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Dynastic, Social, Psychological and Psychiatric Aspects of the Bavarian Royal Drama of 1886

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Abstract

In the royal drama of 1886 King Ludwig II of Bavaria drowned himself, after drowning Prof. von Gudden, who had tried to hold him back from suicide. The psychiatrist had laid the foundation for the king's dethronement, legal incapacitation and psychiatric internment with the incorrect psychiatric assessment he had been commissioned to deliver. The scandalon was the misuse of psychiatry for the purposes of powerful princes. In civil society under Hitler's dictatorial regime the individual misuse was replaced by a mass murder of mentally ill persons. In the Soviet Union Stalin's psychiatrists interned political dissidents on grounds of alleged mental illness.

Influenced by his dynastic ancestry, Ludwig II had strived to establish a Louis XIV-style absolute monarchy, but failed in a period of crumbling monarchies in Germany. In 1871, as the second German Empire was created, Bavaria became a mere constituent state. The loss of sovereignty made the king increasingly disheartened. He reduced his presence in the capital and shunned the dignitaries of his kingdom, as his father, King Max II, had occasionally done. Both suffered from severe bouts of anxiety, trying to flee from anxiety-inducing situations. Ludwig II's homosexuality only intensified his escapist tendencies.

Like some other European monarchs who built imposing castles as symbols of their waning power Ludwig II, too, erected three majestic castles and created there an ersatz world for the lost absolute monarchy. He adopted myths, legends and dynastic scenes from the paintings adorning his father's castle and from the works of the composer Richard Wagner. His devotion to art, music, literature and radical pacifism cost him the sympathy of many of his people. Nevertheless, he accomplished his administrative duties with great consistency and accuracy until his final days. He was toppled mainly because of his increasing debt at the expense of his royal family.

Key words: Late European monarchism; The Wittelsbach dynasty; Ludwig II of Bavaria; Dethronement of a king; Death of a king; The 1886 Bavarian royal drama; Richard Wagner; Misuse of psychiatry

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INTRODUCTION

In 1806, Napoleon, the Emperor of France, created the Kingdom of Bavaria. By means of the Final Recess of the Reichsdeputation (German: Reichsdeputationshauptschluss; Latin: recessus principalis deputationis imperii) (1803) he had previously expanded the Duchy of Bavaria to comprise a greater number of self-governing and ecclesiastical states, free imperial cities and territories governed by abbeys, convents and imperial knights as a compensation for the lost territories to the left of the River Rhine. Napoleon forced the German Emperor Ferdinand von Habsburg to resign, and the "Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation", created by Charlemagne a thousand years earlier, ceased to exist. The new Kingdom of Bavaria, which Napoleon had expanded to include Franconia and Swabia, was subsequently recognized in the Treaty of Ried, which the Austrian Empire and the Kingdom of Bavaria signed on October 8th, 1813. Bavaria also regained possession of Rhineland-Palatinate, which

Napoleon had previously annexed to France. Bavaria was further recognized by the Congress of Vienna (1814-1815) and in treaties between the governing princes. The peoples affected by this redrawing of the territorial boundaries and the changes in the sovereignty exercised over their homelands had no political say.

Bavaria, ruled by the Wittelsbach dynasty since the 13th century, had grown to a European middle power. Its foreign policy was determined by its geopolitical situation. Located, as it was, between three militarily potent great powers: Prussia to the north, Austria-Hungary to the east and south and the Kingdom of France to the west with the smaller monarchies of Württemberg and Baden acting as buffer states in between, the Bavarian kings were intent on securing the kingdom's sovereignty by entering coalitions with the neighbouring powers. In domestic policy they strived to establish absolutist reigns, but became increasingly confronted with the signs of changing times: the consequences of the French Revolution, citizens' growing demand for participation in power, growing nationalistic tendencies and a labour movement which was already gaining momentum.

After its creation by Napoleon in 1806 the Kingdom of Bavaria was successively ruled by five kings. The last of them, King Ludwig III, had to flee the country after the First World War in 1918, and the monarchy was abolished. It is that last king's predecessor, Ludwig II of Bavaria, who ruled from 1864 until his suicide in 1886, that will be at the focus of our analysis.

Figure 1
King Ludwig II of Bavaria (1864-1886), Dressed in a Bavarian General's Uniform and Wearing the Coronation Cloak (Painting by Ferdinand Piloty, Jr., 1865; Bavarian Palace Department, Ludwig II Museum 901)

Ludwig II was exceptional as a monarch, as a person and in his architectural and artistic creations (Figure 1). He was fascinated by modern technology as much as he loved fanciful, romanticizing decorations. During his reign he completed huge construction projects, starting by erecting a romantic winter garden on top of the Imperial Hall of the Munich Royal Residence. Beneath the roof, supported by a curved iron construction measuring about 100 m in length – in those days a technical masterpiece –, there was a landscape garden the King himself had designed. It featured exotic plants, a pond, on which a boat could be rowed, and a Moorish kiosk. Ludwig II had a new community theatre built in Munich. In the first days of his kingship, he was already planning to build, together with the composer Richard Wagner, a magnificent music palace on the high bank of the River Isar in Munich and to connect it with the Royal Opera House and the Main Railway Station by a grand boulevard. Gottfried Semper (Dresden), the then leading theatre architect, was commissioned with the planning of the building.

With this fantastic project King Ludwig II was treading in the footsteps of his predecessors, King Ludwig I and King Max II, who both had erected grand buildings. They had built impressive boulevards, named after them and lined by prestigious buildings, thus leaving their royal imprint on the city of Munich.

The untitled despot and tyrant Adolf Hitler (1889-1945), too, quite in the manner of absolute monarchs, pursued the goal of visualizing the power and glory of his rule by entertaining similarly grand construction plans. Like the three Bavarian kings Ludwig I, Max II and Ludwig II he, too, drafted single-handedly for Munich, the "capital of his movement", a new grandiose opera house to be located on the outskirts of the city and connected with the city centre, the Marienplatz, by a boulevard (Cromme, Frank, & Frühinsfeld, 2014). Only his demise stopped these plans from being implemented.

Ludwig II's grand plans for Munich failed for other reasons. Because of his undue demands for money and meddling with Bavarian politics the king's friend Richard Wagner had fallen out of favour. Ludwig II's fancy project of building the festival hall for Richard Wagner and the grand boulevard cutting across the heart of Munich was thwarted by the government, the archbishop and the people of Munich.

The most impressive buildings King Ludwig II erected after the failure of his grand plans for Munich are two magnificent castles, Linderhof and Neuschwanstein, located in the splendid alpine scenery, and a third one, the Herrenchiemsee Castle, on the Gentlemen's Island (Herreninsel) in the Bavarian Lake Chiemsee. They will be discussed in detail on p. 9ff.

1. THE EARLY YEARS OF LUDWIG II'S REIGN

King Ludwig II was born in 1845 in politically charged times as the period of German monarchies was already

drawing to an end. He stepped on the throne at the age of 18 ½ years, after his father, King Maximilian II, had suddenly died from acute illness. Ludwig had been educated primarily by private teachers, and he had taken his A-levels just before ascending to the throne. Unlike his father, he had not graduated from a university or been trained in administrative tasks. Nor had he undertaken a so-called grand tour to visit other European capitals and get acquainted with the governing princes and their families.

Talking to the novelist Felix Dahn at the age of 28 years in the August of 1873, nine years after his coronation, Ludwig is reported to have said:

> … In the first place…I became king far too early. I had not yet learnt enough. I had just started…to study state law. Suddenly, I was torn away and put to the throne. Now, I am still trying to learn. (Dahn, 1895, p.306f)

In his first years as a king Ludwig II continued to be instructed by his philosophy teacher (Prof. Huber). He discussed with him at length his political ideas and decisions. He also consulted his confessor, Ignatz von Dollinger, in religious and political matters. But there was one particular person increasingly replacing his advisers, and that person came to exert huge influence on how Ludwig II thought and acted: the composer Richard Wagner.

In foreign policy King Ludwig II's primary goal was to preserve the sovereignty of his kingdom (Botzenhart, 2004). After Bavaria, fighting on Austria's side, had lost the war against Prussia in 1866, a secret treaty was struck in Berlin, which, in times of war, placed the Bavarian army under the command of the Prussian king. This was the first step towards the loss of Bavarian sovereignty. The second step had more far-reaching consequences: in 1871, when the second German Empire was established and King Wilhelm of Prussia appointed emperor, the Kingdom of Bavaria was degraded to a mere constituent state of the German Empire. In a tragic twist of fate, Ludwig II was forced to decisively contribute to these developments. In a letter drafted by the Prussian chancellor, Prince Otto von Bismarck, and forced upon King Ludwig II to sign, he proposed, writing in the name of all the governing German princes and imperial cities, that the King of Prussia be conferred the title of emperor and the presidency of the German confederation. Ludwig reacted to this event portending serious trouble with wrath and agony. He attempted, but failed, to strike a deal with the Prussian king, according to which the emperor would have been alternately one of the Prussian Hohenzollerns and the Bavarian Wittelsbachs (Rall, Petzet, & Merta, 2005)

Back in 1866, as Bavaria was heading to war with Prussia on Austria-Hungary's side due to contractual commitments, Ludwig had suffered a severe psychological crisis. He had wanted to abdicate, offering the crown to his brother Otto, but had soon changed his mind, continuing to rule the country as he had done before (Häfner, 2008; Häfner & Sommer, 2013). The considerable blow the 1871 events dealt to his status and powers had a more lasting effect. He regarded those events as the biggest failure of his kingship. Acting in that situation in the best of Bavaria's interest would have required a person capable of reading the „writing on the wall" much earlier and capable of defending his own interests with greater wisdom and flexibility. But the king was not able to do so, given his unworldly monarchist beliefs and strict rejection of any "modernist" political ideas and aspirations. Instead, the loss of sovereignty caused him to withdraw himself more and more from the public scene both as a person and king (Durchhardt, 1998).

From the very beginning, his works of art, especially the majestic castles he erected, are testimonies of how he saw the world and his role as a king. After the events described had cut his status and powers as a monarch, he increasingly found consolation in the creative work he plunged himself in and the monarchist dreams he entertained in building his castles and lavishly decorating them as magnificent symbols of an absolute monarch's power and way of life, which he was denied in real life. The work on the castles ultimately became his main purpose in life, against which everyday life paled into insignificance.

Some of his subordinates saw in this passion for building and the castles he erected a sign of mental illness. Visiting the castle of Herrenchiemsee on June 25th, 1886, a few days after the king's death, a group of members of the lower house of the Bavarian parliament considered the building's *"supernatural pomp and glory*" (Merkt, 1987, p.111) a symptom of his madness. Dr. F.C. Müller, too, the young assistant physician who had been chosen to take care of the king after his deposition and who had accompanied Prof. von Gudden, the psychiatric expert, to arrest and intern the king, thought that the castle of Neuschwanstein with its "*enormous number of pinnacles and towers* [was] *the fruit of a disordered brain*"(Müller, 1929, p.774) (Figure 2).

Figure 2
The Castle of Neuschwanstein
Source: Krückmann, 2005, p.12.

Whether this is what people generally thought in those days, was not investigated then. Today, Ludwig's castles with their historicist style attract crowds of tourists from all over the world. In 2013, the castle of Neuschwanstein alone counted 1.35 million visitors.

