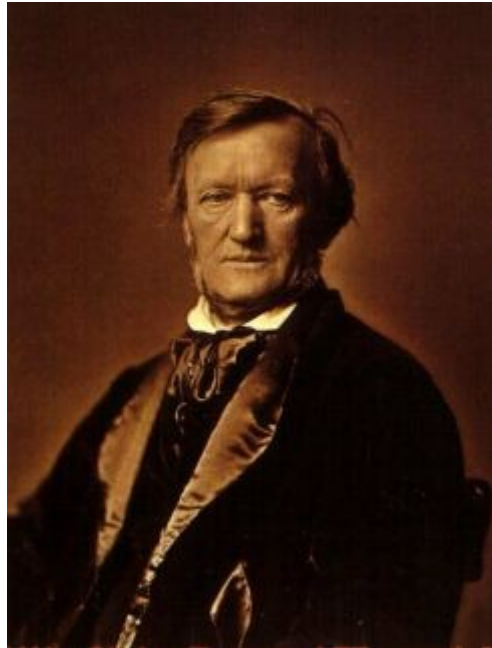


# Collection of Richard Wagner Prose Works



## Contents

**On German Opera (1834)**

**Pasticcio (1834)**

**Bellini: A Word in Season (1837)**

**On German Music (1840)**

**Pergolesi's "Stabat Mater" (1840)**

**The Virtuoso and the Artist (1840)**

**A Pilgrimage to Beethoven (1840)**

**Art and Climate (1841)**

**On the Overture (1841)**

**An End in Paris (1841)**

**The Artist and Publicity (1841)**

**A Happy Evening (1841)**

**Rossini's Stabat Mater (1841)**

**Autobiographic Sketch (1843)**

**The Wibelungen (1848)**

**The Nibelungen-Myth (1848)**

**Art and Revolution (1849)**

**The Art-Work of the Future (1849)**

**Judaism in Music (1850)**

**A Communication to my Friends (1851)**

**Opera and Drama (1852)**

**Remarks on performing the opera "The Flying Dutchman." (1852)**

**On the Performing of "Tannhäuser." (1852)**

**Overture to "Tannhäuser." (1853)**

**A Report on the Production of "Tannhäuser" in Paris. (1861)**

**On State and Religion (1864)**

**Some Explanations Concerning "Judaism in Music." (1869)**

**Beethoven (1870)**

**The Destiny of Opera (1871)**

**Das Liebesverbot (1871)**

**On the name "Musikdrama" (1872)**

**A glance at the German operatic stage of to-day (1873)**

**Prologue to a reading of the "Götterdämmerung" before a select audience in Berlin (1873)**

**What is German? (1878)**

**Modern (1878)**

**The Public in Time and Space (1878)**

**On Poetry and Composition (1879)**

**On Opera Poetry and Composition in particular (1879)**

**On the Application of Music to the Drama (1879)**

**Religion and Art (1880)**

**"What Boots This Knowledge?" (1880)**

**Know Thyself (1881)**

**Introduction to a work of Count Gobineau's (1881)**

**Hero-dom and Christendom (1881)**

**On the Womanly in the Human Race (1883)**

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# *On German Opera*

By Richard Wagner

Translated by William Ashton Ellis



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## Contents

About this Title .....	4
On German Opera .....	5
Notes .....	7
Summary .....	9

## About this Title

### Source

*On German Opera*

By Richard Wagner

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[55]

## On German Opera

When we talk of German Music, and especially when we listen to talk about it, the same confusion of ideas always appears to prevail as in the conception of freedom by those old-German black-frocked demagogues who curled their noses at the results of modern reforms abroad with just as much contempt as our Teutomaniac music-savants now shrug their shoulders. By all means, we have a field of music which belongs to us by right,—and that is Instrumental-music;—but a German Opera we have not, and for the selfsame reason that we own no national Drama. We are too intellectual and much too learned, to create warm human figures. *Mozart* could do it; but it was the beauty of Italian Song, that he breathed into his human beings. Since the time when we began to despise that beauty again, we have departed more and more from the path which *Mozart* struck for the weal of our dramatic music. *Weber* never understood the management of Song, and *Spohr* wellnigh as little. But Song, after all, is the organ whereby a man may musically express himself; and so long as it is not fully developed, he is wanting in true speech. In this respect the Italians have an immeasurable advantage over us; vocal beauty with them is a second nature, and their creations are just as sensuously warm as poor, for the rest, in individual import. Certainly, in the last decad or two the Italians have played as many pranks with this second nature-speech as the Germans with their learning,—and yet, I shall never forget the impression lately made on me by a Bellinian opera, after I had grown heartily sick of the eternally [56] allegorising orchestral bustle, and at last a simple noble Song shewed forth again. (1)

French music acquired its tendency from *Gluck*, who, albeit a German, has had far less influence on ourselves than on the Frenchmen. He felt and saw what the Italians lacked, namely an individuality in their figures and characters, which they sacrificed to vocal beauty. He created Dramatic Music, and bequeathed it to the French as their possession. They have pursued its cultivation, and from *Grétry* to *Auber* dramatic truth has remained a first principle of the Frenchmen.

The talents of the good German opera-composers of modern times, of *Weber* and *Spohr* are unequal to the dramatic province. *Weber*'s talent was purely lyrical, *Spohr*'s elegiac; and where those bounds were overstepped, art and the expenditure of abnormal means had to supplement what their nature failed in. Thus *Weber*'s best work is in any case his "Freischütz," since he here could move in his appointed sphere; the mystic weirdness of Romanticism, and that charm of the Folk-melody, belong peculiarly to the domain of Lyrics. But turn to his *Euryanthe*! What splitting of hairs in the declamation, what fussy use of this or that instrument to emphasise a single word! Instead of throwing off a whole emotion with one bold freehand stroke, he minces the impression into little details and detailed littlenesses. How hard it comes to him, to give life to his Ensembles; how he drags the second Finale! Here an instrument, there a voice, would fain say something downright clever, and none at last knows what it says. And since the audience is bound to admit in the end that it hasn't understood a note of it, people have to find their consolation in dubbing it astoundingly *learned*, and therefore paying it a great respect.—O this wretched erudition—the source of every German ill!

[57]

There was a time in Germany when folk knew Music from no other side than Erudition—it was the age of *Sebastian Bach*. But it then was the form wherein one looked at things in general, and in his deeply-pondered fugues *Bach* told a tale as vigorous as *Beethoven* now tells us in the freest symphony. The difference was this: those people knew no other forms,



and the composers of that time were truly learned. To-day both sides have changed. The forms have become freer, kindlier, we have learnt to live,—and our composers no longer are learned: the ridiculous part of it, however, is that they want to pose as learned. In the genuine scholar one never marks his learning. Mozart, to whom the hardest feat in counterpoint had become a second nature, simply gained thereby his giant self-dependence;—who thinks of his learning, when listening to his Figaro? But the difference, as said, is this: Mozart *was* learned, whilst nowadays men want to *seem* so. There can be nothing wronger-headed than this craze. Every hearer enjoys a clear, melodious thought,—the more seizable the whole to him, the more will he be seized by it;—the composer knows this himself,—he sees by what he makes an effect, and what obtains applause;—in fact it comes much easier to him, for he has only to let himself go; but no! he is plagued by the German devil, and must shew the people his *learning* too! He hasn't learnt quite so much, however, as to bring anything really learned to light; so that nothing comes of it but turgid bombast. But if it is ridiculous of the composer to clothe himself in this nimbus of scholarship, it is equally absurd for the public to give itself the air of understanding and liking it; it ends in people being ashamed of their fondness for a merry French opera, and avowing with Germanomaniac embarrassment that it would be all the better for a little learning.

This is an evil which, however ingrained in the character of our nation, must needs be rooted out; in fact it will annul itself, as it is nothing but a self-deception. Not that I wish French or Italian music to oust our own;—that [58] would be a fresh evil to be on our guard against—but we ought to recognise the *true* in both, and keep ourselves from all self-satisfied hypocrisy. We should clear ourselves a breathing-space in the rubble that threatens to choke us, rid our necks of a good load of affected counterpoint, hug no visions of forbidden fifths and superfluous ninths, and become men at last. Only by a lighter and freer touch can we hope to shake off an incubus that has held our music by the throat, and especially our operatic music, for many a year. For why has no German opera-composer come to the front since so long? Because none knew how to gain the voice [?ear] of the people,—that is to say, because none has seized true warm Life as it is.

For is it not plainly to misconstrue the present age, to go on writing Oratorios when no one believes any longer in either their contents or their forms? Who believes in the mendacious stiffness of a Schneiderian fugue, and simply because it was composed *to-day* by *Friedrich Schneider* ? [1786-1853.] What with Bach and Händel seems worshipful to us in virtue of its truth, necessarily must sound ridiculous with Fr. Schneider of our day; for, to repeat it, no one *believes* him, since it cannot be his own conviction. We must take the era by the ears, and honestly try to cultivate its modern forms; and he will be master, who neither writes Italian, nor French—nor even German.

## Notes

### Note 1 on page 5

In March 1834 the young man had heard Frau Schröder-Devrient as "Romeo" in Bellini's *Montecchi e Capuleti* at Leipzig. It should be remarked that the term "Song" (*Gesang*) is used by Richard Wagner throughout to signify the whole manner both of writing for, and of using the singing-voice.—Tr.



[399]

## Summary

The Germans too learned to create warm human figures. Mozart v. Weber and Spohr. Bellini and Italian Song. Gluck's influence on the French; Grétry and Auber. Weber's *Freischütz* and his *Euryanthe*. Bach's vigour; Mozart's command of counterpoint. In the truly learned one never marks his learning. Modern pretence of erudition: none has seized warm life as it is. He will be master, who writes neither French, nor Italian, nor even German (58).

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# *Pasticcio*

By Richard Wagner

Translated by William Ashton Ellis



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## Contents

About this Title .....	4
Pasticcio .....	5
Notes .....	9
Summary .....	11

## About this Title

### Source

*Pasticcio*

By Richard Wagner

Translated by William Ashton Ellis

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[59]

## Pasticcio

by CANTO SPIANATO.

(1)

The old Italian mode of Song was based on so-called *sostenuto* singing, demanding a *formare*, *fermare* and *finire* of the vocal tone. It certainly allowed much elasticity, but every passage must conform to the character of the human voice itself. The modern method, on the contrary, only secondarily consists of melodious phrases, whose cut has been so uniformly made upon one last, that we recognise it instantly, for all its trimmings. This odious mania for copying the instruments shews a misunderstanding of both Song and human Voice. Erewhile men deemed the voice the noblest of all instruments and, rightly to enjoy its charm, accompanied it as discreetly as possible; now they bury it beneath a load of senseless instrumenting, and, without regard to the dramatic situation, they make it gurgle arabesques that tell us nothing. These gurglings, sure enough, are often mastered, but they rebel against the throat as obstinately as a hard nut against a worn-out tooth.

\*

That the Singing-voice, like every other instrument, needs schooling, and indeed a very careful schooling, in which the *production* of the voice is dealt with quite apart from the *rendering* (taste and expression), no connoisseur [60] will deny; but where, in all our German fatherland, are there training-schools for higher vocal culture?—True, we have Singakademieen, Gesangvereine, Seminaries, and may boldly assert that Chorus-singing in Germany and Switzerland has reached a technical perfection to be sought in vain in Italy itself, the land of song; but the higher vocal art, of solo-singing, is in manifest decline, and many a mile might we journey before we could assemble a couple of dozen good singers really worthy of the name, singers who should possess not only a *well-trained organ*, but also a *good delivery*, *correct declamation*, *pure enunciation*, *sympathetic expression* and *thorough knowledge of music*. Merely gauge the majority of our celebrated singers male and female by *this* standard!—Certain highly important endowments must be set to the credit of certain individuals, but nowadays we could but rarely and exceptionally convene a whole such as not only our fancy might dream of, and our higher aspirations wish for, but also is humanly realisable, and in former times has actually been realised. To-day one hardly ever hears a truly beautiful and finished *trillo*; very rarely a perfect *mordente*; very seldom a well-rounded *coloratura*, a genuine unaffected, soul-stirring *portamento*, a complete equalisation of the vocal register and perfect maintenance of intonation throughout the varying nuances of increase and diminution in the volume of sound. Most of our singers, so soon as they attempt the noble art of *portamento*, fall out of tune; and the public, accustomed to imperfect execution, overlooks the defects of the singer if he only is an able actor and versed in stage-routine.

"The tricky roulade, be it neat or a smear,

Will draw sure applause, as the onion the tear."

C. M. VON WEBER. (2)

\*

[61]

The German singer gladly sinks himself in the character he has to represent. That deserves all praise, but has its own grave dangers. If the singer lets himself be carried away by his rôle; if he does not stand absolute master *over* the whole of his portrayal: then all, as a rule, is lost. He forgets himself, he no longer sings, but screams and moans. Then Nature none too seldom fleeces Art, and the hearer has the unpleasant surprise of suddenly finding himself in the gutter. If in addition to this, each performer tries to set *his* part in the best and most striking light, without regard for his companions, it is all over with the harmony of play and song. Hence it comes, that our ordinary stage-performances in Germany pitch down from the height of rapt emotion to the depths of fussy dulness, and lack the outward stimulus of sustained artistic charm.

