramas.

The investigation of the diaries and letters (Chapters I, II, & III) in the areas of religion, immortality and the deity reveals the centralness of the question of God in Hebbel's life, his early abandonment of all anthropomorphic religion and concepts of God and adoption of natural reli-
gion, his firm commitment to an ethically elevated notion of man and finally the non-binding, experimental character of his diary and letter formulations regarding a speculative God. This God is most consistently conceived of in terms of Schelling's emergent deity in a dualistically constituted universe. Hebbel makes no commitment to this philosophical God, due to the impossibility of a conceptual apprehension of God, but evidences involvement with an indistinct, personal God, whom he never disavows. Examination of the dramas (Chapter IV) reveals that Hebbel's statements here are of a more conclusive nature. The early dramas, *Genoveva* and *Judith*, are an attempt to discern a rift in the divine, between values of the moral law and nature conceived of as divine. This fails in *Genoveva*, where the moral order cannot be relativized through a sophistic, dramatic use of God. But Hebbel succeeds in *Judith*, with the rift occurring between God as master of history and as guardian of the eternal moral order. God both commands and punishes an immoral act, thus revealing a dualism in the divine, and man's moral autonomy is established. God intervenes in the dramatic action in these two plays but not in succeeding pieces. *Maria Magdalena* and *Demetrius* also illustrate a dualism in the divine. In historically conditioned situations personal moral values are pitted against other moral demands, all possessing divine
character. Agnes Bernauer and Gyges und sein Ring document a dualism between personal and contingent values, such as the state, tradition and custom, all of which are viewed as divine. In Herodes und Mariamne and Die Nibelungen the values of a revenge ethic are relativized by comparison with the dawning of a more humane, Christian ethic. In all dramas the figure of God or the divine is commensurate with the age and is symbolic for the values held to be divine at that particular time. Even though from age to age values are superseded, new values can always clash in a given situation. This dualistic structure persists as an attribute of the divine. God or the divine is also employed in all the dramas as a foil to heighten dramatic intensity or the heroic stance of the characters involved in a value conflict.

In Chapter V interpreters' objections to Hebbel's God are met. No basic inconsistency between theory and practice is discerned, nor are despair, nihilism, lack of commitment to ethical values or the loss of belief in God found. Hebbel achieves a personal reconciliation in the face of the dualistic nature of the universe.

In Hebbel's view many concepts of and relationships to God remain possible. In a letter late in life to Uechtritz he sums up his feelings on the matter:

Ich habe mir die Menschen im Verhältnis zu der höchsten Angelegenheit des Geschlechts von jeher
fern so gedacht wie sie an Sonn- und Feiertagen
um die Dämmerungszeit in einem alten Dom vor und
hintereinander sitzen, der durch die Rose sein
letztes Lich erhält. Jeder schaut hinein, Je-
der glaubt am meisten zu sehen und am schön-
sten zu träumen und Jeder ist mir recht, so lan-
ge er nicht allein Augen zu haben behauptet.

(L 602a)
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