2. A PERSONALITY SHAPED BY THE DYNASTY AND FAMILY

Ludwig's father, King Max II of Bavaria, carried on the monarchist tradition of the Wittelsbach dynasty, as his own father had done, in his political beliefs and style of governing. As a crown prince, Max II had studied history, ethnology, law and political science at the Universities of Göttingen and Berlin, but these studies had not disillusioned him in his absolutist dreams. Max II was hesitant in his actions. He frequently consulted several aids on one and the same issue (Hubensteiner, 1985; Spindler, 2007). He suffered from anxiety, which at times grew into panic. King Max II repeatedly left the capital to spend several months in Italy or Greece on grounds of "exhaustion" from the arduous tasks of governing, as the official explanation went. According to the court physician Dr. von Gietl, Max II suffered from terrible panic attacks lasting for several hours and accompanied by an agonizing fear of death (notes of his personal physician Dr. von Gietl (Häfner, 2008). Since his adolescence Ludwig II, too, is reported to have suffered symptoms of social phobia and panic attacks. Hence, both father and son suffered from phobia and tried to cope with it by avoiding fearful situations, for example by escaping from the anxiety-laden environment (Häfner, & Sommer, 2013).

King Ludwig II reduced his presence in Munich even more than his father had done. He also limited his contact to the leading figures of his kingdom and his family. He retreated, not to the south, but to the castles of Hohenschwangau or Berg, located against the backdrop of the Bavarian Alps (Merta, 2005).

A further motive for him to shun contact with the "higher" circles of society was his homosexuality, known since his youth. Homosexuality was considered a grave sin among Catholics, and in those days it was punishable by law and widely condemned (Häfner, 2008).

Despite these factors and the distress they caused, King Ludwig II, wherever he was staying, always attended to his administrative duties sensibly and promptly until the final days of his life (Häfner, 2008; Merta, 2005).In contrast, his father, King Max II, had left heaps of official documents unattended during his lengthy stays abroad, one of which had lasted for a whole year (Häfner, 2008; Krauss, 1997). Ironically, in the official Bavarian history he is described as a dedicated and dutiful king, whereas Ludwig II is purported to have badly neglected his administrative tasks, although there are several explicit testimonies to the contrary, for example, the one given by the Bavarian minister of finance (Riedel) in front of the commission of inquiry of the upper house of the Bavarian parliament after the royal tragedy (Häfner, 2008; Wöbking, 1986).

The main foreign-policy goal pursued by Ludwig's father, King Max II, had been to preserve Bavaria's sovereignty and status as a monarchy and a middle power, circled as the country was by great powers. In home policy he had strived to unite the three ethnicities that Napoleon had brought under Bavaria's roof – Bavaria, Franconia, Swabia – by instilling in them a sense of "royal" Bavarian identity. Max II had harnessed for that purpose the arts, science and history. He had founded the Bavarian National Museum as a home for collections of Bavarian art and the Commission of Bavarian History of the Bavarian Academy of Science and Humanities. He had attracted to the University of Munich renowned scholars from northern-German universities, the so-called "northern lights", who helped to considerably improve the quality of research and teaching at this leading Bavarian university. His prestigious civil buildings, too, the Bavarian elite school Maximilianeum in Munich and the boulevard leading from there to the Royal Opera House – called Maximilian Street – were designed as symbols of the unity and glory of the Kingdom of Bavaria (Häfner, 2008; Hubensteiner, 1985).

As stated, Ludwig II's grand plans of building a festival hall and a prestigious boulevard in Munich at the beginning of his reign had failed to materialize. In other respects, however, the home policies he pursued were prudent. He signed modern social legislation and founded a polytechnical school, which was to become the Technical University of Munich, as well as a music school, the later Academy of Music in Munich (Häfner, 2008). But the most significant testimonies of his reign are the three magnificent castles.

3. MYTHS, SAGAS AND ART AS A LIFESTYLE

King Ludwig II spent most of his childhood, youth and adulthood at his father's castle in Hohenschwangau. This building complex, resembling a medieval fortress in design, had been planned by Maximilian when he was still a crown prince ten years before he married Marie of Prussia (1842). He had been advised in this project by his history teacher, the historian Joseph Freiherr von Hormayr (1781-1848) (Arnold-Becker, 2011).

Hormayr had supported the Tyrolian struggle for independence against Bavaria and Napoleonic France in 1809, whereas Max's father, King Ludwig I, as a crown prince had fought on the French side. The Tyrolean innkeeper Andreas Hofer, the insurgents' commander, had been executed under martial law after their defeat

on February 20th, 1810. Freiherr von Hormayr, who had been sentenced to prison only for 13 months at Prince Metternich's instigation, published the annual „Paperback of Patriotic History" ("Taschenbuch für die vaterländische Geschichte"), abounding in facts, sagas and disinformation. The publication shaped the political opinion in the German-speaking countries and, hence, had attracted the king's interest. In 1828 Ludwig I had invited the former enemy to settle in Bavaria, in order to

> uplift the spirits of the Bavarian people through literary activities and promote Bavaria's standing abroad (Raab, 1985; cited from Arnold-Becker, 2011, p.11.)

In 1832 Ludwig I's son, Maximilian, acquired the remains of the fortress of "Schwanstein", located above Lake Alpsee near the town of Füssen and first mentioned as the seat of the lords of Schwanstein in 1397. Hormayr, whom Crown Prince Max had consulted in the matter, supplied the castle with an illustrious history. In ancient times, he claimed, the fortress of Schwanstein had been in the possession of three German imperial families: The Wittelsbachs, the Stauffers and the Guelphs. It is true that the Guelphs and the Stauffers had had possessions in and around Füssen in the 11th to 13th centuries, but the fortress had not existed in those days yet. After glorifying its history, Hormayr also enhanced the castle's current status by comparing it with the castle of Wartburg located in Eisenach, calling them both national monuments (Arnold-Becker, 2011).

Figure 3
The Castle of Hohenschwangau
Source: Arnold-Becker, 2011, p.6.

Thanks to its appearance and dominant location (Figure 3), the castle, boasting four towers and numerous pinnacles, is a majestic sight. Its interior design and a total of 107 murals, arranged in thematic cycles and supplied with short explanatory inscriptions, are no less impressive. The furniture, original in style and matching the themes, as well as a few sculptures complement the impression. The thematic cycles Max II chose deal with religious legends, medieval myths and sagas, glorifying chivalry, high nobility and the Wittelsbach dynasty (Arnold-Becker, 2011).

Responsible for creating the thematic cycles in detail were Domenico Quaglio (architect and construction supervisor until his death in 1837*)* - he was succeeded by Joseph Daniel Ohlmüller for two years and by Georg Friedrich Ziebland in 1839 -, the historian Joseph Freiherr von Hormayr, the historian Johann Friedrich Huschberg and the royal photographer Joseph Albert. The king himself provided some sketches. The themes were derived from old-Germanic sagas of the Grimm brothers (1816-1818) (Ibid.), but some were also newly created myths glorifying Bavaria and its royal family. Responsible for producing the sketches and painting the murals were different artists, especially Moritz von Schwind and Wilhelm Lindenschmit senior (supported by his brother Ludwig), but also Christian Ruben, Lorenzo Quaglio, Dietrich Monten, Wilhelm Scheuchzer, Christian Heinrich Hanson, Franz Xaver Glink, Friedrich Gießmann, Michael Neher and Albrecht Adam took part as well as further less famous painters, e.g. Nilson, Schimon and Schneider (Ibid.). This array of artists involved, some of them highly acclaimed, illustrates the quality of the artwork and the dynastic significance of the castle.

Figure 4
The Bavarians and the Lombards United Through Authari and Theudelinda
Source: Ibid., p. 24

A look at a few characteristic cycles illustrates the spirit and message of the murals. Depicted in the *Authari Room* is the wedding of the Bavarian princess Theudelinda and King Authari of the Lombards in 589 AD (Figure 4). Its aim is to symbolize the early union of Bavaria's ruling dynasty with the Lombard dynasty. The legend goes that the Lombard King Authari – according to whom the cycle is named – had incognito paid a visit to the Bavarian princess as a suitor. He had not revealed his true identity until on his way back by wielding with an axe a heavy blow in a German oak tree, in other words, by demonstrating his extraordinary male strength.

The murals of the *Berchta Room*, designed by Hormayr, illustrate the legend of the contribution of Bavaria's dynasty to Emperor Charlemagne's ancestry and, hence, to „the birth of the German home country". Charlemagne's actual place of birth is still unknown, but according to the pictures of the Berchta room that event took place in the

wilderness of Würmtal, which connects the city of Munich with the southern tip of Lake Starnberg.

The Franconian King Pippin the Younger (who actually changed residence several times) is claimed to have resided at the castle of Weihenstephan near Freising. In 741 AD he intended to marry Berchta, the daughter of the King of "Kerlingen", allegedly an ancestor of the Bavarian ruling family. King Pippin sent his tutor to the court at Kerlingen to woo Berchta, but the tutor had his servants evict Berchta into the wilderness of Würmtal with an intention to have her killed there and foisted on the king his own daughter as a bride. Instead of killing Berchta the servants released her in the wilderness. She found refuge in a solitary rice mill (Ibid.).

Seven years later Pippin lost his way when hunting in Würmtal. He ran across the same rice mill, took refuge there and found a beautiful maiden washing clothes, whom he recognized as Berchta by her ring. He spent the night with her, conceiving a son. After separating from the false bride, the tutor's daughter, and having brought Berchta home a year later, the son, i.e. the later Emperor Charlemagne, had already been born.

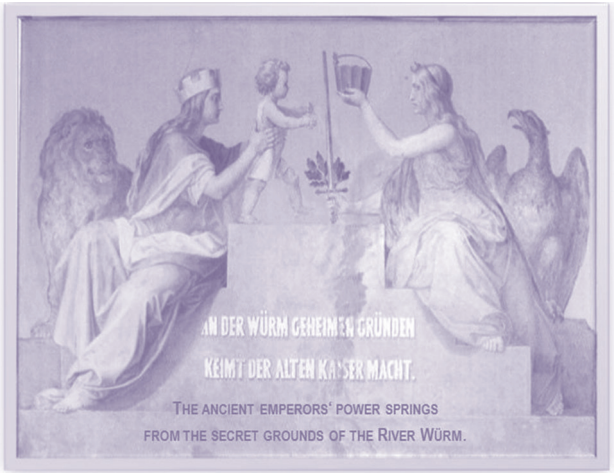

Figure 5
The Origins of Charlemagne
Source: Ibid., p.30.

The dynastic message of this legend is depicted in a picture rounding off the room (Figure 5). In it Berchta, sitting in front of the lion from Bavaria's coat of arms, is offering the infant Charles to Goddess Germania, who is sitting in front of the eagle from the German coat of arms. The future emperor receives the imperial insignia, sword and crown, from Germania (Ibid.).

The imagery depicted in the castle's *Ladies' Chamber (Burgfrauenzimmer)* and the *Hall of the Heroes* (Heldensaal) deals with scenes from the lives of princes and knights in all their "*bravery and virtuousness*" (Ibid., p.103).

The *Hall of the Swan Knight* (Schwanenrittersaal) was dedicated by Max II to the legend of Lohengrin. King Ludwig II readopted that legend, which originates in Richard Wagner's opera "Lohengrin", in a new version at his castle of Neuschwanstein (drafted by August Heckel, paintings by Wilhelm Hauschild) (Ibid.).

Since his childhood, the later King Ludwig II was surrounded by this world of myths and beautiful images featuring brave warriors with their devoted and courageous fair maidens and victorious, benevolent kings from the glorious German past and glorifying the own ancestry with the aim of obfuscating the reality. That this environment did not fail to leave its imprint on him, becomes evident in the Tasso Room, which Ludwig II furnished as his bedroom. He had its ceiling painted blue and tiny holes, illuminated from the space above it, cut in it to generate the illusion of a starry sky. A mobile half-moon and a rainbow were added later. In this room Ludwig also had a small fountain installed between blocks of rock, decorated with plants, so he could enjoy the sound of flowing water. Orange trees and bushes were placed along the sidewalls to create the illusion of a southern night.