Many German singers regard it, in a certain sense, as a point of honour to be willing to sing *anything*, no matter if it suit their voice or not. The Italian does not hesitate to say right out that such and such a part he cannot sing, since it is ungrateful to his voice through height or depth, its trick of ornament, or other qualities. In this he often goes too far, and as good as demands that all his parts shall be written expressly for him: but the German, whether from free will or force of circumstances, too often and too readily accommodates himself to every rôle, thereby ruining both it and his voice as well. The singer should never attempt a part for which he is not qualified

- a. *physically*—in respect of vocal compass, timbre, and power of lung;
- b. *technically*—in respect of throat-dexterity; and
- c. *psychically*—in respect of expression.

[62]

German dramaturgists say: "The actor should accommodate himself to the rôle, not the rôle itself to the actor." The maxim—as it stands—may be true; but unreservedly applied to the stage-singer, it is downright false: for the human voice is no lifeless instrument, like the pianoforte, and our German vocal composers, alas! too often are very sorry lords of Song.—Every sterling Instrumental composer must have studied the character of the various instruments, before he can produce true instrumental effects. Let a composer write for any instrument in the orchestra a passage against its nature; let him assign it notes the player can but bring out badly, or which do not lie in its register—his condemnation is pronounced at once, and rightly. "The man," so the verdict goes, "is a musical bungler; he presumes to compose, and knows nothing of instrumentation! These are pianoforte, not clarinet passages; that cantilena is in the compass of the violin, but not of the violoncello." In short, let the composition breathe never so much life and spirit, it is thrown aside; for the man has not learnt his business—"He writes things that nobody could execute!" Hand on your heart, ye song-composers of our latter days, have ye zealously studied the peculiarities of the human voice? Know ye what it is, to write singably? I will answer:—Ye behold the mote that is in your brother's eye, but consider not the beam that is in your own eye; therefore shall ye be doubly judged.



Most truly does C. M. v. Weber say: The singer's individuality is the actual unconscious colorist of every rôle. The possessor of an agile and flexible throat, and he of a volume of tone, will render one and the same rôle quite differently. The first will be several degrees more animated than the second, and yet the composer may be satisfied with both, insofar as each according to his measure has rightly grasped and reproduced the gradations of passion prescribed.

[63]

It will always remain the hardest of tasks, so to combine the vocal and instrumental parts of a rhythmic composition that they shall melt into each other, and the last not only carry and relieve the first, but also help its utterance of passion; for Song and Instrument stand opposed. Breathtaking and articulation of the words enjoin on Song a certain undulation in the bar, not unlike the uniform swell of the waves. The Instrument, especially the stringed instrument, divides the time into sharp-cut sections, like the strokes of a pendulum. Truth of expression demands the blending of these opposite peculiarities. The beat, the Tempo, must never resemble a mill-clack in its tyrannical slowing or speeding, but to the piece of music it must be what the pulse-beat is to the life of man. Yet most of our modern vocal composers in Germany appear to regard the human voice as a mere portion of the instrumental mass, and misconceive the distinctive properties of Song. The instruments should form a guard of honour to the voice: with us they have become the singer's catch-polls, gagging him and casting him into chains at his first sign of free expression of feeling.

\*

Mozart has irrefutably proved that, with the most complex, ingenious, and even massive orchestration, one still may leave the singer in full exercise of his rights; nowadays the human voice is degraded to an instrument. What has been gained?—Nothing!—The efforts of the human voice, even that of a Sontag, are outdone by instrumental virtuosi; a whole choir of bravura singers would never be able to bring out a thousandth of the tone-figures which have sprung up in our instrumental music since the time of *Bach*; and with this expansion of the art of instrumenting the inventiveness of our tone-artists has shot heaven-high above the bounds of Song.—The genuine art of Song depends on a Cantabile in keeping with the text and a Bravura in keeping with the voice. [64] But since we fell into a depreciation of true Italian vocal beauty, we have departed more and more from the path which Mozart struck for the weal of our dramatic music. With the revival of the, in many respects, classical music of the period of Bach, much too little attention is paid to a really singable cantabile. All the masterworks of Sebastian Bach are as rich in invention as possible within the form of Fugue and Double Counterpoint in general. His inexhaustible creative-force ever drove him on to introduce into each of his products the highest and richest of specific tonal figures, forms, and combinations. But with this super-abundance of purely musical, or rather, instrumental contents, the word must needs be often thrust into its place beneath the note by force; the human voice, as a special organ of tone, was not at all considered by him; its peculiar office he never sufficiently appraised: and as a vocal composer of Cantabile he is nothing less than classical, however much the blind adorers of this master may cry out "Fie!"

Our worthy opera-composers must take a course of lessons in the good Italian cantabile style, guarding themselves against its modern outgrowths, and, with their superior artistic faculty, turn out good work in a style as good. Then will Vocal art bear fruit anew; then a man will some-day come, who in this good style shall re-establish on the stage the shattered unity of Poetry and Song.

\*

Among us there is an archipatriarchal sect which refuses the name of beauty to any but quite simple singing, and utterly condemns all art of ornament. Let these judges turn back from their wretched one-sidedness, their taking of the choice of *means* as sole object for consideration, praise or blame, often blinding them to the *effect* itself! Art should be free. No school, no sect, must arrogate the title of the only bliss-purveyor. The simple, smooth and metric song has its great value—provided its setter is really [65] a good vocal composer: only,

it is not the sole true path of salvation, and the goal—the expression and communication of feeling—may be reached on other roads as well. The solo-singer ought to be an *artist* of song; as such, he may also give vent to his feelings in an enhanced and ornate art-form. Is that passion less true, forsooth, which takes the air with a volley of words, than that which breathes itself in few? Is not now this, now that, included in the individuality of this or that subject? Should not a speech in Parliament be different in form, to boot, from a sermon to a village parish? May not a sumptuous mould of periods, a flowery, decorative diction, a complex and ingenious scheme of verse, a rare but effective rhythm, be conditioned by aesthetic necessity?—We in nowise are opening the door to those meaningless flourishes by which unthinking singers too often, alas! betray their poverty of proper feeling, either to display their nimbleness of throat, or to mask their lack of portamento; but the nobler art of ornament has not yet reached with us its actual bloom; in our modern operatic singing we have merely the stereotyped *volutés of song*, which our singers and composers slavishly copy from the Italians, and wedge in everywhere without taste or psychological necessity.



The Public is at sea with Art, and the Artists have lost touch with the People. Why is it, that no German opera-composer has come to the front of late?—Because none has known how to gain the voice of the Folk,—in other words, *because none has seized true warm Life as it is*. The essence of dramatic art does not consist in the specific subject or point of view, but in this: that the inner kernel of all human life and action, the Idea, be grasped and brought to show. (3) By this standard alone should dramatic [66] works be judged, their special points of view and subjects being simply regarded as special varieties of this Idea. Criticism makes a radically false demand on Art, when it requires the art of the Beautiful to do nothing else than idealise. For without all Ideality, so-called, Dramatico-musical art can take many a form. If the librettist has the true poetic spirit, in him there lies the universe of human moulds and forces, his figures have an organic core of life; let him unroll the heavenly, or the earthly chart of human characters, we shall always find them lifelike, even though we never may have met their like in actual life. But our modern Romantic manikins are nothing but lay-figures. Away with them all—give us *passion!* Only in what is human, does man feel interest; only the humanly-feelable, can the dramatic singer represent. You have been often enough told, but refuse to believe it, that *one* thing alone is needful for Opera—namely *Poesy!*—Words and tones are simply its expression. And yet the most of our operas are a mere string of musical numbers without all psychologic union, whilst our singers ye have degraded into musical-boxes set to a series of tunes, dragged on to the stage, and started by the wave of the conductor's baton. The public no longer believes the opera-singer, since it knows that he is only singing it a thing no heart of man can feel. Mark the age, ye composers, and diligently seek to cultivate new forms; for he will be master, who writes neither Italian nor French—nor even German. But would ye warm, and purify, and train yourselves by models; would ye make shapes instinct with musical life: then take the masterly declamation and dramatic power of *Gluck* and combine it with *Mozart's* contrasted melody, his art of orchestration and ensemble; and ye will produce dramatic works to satisfy the strictest criticism.

## Notes

### Note 1 on page 5

*Pasticcio* means a "pasty," an "olla podrida"; it is a term applied to a curious form of entertainment, somewhat common in earlier days, consisting of arias, duets etc., selected from different operas and served up almost at random.

*Canto spianato*, the pseudonym adopted by the author, is the Italian for "smooth singing."—Tr.

### Note 2 on page 5

"Auf die Roulade, gut oder übel,

Folgt das Geklatsch wie die Thrän' auf die Zwiebel."—

Wagner would appear to have quoted the couplet from memory, for he has substituted "*die Roulade*" for "*den Laufer*" (runs, or scales), and "*Geklatsch*" for "*Gepatsch*" (clapping, or slapping)—unless the latter be a misprint in the *N.Z.f.M.*, repeated in the *Bayr. Bl.* of Nov. 1884. The original lines appeared in a half humorous, half serious sketch contained in certain fragmentary chapters of a "A Tone-artist's Life" posthumously published in Weber's *Hintergelassene Schriften* (Dresden 1828) and edited by C. G. T. Winkler, the "Councillor Winkler" referred to in Wagner's *Letters to Uhlig*. In the same collection of Weber's 'remains' occurs the following epigram upon "Bravura-singeress" Tembila: "Man muss es gesteh'n, dass ihr Trillern gelingt, Nur Schade, dass sie vor Singen nicht singt."—"One must freely admit that her trills are the thing; Yet with all her fine singing, 'tis sad she can't sing."—Tr.

### Note 3 on page 8

It is somewhat remarkable to find the author thus early propounding the Platonic "Idea" as a basis of Æsthetics, and in fact of Life itself. As may be seen upon turning to [Vol. VII. p. 134](#), the thought recurs to him in 1841, with special reference to Music. Therefore we are perfectly justified in chiming for Wagner an independent insight into one of Schopenhauer's main principles fully twenty years before he made acquaintance with that philosopher's system.—Tr.



[399]

## Summary

Merits of old Italian mode of writing for the voice, and singing. In Germany good chorus-singing, but dearth of soloists with a well-trained organ, good delivery, correct declamation, pure enunciation, sympathetic expression, and thorough knowledge of music (60). Necessity of dramatic singer's exercising self-control; ensemble to be considered. Italians decline rôles unsuited to their voice etc.; Germans undertake anything, suitable or not. Human voice no lifeless instrument; must be studied by composers (62). Liberty accorded to singer; modifying tempo; the instruments should be a guard of honour to the voice, not its catch-polls. Mozart's orchestration: cantabile and bravura. Bach treats voice as an instrument. Take a lesson from the Italians, and then a man will some day come to re-establish the lost unity of Poetry and Song (64). Pedantic onesidedness of the sect which abjures all ornament. A parliamentary speech should differ from a village sermon; a sumptuous mould etc. may be demanded by æsthetic necessity. Composers have lost touch with the people: essence of dramatic art the Idea behind all human actions; give us passion! One thing needful for Opera—*poesy*: words and tones are simply its expression. The future master (66).

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*Bellini: A Word in Season*

By Richard Wagner

Translated by William Ashton Ellis



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## Contents

About this Title .....	4
Bellini († 1835) - A Word In Season .....	5
Notes .....	7
Summary .....	9

## About this Title

### Source

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Translated by William Ashton Ellis

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[67]

## Bellini († 1835)

### A Word In Season

BELLINI'S music, i.e. Bellini's music for the voice, has latterly made such a stir and kindled such enthusiasm, even in highly-learned Germany, that the phenomenon itself perhaps is worth a closer scrutiny. That *Bellinian* Song enraptures Italy and France, is natural enough, for in Italy and France men hear with their ears,—whence our phrases such as "ear-tickling" (presumably in contrast to the "eye-ache" caused us by the reading of so many a score of our newer German operas);—but that even the German music-scholar should have taken the spectacles from his fagged-out eyes, and given himself for once to reckless delight in a lovely song, this opens us a deeper glimpse into the inner chamber of his heart,—and there we spy an ardent longing for a full and deep-drawn breath, to ease his being at one stroke, and throw off all the fumes of prejudice and pedantry which so long have forced him to be a German music-scholar; to become a Man instead at last, glad, free, and gifted with every glorious organ for perceiving beauty, no matter the form in which it shews itself.

How little we are really convinced by our pack of rules and prejudices! How often must it have happened that, after being transported by a French or Italian opera at the theatre, upon coming out we have scouted our emotion with a pitying jest, and, arrived safe home again, have read ourselves a lecture on the danger of giving way to transports. [68] Let us drop for once the jest, let us spare ourselves for once the sermon, and ponder what it was that so enchanted us; we then shall find, especially with *Bellini*, that it was the limpid Melody, the simple, noble, beauteous Song. To confess this and believe in it, is surely not a sin; 'twere no sin, perchance, if before we fell asleep we breathed a prayer that Heaven would one day give German composers such melodies and such a mode of handling Song.

Song, Song, and a third time Song, ye Germans! For Song is once for all the speech wherein Man should musically express himself; and if this language is not made and kept as self-dependent as any other cultivated Speech, then nobody will understand you. The rest of the matter, what is bad in Bellini, any of your village schoolmasters could better; we admit it. To make merry over these defects, is quite beside the question: had Bellini taken lessons from a German village-schoolmaster, presumably he would have learnt to do better; but that he perhaps would have unlearned his Song into the bargain, is certainly to be very much feared.

Let us therefore leave to this lucky Bellini the cut of his pieces, habitual with all the Italians, his crescendos, tutti and cadenzas that regularly succeed the theme, and all those other mannerisms which so disturb our spleen; they are the stable forms than which the Italians know no other, and by no means so dreadful in many respects. If we would only consider the boundless disorder, the jumble of forms, periods and modulations, of many a modern German opera-composer, distracting our enjoyment of the single beauties strewn between, we often might heartily wish this frayed-out tangle put in order by that stable Italian form. As a matter of fact the instantaneous apprehension of a whole dramatic passion is made far easier, when with all its allied feelings and emotions that passion is brought by one firm stroke into *one* clear and taking melody, than when it is patched with a hundred tiny commentaries, with this and that harmonic nuance, the interjection [69] of first one instrument and then another, till at last it is doctored out of sight.

How much the Italians are helped by their form and manner, especially with certain operatic subjects,—whatever that form's onesidedness and tawdriness in degeneration,—of this Bellini affords a proof in his *Norma*, beyond dispute his most successful composition. Here, where the poem itself soars up to the tragic height of the ancient Greeks, this form,

pronouncedly ennobled by Bellini, does but exalt the solemn, grandiose character of the whole; all the passions which his Song so notably transfigures, thereby obtain a majestic background, on which they hover not in vaguest outlines, but shape themselves to one vast and lucid picture, involuntarily recalling the creations of Gluck and Spontini.

Accepted with this free, untroubled self-abandonment, *Bellini's* operas have found applause in Italy, in France and Germany; why should they not find the like in Lithuania? (1)

O.

## Notes

### Note 1 on page 6

For his benefit at the Riga theatre (Dec. 1837) the author had chosen the production of *Norma*; the above article was intended as its avant-courière.—Tr.



[399]

## Summary

"Ear-tickling" v. "eye-ache". Music-scholars should remove their spectacles, and listen for once; give up their sermonising and learn the lesson of a noble melody. Dramatic passion and its expression: *Norma* and Greek Tragedy (69).



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# *On German Music*

By Richard Wagner

Translated by William Ashton Ellis



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## Contents

About this Title .....	4
On German Music .....	5
Notes .....	13

## About this Title

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By Richard Wagner

Translated by William Ashton Ellis

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[84]

## On German Music

THANKS to the exertions of a number of distinguished artists, who seem to have combined expressly for this purpose,—thanks to them and their good services, the highest products of German Music are no longer unknown to the Parisian public; they have been set before it in the worthiest fashion, and received by it with the greatest enthusiasm. (1) People have begun to demolish the barriers which, destined perhaps to eternally sever the nations themselves, yet should never separate their arts; one may even say that through their ready acknowledgment of foreign productions the French have distinguished themselves more than the Germans, who are generally more prone to fall beneath a foreign influence than is good for the preservation of a certain self-dependence. The difference is this:—the German, not possessing the faculty of initiating a Mode, adopts it without hesitation when it comes to him from abroad; in this weakness he forgets himself, and blindly sacrifices his native judgment to the foreign gauge. But this chiefly refers to the mass of the German public; for on the other side we see the German musician by profession, perhaps from very revolt against this universal weakness of the mass, too sharply cutting off himself therefrom, and becoming one-sided in his falsely patriotic zeal and unjust in his verdict on extraterritorial wares.—It is just the reverse with the French: the mass of the French public is perfectly contented with its national products, and does not feel the least desire to extend its taste; but the higher class of music-lovers is all the broader-minded in its recognition of foreign merit; it loves to shew enthusiasm for whatever comes to it of [85] beautiful and unknown from abroad. This is plainly proved by the reception so quickly accorded to German Instrumental-music. Whether the Frenchman *understands* German music for all that, is another question, and one whose answer must be doubtful. Of course it would be impossible to maintain that the enthusiasm called forth by the masterly execution of a Beethoven Symphony by the orchestra of the Conservatoire is an affected one; nevertheless it would suffice to learn the views, ideas and fancies roused in this or that enthusiast by the hearing of such a symphony, to perceive at once that the German genius has not as yet been thoroughly understood.—Let us therefore cast a more comprehensive glance upon Germany and the state of its music, to afford a clearer notion of how it should be taken.

Somebody once said: The Italian uses music for love, the Frenchman for society, but the German as science. Perhaps it would be better put: The Italian is a singer, the Frenchman a virtuoso, the German a—musician. The German has a right to be styled by the exclusive name "Musician," for of him one may say that he loves Music for herself,—not as a means of charming, of winning gold and admiration, but because he worships her as a divine and lovely art that, if he gives himself to her, becomes his one and all. The German is capable of writing music merely for himself and friend, uncaring if it will ever be executed for a public. The desire to shine by his creations but rarely seizes him, and he would be an exception if he even knew how to set about it? Before what public should he step?—His fatherland is cut up into a number of kingdoms, electoral principalities, duchies and free towns; he dwells, let us say, in a market-borough of some duchy; to shine in such a borough never occurs to him, for there isn't so much as a public there; if he is really ambitious, or compelled to support himself by his music,—he goes to the residential city of his duke; but in this little *Residenz* there are already many good musicians,—so it is terrible uphill work to get on; at last he makes his [86] way; his music pleases; but in the next-door duchy not a soul has ever heard of him,—how, then, is he to begin to make a name in Germany? He tries, but grows old in the attempt, and dies; he is buried, and no one names him any more. This is pretty well the lot of hundreds; what wonder that thousands don't even bestir themselves to adopt the career of Musician?

They rather choose a handicraft to earn their living, and give themselves with all the greater zest to music in their leisure hours; to refresh themselves, grow nobler by it, but not to shine. And do you suppose they make nothing but handicraft-music? No, no! Go and listen one winter-night in that little cabin: there sit a father and his three sons, at a small round table; two play the violin, a third the viola, the father the 'cello; what you hear so lovingly and deeply played, is a quartet composed by that little man who is beating time.—But he is the schoolmaster from the neighbouring hamlet, and the quartet he has composed is a lovely work of art and feeling. (2) —Again I say, go to that spot, and hear that author's [87] music played, and you will be dissolved to tears; for it will search your heart, and you will know what German Music is, will feel what is the German spirit. (3) Here was no question of giving this or that virtuoso the opportunity of earning a storm of applause by this or that brilliant passage; everything is pure and innocent, but, for that very reason, noble and sublime.—But set these glorious musicians before a full-dress audience in a crowded salon,—they are no longer the same men; their shame-faced bashfulness will not allow them raise their eyes; they will grow timid, and fear their inability to satisfy you. So they inquire by what devices other people please you, and for sheer lack of self-confidence they'll abandon their nature in shame, to pick up arts they only know by hearsay. Now they will make their fingers ache in practising gymnastics for you; those voices, which sang the lovely German *Lied* so touchingly, will make all haste to learn Italian colorature. But these passages and colorature refuse to suit them; you have heard them performed much better, and are bored by the bunglers.—And yet these bunglers are the truest artists, and in their hearts there glows a finer warmth than ever has been shed on you by those who hitherto have charmed you in your gilded salons. What then has ruined them?—They were too modest, and ashamed of their own true nature. This is the mournful chapter in the history of German Music. (4)

Alike the nature and the constitution of his fatherland have set the German artist iron bounds. Nature has denied him that flexibility of one chief organ which we find in the throats of the happy Italians;—political barriers obstruct him from higher publicity. The opera-composer [88] sees himself obliged to learn an advantageous treatment of Song from the Italians, yet to seek external stages for his works themselves, as he can find none in Germany on which to present himself before a nation. So far as concerns this latter point, you may take it that the composer who has produced his works at Berlin, stays unknown at Vienna or Munich for that very reason; only from abroad, can he succeed in attracting the whole of Germany. Their works are therefore like nothing more than provincial products; and if a whole great fatherland is too small for an artist, how much smaller must one of its provinces be! The exceptional genius may soar above these limitations, but for the most part only through the sacrifice of a certain native self-dependence. So that the truly characteristic of the German always remains provincial, in a sense, just as we have Prussian, Swabian, Austrian folk-songs, but nowhere a German national anthem.—

This want of centralisation, albeit the reason why no great national work of music will ever come to light, is nevertheless the cause of Music's having preserved through out so intimate and true a character among the Germans. Just because there is no great Court, for instance, to gather all that Germany possesses in the way of artistic forces, and thrust it in one joint direction toward the highest-attainable goal,—just for this reason we find that every Province has its artists who independently exert their dear-loved art. The result is a general extension of music to the most unlikely neighbourhoods, down to the humblest cots. It is surprising and astonishing, what musical forces one often finds combined in the most insignificant towns of Germany; and though there is an occasional dearth of singers for the Opera, you everywhere will find an orchestra that as a rule can play Symphonies quite admirably. In towns of 20,000 to 30,000 inhabitants you may count on not *one*, but two to three well-organised bands, (5) not reckoning the countless [89] amateurs who frequently are quite as good, if not still

better-educated musicians, than the professionals. And you must know what one means by a German bandsman: it is rare indeed for the most ordinary member of an orchestra not to be able to play another instrument besides the one for which he is engaged; you may take it as a rule that each is equally expert on at least three different instruments. But what is more,—he is commonly a composer too, and no mere empiric, but thoroughly versed in all the lore of harmony and counterpoint. Most of the members of an orchestra that plays a Beethovenian Symphony know it by heart, and their very consciousness of this gives rise to a certain presumption that often turns out badly for the performance; for it will sometimes tempt each unit in the band to pay less heed to the ensemble, than to his individual conception.

We therefore may justly contend that Music in Germany has spread to the lowest and most unlikely social strata, nay, perhaps has here its root; for higher, showier society in Germany must in this respect be termed a mere expansion of those humbler, narrower spheres. Maybe in these quiet unassuming families German Music finds herself at home; and here in fact, where she is not regarded as a means of display, but as a solace to the soul, Music *is* at home. Among these simple homely hearts, without a thought of entertaining a huge mixed audience, the art quite naturally divests herself of each coquettish outward trapping, and appears in all her native charm of purity and truth. Here not the ear alone asks satisfaction, but the heart, the soul demands refreshment; the German not merely wants to feel his music, but also to think it. Thus vanishes the craze to please the mere sensorium, and the longing for mental food steps in. It not being enough for the German to seize his music by the senses, he makes himself familiar with its inner organism, he studies music; he learns the laws of counterpoint, to gain a clearer consciousness of what it is that drew him so resistlessly in master-works; he goes to the toot of the art, and becomes in time a tone-poet [90] himself. This need descends from father to son, and its satisfaction thus becomes an essential part of bringing-up. All the difficulties on the scientific side of music the German learns as a child, parallel with his school-lessons, and as soon as he is at an age to think and feel for himself nothing is more natural than that he should include music in his thought and feeling, and, far from looking on its practice as an empty entertainment, religiously approach it as the holiest precinct in his life. He accordingly becomes a fanatic, and this devout and fervent *Schwärmerei*, with which he conceives and executes his music, is the chief characteristic of German Music.

Alike this bent and, perhaps, the lack of fine voices direct the German to instrumental music.—If we may take it as a general principle that every art has one particular genre that represents it at its purest and most independent, this certainly may be said to be the case with Music in its instrumental genre. In every other branch a second element combines that necessarily destroys the unity and self-dependence of the first, and yet, as we have experienced, can never raise itself to a level with it. Through what a mass of extras from the other arts must one not wade, in listening to an opera, to arrive at the real drift of the music itself! How the composer feels obliged to almost completely subordinate his art, here and there, and often to things beneath the dignity of any art. In those happy instances where the value of the services rendered by the auxiliary arts attains an equal height with the music itself, there arises indeed a quite new genre, whose classic rank and deep significance have been sufficiently acknowledged; but it must always stay inferior to the genre of higher instrumental music, as at least the independence of the art itself is sacrificed, whereas in instrumental music the latter gains its highest scope, its most complete development.—Here, in the realm of Instrumental music, the artist, free of every foreign and confining influence, is brought the most directly within reach of Art's ideal; here, where he has to employ the [91] means the most peculiar to his art, he positively is bound to stay within its province.

What wonder if the earnest, deep and visionary German inclines to this particular genre of music more fondly than to any other? Here, where he can yield himself entirely to his dream-like fancies, where the individuality of a definite and bounded passion lays no chains

on his imagination, where he can lose himself unhampered in the kingdom of the clouds,—here he feels free and in his native country. To realise the masterpieces of this genre of art it needs no glittering frame, no dear-paid foreign singers, no pomp of stage-accessories; a pianoforte, a violin, suffice to call awake the most enrapturing imaginations; everybody is master of one or other of these instruments, and in the smallest place there are enough to even form an orchestra capable of reproducing the mightiest and most titanic creations. And is it possible, with the most lavish aid of all the other arts, to erect a sublimer and more sumptuous building than a simple orchestra can rear from one of Beethoven's symphonies? Most surely not! The richest outward pomp can never realise what a performance of one of those master-works sets actually before us.