In his letters Ludwig repeatedly mentioned the formative influence of his father's castle. For example, on August 29th, 1867 he wrote to Cosima von Bülow, later Wagner, that Hohenschwangau was a paradise on earth for him, a place teeming with his ideals, simply a place where he was happy (Schad, 1996). It was

> for me the dearest place on earth, a place linked with the happiest memories of my life. (Ibid., p. 420f)

In his letter of October 8th, 1867 to Cosima von Bülow he wrote: "*A spirit of poetry is flowing through the magnificent Hohenschwangau*" (Ibid., p.438). Despite all the similarities between father and son there were also differences. When absent from the castle, Max II allowed his people to visit it in order to give them an opportunity to admire the medieval times, the Wittelsbach dynasty in particular (Arnold-Becker, 2011). The romantic idea reflected in it, also entertained by other German rulers and writers in those days, namely that ordinary people could be educated by letting them experience works of art and myths, was also shared by Ludwig II. Under Richard Wagner's influence, however, this attitude soon turned into contempt for the common people. Ludwig II admitted only few selected individuals to his castles, the majestic edifices of his fictive absolutism.

It will probably shape your personality if you are growing up as an heir to the throne and a future successor to a monarch. Ludwig had a very strict and authoritarian father, whose aim was to raise his son as a Christian sovereign with high moral principles. Contributing to Ludwig's poor relationship to his father – strikingly, that was also true of the relationship between Max II and his father, Ludwig I, and, again, of the relationship between Ludwig I and his father, King Max Joseph I - was the rigorous education Ludwig was given. Another factor was the personal distance Ludwig kept to his parents as well

as the fact that he was very much aware of his status as a crown prince (Böhm, 1924).

But this overt self-consciousness bordering on arrogance probably also originated in the dynastic subculture of the parental court, particularly in the so-called "monarchist principle", according to which the monarch, by virtue of his birth, has been chosen by God and is above the law and the state (Brunner, 1967). Due to his haughtiness, visible quite early, Ludwig strived for dominance at the court, in his family and among his companions (Böhm, 1924). As an adult, his arrogance at times caused him to treat even his next of kin in a presumptuous and conceited manner, which only made him unnecessary enemies (Brunner, 1967). He seriously insulted and humiliated his uncle, Prince Luitpold, the later "regent", and his cousin Ludwig, the later King Ludwig III, on several occasions, causing serious rancor. For example, he punished his closest family members, after they had voted in parliament contrary to his wishes, by denying them access to the Royal Residence in Munich for several days – producing a big scandal (Möckl, 1972).

The fantasy-laden, theatre-like environment Ludwig grew up in – as an artistic style quite characteristic of the Romantic period (Paulmann, 2000; Safranski, 2007); Langewiesche, 2013) — probably shaped his mental development from early on. He liked to dress up as a child, to declaim and act roles. He is reported to have been an avid reader, early devouring German classics. Throughout his life he admired and held in high esteem successful actors and actresses and fell at least once in homoerotic love with one of them. From the age of eight on, as was typical in ruling families in those days, Ludwig was educated by a high-ranking officer, Major General Theodor Earl Basselet de la Rosée, and instructed in military virtues by another officer, Major Baron Wulffen (Häfner, 2008), but the latter only to little avail. However, it is difficult to say how Ludwig's development was actually influenced by his extremely strict father, who did not even stop short of using corporal punishment (Müller, 2006).

4. ABSOLUTIST INCLINATIONS AND PACIFIST POLICIES

Ludwig loved his governess, Sibylle Meilhaus, later Countess of Leonrod, like an own mother. She took care of him until the age of eight and, until her death, remained a person he very much trusted and liked to share his thoughts and experiences with. It was to her that after becoming king he several times stated quite frankly that he rather preferred a policy of peace to the expansionist policies of power many of his fellow monarchs were pursuing, for example in a letter he wrote on August 28th, 1870:

> I am yearning for lasting peace soon to come, beneficial for the whole of Germany, but excellent for my beloved Bavaria(Hacker, 1972, p.179),

but in vain. In the March of 1871, after the victorious end of the Franco-German war and the establishment of the second German Empire, he wrote to Sibylle von Leonrod:

> ...sad, horrible times that we are being forced to live through, during my short reign already two excruciating wars! Very hard for a peace-loving prince! The crude handicraft of war, when practised for long, corrupts people's morals, makes them unable to entertain grand, noble ideals, dulls them for spiritual enjoyment, for these alone are capable of exercising a permanent fascination, these alone bestow genuine blissfulness and inner satisfaction. (Ibid., p.198)

These lines are evidence not only of his pacifism, but also of his philosophy of life and reveal prominent aspects of the ideal he had of a ruler.

The king's pacifism also became reflected in his policies. Military exercises were neglected under Ludwig II. He visited his troops extremely seldom and missed to improve their armament, e.g. to equip them rapidly with needle guns, which could be fired five times a minute, whereas the traditional muzzle loaders of the Bavarian and the Austrian army took considerably longer to fire (Hilmes, 2013). It was largely thanks to the needle gun that the Prussian army had won a victory over Austria, Bavaria and some other German states in the battle of Königsgrätz in 1866, producing some 200,000 victims on the enemy's side (Ibid.). It was because of this aversion to all things military that Ludwig II came in for criticism early in his reign. On August 17th, 1866 the army's old commander Prince Carl (great-uncle of Ludwig II and a younger brother of King Ludwig I) wrote to Ludwig I:

> It is with an anxious heart that I am looking into Bavaria's future. These highly critical current circumstances do not seem to affect…our young king at all; … It only shows all too plainly the indifference he is possessed by. You will see that it will come to a forced abdication (Franz, 1933, p.145ff),

because of this. It did not happen. Ludwig II was only fortified in his pacifist beliefs by the wars of 1866 and 1870/71, which his kingdom could not avoid fighting due to contractual commitments.

As a 12-year-old boy Crown Prince Ludwig had discovered *Richard Wagner*'s paper entitled "The future of art" at the place of his uncle Max, Duke in Bavaria. The uncle was called "Zithermaxl", because he liked to play the zither and sing folksongs together with his companions at a Munich café. Ludwig was fascinated by Wagner's grand ideas and mythical visions. At the age of 15 he was for the first time allowed to attend the opera "Lohengrin". It moved him deeply. After that experience he devoted himself more and more to studying Wagner and his works (Hubensteiner, 1985). Wagner's romantic-heroic operas, his world of Germanic sagas and myths full of pomp and glory as well as his elitist attitude combined with a contempt for the ordinary people matched – like a key matches a lock - the world of fantasies and attitudes

Ludwig had developed under the early influence of his father's castle in Hohenschwangau.

After stepping on the throne in 1864 the young king immediately invited Wagner to his court. Wagner had a past not of the usual sort (Ibid.). In 1842 he had been appointed musical director at the court of the Saxon King in Dresden. Notwithstanding this, he participated in the preparations for the 1848 revolution, writing and distributing revolutionary pamphlets in the spirit of the Russian anarchist Bakunin, and finally even engaged in streetfighting against the monarchy during the 1849 uprising in Dresden, which had ensued after the king had violated the constitution by dismissing an elected parliament (Mann, 1992). Bakunin tried to encourage Wagner to compose a trio, in which the tenor would sing a refrain of "behead him!", the soprano "cut off his head!" and the bass "fire, fire!" (Safranski, 2007). But Wagner had had other plans. When the rebellion was quelled, Wagner escaped from the Saxon warrant of arrest. Soon, he was also fleeing from his creditors first to Vienna and then to other places because of unpaid debts, for economizing was equally foreign to him as it was to his royal friend (Voss, 2012).

The royal Bavarian cabinet secretary von Pfistermeister found Wagner hiding in the vicinity of Stuttgart. He handed the composer a precious ring and a letter, not quite ordinary either, from the king:

> Unknowingly, you were my only source of pleasure from my tender age on, my friend who touched my heart like no one else ever did, my very best teacher and educator (Letter of May 5th, 1864. (Hacker, 1972, p.65).

At first, Wagner could not believe what was happening to him. He enthused to a friend of his, Elisabeth Wille:

> He loves me with the intensity and fervor of first love: He knows everything about me and understands me like my own soul. He wants me to stay by him forever, to work, rest, perform my works; he wants to give me anything I need for that …. (Letter of May 5th, 1864, Ibid.)

After this unusual approach, which sounded like a romantic confession of love, by the 19-year-old king there ensued between him and the composer (1813-1883), 32 years his senior, one of the most curious male friendships in European history. Wagner moved to Munich right away. Ludwig II was now paying his living expenses, gave to his disposal a country house in the vicinity of the royal castle of Berg and an apartment in the best quarters of Munich (Häfner, 2008). Under Wagner's influence Ludwig's early conception of himself as a monarch and his political beliefs became reinforced: To educate his people and let them lead more fulfilling lives by giving them opportunities to enjoy the arts, culture and music. However, soon after he had had to expel Wagner from Bavaria, Ludwig felt that his "*subjects did not comprehend"* him (letter to Cosima von Bülow of January 2nd, 1866, [Schad, 1996, p.93]). After this illusionary plan was shattered, the king's elitist arrogance and contempt for the ordinary folks surfaced again.

Time and again Ludwig II met Wagner's excessive demands for money, financed the composition and performance of the „Ring" operas with an advance payment of an honorarium, but also secured the performing rights to them (Häfner, 2008). Otto Wesendonck, married to Richard Wagner's platonic – possibly also erotic – lady friend Mathilde, had acquired the rights to the opera "The Ring of the Nibelung" in exchange for a loan and later transferred these rights to the king (Voss, 2012). In addition, Wagner had given to his patron, the king, the scripts of his works as a present (Ibid.). Apart from the "Meistersinger" score, which Ludwig's heir, Prince Regent Luitpold, donated to the Germanic National Museum in Nuremberg in 1902, all these autographs ended up in the hands of Adolf Hitler and have been missing ever since (Ibid.).

Ludwig and Wagner exchanged a lot of romantic, at times exalted letters. They resemble in style the late Romantic period, typical of which was to elevate the reality, sometimes quite excessively, by using lyrical, passionate language and by invoking feelings and phantasies. For example, the king wrote to Wagner in December 1864:

> Beloved Saint! – I am like a spark yearning to merge into your ray of sunlight… - Oh, how happy I am! In everlasting love until death your faithful Ludwig in bliss. (Hacker, 1972, p.74f)

To further illustrate the romantic style of writing of the time here are a few examples from Ludwig's correspondence with Cosima von Bülow, later Wagner, of how they addressed each other and closed their letters: Ludwig II wrote to Cosima on January 2nd, 1866: "*Dear, highly revered Madam!*", closing the letter by: "*Warmest regards from your most kindly disposed Ludwig, whose soul is troubled unto death"* (Schad, 1996, p. 92, 94); Cosima to Ludwig on January 7th, 1866: "*My dear, my adored Sir*! *King! Guardian! Shield! Angel of Hope!*" – ending: "*Your faithful servant is scattering love and blessing on every step of her King and Master and will remain until death His Majesty's most faithful Cosima von Bülow Liszt*" (Ibid., p.94, 97). Ludwig's correspondence with Richard Wagner, too, is characterized by a particularly vivid, rapturous style of writing typical of the Romantic period. Hilmes cites a few expressions. To give an example from the king's official correspondence, the Bavarian minister of the interior closes his letter of January 21st, 1886 to the king with the words: "*In attested reverence Baron Max von Feilitzsch will remain until death in utmost subservience and devoted obedience to Your Majesty*" (Häfner, 2008, p.489).

Wagner's personality has been judged quite controversially in history. Friedrich Nietzsche, at first an ardent admirer of the composer and his music, later condemned both. Wagner's contemporary, the

Swiss novelist Gottfried Keller, judged Wagner (1857) ambivalently, regarding him as a hugely talented person, "*but also as something of a hairdresser and charlatan"* (Karthaus, 2007, p.239).

But Ludwig also got to know the other side of Richard Wagner's personality. As Wagner was growing more and more unscrupulous in his demands for money, Ludwig reacted increasingly pragmatically. A line was crossed, when Wagner finally asked him to dismiss the prime minister and his court secretary and even published in a Munich newspaper an anonymous article vilifying them (Häfner, 2008). A resolution adopted by the ministers, the archbishop, Ludwig's mother and a larger number of respected people in Munich called for Wagner's expulsion. The king reluctantly asked Wagner to leave Munich. Together with Cosima von Bülow, nèe Liszt, at that time still married to Hans von Bülow, but already pregnant from Wagner, the composer found refuge at Tribschen, near Lucerne in Switzerland (Gregor-Dellin, 1972). Despite the exile his influence on the king did not end. Ludwig II went on supporting Wagner until the composer's death in 1883. Wagner's works remained a powerful source of inspiration for Ludwig II when he was planning and designing his castles.

5. THE "FAIRY-TALE" CASTLES OF KING LUDWIG II

To get a proper idea of the king's castles and the spirit they reflected, we should take a look at what his fellow rulers were doing in those days. Napoleon and the Congress of Vienna (1814-1815) had in different ways reinvigorated and reinstituted monarchist styles of government in Europe. After the first republican uprisings in Germany and Austria, republican aspirations were quelled on a large scale in keeping with the Carlsbad Decrees formulated and adopted in 1819 under the aegis of Prince Metternich[1]. The renaissance of the concept of an absolute ruler was accompanied by a nostalgia for the artistic and architectural styles of the supposedly glorious days gone by. Testimonies are the prestigious medieval-style fortresses and castles built at that time, many of them well visible from the distance because sitting high on hill or mountain tops. They were intended as symbols of the ruler's might and riches in the eyes of ordinary people. Examples are besides the castles and palaces built by Ludwig II the castle of Lichtenfels built by the dukes of Württemberg-Urach, the expanded and renovated castle of Hohenzollern and the castle of Stolzenfels of the Prussian royal family.

These extravagant, often ostentatious construction projects, in those days so à la mode among the potentates, no longer served the purpose of just providing housing for the royals or for assembling members of the nobility at the court (Karthaus, 2007). In a period of shadow monarchs they were intended as monuments to the past era when the absolute monarchs still ruled by the grace of God. They also served as visible and tangible symbols of the "royal myth" (Hojer, 1986, p, 11f). However, none of these numerous "monuments" to the twilight of absolute monarchs have achieved the fame of the three castles King Ludwig II of Bavaria erected. With the locations, styles and designs he chose for his castles, with the murals and paintings depicting religious topics, dynastic legends and national sagas on the one hand and mythical scenes from the works of Richard Wagner on the other hand, Ludwig II created a nostalgic, fictional world of absolute kingship. By a posterity lacking proper understanding of the spirit characteristic of an era that witnessed the last burst of strength of the waning monarchies, Ludwig II is sometimes described as a "airy-tale king" (Herre, 1986; von Zerssen, 2010). It is true that the narrative part of the myths and heroic sagas depicted in the murals and paintings of his castles, when stripped of their monarchist glorification, can also be found in the fairy-tales and sagas of the ordinary people (Benz, 1910). However, to call Ludwig II a fairy-tale king would miss the point in view of his artistic accomplishments and the significance of his life's work.

5.1 The Castle of Linderhof

The castle of Linderhof (with its Venus Grotto), modelled on the summer palaces of King Louis XIV - Trianon and Marly -, was erected by Ludwig II on the grounds of a hunting lodge in an isolated valley of the Bavarian Alps (Graswangtal) (Figure 6).

Figure 6
The Castle of Linderhof
Source: Krückmann, 2005, p.37.

[1] http://www.uni-leipzig.de/~agintern/uni600/ug164.htm; http://www.geschichtsinfos.de/karlsbader-beschluesse/

It is the only one of his three castles that was completed during his lifetime and he occasionally stayed in. It overlooks a beautiful park featuring water basins with giant fountains and sculptures. The Venus Grotto, built as part of the castle, is painted fancifully and illuminated in changing colours. It is filled with heated Capri-blue water and boasts artificial waves (Connerade & Heckl, 2006).

This example illustrates a further aspect of Ludwig's personality: his enthusiasm for modern technology. Ludwig needed electricity for the coloured illumination of the grotto with its 24 arc lamps and for heating the water in its pond. At Linderhof, a power station consisting of generators produced electricity from hydropower. It was the first of its kind and had been constructed by Werner von Siemens, an engineer and entrepreneur who later founded the famous Siemens company (Ibid.). All the castles Ludwig II built were equipped with the latest technology: e.g. central heating, electric light, water closets, telephone connection and an electric intercom (Ibid.). The largest dome of the castle of Neuschwanstein is supported by a daring iron construction, as was the huge roof of the new wintergarden at the Munich Residence. Ludwig II encouraged industrial and technological development in Bavaria. As already mentioned, he founded the Polytechnical School in Munich in 1868, today known by the name of the Technical University of Munich, one of Germany's leading universities.

The inspiration emanating from Richard Wagner's works did not stop at the castles' walls. At Linderhof, Ludwig built the *Hunding Hut* around an old ash tree near the castle and had its interior decorated with scenes from the first act of the "Ring" opera "Valkyrie". Struck in the trunk of the ash tree was the "invincible sword Notung" from the Parzival saga. In a nearby forest he built the *Gurnemanz Hermitage*, inspired by the Munich opera's stage setting for the third act of the opera "Parsifal" (Petzet, 1990).

5.2 The Castle of Neuschwanstein

On May 13th, 1868 Ludwig II told Richard Wagner that he intended to rebuild the old castle ruin located near the Pöllatschlucht (Pöllat Gorge) in the authentic style of an old German fortress:

> …the place is one of the most beautiful to be found, holy and unapproachable, a worthy temple for the divine friend who alone has bestowed salvation and true blessing on the world. (Hüttl, 1986, p. 232)

He also told Wagner about his plans to build a *Singers' Hall* and decorate it with reminiscences from the composer's operas "Tannhäuser" and "Lohengrin". Comparing it with the nearby castle of his parents, he wrote:

> In every respect this castle will be more beautiful and habitable than the lower Hohenschwangau, which, year by year, becomes desecrated by my mother's prose; they are bound to take revenge, the desecrated Gods, and come and stay with us up in the lofty heights, where the air of heaven is blowing. (Hacker, 1972, p.259)

This quotation not only shows Ludwig's antipathy towards his mother, but also indicates that these plans were an intention to enter in an aesthetic competition with his father's castle, located in a visible distance.

After a short period of planning, the construction work started in the June of 1869 under the architects Eduard Riedel, Christian Jank and Georg von Dollmann (Arnold-Becker, 2011).

In the castle of Neuschwanstein history, architecture and nature merge in a masterly way. It is mainly Romantic in style, while also citing the other great periods of German art, Gothic and Baroque. Old-Germanic myths first played the key role, but then Ludwig intended to resurrect for example the saga of the grail's fortress Monsalvat (Tauber, 2013, p.136ff). The central theme of the interior decoration is the mythical representation of guilt and redemption, of the longing for purity and sanctity, deeply rooted in one of Ludwig's personal problems in life, - religion, homosexuality and repeated bouts of elementary guilt (Merta 1990; *Das Geheime Tagebuch König*, para.6, 2000).

To give a few examples, the king's dining room is decorated with murals of the medieval minnesingers Gottfried von Straßburg and Wolfram von Eschenbach at the court of Landgrave Hermann von Thüringen. The topic of minnesong and the veneration of the Virgin Mary, depicted in numerous scenes, refer to Ludwig's fictional notion of pure, incorporeal love (Arnold-Becker, 2011).

The king's new bedroom at Neuschwanstein is designed in the style of Gothic German cathedrals. It features a scene from one of Wagner's operas: Tristan bidding farewell to Isolde. The king's living room is decorated with images from the Lohengrin saga. One scene shows the appointment of Lohengrin to the Holy Grail.

The king's study is devoted to the Tannhäuser saga. The grand Hall of the Singers underneath the castle's roof is modelled on the historic Singers' Hall of the Wartburg Castle. Depicted there is the Parsifal saga. The Throne Hall resembles the interior of a Byzantine church. On the side of the altar there are images of six sainted kings. In the middle, above the king's throne, there is Ludwig, the holy king of France, the king's namesake. Palms are included as symbols of eternal peace. On the rear wall the holy George is killing a dragon.

The imageries of the castles of Hohenschwangau and Neuschwanstein are strikingly similar. The spirit that Ludwig II grew up in and the mythical environment that surrounded him are reflected in his works. Some differences are to be found in the topics of the murals, particularly in those originating in Richard Wagner's works. Hence, it can be concluded that the architecture of the castle of Neuschwanstein and the imagery of its

interior were primarily influenced, apart from the dynastic legacy, by the pictures Ludwig II grew up with at his father's castle Hohenschwangau, featuring medieval sagas, patriotic and dynastic legends that Hormayr and his colleagues had contributed, and by the sagas, myths and iconology from Richard Wagner's works.

6. ABSOLUTISM – AN OUTDATED POLITICAL SYSTEM

As pointed out, Ludwig II lived in the late monarchist era. In the king's personal prayer book there are telling lines from the pen of Jakob von Türk, canon of the royal monastery. They provide a glimpse at the King's absolutist beliefs:

> Your eternal Providence has called me to rule over all others, your divine plan, your holy will has assigned me this position. (Häfner, 2008, p.28)

After ascending the throne, Ludwig II relied on wise counselling. As he had lost his father, his godfather and grandfather, Ludwig I, stepped in the role of advising the inexperienced king. The old king instilled into his grandson the dynastic tradition of the Wittelsbach royal family and the importance of holding on to the "monarchist principle". In the numerous letters he wrote to his grandson he vigorously asserted his conservative beliefs, for example writing from Rome on December 7th, 1866:

> Your grandgrandfather, the giver of the constitution, would turn in his grave, if the changes hostile to the monarchy were to be adopted, and your grandfather would feel very grieved if what has existed since the beginning of the constitution during three governments were destroyed at the beginning of the fourth… . (Tauber, 2013, p.76)

He told his grandson to see to it

> that it will not be written in history books: Ludwig II shoveled the grave of the Bavarian monarchy. (Ibid., p.76)

He further warned his grandson not to let himself be degraded to a "mere rubber stamp" of the parliament or by his government to "a servant of the ministries", as, he believed, was the case in the political systems of England and France.[2] He also warned of the Prussian influence on Bavaria.