Instrumental music is consequently the exclusive property of the German,—it is his life, his own creation! And just that modest, bashful shyness, which constitutes a leading feature in the German character, may be a weighty reason for the thriving of this genre. It is this shamefacedness that prevents the German from parading his art, that inner halidom of his. With innate tact he feels that such a showing-off would be a desecration of his art, for it is so pure and heavenly of origin that it easily becomes defaced by worldly pomps. The German cannot impart his musical transports to the mass, but only to the most familiar circle of his friends. In that circle, however, he gives himself free rein. There he lets flow the tears of joy or grief unhindered, and therefore it is here that he becomes an artist in the fullest [92] meaning of the word. If this circle is scant, it is a piano and a pair of stringed instruments that are played on;—one gives a sonata, a trio or a quartet, or sings the German four-part song. If this familiar circle widens, the number of instruments waxes too, and one undertakes a symphony.—This justifies us in assuming that Instrumental-music has issued from the heart of German family-life; that it is an art which can neither be understood nor estimated by the mass of a crowded audience, but solely by the home-like circle of the few. A pure and noble *Schwärmerei* is needed, to find in it that ecstasy it sheds on none but the initiate; and this can only be the true musician, not the mass of an entertainment-craving public of the salon. For everything the latter takes and greets as piquant, brilliant episodes, is therewith quite misunderstood, and what sprang from the inmost kernel of the noblest art is consequently classed with tricks of empty coquetry.

We will now attempt to shew how all of German music is founded on the selfsame basis.

The reason has already been given above, why the Vocal genre is far less native to the Germans than that of Instrumental music. It is not to be denied that Vocal music has also taken a quite special direction of its own, with the Germans, which likewise had its starting-point in the people's needs and nature. Yet the grandest and most important genre of vocal music, the Dramatic, has never attained a height and independent evolution on a par with that of Instrumental music. The glory of German vocal music appeared in the Church; the Opera was abandoned to the Italians. Even Catholic church-music is not at home in Germany, but exclusively Protestant. Again we find the reason in the simplicity of German habits, which were far less suited to the priestly splendour of Catholicism than to the unpretentious ritual of the Protestant cult. The pomp of Catholic Divine Service was borrowed by courts and princes from abroad, and all German Catholic church-composers have been imitators, more or less, of the Italians. In the older Protestant churches, however, in place of all [93] parade there sufficed the simple Chorale, sung by the whole congregation and accompanied on the organ. This chant, whose noble dignity and unembellished purity can only have sprung from simple and sincerely pious hearts, should and must be regarded as an exclusively German possession. In truth its very structure bears the impress of all German art; in its short and popular melodies, many of which shew a striking likeness to other secular but always inoffensive folk-songs, one finds expressed the nation's liking for the *Lied*. The rich and forceful harmonies upon the other hand, to which the Germans set their choral melodies,



evinced the deep artistic feeling of the nation. Now this Chorale, in and for itself one of the worthiest events in the history of Art, must be viewed as the foundation of all Protestant church-music; on it the Artist built, and reared the most imposing fabrics. The first expansion of the Chorale we have to recognise in the *Motet*. These compositions had the same church-songs, as the Chorale, for their basis; they were rendered by voices alone, without accompaniment by the organ. The grandest compositions in this genre are those of *Sebastian Bach*, who must also be regarded as the greatest Protestant church-composer in general.

The Motets of this master, which filled a similar office in the ritual to that of the Chorale (saving that, in consequence of their great artistic difficulty, they were not delivered by the congregation, but by a special choir), are unquestionably the most perfect things we possess in independent vocal-music. Beside the richest application of a profoundly thoughtful art they shew a simple, forcible and often most poetic reading of the text in a truly Protestant sense. Moreover the perfection of their outward forms is so high and self-delimited, that nothing else in art excels it. But we find this genre still further magnified and widened in the great Passions and Oratorios. The Passion-music, almost exclusively the work of great Sebastian Bach, is founded on the Saviour's sufferings as told by the Evangelists; the text is set to music, word by word; but between the divisions of the [94] tale are woven verses from the Church's hymns appropriate to the special subject, and at the most important passages the Chorale itself is sung by the whole assembled parish. Thus the performance of such a Passion-music became a great religious ceremony, in which artists and congregation bore an equal share. What wealth, what fulness of art, what power, radiance, and yet unostentatious purity, breathe from these unique master-works! In them is embodied the whole essence, whole spirit of the German nation; a claim the more justified, as I believe I have proved that these majestic art-creations, too, were products of the heart and habits of the German people.

Church-music therefore owed alike its origin and consummation to the people's need. A like need has never summoned up Dramatic music, with the Germans. Since its earliest rise in Italy the Opera had assumed so sensuous and ornate a character, that in this guise it could not possibly excite a need of its enjoyment in the earnest, steady-going German. Opera, with its pomps of spectacle and ballet, so very soon fell into the disrepute of a mere luxurious pastime for the Courts, that in former times, as a matter of fact, it was kept up and patronised by them alone. Naturally also, as these Courts, and especially the German ones, were so completely severed from the people, their pleasures could never become at like time those of the Folk. Hence in Germany we find the Opera practised as an altogether foreign art-genre down almost to the end of the past century. Every court had its Italian company, to sing the operas of Italian composers; for at that time no one dreamt of Opera being sung in any but the Italian language and by Italians. The German composer who aspired to write an opera, must learn the Italian tongue and mode of singing, and could hope to be applauded only when he had completely denationalised himself as artist. Nevertheless it was frequently *Germans*, who took first rank in this genre as well; for the universal tendency of which the German genius is capable made it easy to the German artist to naturalise himself on a foreign field. [95] We see how quickly the Germans feel their way into whatever the national idiosyncrasy of their neighbours has brought to birth, and thereby win themselves a fresh firm stand-point whence to let their innate genius spread creative wings long leagues beyond the cramping bounds of Nationality. The German genius would almost seem predestined to seek out among its neighbours what is not native to its motherland, to lift this from its narrow confines, and thus make something Universal for the world. Naturally, however, this can only be achieved by him who is not satisfied to ape a foreign nationality, but keeps his German birthright pure and undefiled; and that birthright is Purity of feeling and Chasteness of invention. Where this dowry is retained, the German may do the grandest work in any tongue and every nation, beneath all quarters of the sky.

Thus we see a German raising the Italian school of Opera to the most complete ideal at last, and bringing it, thus widened and ennobled to universality, to his own countrymen. That German, that greatest and divinest genius, was *Mozart*. In the story of the breeding, education, and life of this unique German, one may read the history of all German Art, of every German artist. His father was a musician; so he too was brought up to music, apparently with the mere idea of turning him into an honest professional who could earn his bread by what he had learnt. In tenderest childhood he was set to learn the very hardest scientific branches of his art; he naturally became their perfect master as soon as boy; a pliant, childlike mind and intensely delicate senses allowed him at like time to seize the inmost secrets of his art; but the most prodigious genius raised him high above all masters of all arts and every century. Poor all his life to the verge of penury, despising pomp and advantageous offers, even in these outward traits he bears the perfect likeness of his nation. Modest to shamefacedness, unselfish to the point of self-oblivion, he works the greatest miracles and leaves posterity the most unmeasured riches, without [96] knowing that he did aught save yield to his creative impulse. A more affecting and inspiring figure no history of art has yet to shew.

Mozart fulfilled in its highest power all that I have said that the universality of the German genius is capable of. He made the foreign art his own, to raise it to a universal. His operas, too, were written in the Italian tongue, because it was then the only one admissible for song. But he snatched himself so entirely from all the foibles of the Italian manner, ennobled its good qualities to such a pitch, so intimately welded them with his inborn German thoroughness and strength, that at last he made a thing completely new and never pre-existing. This new creation was the fairest, most ideal flower of Dramatic music, and from that time one may date the naturalisation of Opera in Germany. Thenceforward national theatres were opened, and men wrote operas in the German tongue.

While this great epoch was in preparation, however, while Mozart and his forerunners were developing this novel genre from Italian music itself, from the other side there was evolving a popular Stage-music, through whose conjunction with the former at last arose true German Opera. This was the genre of German *Singspiel*, which, distant from the glare of Courts, sprang up in the people's midst and from its heart and customs. This German *Singspiel*, or *Operetta*, bears an unmistakable likeness to the older French *opéra comique*. The subjects for its texts were taken from the people's life, and mostly sketched the customs of the lower classes. They were generally of comic type, full of blunt and natural wit. The pre-eminent home of this genre was Vienna. In general it is in this Kaiser-city, that the greatest stamp of nationality has always been preserved; the gay and simple mind of its inhabitants has always been best pleased with what made straight for its mother-wit and buoyant fancy. In Vienna, where all the folk-plays had their origin, the popular *Singspiel* also thrived the best. The composer, indeed, would mostly restrict himself to *Lieder* and *Ariettas*; [97] however, one met among them many a characteristic piece of music, for instance in the excellent "*Dorfbarbier*," that was quite capable, if expanded, of making the genre more important in time, had it not been doomed to die out through absorption into the grander class of opera. This notwithstanding, it had already reached a certain independent height; and one sees with astonishment that at the very time when Mozart's Italian operas were being translated into German, and set before the whole public of his fatherland immediately after their first appearance, that *Operetta* also took an ever ampler form, appealing to the liveliest fancy of the Germans by an adaptation of folk-sagas and fairy-tales.—Then came the most decisive stroke of all: Mozart himself took up this popular line of German *Operetta*, and on it based the first grand German opera: *die Zauberflöte*. The German can never sufficiently estimate the value of this work's appearance. Until then a German Opera had as good as not existed; with this work it was created. The compiler of the text-book, a speculating Viennese Director, meant to turn out nothing further than a right grand *operetta*. Thereby the work was

guaranteed a most popular exterior; a fantastic fable was the groundwork, supernatural apparitions and a good dose of comic element were to serve as garnish. But what did Mozart build on this preposterous foundation? What godlike magic breathes throughout this work, from the most popular ballad to the sublimest hymn! What many-sidedness, what marvellous variety! The quintessence of every noblest bloom of art seems here to blend in one unequalled flower. What unforced, and withal what noble popularity in every melody, from the simplest to the most majestic!—In fact, here genius almost took too giant-like a stride, for at the same time as it founded German Opera it reared its highest masterpiece, impossible to be excelled, nay, whose very genre could not be carried farther. True, we now see German Opera come to life, but going backwards, or sickly into mannerism, to the full as quickly as it raised itself to its most perfect height.— [98] The directest imitators of Mozart, in this sense, were undoubtedly *Winter* and *Weigl*. Both joined the popular line of German Opera in the honestest fashion, and the latter in his "Schweizerfamilie," the former in his "unterbrochener Opferfest," proved how well the German opera-composer could gauge the measure of his task. Nevertheless the broader popular tendency of Mozart already loses itself in the petty, with these his copiers, and seems to say that German Opera was never to take a *national* range. The popular stamp of rhythms and melismata stiffens to a meaningless rote of borrowed flourishes and phrases, and above all, the indifferentism with which these composers approached their choice of subjects betrays how little they were fitted to give to German Opera a higher standing.

Yet we see the popular musical drama once more revive. At the time when Beethoven's all-puissant genius set open in his instrumental music the realm of daringest romance, a beam of light from out this magic sphere spread also over German Opera. It was *Weber* who breathed a fair warm life again into stage-music. In his most popular of works, the "Freischütz," he touched once more the people's heart. The German fairy-tale, the eerie saga, here brought the poet and composer into immediate touch with German folk-life; the soulful, simple German Lied was the foundation, so that the whole was like a long-drawn moving Ballad, attired in noblest dress of breeziest romanticism, and singing the German nation's fondest fantasies at their most characteristic. And indeed both Mozart's Magic Flute and Weber's Freischütz have proved with no uncertain voice that in this sphere German Musical Drama (*opéra*) is at home, but beyond it lie stern barriers. Even Weber had to learn this, when he tried to lift German Opera above those bounds; for all its beauty of details, his "Euryanthe" must be termed a failure. Here, where Weber meant to paint the strife of great and mighty passions in a higher sphere, his strength forsook him; his heart sank before the vastness of his task, he sought by toilsome painting-in of single features to make up for a [99] whole that could only be drawn with bold and vigorous strokes; thus he lost his unconstraint and became ineffective. (6) 'Twas as if Weber knew that he here had sacrificed his own chaste nature; in his Oberon he returned with the sad sweet smile of death to the Muse of his former innocence.

*Spohr* also sought to make himself a master of the German stage, but never could arrive at Weber's popularity; his music lacked too much of that dramatic life which should radiate from the scene. To be sure, the products of this master must be called completely German, for they speak in deep and piercing accents to the inner heart. They entirely lack, however, that blithe and naïve element so characteristic of Weber, without which the colour of dramatic music grows too monotonous and loses all effect.