In that respect Ludwig II was a receptive student. In an undated letter to this grandfather he wrote:

> I am the King, and what pleases me to do is rightly done, this is how every good subject must think, submitting himself to the monarch's will. (Hacker, 1972, p.293)

At least in the first year of his rule, his Bavarian "subjects" seem to have complied with Ludwig II's absolutist inclinations. Especially women were charmed by the young, romantic and good-looking king with a stately figure of 6 feet 4 inches (1.92 m). The Bavarian constitution of 1818, which Ludwig I was referring to in his letter, only reinforced the king's absolutist beliefs. §1, Title II, ran:

> The King is the head of the state, he unites in himself all the rights and powers of the state and exercises them according to the terms given by him and laid down in the present Constitution. His person is sacred and inviolable.cited from (von Pözl 1877, p. 381f)

As his reign wore on and he grew older, Ludwig's absolutist tendencies only became stronger. On August 30th, 1869, five years into his reign, he formulated his idea of a monarch:

> He (the King) has received his crown from God and must be completely free in his actions … He alone, and I repeat it here, by virtue of his office exercises independent and undivided legislative power. (Bay HStA, MA 99733, Häfner, 2008, p. 87)

Hubert Glaser, a Bavarian historian who has focused on the history of the constitution, has characterized the monarchist principle as:

> A clinging to the belief already shaken by the Enlightenment and revolution that God has chosen the monarch as a ruler and given him special gifts of grace, …[which,] however does not prevent him from leading a private life to his own liking. (Glaser, 1993, p.61)

7. WAS HE REALLY MAD? THE KING'S DEPOSITION

Feeling threatened by the growing number of people who did not share his absolutist beliefs, Ludwig II founded a circle of like-minded people and called it a "Coalition". Its aim was to provide him with information and carry out secret operations with the objective of securing the king's absolute rule. In von Gudden's psychiatric assessment (see Häfner, 2008, p.499ff), the "Coalition" was interpreted as a symptom of feebleness of mind and paranoia. This is just one of the misinterpretations to be found in the psychiatric assessment. Politically, the "Coalition" was not a particularly wise move, but absolutely understandable, as the few orders Ludwig II gave to his informants demonstrate. The "Coalition" comprised only few members and was soon dissolved for lack of suitable candidates (Hacker, 1972).

With the psychological evaluation of the "Coalition", the small secret squad loyal to the king, we have entered the issues surrounding the psychiatric expertise written about Ludwig II because of his alleged incapacity to rule.

[2] In a memorandum for newly appointed ministers of his kingdom (1831) Ludwigs II's grandfather, King Ludwig I, spelled out what this principle meant in political practice: "*By no means should a Bavarian minister strive to be what a French or an English minister is, …the Bavarian King will never bring himself to take on the role of those kings …It is hard work to be a king, and the ministers should not make it even harder; they should not raise again matters that the king has ruled upon … let alone take sides against their King…*" (Kraus, 2003, p.138)

That assessment had been "ordered" by Prince Luitpold, the king's uncle and second heir to the throne, from the Munich-based professor of psychiatry Bernhard von Gudden, as an instrument of deposing the king, and the latter submitted it on June 8th, 1886. It was co-signed by three other Bavarian psychiatrists. Prince Luitpold had appointed them as further psychiatric experts, but they did not change anything in the wording of von Gudden's report[3]. Like von Gudden they were all members of the Bavarian civil service.

We will now take a short look at the behaviours and arguments that were cited as evidence supporting Ludwig II's alleged mental illness and incapacity to rule and assess their conclusiveness.

Ludwig's personality and lifestyle were shaped by his ancestors' court culture and the imagery he grew up with at the parental castle of Hohenschwangau. Other forces, too, which influenced his way of thinking and acting originated in that culture. Further factors were his social phobia, his homosexuality and the influence Richard Wagner exerted on him. An argument listed in the psychiatric report as evidence for his mental illness and incapacity to rule was his reclusiveness and wariness of people and his growing reluctance to see his government ministers. Indeed, the king had also developed a strong disinclination for meeting with Bavarian dignitaries and some members of the royal family. But he enjoyed the company of selected persons he trusted, e.g. Richard and Cosima Wagner, and Prince Ludwig Ferdinand of Bavaria and his wife, Infanta of Spain. Consequently, he was frequently absent from his Munich Residence. In his last years it was only a few weeks in the spring and late autumn that King Ludwig II spent at his Residence in Munich, mostly shunning public appearances. His favourite places of retreat were the parental castle of Hohenschwangau and the castle of Berg at Lake Starnberg (Merta, 2005).

One of the personal reasons for his frequent absence from the capital – a type of behavior his father, King Max II, too, had practiced for similar reasons – was, as already mentioned, that Ludwig II suffered from social phobia associated with panic attacks and urges to flee, because he tried to cope with them by avoiding situations causing them – i.e. social contacts. A further reason was his homosexuality, evident since his adolescence and a type of behaviour that according to his strictly Roman Catholic faith was a deadly sin and in those days socially despised and a legally punishable offence.

However, social phobia associated with occasional panic attacks, the kind Ludwig II and his father suffered from, is not a mental illness that automatically involves incapacity to govern. Normally, the ability to take care of one's affairs or pursue political activities is not affected, because the condition impacts on mental domains other than cognitive functioning and sensory perception. This is also the reason why King Max II's social phobia did not officially play a role. In keeping with this assessment of how social phobia affects fitness to rule, Ludwig II, too, was capable of executing his administrative duties reasonably, correctly and promptly until his final days (Häfner, 2008; Merta, 2001). Even between June 3rd and 6th the ministers had submitted him documents, which he signed and returned on June 8th, 1886, before he was arrested on June 12th (Häfner, 2008).

One of the characteristics frequently considered to be a sign of the king's madness was his unusual power of imagination. The examples cited in the psychiatric assessment were his fantasy of a southern landscape during a Bavarian winter, his bowing to a monument of Queen Marie Antoinette, a relative beheaded during the French Revolution, or his fantasies of important persons being present at the table when in fact he was eating alone. If not classifiable as a type of behaviour befitting the late Romantic period, reflected especially in the interior decoration of his castles, these episodes can also be seen as mirroring Ludwig II's personality, whom we have seen grow up in a fanciful, romanticizing environment at his father's castle.

His majestic castles, decorative in style, but also impressive in their grandiosity, induced not only the psychiatric expert von Gudden, but also some less ingenious minds to believe that the king was mad. Today, all doubts about Ludwig II's mental powers supposedly manifested in the castles he designed and built have been dismantled.

One of the main reasons why King Ludwig II was thought to be mentally ill and incapable of governing was his excessive need for money. Indeed, it was not only the construction projects of his majestic castles, elaborate in architecture, lavish in decoration and surrounded by generously designed, spacious gardens, that produced high costs (by 1886 a total of 31.3 million marks for the castles of Linderhof, Neuschwanstein and Herrenchiemsee (Müller, 2006)). Ludwig also enjoyed operas and plays performed just for him at the royal theatre in Munich. The reason was that due to his social phobia he disliked the presence of the audience. Between 1872 and 1885 a total of 209 such private performances were given (Häfner, 2008). To give an idea of the costs involved, to perform a single opera ("Parsival") reportedly cost 70,000 marks (Ibid.), and typical of the frequently given Wagner operas are an opulent orchestration and stage decoration and some demanding vocal parts.

After Cabinet Secretary von Düfflip, who had kept tight control of the king's purse strings, left the court in

[3] The psychiatric assessment of June 8th, 1886 was signed by von Gudden, university professor and senior medical officer of health; Dr. Hagen, director (Erlangen mental hospital); Dr. Grashey, university professor (Würzburg); Dr. Hubrich, director (Werneck mental hospital) (Bay HStA, GHA: 36/1/3 V and 36/1/4; see Häfner, 2008, p.510).

1877, because the king was not willing to accept the cost-cutting measures he had proposed (Möckl, 1972), the debt of the royal treasury began to climb from year to year. Obviously, the sensitive, at times arrogant king was not properly urged to economize and adjust his expenses accordingly either by his family or his staff. In 1884 the solvency of the royal purse was secured by a bank loan to the tune of 7.5 million marks and with a maturity of 16.5 years, which the Bavarian finance minister, Riedel, had arranged. The loan was granted on the condition that the king ceased to accrue further debt and the descendants entitled to succeed to the throne (Prince Ludwig, Prince Luitpold, Prince Leopold) assumed liability for it (Häfner, 2008). The burden of debt, however, remained unchanged. The German chancellor, Prince Otto von Bismarck, too, was willing to help the Bavarian king to obtain a larger amount of money as a loan, provided that the king's finances were placed on a sound footing and administered properly(Möckl, 1972).

Since 1876 Bismarck had been secretly transferring to King Ludwig II 300,000 marks annually from the chancellor's "slush fund", which he replenished from the confiscated property of King George V of Hanover, who had been deposed after the 1866 war. 30,000 - marks of that annual sum went as a provision to Earl Holnstein, who had allegedly negotiated the payments. Ludwig II was on friendly terms with the Prussian chancellor, although he actually felt a fundamental aversion towards Prussia. In February 1884 Bismarck granted Ludwig II further financial support to the tune of one million marks (Häfner, 2008). However, in spite of this cash injection from the Prussian chancellor, the Bavarian king's debt mountain kept growing, because planning, building and furnishing continued unrelentingly.

The debt, growing unpredictably at the family's expense, was a decisive factor behind the decision taken by Prince Luitpold and his sons to dethrone the king (Möckl, 1972). In 1884 a total of 48 members of the Wittelsbach family depended on the civil list for income or support (Müller, 2006).

But there were other reasons, too, for example, the shattered relationships between the king and his presumptive successors (Möckl, 1972; Häfner, 2008), his inacceptable homosexual relationships and the fact that he had withdrawn himself almost completely from his representative duties. In his final years, King Ludwig II no longer appeared in public as a powerful monarch and benevolent sovereign of his people (Häfner, 2008).

It took Prince Luitpold some time to arrive at the conclusion that as the next ascendant to the Bavarian throne it was up to him to initiate the king's deposition. The ministers that Luitpold approached in the matter in the July of 1885 (Böhm, 1924), first declined to cooperate, pointing out that it was a family affair and, given the 1834 law about the civil list, none of the government's business (Häfner, 2008). In fact, the ministers had also fared quite well under King Ludwig II, because he sided with the Liberal ministers against the Conservative opposition, who at that time had a majority in the Bavarian parliament, and gave them quite a free reign in governing. The ministers also feared losing their government posts, once the king was toppled (Ibid.)

Otto von Bismarck is reported as commenting on the role of the Bavarian government and the intended deposition of Ludwig II with the following words:

> [He had] got the impression that our Bavarian colleagues intended to "slaughter" the King, because they would not survive as ministers. (cited from Albrecht, 2003, p.392)

However, after Prince Luitpold had promised that the ministers could keep their posts after the head of state was changed (Häfner, 2008), Prime Minister von Lutz and the Minister of the Royal House and Foreign Affairs von Crailsheim started preparations for the king's deposition in the late summer of 1885. From this point on there was no returning back for those involved in the deposition plans, because there was a risk of being convicted of high treason and that could have meant a death sentence (Körner & Körner, 1983).

The deposition was based on Title II §11 of the Bavarian constitution of 1818. It contained provisions for establishing a caretaker reign, should the king be incapable to rule for more than a year. According to those provisions, ratification by the parliament was needed (Häfner, 2008). But the constitution did not specify who should submit the request for initiating that process. Max von Seydel, the Munich-based university professor of state law who had been ordered to write an expert report supplementing the constitution two years before the tragic events around King Ludwig II, had come to the conclusion that the successor to the monarch should take the initiative in cooperation with the government (Ibid.). This meant that the family council did not need to be heard, which was very much in the interest of Prince Luitpold, for some family members, e.g. Empress Elisabeth of Austria, fiercely opposed the king's deposition. Formally, King Ludwig II's deposition was carried out in conformity with the constitution, but the way his incapacitation was initiated and executed – i.e. Prince Luitpold had ordered it to be done - did not conform with the legal provisions and, hence, was unlawful (Häfner, 2008; Gauweiler, 2007; Immler, 2013).

Despite the difficult time, the king could still rely on a fairly large number of loyal subjects. He was the commander-in-chief of the Bavarian army, and he was still a prestigious figure and influential enough to hope that he would find enough support among the members of the lower house of the Bavarian parliament to put up defenses against a coup d'etat. But Ludwig II chose none of these options early enough. The reasons lie mostly in his behavior in the final years of his reign.

As stated, the Kingdom of Bavaria had lost part of its sovereignty with the establishment of the second German

Empire. After this event King Ludwig II had lost his interest in public affairs. He had devoted himself more and more to the arts and building and decorating his castles. It had also become increasingly difficult for him to find homosexual partners, so he had grown increasingly lonely. He had entered in sexual relationships with some of his courtiers and young members of the Chevauxlegers sent on duty at the court (Häfner, 2008; Böhm, 1924). In 1885 the latter fact had contributed to the resignation of War Minister Ritter von Maillinger (Häfner, 2008).

In the final years the atmosphere at the court had grown increasingly unpleasant. It had become ever more difficult to fill leading positions at the court, e.g. that of the cabinet secretary or court secretary, with respectable, academically educated civil servants (Ibid.). As a consequence, the king, residing at the secluded castle in the Bavarian mountains, was largely cut off from a reliable flow of information about political developments in his kingdom and his adversaries' plotting and scheming. In a case of emergency he was also considerably handicapped as the commander-in-chief of the army. Under these circumstances, it was fairly easy for Prince Luitpold to keep preparing for the king's deposition in cooperation with the two government ministers.

Some five months before his death, a court injunction had denied Ludwig access to the civil list because of unpaid craftsmen's bills. Ultimately the king had had to accept the fact that he could not place any new orders without new money. Several desperate attempts to organize money had failed, and Ludwig grew distraught. He thought he could not go on living anymore (Müller, 2006). He had asked several court servants to bring him poison, so that he could commit suicide (Häfner, 2008), but none of them had complied.

On April 24th, 1886 King Ludwig II had finally realized the rather hopeless situation he was in, issuing an austerity edict to those running his court and ordering a radical reduction of expenses (Ibid.). But it was already too late.

Despite devoting himself to his grand building projects and artistic interests, Ludwig II, as already mentioned, had accomplished his administrative tasks in a correct, sensible and politically reasonable manner without delay and had continued to do so until shortly before his deposition (Botzenhart, 2004; Merta, 2001). His personal correspondence, which he conducted primarily with his relatives, but also with leading political figures, such as Prince von Bismarck, and some of his own intimate partners (Häfner, 2008; Sommer, 2009) showed quite a high standard in style and contents and revealed no sign of mental handicap or illness.

Bismarck wrote about King Ludwig II after the latter's death:

> Until his very end I remained on good terms with him, exchanging letters quite frequently, and the impression I got of him every time was that of a ruler very much to the point in his dealings and of a nationalist-German orientation, though predominantly concerned about the preservation of the federal principle of the imperial constitution and the constitutional privileges of his country. …The world is bound to essentially change its opinion about King Ludwig when it is possible not only to admire his artistic creations, but also to study his correspondence as a statesman. (Bismarck, 1898, p.359, for the last sentence see Memminger, 1921, p.175)

This was a more accurate assessment of the king than the ones given by the psychiatrist von Gudden and the Bavarian princes and ministers who stood behind the deposition.

But, as stated, Ludwig II had almost completely neglected his representative duties. Consequently, he had been no longer present to his people as a sovereign, so it was unlikely that his deposition would cause an uprising.

8. A FALSE PSYCHIATRIC ASSESSMENT

Once the decision to depose the king had been taken, a distinguished psychiatrist had to be found willing to provide a psychiatric assessment and rate him unfit to rule. After a few unsuccessful attempts the holder of the chair of psychiatry at the University of Munich, Bernhard von Gudden, was chosen. He turned out to be a good choice, serving that purpose well. However, from the point of view of psychiatric competence and ethical considerations he was anything but. Von Gudden was a friend of Prime Minister von Lutz. He was a subject of the king and an underling of the ministers involved in the king's deposition and incapacitation. It was already at the first, preliminary secret meeting that von Gudden had indicated his readiness to do what was expected of him: he assured the two ministers, von Lutz and von Crailsheim, that he considered the king mentally ill and unfit to rule. At that point he had neither met with the king, nor examined him. His only encounter with him had occurred eight years earlier during an audience.

Von Gudden is understandably described by some devotees of the House of Wittelsbach, partly also in contributions on Bavarian history, as

> the most renowned German psychiatrist of his time, who was consulted from all quarters and also invited to provide expert opinion in numerous prominent court trials (Dr. Ernst Rehm, senior physician under von Gudden at the Upper-Bavarian District Mental Asylum. (Hacker, 1972, p.336)

But actually, von Gudden had been appointed director of the Munich-based district mental asylum, which served as the university hospital, against the vote of the Medical Faculty of the University of Munich. The faculty had been forced to give him the chair against their will. Von Gudden's specialty was neuroanatomy, which he practised by conducting countless animal experiments – in those days neurology and psychiatry were the same discipline. In court von Gudden had provided expert psychiatric opinion only once before in a murder case. A reassessment

of the case later showed that he had erred in his assessment (Hagen, 1872). Von Gudden's most prominent students, Emil Kraepelin, later professor of psychiatry and neurology at the University of Heidelberg, and Auguste Forel, later professor of psychiatry in Zurich/Switzerland – both had worked as senior physicians under von Gudden - later pointed out that while von Gudden was successful in his neuroanatomical studies, which he conducted on various species, in part also on dead human bodies, he was only little interested in psychiatry, even showing outright antipathy towards the field (Hippius, Peters, & Ploog, 1983; Burgmair & Weber, 2002). Consequently, there is every reason to call into question von Gudden's independence and impartiality as well as his competence as a psychiatric expert.

At a meeting of the Council of Ministers on June 7th, 1886 Prince Luitpold officially appointed von Gudden as a psychiatric expert. Von Gudden wrote the psychiatric assessment relying on the written testimonies of the king's two former cabinet secretaries, whom Prince Luitpold had solicited, and on the testimonies obtained from three members of the king's stable and personal staff, who had been secretly interrogated in the private quarters of Prime Minister von Lutz. He ignored all the statements and testimonies favourable to the king. As mentioned, the assessment was signed by three other Bavarian psychiatrists without altering anything in it.

Without examining the king von Gudden concluded in his report that:

> a) His Majestey is in a far-advanced stage of insanity, suffering from that form of mental illness well-known to alienist physicians of experience by the name of paranoia (insanity)
>
> b) Suffering as he does from this form of disease, which has been gradually and continuously developing over a great number of years, His Majesty must be pronounced incurable and a further decay of his mental faculties is certain.
>
> c) By reason of this disease, free volition on His Majesty's part is completely impossible, His Majesty must be considered as incapable of exercising government; and this incapacity will last, not merely for a full year, but for the whole of the rest of his life. (Summary of the medical report on the mental health of His Majesty King Ludwig II of Bavaria of June 8th, 1886; Bay HStA, GHA: 36/1/4; see also Häfner, 2008, p.510)

It was on the basis of this false assessment that at the meeting held on June 9th, 1886 the Bavarian Council of Ministers, chaired by Prince Luitpold, took the decision to dethrone King Ludwig II on the grounds of alleged incapacity to reign. Ludwig was also declared legally incapacitated without an orderly procedure, and two guardians were appointed for him. Ludwig's brother, Prince Otto, who was genuinely mentally ill and suffering from general paresis (dementia paralytica) (Häfner, 2008), was appointed King of Bavaria. But, because the new king was incapable of reigning, as immediately confirmed by psychiatric experts, the next claimant to the throne, Prince Luitpold, was appointed Regent of the Kingdom of Bavaria on June 9th, 1886 (Ibid.). The official announcement was made on June 10th, 1886. The lower house of the Bavarian parliament ratified the king's deposition, as required by the constitution.

None of the features von Gudden lists in his psychiatric assessment as symptoms of the King Ludwig II's mental illness provided reliable evidence for such illness or for his lack of fitness to rule, although they had been specially derived for this purpose from questionable sources.

Rupert Hacker, a Bavarian historian without medical competence, who has intensively studied the life of Ludwig II, writes:

> The psychiatric assessment of the four doctors is a document that can be challenged on several accounts. Apart from the fact that it is based on written material only, it focuses exclusively on statements about the mental and spiritual anomalies of the King, without taking into account that Ludwig's mind also showed numerous healthy features. Consequently, the psychiatrists falsely conclude that the King was already completely driven by madness. (Hacker, 1966, p.343)

After the king's dethronement and incapacitation had been established, a commission, headed by Minister von Crailsheim and accompanied by the two guardians Prince Luitpold and the Council of Ministers had appointed for the king as well as by the psychiatrist von Gudden, was sent to the castle of Neuschwanstein to arrest the king. Von Gudden had also brought along four male nurses, equipped with a straight-jacket, leather straps and chloroform. Ludwig had called to his protection the police force from the nearby city of Füssen. The loyal gendarmes arrested the members of the commission at the gates of the castle, brought them to the servants' quarters, but released them about a day later after receiving from Munich orders to do so. The commission returned to Munich with their mission unaccomplished. The next day the psychiatrist von Gudden and the male-nurses returned to the castle of Neuschwanstein to take Ludwig into custody. The king protested unmistakably, arguing fully reasonably against a psychiatric assessment given without an examination, which he considered inacceptable, as well as against his detention. Von Gudden dismissed his protest without giving any reasonable arguments. Ludwig was then taken in a closed carriage to the castle of Berg on Lake Starnberg.

After the tragic events, von Gudden's behavior, but also that of the king's closest family members came in for repeated criticism, for example by the famous Viennese psychiatrist Dr. von Mundy (von Mundy, 1886). Prince Bismarck, too, voiced his misgivings about Prof. von Gudden's role as a psychiatric expert: "*The mad-doctor acting as the sole eliminator of the king*" (Schrott, 1962, p.87).

9. LUDWIG II'S FINAL DAYS

At Castle Berg, Ludwig II was brought to a two-room apartment and put behind closed doors that could only

be opened by keys similar to those used at von Gudden's Munich-based insane asylum. The windows had been locked and peeping holes been cut in the doors. The intention was to keep Ludwig II there locked away indefinitely, guarded by male-nurses under von Gudden's medical supervision.

Ludwig had lost his throne and status as a monarch (deposition). He had lost his freedom (closed psychiatric interment) and the right to take care of his own affairs (incapacitation). Under the surveillance of nurses through the peeping holes, he was also deprived of his privacy. Under these circumstances his life made no sense and had no future anymore. He had voiced suicidal intentions before. Considering the intolerable, hopeless situation he was in, death probably seemed a more benign solution.

On the first day at Castle Berg, during which Ludwig II talked to several doctors (von Gudden, Grashey and Müller) and some other persons present there (Häfner 2008), von Gudden sent a telegram to his friend and employer, Prime Minister von Lutz, to Munich at about 4 pm on that same afternoon. It contained the following lines:

> Everything is going wonderfully well here. By the way, a personal examination has only confirmed the written assessment. (Hacker, 1972, p.389)

But that was simply not true: neither had the king been examined, nor could his behavior in any way be seen as confirming the verdict of the expert opinion.