The last and most important follower of these two we recognise in *Marschner*; he touched the selfsame chords that Weber struck, and thereby swiftly gained a certain popularity. But with all his innate force, this composer was powerless to keep erect that German Opera so brilliantly revived by his predecessor, when the products of the newer French school began to make such strides in the enthusiastic welcome of the German nation. In effect, the newer French dramatic music dealt such a crushing blow at German popular Opera, that the latter

may now be said to have wholly ceased to exist. Yet some further mention must be made of this last period, as it has exerted a most powerful influence on Germany, and it really seems as though the German after all would rise to be its master too. (7)

We can but date the commencement of this period from the advent of *Rossini*; for, with that brilliant audacity [100] which alone could compass such a thing, he tore down all the remnants of the old Italian school, already withered to a meagre skeleton of empty forms. His lustful-jovial song went floating round the world, and its advantages—of freshness, ease and luxury of form—were given consistence by the French. Among them the Rossinian line gained character and a worthier look, through national stability; on their own feet, and sympathising with the nation, their masters now turned out the finest work that any folk's art-history can shew. Their works incorporated all the merits and character of their nation. The delicious chivalry of ancient France breathed out from *Boieldieu's* glorious *Jean de Paris*; the vivacity, the spirit, wit, the grace of the French re-blossomed in that genre exclusively their own, the *opéra comique*. But its highest point was reached by French dramatic music in *Auber's* unsurpassable "Muet de Portice" [*Masaniello*],—a national-work such as no nation has more than one at most to boast of. That storm of energy, that sea of emotions and passions, painted in the most glowing tints, drenched with the most original melodies, compact of grace and vehemence, of charm and heroism,—is not all this the true embodiment of latter-day French history? Could this astounding art-work have been fashioned by another than a Frenchman? There is no other word for it,—with this work the modern French school had reached its apex, and with it the hegemony of the civilised world. (8)

Small wonder, if the impressionable and impartial German did not delay to recognise the excellence of these products of his neighbours with unassumed enthusiasm. For the German, in general, can be juster than many another nation. Moreover these foreign imports met a genuine need; for it is not to be denied that the grander genre of Dramatic music does not flourish in Germany of itself; and apparently for the same reason that the higher type of German, play has never reached [101] its fullest bloom. On the other hand it is more possible for the German, than for anyone else, on foreign soil to bring a national artistic epoch to its highest pitch and universal acceptance. (9)

As regards Dramatic music, then, we may take it that the Germans and the French at present have but one; though their works be first produced in *one* land, this is more a local than a vital difference. In any case the fact that these two nations now are stretching hands to one another, and lending forces each to each, is a preparation for one of the greatest artistic epochs. May this propitious union ne'er be loosed, for it is impossible to conceive two nations whose fraternity could bring forth grander and more fruitful results for Art, than the German and the French, since the genius of each of these two nations is fully competent to supply whatever may be lacking in the one or other.

## Notes

### Note 1 on page 5

Under the title of "De la Musique Allemande" this article originally appeared in the *Gazette Musicale* of July 12 and 26, 1840, forming Richard Wagner's earliest contribution to that journal.—Tr.

### Note 2 on page 6

To many a foreigner the above little picture may appear exaggerated; it is therefore particularly apropos that we read in a sketch of August Manns (*Musical Times*, March 1898) the following:

"August Friedrich Manns was born at Stolzenburg, a village near Stettin, in North Germany, March 12, 1825. His father was a glass-blower, with a pound a week and ten children, of whom August was the fifth. When the father returned from his day's work he would take down his fiddle from the wall and make music to his children. . . . At the age of six August was sent to the village school, where the day's work always commenced with a hymn sung from a figure-notation upon the ancient 'movable doh' system. In course of time the father's fiddle was augmented by another, a violoncello, and a horn, played by August's elder brothers, and later on by an old F flute, played by the future conductor of the Crystal Palace orchestra. . . . At the age of ten, August temporarily took the place of one of his brothers at the factory. . . . At the age of twelve he was sent to a school, kept by his uncle, at Torgelow, a neighbouring village. Here he became a musical pupil of Herr Tramp, the village musician. Up to this time the boy had been self-taught, and Tramp soon put him into the pathway of acquiring the proper fingering of both the flute and clarinet; but his chief instrument was the violin. As he had no means of buying an instruction book, he copied out the greater part of Rode, Kreutzer, and Baillot's book on the violin."

As this quotation deals with the very decad in which Wagner was writing, it is of peculiar interest in the present connection. A few lines farther in the *Musical Times* article, we read how at fifteen young Manns was apprenticed to Urban, the town-musician of Elbing, whose boys "were taught every instrument in the orchestra," and how "in his third year Manns played first violin in the string-band and first clarinet in the wind band of Urban's Town-band," which confirms a general statement of Wagner's a few pages ahead.—Tr.

### Note 3 on page 6

"One sees that the author was young, and not yet acquainted with our elegant modern music-Germany.—The Editor" (i.e. R. Wagner in 1871).

### Note 4 on page 6

"It would seem that in our days this grief and shame have been happily overcome.—Ed." (i.e. R. W. in 1871).

### Note 5 on page 6

"This was the actual experience of our friend at *Wurzburg* in his time, where, besides a full orchestra at the theatre, the bands of a musical society and a seminary gave alternate performances.—Ed." (R. W. in '71).

### Note 6 on page 11

"Methinks my friend would have learnt in time to express himself more guardedly on this

point.—Ed." (i.e. R. Wagner).

[Note 7 on page 12](#)

Evidently referring to Meyerbeer; for the master does not appear to have realised at this epoch that the composer of the *Huguenots* was not a German, but a Jew.—Tr.

[Note 8 on page 12](#)

"Mephistopheles: 'You already speak quite like a Frenchman!'—Ed." (R. W.).

[Note 9 on page 12](#)

A longish passage appeared in the French, between this sentence and the succeeding paragraph, as follows: "Haendel et Gluck l'ont prouvé surabondamment, et de nos jours un autre Allemand, Meyerbeer, nous en offre un nouvel exemple.—Arrivé au point d'une perfection complète et absolue, le système français n'avait plus en effet d'autres progrès à espérer, que de se voir généralement adopté et de se perpétuer au même degré de splendeur; mais c'était aussi la tâche la plus difficile à accomplir. Or, pour qu'un allemand en ait tenté l'épreuve et obtenu la gloire, il fallait sans contredit qu'il fût doué de cette bonne foi désintéressée, qui prévaut tellement chez ses compatriotes, qu'ils n'ont pas hésité à sacrifier leur propre scène lyrique pour admettre et cultiver un genre étranger, plus riche d'avenir et qui s'adresse plus directement aux sympathies universelles. En serait-il autrement quand la raison aurait anéanti la barrière des préjugés qui séparent les différents peuples, et quand tous les habitants du globe seraient d'accord pour ne plus parler qu'une seule et même langue?"—Tr.



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*Pergolesi's "Stabat Mater"*

By Richard Wagner

Translated by William Ashton Ellis



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## Contents

About this Title .....	4
Pergolesi's "Stabat Mater" .....	5
Notes .....	9
Summary .....	11

## About this Title

### Source

*Pergolesi's "Stabat Mater"*

By Richard Wagner

Translated by William Ashton Ellis

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Richard Wagner's Prose Works

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[102]

## Pergolesi's "Stabat Mater"

(1)

THERE still are good musicians who find their keenest joy in searching the chefs-d'œuvre of ancient masters, to fill themselves with their incomparable beauties; and when one brings to such a study so much zeal and intelligence as the author of whom we are about to speak, the results deserve no less esteem and recognition than if they were original works. It would be a great mistake to ascribe to M. Lvoff the claim of having added to the perfection of the work of Pergolesi, for it is evident that his only aim has been to remind the modern school of a sublime exemplar, and to get it enrolled in the repertoire of contemporary performances. Under influence of this conviction, and in spite of all aesthetic scruples excited by this mode of secondary arrangement, it is impossible to deny the interest and importance of the publication now before us.

At an epoch like ours, when the different branches of the art of Music have taken such divergent lines, often to the point of a most abnormal transformation, it is an essential need and noble duty to ascend to primal sources for new elements of force and fecundity. But to usefully re-knit these ties of parentage with the great masters of the past, the practice of their compositions—adapted, if [103] necessary, to the exigences of modern taste—will always be more efficacious than a pale and mediocre imitation of their wondrous style. In fact the last procedure offers all the danger of a retrogression, for such copiers are but too frequently inclined to reproduce in their concoctions those superannuated forms which purity of taste reproves.

The exclusive admirers of the ancient school have fallen into a vicious exaggeration, through attaching the same value to its imperfect canons as to the depth and thought revealed in its works.

Grand and noble as are those thoughts, the details of material execution shew inexperience and the gropings of a science in its infancy; and it is impossible to call in doubt the greater perfecting of form, if not in our day, at least during the intermediary period that succeeded to this golden age of musical art.

It was with Mozart, the chief of the Idealistic school, that religious music really touched its apogee in point of structure; and if I did not fear being misinterpreted, I should venture to express the wish that all the works of the preceding period had been transmitted to us clad in forms analogous, for the perfection of these latter would have been ample recompense for the pains of such a transformation; nor would the difficulty have been very great, since Mozart was not too distant from the primitive epoch, and his manner still preserved its sentiment and characteristic traits. On the contrary, he has brilliantly proved how much the older masterpieces could be enhanced by a vivacity and freshness of colour, without losing aught of their intrinsic merit, so to say, and notably by his arrangement of Haendel's oratorio *The Messiah*.

We are far from blaming those who would only have Haendel's oratorio performed in a cathedral with a chorus of from three to four hundred voices, supported by organs and a quartet of stringed instruments of proportionate number, to enjoy the whole splendour and primitive energy of the composition. For the individual anxious to appreciate the historic value of Haendel's music it [104] would no doubt be preferable to hear it rendered by such potent means,—a thing almost impossible to realise to-day for reason of one notorious circumstance, namely that Haendel himself improvised the accompaniments on the organ for the first performances of the *Messiah*. Is it not permissible to assume that the composer, unacquainted with the more perfect modern use of the 'wind,' employed the organ to produce

the same effects that Mozart entrusted later to the improved wind-instruments of his day?

In any case, Mozart's instrumentation has embellished the work of Haendel in the general interest of art. It needed, in truth, the genius of a Mozart, to accomplish such a task in so complete a measure. He who undertakes a similar work to-day, can therefore do no better than adopt that for his model, without seeking to complicate its simple and natural lines; for an application of the resources of modern orchestration would be the surest means of travestyng the theme and character of ancient works.

And such has been the laudable desire of M. Lvoff. An examination of his score will demonstrate that he has taken his type from the discreet instrumentation of Mozart. Three trombones, two trumpets, the drums, two clarinets and two bassoons,—such are the elements added to the original orchestra. And most frequently it is only the clarinets and bassoons that take an active part in the accompaniment, following the precedent of the bassoons and basset-horns in Mozart's *Requiem*. The greatest difficulty must have resided in the general revision of the string-quartet, as Pergolesi had written it entirely in the naïve style of olden days, limiting himself for most of the time to three parts, and sometimes even to two. Very often the complementary harmonic part was a matter of course, and one finds it hard to explain why the composer omitted to write it, thereby producing very perceptible gaps. But in other places the filling-up presented serious difficulties, especially where the melody seems to admit [105] of only three parts, or sometimes two, and where a supplementary voice might be considered superfluous, if not harmful. Nevertheless this great obstacle has always been happily surmounted by M. Lvoff, whose general discretion is beyond all praise. The wind-instruments which he introduces, far from ever smothering or altering the original theme, serve on the contrary to throw it into higher relief. They even have a certain independent character that contributes to the effect of the ensemble, entirely after the rules adopted by Mozart, and in this regard we may particularly instance the fourth strophe, *Quæ mærebat*. Only occasionally, for example at the beginning of the first number, was it wrong, perhaps, to transfer the part of the violins to the bassoons and clarinets; not that the author has here misjudged the character of these latter instruments, but since the bass, retained for the lower strings, appears too full and too sonorous for its new superstructure.

It is astonishing, however, that the author of so conscientious a work should have let himself be once betrayed into altering the bass: namely at the commencement of the second strophe, where M. Lvoff has modified the entire phrase, greatly to the disadvantage of the original melody. No doubt he did it to avoid a passage of a certain crudity which Pergolesi had given to the part of the alto; but in our opinion there were other ways of remedying this harshness, without sacrificing the great composer's lovely bass. For the rest, it is the solitary instance, in all the work, of a change both useless and unfavourable. With scarcely another exception, we have witness of the most conscientious zeal and a highly delicate appreciation of the old chef-d'œuvre, down to tiny details of a character a trifle superannuated.

Beyond dispute the most audacious step in M. Lvoff's undertaking is the addition of choruses, since Pergolesi wrote his *Stabat* for but two voices, the one soprano and the other high contralto. Strictly speaking, it would have been better to respect the original intention of the master; [106] but as this introduction of choruses has in no way spoiled the work, and as, moreover, the two original solo parts have been preserved in their integrity, it would be impossible to seriously blame the adaptor; in fact one must even acknowledge that he has added to the richness of the ensemble, for this adjunction has been effected with a rare address and a superior understanding of the text.

Thus in the first number the intermittent fusion of the choral with the solo voices reminds us happily of the manner in which the two choirs are treated in Palestrina's *Stabat*. However it is principally upon the choir, that weighs the difficulty of adding complementary parts in the places aforesaid where Pergolesi had designed his melody exclusively for two or three. Here

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the arranger is obliged to restrict the rôle of the chorus to three parts at most, not to absolutely mar the original harmony and disfigure its noble simplicity. This is especially perceptible in the fugal passages, such as the *Fac ut ardeat*. Further, the vocal theme is never in the tenor register, but devolves exclusively on either the soprano or alto, as in the original composition, or the bass which it was easy to extract from the primary accompaniment. Above all, the reviser must have been embarrassed by the *Amen*, expressly written by Pergolesi for two voices alone.

Apropos of No. 10, *Fac ut portem*, we must remark that it would have been better to omit the accompaniment by the choir, as also the concluding cadence, these two accessories reminding one too much of modern Opera, and ill according with the character of the sacred work.

But if we have felt it our duty to point out the reefs presented by so rare a task, we have also to frankly avow that the modern composer has given proof of great ability in doubling them. It would be impossible to praise too much the noble aim that has governed M. Lvoff's enterprise; for if an intelligent admiration and an ardent sympathy for so great a masterpiece alone were capable of prompting anyone to such a labour, there also is no doubt that M. Lvoff took the perfect measure of its difficulty [107] and extent. It therefore is no more than just to recognise not merely the talent, but also the courage necessary to accomplish a labour where the artist has to make complete denial of, and constantly efface himself, to let the superior genius to whom he renders loving homage shine in all his glory.

R. WAGNER.



## Notes

### Note 1 on page 5

This "revue critique" of the "*Stabat Mater* de Pergolèse, arrangé pour grand orchestre avec chœurs par Alexis Lvoff, membre des Académies de Bologne et de Saint-Pétersbourg" appeared in the *Gazette Musicale* of Oct. 11, 1840. Although it is not included in the *Ges. Schr.*, having evidently been regarded by the author as simply a pot-boiler, I fancy that many of its sentences will justify my rescuing it from oblivion. Col. Alexis Lvoff, or Lwoff, was the composer of the Russian National Anthem.—Tr.





[363]

## Summary

Importance of reviving old masterpieces for performance: limits to be observed by the adaptor; Mozart's revision of Handel's *Messiah* a model (104). Detailed criticism of M. Lvoff's adaptation; difficulties he has overcome (107).

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# *The Virtuoso and the Artist*

By Richard Wagner

Translated by William Ashton Ellis



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## Contents

About this Title .....	4
The Virtuoso and the Artist .....	5
Notes .....	13
Summary .....	15

## About this Title

### Source

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[108]

## The Virtuoso and the Artist

(1)

ACCORDING to an ancient legend there is somewhere an inestimable jewel whose shining light bestows forthwith, upon the favoured mortal whose glance rests on it, all gifts of mind and every joy of a contented spirit. But this treasure lies buried in unfathomed depths. The story goes, that eyes of happy mortals once were blest with superhuman power to pierce the ruins heaped above it like gateways, pillars, and misshapen fragments of a giant palace: through this chaos then there leapt to them the wondrous splendour of the magic jewel, and filled their hearts with bliss untold. Then yearning seized them to remove the pile of wreckage, to unveil to all the world the glory of the magic treasure at which the very sun would pale its fires when *its* glad rays should fill our heart with love divine, our mind with heavenly knowledge. But in vain their every effort: they could not move the inert mass that hid the wonder-stone.

Centuries passed by: the spirit of those rarest favoured ones still mirrored on the world the radiance of that starry light which once had shone upon them from the glinting jewel; but no one could draw near itself. Yet tidings of it still existed; there were traces, and men conceived the thought of burrowing for the wonder-stone with all the arts of mining. Shafts were sunk, levels and cross-cuts [109] were driven into the bowels of the earth; the most ingenious of subterranean tactics were pursued, and one dug afresh, cut winzes and new galleries, until at last the labyrinth grew so confusing that all remembrance of the right direction was lost for good. And so the whole great maze, in whose behalf the jewel itself was finally forgotten, lay useless quite: men gave it up. Abandoned were adits, shafts and raises: already they were threatening to cave in, when—so they say—a poor miner from Salzburg came that way. He carefully surveyed the work of his forerunners: full of astonishment he paced the countless mazes, whose useless plan he half surmised. Of a sudden he feels his heart beat high for very rapture: through a chink the jewel flashes on him; with a glance he takes the measure of all the labyrinth: the longed-for pathway to the wonder-stone itself grows plain; led by its light he dives into the deepest cavern, to it, the heavenly talisman itself. A wondrous luminance then filled the world with fleeting glory, and every heart was thrilled by ecstasy untold: but the miner from Salzburg no man saw again.

Then came once more a miner, this time from Bonn in the Siebengebirge; he wished to search in the abandoned levels for the missing Salzburger: he lit full soon upon his track, and so suddenly the splendour of the wonder-jewel smote his eye, that it struck him blind. A foaming sea of light surged through his senses, he flung himself into the chasm, and down the timbers crashed upon him: a fearful din went up, as though a world had foundered. The miner from Bonn was never seen again.

And so, like every miner's-story, this ended—with a falling in. Fresh ruins overlay the old; yet to this day men shew the site of the ancient workings, and recently have even begun to dig for the two lost miners, as kind good people think they still might be alive. With breathless haste the pits are sunk afresh, and get much talked of; the curious come from far and near, to view the spot: fragments of schist are taken away as souvenirs, and paid a trifle for, for everyone would like to have contributed to such a pious work; moreover one buys the life-account of [110] the two entombed, which a Bonn professor (2) has carefully drawn up, yet without being able to tell exactly how the accident occurred, which nobody knows but the Folk. And things have come to such a pass at last, that the real original legend is clean forgotten, whilst all kinds of minor modern fables take its place, *e.g.* that quite prolific veins of gold have been discovered in the diggings, and the solidest ducats struck therefrom. Indeed

there seems some truth in this; for people think less and less about the wonder-stone and those two poor miners, although the whole exploit still bears the title of a rescue-party.—

Perhaps the whole legend, with its subsequent fable, is to be understood in an allegoric sense: on that hypothesis, its meaning would soon be apparent if we took the wonder-jewel to be the *genius of Music*; the two incarcerated miners would be no less easy to divine, and the debris that covers them would lie before our feet when we gird ourselves to pierce to those enshrined elect. In truth, on whom that wonder-stone has shone in fabled dreams o'night, whose soul has felt the fire of Music in the holy hours of ecstasy,—would he fain arrest that dream, that ecstasy, *i.e.* if he would seek the tools therefor, he first of all will stumble on that heap of ruins: there he has then to dig and delve; the place is filled with gold-diggers; they pile the debris ever denser, and, would you make for the forgotten shaft, they fling down slag and cat-gold in your way. The rubble waxes high and higher, the wall grows ever thicker: sweat pours in rivers from your brow. Poor fellows! And they laugh at you.

Yet the thing may have a serious side.—

[111]

What you have written down in notes, is now to sound aloud; you want to hear it, and let others hear it. Very good: the weightiest, nay, the ineluctable concern for you, is to get your tone-piece brought to hearing exactly as you felt it in you when you wrote it down: that is to say, the composer's intentions are to be conscientiously reproduced, so that the thoughts of his spirit may be transmitted unalloyed and undisfigured to the organs of perception. The highest merit of the executant artist, the Virtuoso, would accordingly consist in a pure and perfect reproduction of that thought of the composer's; a reproduction only to be ensured by genuine fathering of his intentions, and consequently by total abstinence from all inventions of one's own. It follows that a performance directed by the composer in person alone can give a full account of his intentions; nearest to him will come the man sufficiently endowed with creative power to gauge the value of observing another artist's intentions by that he sets upon his own, and it will be an advantage to him to have a certain loving pliability. After these most authorised would come such artists as make no claim to productivity, and belong to art, so to say, merely in virtue of their aptitude for making a stranger's artwork their intimate possession: these would have to be modest enough to so entirely sink their personal attributes, in whatever they may consist, that neither their defects nor their advantages should come to light in the performance; for it is the artwork in its purest reproduction, that should step before us, in nowise the distracting individuality of the performer.

Unfortunately however, this very reasonable demand runs counter to all the conditions under which artistic products win the favour of the public. This latter's first and keenest curiosity is addressed to art-dexterity; delight in that is the only road to notice of the work itself. Who can blame the public for it? Is it not the very tyrant whose vote we sue? Nor would things stand so bad with this failing, did it not end by corrupting the executant artist, and make him forget at last his own true mission. [112] His position as vehicle of the artistic intention, nay, as virtual representative of the creative master, makes it quite peculiarly his duty to guard the earnestness and purity of Art in general: he is the intermediary of the artistic idea, which through him, in a sense, first attains to physical existence. The real dignity of the Virtuoso rests therefore solely on the dignity he is able to preserve for creative art: if he trifles and toys with this, he casts his own honour away. To be sure, 'tis small matter to him, should he not have grasped that dignity at all: though he be no artist, he yet has art-dexterities to hand: these he lets play; they do not warm, but glitter; and at night it all looks very nice.

There sits the virtuoso in the concert-hall, and entrances purely for himself: here runs, there jumps; he melts, he pines, he paws and glides, and the audience is fettered to his fingers. Go and watch the strange Sabbath of such a soirée, and try to learn how you should make yourselves presentable for this assemblée; you will find that, of all that passes before your

eyes and ears, you understand about as much as probably the Witches'-master there of what goes on within your soul when music wakes in you and drives you to produce. Heavens! You are to dress your music to suit this man? Impossible! At each attempt you would miserably fail. You can swing yourselves into the air, but cannot dance; a whirlwind lifts you to the clouds, but you can make no pirouette: what would you succeed in, if you took him for model? A vulgar catherine-wheel, no more,—and everyone would laugh, even if you did not get hurled from the salon.

Plainly we have nothing to do with this virtuoso. But presumably you mistook your locality. For indeed there are other virtuosi, and among them true, great artists: they owe their reputation to their moving execution of the noblest tone-works of the greatest masters; where would the public's acquaintance with these latter be slumbering, had not those eminently pre-elect arisen from out the chaos of music-makery, to shew the world [113] who These really were and what they did? There sticks the placard, inviting you to such a lordly feast: one name shines on you: *Beethoven!* Enough. Here is the concert-room. And positively, Beethoven appears to you; all round sit high-bred ladies, row after row of high-bred ladies, and in a wide half-moon behind them lively gentle men with lorgnettes in the eye. But Beethoven is there, midst all the perfumed agony of dream-rocked elegance: it really is Beethoven, sinewed and broad, in all his sad omnipotence. But, who comes there with him? Great God:—Guillaume Tell, Robert the Devil, and—who after these? *Weber*, the tender and true! Good! And then:—a "Galop." (3) O heavens! Who has once written galops himself, who has had his stir in Potpourris, knows what a want can drive us to it when it is a question of drawing near to Beethoven at all costs. I took the measure of the awful need that could drive another man to-day to Potpourris and Galops, to gain the chance of preaching Beethoven; and though I must admire the virtuoso in this instance, I cursed all virtuosity.—So falter not, true disciples of Art, upon the path of virtue: if a magic power drew you to dig for the silted shaft, be not misguided by those veins of gold; but deeper, ever deeper delve towards the wonder-stone. My heart tells me, those buried miners are living yet: if not, why! still believe it! What harms you the belief?

But come, is it all mere foppery? You need the Virtuoso, and, if he's the right sort, he needs you too. So, at least, it must once have been. For something happened, to cause a division between the Virtuoso and the Artist. In former times it certainly was easier to be one's own virtuoso; but you waxed overweening, and made things so hard for yourselves that you were obliged to turn their [114] execution over to a man who has quite enough to do, his whole life long, to bear the other half of your labour. Indeed you should be thankful to him. He is the first to face the tyrant: if he doesn't do his business well, nobody asks about your composition, but *he* is hissed off the boards; can you be cross with him then, if, when applauded, he takes that also to himself, and does not specially return his thanks in name of the composer? Nor would that be quite what you want: you want your piece performed precisely as you thought it; the virtuoso is to add nothing to it, leave nothing from it; he is to be *your second self*! But often that is very hard: let one of you just try, for once, to sink himself so entirely in another!—

Lo there the man who certainly thinks least about himself, and to whom the personal act of pleasing has surely nothing special to bring in, the man beating time for an orchestra. He surely fancies he has bored to the very inside of the composer, ay, has drawn him on like a second skin? You won't tell me that *he* is plagued with the Upstart-devil, when he takes your tempo wrong, misunderstands your expression-marks, and drives you to desperation at listening to your own tone-piece. Yet *he* can be a virtuoso too, and tempt the public by all kinds of spicy nuances into thinking that it after all is *he* who makes the whole thing sound so



nice he finds it neat to let a loud passage be played quite soft, for a change, a fast one a wee bit slower; he will add you, here and there, a trombone-effect, or a dash of the cymbals and triangle; but his chief resource is a drastic cut, if he otherwise is not quite sure of his success. Him we must call a virtuoso of the Baton; and I fancy he's none too rare, especially in opera-houses. So we shall have to arm ourselves against him; and the best way will probably be to make sure of the real original, not second-hand virtuoso, to wit the *singer*.

Now the composer so thoroughly impregnates the Singer, that he streams from his throat as living tone. Here, one would think, no misunderstanding is possible: the Virtuoso has to pick here and there, all round him; he may [115] pick the wrong thing: but there, in the Singer, we sit with our melody itself. It will be a bad job, by all means, if we are not sitting in the right spot of him; he, too, has picked us up from outside: have we got down as far as his heart, or simply stuck in his throat? We were digging, for the jewel in the depths: are we caught in the toils of the gold-veins?