Shortly before 6 pm Ludwig summoned von Gudden to take him for an evening walk in the castle's gardens. Von Gudden, who on the same morning had ordered precautions to be taken because of the king's suicidality, now dismissed the pertinent warnings of his assistant Dr. Müller, presumably because he mistakenly believed that the king already trusted him. Dr. Müller reported:

> Gudden thought that the King had put up with his situation, wonderfully well; in the evening he would again be taking the King alone for a walk, for there was no risk anymore, the King was like a child. Washington[4] and I voiced our doubts about that, and I told him that I would never take the responsibility for going alone for a walk with the King. Only Gudden could do that, given the fascinating power he had over his patients, I myself would never dare do that. (Ibid., p. 382)

The two men walked out of the castle at 6.25 pm. As they arrived on the lakeshore, Ludwig threw off his coat and ran into the water. Von Gudden followed him, trying to detain the considerably taller and physically stronger king, but failed. Ludwig punched von Gudden on the temple and strangled him, leaving deep scratches on his face (Wöbking, 1986). Von Gudden drowned, either because he had lost consciousness through the punch or the king had pushed him under the water. After this struggle Ludwig waded further into the water and drowned himself.

Early in the following morning all the visible evidence for the events surrounding the deaths of the two men was carefully collected and evaluated on site by the judge responsible for the case and confirmed by several witnesses. The major findings of a judicial autopsy performed on the king's body at the Munich Residence in the presence of 12 prominent witnesses were an inguinal hernia treated by a ligament, the absence of almost all teeth – the king had loved filled chocolates – and drowning as the most likely cause of death (Häfner, 2008; Wöbking, 1986).

After the tragedy, the "Handelszeitung", a Bavarian newspaper fairly independent of the monarchy, published an obituary describing King Ludwig II's achievements in encouraging developments in the social, economic, artistic and cultural fields in Bavaria. With his policies – it said – he had promoted Germany's political union – in fact, not quite voluntarily - thanks to the favourable economic effects these developments had. They had contributed to a boom in commerce and industry in Bavaria. Ludwig II's encouragement of arts and crafts, which led to a flourishing of German artistic industry, would remain unforgotten, it further stated. He was also revered for promoting industry and modern technology and of course for the romantic castles he erected. This illustrates once more how discrepantly this monarch was judged.

We have demonstrated the consequences the misjudgment of Ludwig II's persona and abilities ultimately led to as well as the factors that facilitated his deposition. They were primarily rooted in his lifestyle, unbefitting a ruling monarch of the time, and in his absolutist-monarchist beliefs. Further factors were his consistent pacifism, his social aloofness nourished by his social phobia and homosexual orientation, and his lack of economic prudence.

King Ludwig II's main sources of pleasure were a receptive enjoyment of art, music and theatre, an active participation in building and decorating the castles with the aim of seeing his artistic ideas realized and invoking the spirits of ancient myths, sagas and legends inspired by Richard Wagner while striving for aesthetic perfection. It was these very activities, when they grew into excess, that also ruined the king's finances and, thus, provided his adversaries with a decisive motive for declaring him incapacitated and overthrowing him. In the final years of his reign he had ignored the mounting crisis. He had regarded his growing debt, more or less, as his royal prerogative.

In the midst of the debt crisis Ludwig II's historical reference to King Ludwig I was correct. The latter had almost driven his kingdom and the city of Munich to ruin with his numerous monumental construction projects. In 1825, a state crisis had ensued. Ludwig I's debt of

[4] Baron Washington reported: "Dr. Müller said: ' I would not do that. Furthermore, in doing so you are only complicating my duty'. Dr. Müller said this curtly in an edgy voice, so it was obvious that he did not agree with his superior on what the latter was doing." (Hacker, 1972, p.383)

116 million guilders (after the 1857 coin treaty a guilder was worth 1.71 marks, so the debt was equivalent to 197 million marks) (Häfner, 2008), exceeded the debt King Ludwig II had incurred by the end of his reign (14 million marks) by as much as about fourteenfold. Ludwig I, who had still been able to reign, more or less, as an absolute monarch, had imposed radical austerity measures at the expense of the state and the Bavarian people. For example, the salaries of all civil servants were cut by half for a limited period of time. The state's budget had soon been consolidated (Kraus, 2003). But growing opposition on the part of the nobility and the poverty-stricken Bavarian population had forced Ludwig I to separate the royal household's purse from the state budget by establishing the civil list in 1834 (Möckl, 1972).

So the situation was radically different during King Ludwig II's reign. All the king's personal expenses and, thus, also the expenditure for his building projects had to be paid out of the privy purse financed from the civil list. Nor did the king's debt burden the state, but the royal family of the House of Wittelsbach, and the family indeed kept repaying that debt until 2002. The debt service was facilitated by the royalties from Richard Wagner's opera "Ring of the Nibelung" and music dramas (Voss, 2012). Ludwig II had long ignored the financial burden his debt meant for his successor and the latter's family. He had been tempted by the examples some of his Wittelsbach ancestors ruling as kings or dukes had set by incurring huge debts at their subjects' expense, mostly by building oversized castles. To stress it once more, King Ludwig II's debt had nothing to do with mental illness.

CONCLUSION

A. The End of an Exceptional Monarch

The dynastic tradition, the familial environment abounding in romanticizing legends and mythical ideas together with the compounding influence the illusionary world of Richard Wagner's music with its myths and sagas exerted on this setting created an outlook on life that dominated Ludwig II's personality and informed his political actions. The long outmoded inclination to rule as an absolute monarch, which originated in his past, alienated Ludwig II from the current sentiments of his time. The gulf between the king and his people only widened as a consequence of the avoidance behavior he practised due to his social phobia and the episodes of absence from the capital he indulged in like his father had done. A further factor aggravating the situation was his homosexuality, in those days an object of scorn. He was unable to keep up with the spirit of the times, „infested" as it was with republican tendencies, and adjust himself to a growing emancipation of his people towards the end of his monarchy by wisely seeking compromises. Instead, he created for himself a fictional world of an everlasting absolute monarchy by building his three majestic castles in the splendid landscapes surrounding them. There he could experience the return of the spirits of the myths and legends familiar to him from his youth and go on living his dream of an absolute monarchy of the type Louis XIV had practiced in 17-century France.

Due to his growing desire to escape from the disappointing, increasingly hated reality of his days and the aristocratic and civil community into the peaceful, enticing world of imagination in his castles, Ludwig II increasingly failed to face key developments in both his personal life and the political field. These tendencies were aided and abetted by the loss of sovereignty his throne had suffered with the establishment of the second German Empire. His growing debt, a result of his way of life, and the changed atmosphere at his court, a result of his homoerotic behavior, ultimately left him vulnerable to and defenseless against the machinations of his adversaries.

On June 9th, 1886 Ludwig II made an attempt to publically appeal to his people and the German nation. The first lines probably represent a fairly realistic interpretation of what was going on as well as of the persons involved in his dethronement:

> Proclamation: I, Ludwig II, King of Bavaria, feel obliged to issue the following appeal to my beloved Bavarian people and the whole of the German nation: Prince Luitpold intends to seize the regency of my country against my will, and my government has deceived my beloved people by spreading untrue information on the state of my health and is plotting acts of high treason … Should the planned acts of violence be executed and Prince Luitpold seize the reign against my will, I herewith call on my loyal friends to safeguard my rights by all means and under all circumstances. (Müller, 2006, p.260f; see also Häfner, 2008, p.408f).

The minister of the interior, however, had ordered the king's post and telegraphs to be inspected and introduced censorship of the media, so the appeal appeared only in one Bavarian newspaper, the „Bamberger Zeitung", which was immediately confiscated, in a Basel and a Russian newspaper, but at that point it was simply too late to rally support.

The fate of King Ludwig II, an outstanding historical figure in Europe, aptly illustrates the interaction between the dynastic tradition of an absolute monarchy, his personal development in an exceptional environment characterized by myths, legends and sagas about his ancestry and the influence of an exceptional friendship (Richard Wagner) on the one hand and the political developments in a period of transition from a monarchist to a republican-democratic form of government on the other hand.

B. The Misuse of Psychiatry

A core aspect of the events surrounding Ludwig II's dethronement was the misuse of psychiatry for the purposes of powerful individuals, and it was this scandalon that paved the way for the tragic events that

were to ensue. Today, it is difficult to imagine why a well-known professor of neurology and psychiatry would be willing to provide false psychiatric testimony as von Gudden had done. In that historical period, however, it was nothing unusual. There were contextual factors originating in the spirit of the time that aided and abetted such violation of ethical principles by psychiatrists acting in the interests of monarchs: a) A belief that the monarch or ruler had almost unlimited power over his subjects and b) The way psychiatrists in leading positions saw their own role in relation to both powerful persons and the patients. Let me cite here von Gudden's predecessor, the Munich-based psychiatrist Prof. von Solbrig (1809-1972):

> The doctor is the God of the patient, omnipresent …by virtue of the treasure of his material wisdom and experience…the power of his imagination, the acuity of his historical understanding of the world, the visionary power of a religious faith. (cited from Eberstadt, 1946)

The haughtiness reflected in this concept presumably mirrors the monarchist attitude of the time and leaves only little room for self-criticism and compassion for the ill.

To illustrate how psychiatry was misused in the late monarchist era, a few paradigmatic cases will be presented. The first is one of compulsory education in psychiatric internment, the second one of unjustified incapacitation and long-term confinement to psychiatric institutions.

Duchess Sophie Charlotte in Bavaria and of Alençon, the youngest sister of the 10-years older Empress Elisabeth of Austria, became engaged to the young King Ludwig II on January 23rd, 1867. But on October 7th of that year the homosexual king broke off the engagement (Häfner, 2008). Only a year later did the jilted bride get married, namely to Ferdinand, Duke of Alençon, a nephew of the French bourgeois king, Louis Philipp, on September 28th, 1868. The marriage, arranged by her aristocratic family, was not happy. Sophie gave birth to two children. In 1886 she fell in love with Dr. Glaser, a married physician from Munich. She left her family and eloped with her lover to Meran (now Italy). Dr. Glaser's wife discovered the relationship and demanded a divorce.

To prevent a scandal, the family first tried in vain to persuade Sophie Charlotte to end the relationship and then brought her under guard to see Prof. von Krafft-Ebing, chair of psychiatry in the Austrian town of Graz and specialized in sexual disorders (von Krafft-Ebing, 1886). When Sophie Charlotte realised that she was being interned, she fought back "*with the force of desperation*"[5]. She was diagnosed as suffering from "moral insanity" ("moralische Farbenblindheit") and interned at Prof. Krafft-Ebing's private mental sanatorium Mariagrün in Graz[6]. Sophie wrote letters to her lover, but Krafft-Ebing passed them on to her husband, while letting Sophie believe that they had been dispatched. Dr. Glaser's letters to Sophie were confiscated. Prof. Krafft-Ebing kept discussing Sophie's treatment with her husband. One of his letters closed with the words: "*Awaiting instructions. Baron Krafft*"[7].

As the letters to her lover went unanswered and she had been falsely told that Dr. Glaser had begun a new relationship, Sophie finally gave up. Five months of compulsory psychiatric "education" had come to fruition. Sophie returned to her family. In a letter of November 9th, 1887, her brother-in-law Emperor Franz Joseph spoke of "*physical and moral recovery*" (Müller, 2006, p.115).

But Sophie had changed her life. She entered a Benedictine lay order, devoting the rest of her life to charitable work among beggars and homeless people in Paris (Häfner, 2008).