The human voice, as well, is an instrument; it is rare, and paid for dearly. How it is shaped, is the first care of the inquisitive public, and its next *how* it is played with: *what* it plays, is immaterial to the generality. The Singer knows better: for what he sings must be so formed, as to make it easy for him to play on his voice to great credit. How small, in comparison, is the heed the Virtuoso has to pay to *his* instrument: it stands ready-made; if it suffers harm, he gets it repaired. But this priceless, wondrously capricious instrument of the Voice? No man has quite found out its build. Write how you will, ye composers, but mind it is something the singer sings gladly! How are you to set about it? Why, go to concerts, or better still, to salons!—We don't want to write for these, but for the theatre, the Opera,—dramatic music.—Good! Then go to the Opera, and discover that you still are merely in the salon, the concert-room. Here, too, it is the Virtuoso with whom you must first come to terms. And this virtuoso, believe me, is more perilous than all the rest; for wherever you encounter him, he'll slip between your fingers.

Look at those most celebrated singers in the world: from whom would you learn, if not from the artists of our great Italian Opera, who are worshipped as positively superhuman beings, not only by Paris, but by every capital in the world? Here learn what really is the *art* of Song; from them the famous singers of the French Grand Opéra first learnt what singing means, and that it's no joke, as the good German scrape-throats (*Gaumen-Schreihälse*) dream when they think the thing done if their heart is in the right place, namely seated tight upon their stomach. There you also will meet the composers who understood how to write [116] for real singers: they knew that through these alone could they arrive at recognition, eh! existence; and as you see, they are there, doing well, nay, honoured and glorified. But you don't want to compose like these; your works shall be respected; it is from them you require an impression, not from the success of the throat-feats of the singers to whom those others owe their fortune?—Look a little closer: have these people no passion? Do they not tremble and heave, as well as lisp and gurgle? When they sing "*Ah! Tremate!*" it sounds a little different from your "*Zittre, feiger Bösewicht!*" Have you forgotten that "*Maledetta!*" at which the best-bred audience turned into a Methodist-meeting of niggers?—But to you it doesn't seem the genuine thing? You think it a pack of Effects, at which all reasonable men should laugh?

However, this also is art, and one these celebrated singers have carried very far. With the singing-voice. too, one may toy and juggle as one pleases; but the game must lastly be related to some passion, for one does not pass so altogether needlessly from rational talk to the decidedly much louder noise of singing. Ah! now you have it: the public wants an emotion it cannot get at home, like whist or dominoes. This, also, may have been quite otherwise at one time: great masters found great pupils among their singers; the tradition still lives of the wonderful things they brought to light together, and often is renewed by fresh experience.

Most certainly one knows and wills that Song should also work dramatically, and our singers therefore learn so thorough a command of Passion that it looks as if they never left it. And its use is quite reduced to rule: after cooing and chirping, an explosion makes a quite unparalleled effect; its not being an actual matter of fact, why! that is just what makes it art.

You still have a scruple, founded principally on your contempt for the sickly stuff those singers sing. Whence springs it? Precisely from the will of those singers, on whose behalf it is cobbled up. What in the world can a [117] true musician wish to have in common with this handiwork? But how would it stand if these fêted demigods of the Italian Opera were to undertake a veritable art-work? Can they truly catch fire? Can they bear the magic lightnings of that wonder-jewel's flash?

See: "Don Giovanni"! And really by Mozart! So reads the poster for to-day. Let us go to hear and see.

And strange things happened to me, when I actually heard "Don Juan" lately with the great Italians: it was a chaos of every sensation in which I was trundled to and fro; for I really found the perfect artist, but close beside him the absurdest virtuoso, who sent him to the wall. Glorious was *Grisi* as "Donna Anna" unsurpassable *Lablache* as "Leporello." The grandest, richest-gifted woman, inspired with but one thought: to be Mozart's own "Donna Anna": there all was warmth and tenderness, fire, passion, grief and woe. Oh! *she* knew that the buried miner still is living, and blessedly she fortified my own belief. But the silly soul consumed herself for Signor *Tamburini*, the world-most-famous barytone who sang and played "Don Juan": the whole evening through, the man could not rid himself of the log of wood that was tied to his legs with this fatal rôle. I had previously once heard him in an opera of Bellini's: there we had "*Tremate!*" "*Maledetta,*" and all the Passion of Italy rolled into one. Nothing of the sort to-day: the brief swift pieces whizzed past him like fugitive shadows; much airy Recitative all stiff and flat; a fish on the sands. But it seemed that the whole audience was stranded too: it remained so decorous that no one could trace a sign of its usual frenzy. Perhaps a worthy mark of homage to the true genius who swayed his wings to-night throughout the hall? We shall see. In any case the divine *Grisi* herself did not peculiarly entrance: nobody could quite appreciate her secret passion for this tiresome "Don Juan."—But there was *Lablache*, a colossus, and yet to-night a "Leporello" every inch. How did he manage it? The enormous bass-voice sang throughout in the clearest, most superb of tones, and yet it was more like a chattering, [118] babbling, saucy laughing, hare-footed scampering; once he absolutely piped with his voice, and yet it always sounded full, like distant church-bells. He neither stood nor walked, nor did he dance; but he was always in motion; one saw him here, there, everywhere, and yet he never fidgeted; always on the spot, before you knew it, wherever a fine sense of humour could scent out fun or frolic in the situation. *Lablache* was not applauded once in all this evening: that might be reasonable, a token of dramatic *goût* in the audience. But the latter seemed really annoyed that its authorised favourite, Madame *Persiani* (one's heart convulses at mere mention of that name!), was ill at ease in the music for "Zerlina." I perceived that one had quite prepared oneself to be charmed beyond all bounds with her, and whoever had heard her a short while before in the "*Elisire d'amore*" could not be gainsaid such a verification. But *Mozart* was decidedly to blame, that the charm refused to work to-night: more sand, for such a lively fish! Ah! what would not audience and *Persiani* have given to-day, had it been held decent to infuse a drop from that Elixir of Love! In effect, I gradually remarked that both sides were bent on an excess of decency: there reigned a unanimity which I was long in accounting for. Why, since to all appearance one was "classically" minded, did the magnificent and perfect execution of that glorious "Donna Anna" not carry everyone into that sterling ecstasy which seemed to be the only thing proposed to-day? Why, as in the strictest of senses one was ashamed of being carried away, had one come to a performance of "Don Juan" at all? Verily the whole evening

seemed a voluntary act of penance, imposed on oneself for some unknown reason: but to what end? Something must really be gained by it; for such a Paris audience will spend much, 'tis true, but always expects a return for its money, be it only a worthless one.

This riddle also solved itself: *Rubini fired off this night his famous trill from A to B!* The whole thing flashed [119] on me. How could I have expected much from poor "Don Ottavio," the so often mocked-at tenor-stopgap of Don Juan? Indeed I long felt truly sorry for the so unrivalledly adored *Rubini*, the wonder of all tenors, who on his side went quite crossly to his Mozart-sum. There he came, the sober, solid man, passionately dragged on by the arm by the divine "Donna Anna," and stood with ruffled peace of mind beside the corpse of his expected father-in-law, who now no more could breathe his blessing on a happy marriage. Some say that *Rubini* was once a tailor, and looks just like one; I should have credited him with more agility in that case: where he stood he stayed, and moved no further; for he could sing, too, without stirring a muscle; even his hand he brought but seldom to the region of his heart. This time his singing never touched him at all; he might fitly save his fairly aged voice for something better than to cry out words of comfort, already heard a thousand times, to his beloved. That I understood, thought the man sensible, and, as he took the same course throughout the opera whenever "Don Ottavio" was at hand, I fancied at last it was over, and still more anxiously inquired the meaning, the purpose of this extraordinary night of abstinence. Then slowly came a stir: unrest, sitting-up, shrewd glances, fan-play, all the symptoms of a sudden straining of attention in a cultured audience. "Ottavio" was left alone on the stage; I believed he was about to make an announcement, for he came right up to the prompter's box: but there he stayed, and listened without moving a feature to the orchestral prelude to his *B flat* aria. This ritornel seemed to last longer than usual; but that was a simple illusion: the singer was merely lisping out the first ten bars of his song so utterly inaudibly that, on my discovery that he really was giving himself the look of singing, I thought the genial man was playing a joke. Yet the audience kept a serious face; it knew what was coming; for at the eleventh bar *Rubini* let his F swell out with such sudden vehemence that the little reconducting [120] passage fell plump upon us like a thunderbolt, and died away again into a murmur with the twelfth. I could have laughed aloud, but the whole house was still as death: a muted orchestra, an inaudible tenor; the sweat stood on my brow. Something monstrous seemed in preparation: and truly the unhearable was now to be eclipsed by the unheard-of. The seventeenth bar arrived: here the singer has to hold an F for three bars long. What can one do with a simple F? *Rubini* only becomes divine on the high B flat: *there* must he get, if a night at the Italian Opera is to have any sense. And just as the trapezist swings his bout preliminary, so "Don Ottavio" mounts his three-barred F, two bars of which he gives in careful but pronounced crescendo, till at the third he snatches from the violins their trill on A, shakes it himself with waxing vehemence, and at the fourth bar sits in triumph on the high B flat, as if it were nothing; then with a brilliant roulade he plunges down again, before all eyes, into the noiseless. The end had come: anything that liked might happen now. Every demon was unchained, and not on the stage, as at close of the opera, but in the audience. The riddle was solved: this was the trick for which one had assembled, had borne two hours of total abstinence from every wonted operatic dainty, had pardoned Grisi and Lablache for taking such music in earnest, and felt richly rewarded by the coming-off of this one wondrous moment when *Rubini* leapt to B flat!

A German poet once assured me that, in spite of all, the French were the true "Greeks" of our era, and the Parisians in particular had something Athenian about them; for really it was they who had the keenest sense of "Form." This came back to me that evening: as a fact, this uncommonly elegant audience shewed not a spark of interest in the stuff of our "Don Juan"; to them it was plainly a mere lay-figure on which the drapery of unmixed Virtuosity had first to be hung, to give the music-work its formal right to existence. But *Rubini* alone [121] could

do this properly, and so it was easy to guess why just this cold and venerable being had become the darling of the Parisians, the chartered "idol" of all cultivated friends of Song. In their predilection for this virtuosic side of things they go so far as to give it their whole æsthetic interest, while their feeling for noble warmth, nay even for manifest beauty, is more and more amazingly cooling down. Without one genuine throb they saw and heard that noble *Grisi*, the splendid woman with the soulful voice: perhaps they fancy it too realistic. But *Rubini*, the broad-built Philistine with bushy whiskers; old, with a voice grown greasy, and afraid of over-taxing it: if *he* is ranked above all others, the charm can't reside in his substance, but purely in a spiritual Form. And this form is forced upon every singer in Paris: they all sing *à la* Rubini. The rule is: be inaudible for awhile, then suddenly alarm the audience by a husbanded explosion, and immediately afterwards relapse into an effect of the ventriloquist. Mons. *Duprez* already quite obeys it: often have I hunted for the substitute, hidden somewhere beneath the podium like the mother's voice trumpet in "Robert the Devil," that seemed to take the part of the ostensible singer at the prompter's box, who now wasn't making a sign. But that is "art." What do we block-heads know about it?—Taken all in all, that Italian performance of "Don Giovanni" has helped me to great consolation. There really are great artists among the virtuosi, or, to put it another way: even the virtuoso can be a great artist. Unfortunately they are so entangled with each other, that it is a sorrowful task to sift them out. That evening *Lablache* and the *Grisi* distressed me, while *Rubini* diverted me hugely. Is there something corruptive, then, in setting these great differences side by side? The human heart is so evil, and hebetude so very sweet! Take care how you play with the Devil! He'll come at last when you least expect him. That's what happened to Sig. Tamburini that evening, where he surely would never have dreamt it. Rubini had happily swung [122] himself up to his high B flat: he looked simpering down, and quite amiably upon the Devil. I thought to myself: God, if he'd only take that one!—

Presumptuous thought! The whole audience would have plunged to Hell after him.—

(To be continued in the next world!)



## Notes

### Note 1 on page 5

Under the title of "Du métier de Virtuose et de l'indépendance des Compositeurs: Fantaisie esthétique d'un musicien," this article appeared in the *Gazette Musicale* of Oct. 18, 1840; its French form, however, differs so greatly from the German of the *Ges. Schr.*, after the first page or two, that I reproduce it in its entirety on pages 123 *et seq.*—Tr.

### Note 2 on page 5

Otto Jahn, whose *Life of Mozart* appeared in 1856-59, with a second edition in 1867; he also wrote for the *Grenzboten* an exhaustive review of the Complete Edition of Beethoven's works, with biographical information, re-published in his *Collected Essays on Music* in 1868, and was collecting materials for a minute biography of Beethoven at the time of his death in 1869. So that this clause at anyrate is an interpolation of 1870-71, having probably been represented in the original German manuscript by a reference to Schindler's biography of Beethoven, which made its first appearance in 1840; one of Wagner's Letters from Paris of 1841 (to appear in Vol. VIII.) alludes at greater length to Schindler.—Tr.

### Note 3 on page 7

On April 20, 1840, Liszt had given a concert in the Salle Erard, playing Beethoven's Pastoral Symphony (for two hands), a fantasia on airs from *Lucia*, Schubert's *Serenade* and *Ave Maria*, and winding up with a *Galop Chromatique*. His *Robert le diable* fantasia would pretty certainly have figured also, if only as encore.—Tr.