The second example is a case of unjustified incapacitation and long-term compulsory psychiatric internment. That fate was suffered by the younger daughter of the King of Belgium, *Princess Louise* (1858-1924). Louise had close ties to the Austrian imperial family, for her sister Stephanie was married to Crown Prince Rudolf of Habsburg, who died in an extended suicide together with Baroness Vetsera. In 1875 Louise was forced to marry at the age of 16 the considerably older and very rich Viennese Prince Phillip of Saxe-Coburg Gotha, who became Prince of Bulgaria in 1887. In the wedding night she is reported to have fled from her husband's bed-chamber into the greenhouse, where a gardener found her.

In 1895, at the age of 37 years, after she had born two children, Louise fell in love with Duke Geza of Mattachich-Keglevich, a Croatian uhlan first lieutenant, who was nine years her junior. In 1897 Louise separated from her husband and led a lavish life with Mattachich. The affair was the talk at the court in Vienna. The emperor had Mattachich transferred to another garrison and banned Louise from social events of the imperial house admonishing her firmly. Two years later Louise eloped with Mattachich to France, where they lived as a couple. In 1898, Prince Phillip, urged by the emperor to defend his honour, challenged Mattachich in a duel. After two rounds with pistols had failed to yield a winner, Mattachich injured the prince's thumb tendion in a duel with sabres, which ended the encounter in his favour (Bestenreiner, 2008).

The emperor had Louise arrested in Croatia and confronted with the alternative of either immediately returning to her husband or letting herself be treated at Obersteiner's sanatorium located in Vienna-Oberdöbling (Ibid.). Louise chose the latter alternative, not knowing that it was a mental sanatorium. Mattachich was also arrested, subjected to a military court trial and on the

[5] Wellcome Library London, Krafft-Ebing's estate, PP/KEB/D/8, undated newspaper article.
[6] Wellcome Library London, Krafft-Ebing's estate, PP/KEB/D/8.
[7] We found this information at the Wellcome Library in London, where Prof. Krafft-Ebing's estate is stored.

basis of a dubious graphological assessment without any witnesses being heard found guilty of forging a bill of exchange. He was degraded, lost his aristocratic title and was sent to six years in dungeon, aggravated by fasting on every 15th day and removal of the matrass on every 28th day of a month as well as by solitary confinement during the whole of the first and seventh month.

The head physician of the sanatorium, Prof. Heinrich Obersteiner, examined Louise and came to the conclusion that she was suffering from "intellectual and moral deficiency". As a result, Louise was declared temporarily legally incapacitated and confined to intramural psychiatric treatment (Holler, 1991).

Time was running out for the monarchy and freedom of the press was gaining momentum in Austria. As information about the measures taken against both Louise and her lover were leaked out by the press, she was moved from Vienna to the mental hospital at Pukersdorf. The doctors there wanted to release Louise, for they did not consider her mentally disordered. But a psychiatric expert, Dr. Rüdiger, officially appointed to rate Louise's mental health, found her "*completely lacking critical ability and her intellectual faculties reduced to a minimum*" (Bestenreiner, 2008, p.126). Hence, Louise continued to be psychiatrically interned. Public protests grew louder, the Viennese "Arbeiterzeitung", a newspaper, reported on Louise's unjustified psychiatric internment, and Social-Democratic members raised the matter in the parliament. Against the backdrop of these developments, the court chancellery ordered Louise to be psychiatrically assessed once more, this time by two specialists in forensic medicine. They came to the conclusion that:

> Her royal highness…urgently needs to be protected by the law because of her mental infirmity. (Ibid., p.127)

Since the public outrage did not die down, in 1898 Prof. von Krafft-Ebing, who in the meantime had become a well-known expert in psychiatry and moved to the University of Vienna, was requested to provide an expert opinion confirmed by the medical faculty. He wrote:

> Her royal highness…is suffering from a state of mental weakness, and higher mental abilities (reasoning, will, ethical powers) are considerably reduced. This infirmity of the mind… can be scientifically subsumed in the category of states of acquired feeble-mindedness. (Ibid., p.127)

As a consequence, the imperial court chancellery changed the temporal tutelage into a permanent one and appointed a guardian for Louise.

In 1899, alluding to Princess Louise, the Viennese "Extrapost" , a newspaper, wrote:

> Is it worthy of a psychiatrist to keep a person who is not mad interned? …. Is there not any doctor or doctors' association protesting against the practice of confining to mental asylums persons who are not mad? (Ibid., p.128)

To get rid of the embarrassing affair, Emperor Franz Joseph ordered Princess Louise to be brought out of the country (Austria) to Lindenhof asylum located in Coswig near Dresden (Saxony).

After the unfair and harsh punishment of Louise's lover Mattachich had also become public through the question of the Social Democratic party at the Austrian parliament, the duke was pardoned and released after four years in prison in the August of 1902 (Ibid.). Mattachich published his memoirs in 1904, and the book triggered unfavourable press reports about the Austrian imperial house.

By then, the public outcry had grown too big to make the affair simply go away. In 1904 the princess' guardian appointed an international commission of leading psychiatrists comprising Prof. Friedrich Jolly, Berlin, Dr. Guido Weber, Sonnenstein-Pirma (Saxony), Dr. Leopold Mélis, Brussels, and the later Nobel-prize winner (1927) Prof. Julius Wagner-Jauregg, Vienna. But this commission, too, only came to the conclusion that the princess was still suffering from an unabated *"state of pathological feeble-mindedness"* (Ibid., 62, p.137f, and that the condition continued to make her

> incapable of taking care of her own affairs …. The permanent stay…at the closed institution [was therefore] absolutely necessary and in the interest of the high-born patient. (Ibid., p.137f)

In the midst of the scandal a journalist of the French daily "Le Journal" offered Mattachich 48.000,- Francs for his memoirs. Thanks to this money, Mattachich managed to organize Louise's liberation in the autumn of 1904. The couple fled over Berlin to Paris.

Albrecht Südekum, a Social-Democratic member of the Reichstag in Berlin, at whose place the couple had stayed overnight in Berlin on their way to Paris, told the "Neues Wiener Tagblatt", a Viennese newspaper, that Louise was a lively and interesting lady in full command of her mental faculties (Ibid.). Again, it caused a stir.

Louise's lawyer managed to attain the consent of the highest court chancellery in Vienna for her re-examination in Paris by two prominent French psychiatrists, Dr. Valetin Magnan and Dr. Paul Dubuisson. After being sworn in at the Austrian embassy and carefully examining Louise, the psychiatrists submitted their joint expert opinion. They could not find any of the symptoms described in the previous assessments as symptoms of mental feebleness (Ibid.), hence concluding on June 26th, 1905 that the princess was legally fully competent. The need for psychiatric internment was annulled and her legal incapacitation declared null and void by the highest court chancellery in Vienna. This ended a grotesque and scandalous case of the misuse of psychiatry after six and a half years of psychiatric internment and unjustified legal incapacitation.

Not only was the emperor responsible for the breach of the couple's fundamental rights through the illegal and inhuman measures he had ordered to be taken and

continued, but also an appallingly large number of leading Austrian and some German and Belgian psychiatrists had provided false expert opinion and thus become instrumental in causing suffering to the princess and her friend.

There are many other cases that could be cited from the immediate circles of monarchist rulers, but it was Emperor Franz Joseph of Austria who was particularly frequently involved. For example, he had his youngest brother, *Archduke Ludwig Viktor* (1842-1919), who was homosexual and liked to stroll through the streets of Vienna dressed up as a woman, psychiatrically assessed and interned at the castle of Kleßheim near Salzburg (Dickinger, 2007).

Another example is the emperor's nephew, *Archduke Leopold Ferdinand*. He had brought along his mistress, dressed up as a cadet, on board a torpedo boat of the Austrian marine to Australia (Ibid.). The action led to his disciplinary transfer. As the archduke then intended to marry a prostitute, the emperor had him taken to a closed psychiatric asylum to be "*cured from states of nervousness*" (Brink, 2010).

We have illustrated the misuse of psychiatry on persons from the European aristocracy. A greater number of similar events occurred in the bourgeois circles, too, but they attracted less attention and most of them are less well known, although there are a few well documented cases.

Towards the end of the 19th century increasing voices were raised in the press against the practice of shutting mentally healthy persons behind the doors of mental asylums. The cases of misuse widely reported on and the frequently long-term internment without any legal protection led to a movement calling for a fundamental reform of the rights of the mentally ill and after the First World War ultimately gave impetus to decisively improve the legal protection of mentally ill individuals (Schroeder, 1891; Goldberg, 2003). Today, in Germany and most of the democratic world a comparable type of misuse of psychiatry is extremely unlikely, if not impossible, given the comprehensive legal protection patients now enjoy and the profound change that has occurred in the systems of care, in the availability of treatment for mental illnesses and in the attitudes of mental-health professionals.

Psychiatry has been misused by powerful persons not only to serve their purposes in individual cases, but also for political goals on a large-scale with criminal intent. The first such inhuman misuse of psychiatry so far known was the mass killing of some 200,000 mentally ill and/or disabled persons by Adolf Hitler and his National Socialist regime in Germany. A total of 40 psychiatrists (Wikipedia), most of them working in key positions, actively participated in this NS programme of killing mental patients, and the number of persons contributing to it on lower levels (physicians, nurses, administrative and transport staff) was far greater. After the war, some of the perpetrators were sentenced to death, but later primarily milder punishments were imposed. An official historical analysis of the participation of the German Psychiatric Association and its members in the murder programme was put off until 2010[8] (Schneider, 2011).

Another totalitarian dictator, Josef Stalin, first had unwelcome intellectuals and artists sentenced to death in criminal trials or murdered without a court trial. This practice was later replaced by a policy of locking dissidents away in psychiatric institutions. He did not require any law to do so, only psychiatrists willing to serve his purposes. The director of the Serbsky Institute of Forensic Psychiatry located in Moscow, Prof. Snezhnevsky, even adjusted the diagnostic classification system of mental disorders for Russian psychiatry to meet the requirements of the Stalinist dictatorship. With the introduction of the diagnosis of "rational schizophrenia" nonconformist political ideas became defined as symptoms of mental illness and, thus, as a ground for confining unwelcome healthy persons to psychiatric institutions. It is thanks to a small number of upright psychiatrists that these crimes became internationally known. The World Psychiatric Association protested energetically against this misuse, forcing the Stalinist regime to observe human rights, at least in this respect, before the Soviet Union finally fell (Häfner, 2008; van Voren, 2010).

After World War II the system of psychiatric care was reformed in root and branch in many countries. A considerable part of that reform consisted in introducing legal protection for patients, guaranteeing them all the basic rights and covering all aspects of illness and treatment relevant in both civil and criminal law. At the same time efficient methods of treating mental disorders became available with the advent of antipsychotic, antidepressant and anxiolytic medications, practical psychotherapeutic tools and measures of rehabilitation. These reforms and innovations have changed psychiatry from a custodial to a therapeutic discipline. The freedom of the press and its role as a guardian of humanism has proved to be a further factor protecting against an inhumane misuse of psychiatry. Hence, in a number of countries, the threat of psychiatry's misuse has vanished, hopefully forever. In other parts of the world, however, violence and brutality are rampant and people are constantly fearing for their lives. Under such conditions the mentally ill are placed at the bottom of the priority list. In those countries, psychiatry, a discipline with a mission to save lives, cure or at least alleviate human suffering caused by mental illness, has faded to a mere reminiscence of a long lost culture.

[8] President's Symposium "Psychiatry under National Socialism", organized by: F. Scheider, V. Roelcke , Congress of the German Association for Psychiatry and Psychotherapy (DGPPN), Berlin, November 26th, 2010.

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