[363]

## Summary

Fable of the magic jewel and the two poor miners—Mozart and Beethoven—succeeded by the gold-diggers (110). The composer's intention and its interpreters; after *himself* would come an executant endowed with some creative power and much affection; then the man who, no producer, will sink himself in the performance. But the public wants trick; Thalberg contrasted with Liszt, though even Liszt makes concessions (113). Conductor as virtuoso, with false tempi, added instruments, and cuts (114). Singers: surely here are the true artists, for the composer's music comes from *inside* them; but the human voice is an expensive instrument, and needs humouring; you'll have to write to please them. The Italians, see how they're glorified! Can they really catch fire at the wonder-stone? (117). "Don Giovanni" at the *Italiens*: Grisi and Lablache, true artists, make no effect; the whole audience strangely impassive; why this abstinence? Don Ottavio (Rubini) duller than ever; till at last the fans begin to stir, the audience wakes up, for—Rubini is about to do his trick: an inaudible tenor suddenly explodes, and lands on his high B flat. Take care how you play with the Devil (122).



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# *A Pilgrimage to Beethoven*

By Richard Wagner

Translated by William Ashton Ellis



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## Contents

About this Title .....	4
Prefatory Note .....	5
A Pilgrimage to Beethoven .....	7
Notes .....	19

## About this Title

### Source

*A Pilgrimage to Beethoven*  
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Notes are indicated using parenthesis, like (1).  
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[20]

## Prefatory Note

Shortly after the modest funeral of my friend R..., lately deceased in Paris, I had set to work and written the brief history of his sufferings in this glittering metropolis, in accordance with the dead man's wish, when among his papers—from which I propose to select a few complete articles in the sequel—there came into my hands the fond narration of his journey to Vienna and visit to Beethoven. There I found a wonderful agreement with what I already had jotted down. This decided me to print that fragment of his journal in front of my own account of his mournful end, since it deals with an earlier period of his life, and also is likely to wake a little prior interest in my departed friend.



[21]

## A Pilgrimage to Beethoven

(01)

WANT-AND-CARE, thou patron-goddess of the German musician, unless he happens to be Kapellmeister to a Court-theatre or the like, (02) —Want-and-care, thine be the name first lauded even in this reminiscence from my life! Ay, let me sing of thee, thou staunch companion of my life-time! Faithful hast thou been to me, and never left me; the smiles of Inconstance thou hast ever warded off, and shielded me from Fortune's scorching rays! In deepest shadow hast thou ever cloaked from me the empty baubles of this earth: have thanks for thy unwearying attachment! Yet, might it so be, prithee some day seek another favourite; for, purely out of curiosity, I fain would learn for once how life might fare *without* thee. At least, I beg thee, plague especially our political dreamers, the madmen who are breathless to [22] unite our Germany beneath *one* sceptre:—think on't, there then would be but one Court-theatre, one solitary Kapellmeister's post! What would become of my prospects, my only hopes; which, even as it is, but hover dim and shadowy before me—e'en now when German royal theatres exist in plenty? (03) But I perceive I am turning blasphemous. Forgive, my patron-goddess, the dastard wish just uttered! Thou know'st my heart, and how entirely I am thine, and shall remain thine, were there a thousand royal theatres in Germany. (04) Amen!

Without this daily prayer of mine I begin nothing, and therefore not the story of my pilgrimage to Beethoven!

In case this weighty document should get published after my death, however, I further deem needful to say who I am; without which information much therein might not be understood. Know then, world and testament-executor!

A middle-sized town of middle Germany is my birthplace. I'm not quite certain what I really was intended for; I only remember that one night I for the first time heard a symphony of Beethoven's performed, that it set me in a fever, I fell ill, and on my recovery had become a musician. This circumstance may haply account for the fact that, though in time I also made acquaintance with other beautiful music, I yet have loved, have honoured, worshipped Beethoven before all else. Henceforth I knew no other pleasure, than to plunge so deep into his genius that at last I fancied myself become a portion thereof; and as this tiniest portion, I began to respect myself, to come by higher thoughts and views — in brief, to develop into what sober people call an idiot. My madness, however, was of very good-humoured sort, and did no harm to any man; the bread [23] I ate, in this condition, was very dry, and the liquid that I drank most watery; for lesson-giving yields but poor returns, with us, O honoured world and testament-executor! (05)

Thus I lived for some time in my garret, till it occurred to me one day that the man whose creations I revered above all else was still *alive*. It passed my understanding, how I had never thought of that before. It had never struck me that Beethoven could exist, could be eating bread and breathing air, like one of us; but this Beethoven was living in Vienna for all that, and he too was a poor German musician!

My peace of mind was gone. My every thought became one wish: *to see Beethoven!* No Mussulman more devoutly longed to journey to the grave of his Prophet, than I to the lodging where Beethoven dwelt.

But how to set about the execution of my project? To Vienna was a long, long journey, and needed money; whilst I, poor devil, scarce earned enough to stave off hunger! So I must think of some exceptional means of finding the needful travelling-money. A few pianoforte-sonatas, which I had composed on the master's model, I carried to the publisher; in

a word or two the man made clear to me that I was a fool with my sonatas. He gave me the advice, however, that if I wanted to some day earn a dollar or so by my compositions, I should begin by making myself a little renommée by galops and pot-pourris.—I shuddered; but my yearning to see Beethoven gained the victory; I composed galops and pot-pourris, but for very shame I could never bring myself to cast one glance on Beethoven in all that time, for fear it should defile him.

To my misfortune, however, these earliest sacrifices of my innocence did not even bring me pay, for my publisher explained that I first must earn myself a little name. I shuddered again, and fell into despair. That despair brought forth some capital galops. I actually touched money for them, and at last believed I had amassed enough to be able to execute my plan. But two years [24] had elapsed, and all the time I feared that Beethoven might die before I had made my name by galops and pot-pourris. Thank God! he had survived the glitter of my name!—Saint Beethoven, forgive me that renommée; 'twas earned that I might see thee!

Joy! my goal was in sight. Who happier than I? I might strap my bundle and set out for Beethoven at once. A holy awe possessed me when I passed outside the gate and turned my footsteps southwards. Gladly would I have taken a seat in the diligence, not because I feared footsoreness—(what hardships would I not have cheerfully endured for such a goal!)—but since I should thus have reached Beethoven sooner. I had done too little for my fame as galop-composer, however, to be able to pay carriage-fare. So I bore all toils, and thought myself lucky to have got so far that they could take me to my goal. O what I pictured, what I dreamed! No lover, after years of separation, could be more happy at returning to his youthful love.

And so I came to fair Bohemia, the land of harpists and wayside singers. In a little town I found a troop of strolling musicians; they formed a tiny orchestra, composed of a 'cello, two violins, two horns, a clarinet and a flute; moreover there was a woman who played the harp, and two with lovely voices. They played dances and sang songs; folk gave them money and they journeyed on. In a beautiful shady place beside the highway I found them again; they had camped on the grass, and were taking their meal. I introduced myself by saying that I too was a travelling musician, and we soon became friends. As they played dance-music, I bashfully asked if they knew my galops also? God bless them! they had never heard of my galops. O what good news for me!

I inquired whether they played any other music than dances.

"To be sure," they answered, "but only for ourselves; not for gentlefolk."

They unpacked their sheets, and I caught sight of the [25] grand Septuor of Beethoven; astonished, I asked if they played that too?

"Why not?"—replied the eldest,—"Joseph has hurt his hand, and can't play the second violin to-day, or we'd be delighted to give it at once."

Beside myself, I snatched up Joseph's violin, promised to do my best to replace him, and we began the Septuor.

O rapture! Here on the slope of a Bohemian highway, in open air, Beethoven's Septuor played by dance-musicians with a purity, a precision, and a depth of feeling too seldom found among the highest virtuosi!—Great Beethoven, we brought thee a worthy offering.

We had just got to the Finale, when—the road bending up at this spot toward the hills—an elegant travelling-carriage drew slowly and noiselessly near, and stopped at last close by us. A marvellously tall and marvellously blond young man lay stretched full-length in the carriage; he listened to our music with tolerable attention, drew out a pocket-book, and made a few notes. Then he let drop a gold coin from the carriage, and drove away with a few words of English to his lackey; whence it dawned on me that he must be an Englishman.

This incident quite put us out; luckily we had finished our performance of the Septuor. I embraced my friends, and wanted to accompany them; but they told me they must leave the



high road here and strike across the fields, to get home to their native village for a while. Had it not been Beethoven himself who was awaiting me, I certainly would have kept them company. As it was, we bade each other a tender good-bye, and parted. Later it occurred to me that no one had picked up the Englishman's coin.—

Upon entering the nearest inn, to fortify my body, I found the Englishman seated at an ample meal. He eyed me up and down, and at last addressed me in passable German.

"Where are your colleagues?" he asked.

"Gone home," I replied.

"Just take out your violin, and play me something more," he continued, "here's money."

[26]

That annoyed me; I told him I neither played for money, nor had I any violin, and briefly explained how I had fallen in with those musicians.

"They were good musicians," put in the Englishman, "and the Symphony of Beethoven was very good, too."

Struck by this remark, I asked him if he practised music?

"Yes," he answered, "twice a week I play the flute, on Thursdays the French horn, and of a Sunday I compose."

That was a good deal, enough to astound me. In all my life I had never heard tell of travelling English musicians; I concluded that they must do very well, if they could afford to make their tours in such splendid equipages. I asked if he was a musician by profession?

For long I got no answer; finally he drawled out, that he had plenty of money.

My mistake was obvious to me now, for my question had plainly offended him. At a loss what to say, I devoured my simple meal in silence.

After another long inspection of me, the Englishman commenced afresh.

"Do you know Beethoven?"

I replied that I had never yet been in Vienna, but was on my way there to fulfil my dearest wish, to see the worshipped master.

"Where do you come from?" he asked.

"From L...."

"That's not so far! I've come from England, and also with the intention of seeing Beethoven. We both will make his acquaintance; he's a very famous composer."

What a wonderful coincidence!—I thought to myself. Mighty master, what divers kinds thou drawest to thee! On foot and on wheels they make their journey.—My Englishman interested me; but I avow I little envied him his equipage. To me it seemed as though my weary pilgrimage afoot were holier and more devout, and that its goal must bless me more than this proud gentleman who drove there in full state.

Then the postilion blew his horn; the Englishman drove [27] off, shouting back to me that he would see Beethoven before I did.

I scarce had trudged a few miles in his wake, when unexpectedly I encountered him again. It was on the high road. A wheel of his carriage had broken down; but in majestic ease he sat inside, with his valet mounted up behind him, notwithstanding that the vehicle was all askant. I learnt that they were waiting for the return of the postilion, who had run off to a somewhat distant village to fetch a blacksmith. As they had already been waiting a good long time, and as the valet spoke nothing but English, I decided to set off for the village myself, to hurry up smith and postilion. In fact I found the latter in a tavern, where spirits were relieving him of any particular care about the Englishman; however, I soon brought him back with the smith to the injured carriage. The damage was mended; the Englishman promised to announce me to Beethoven, and—drove away.

Judge my surprise, when I overtook him again on the high road next day! This time, however, no wheels were broken; drawn up in the middle of the road, he was tranquilly

reading a book, and seemed quite pleased to see me coming.

"I've been waiting a good many hours for you," he said, "as it occurred to me on this very spot that I did wrong in not inviting you to drive with me to Beethoven. Riding is much better than walking. Come into the carriage."

I was astonished again. For a moment I really hesitated whether I ought not to accept his invitation; but I soon remembered the vow I had made the previous day when I saw the Englishman rolling off; I had sworn, in any circumstances to pursue my pilgrimage on foot. I told him this openly. It was now the Englishman's turn to be astonished; he could not comprehend me. He repeated his offer, saying that he had already waited many hours expressly for me, notwithstanding his having been very much delayed at his sleeping-quarters through the time consumed in thoroughly repairing the broken wheel. I remained firm, and he drove off, wondering.

[28]

Candidly, I had a secret dislike of him; for I was falling prey to a vague foreboding that this Englishman would cause me serious trouble. Moreover his reverence for Beethoven, and his proposal to make his acquaintance, to me seemed more the idle whim of a wealthy coxcomb than the deep inner need of an enthusiastic soul. Therefore I preferred to avoid him, lest his company might desecrate my pious wish.

But, as if my destiny meant to school me for the dangerous association with this gentleman into which I was yet to fall, I met him again on the evening of that same day, halting before an inn, and, as it seemed, still waiting for me. For he sat with his back to the horses, looking down the road by which I came.

"Sir," he began, "I again have waited very many hours for you. Will you drive with me to Beethoven?"

This time my astonishment was mingled with a secret terror. I could only explain this striking obstinacy in the attempt to serve me, on the supposition that the Englishman, having noticed my growing antipathy for him, was bent on thrusting himself upon me for my destruction. With undisguised annoyance, I once more declined his offer. Then he insolently cried:

"Goddam, you little value Beethoven. *I shall soon see him.*" Post haste he flew away.—

And that was really the last time I was to meet this islander on my still lengthy road to Vienna. At last I trod Vienna's streets; the end of my pilgrimage was reached. With what feelings I entered this Mecca of my faith! All the toil and hardships of my weary journey were forgotten; I was at the goal, within the walls that circled Beethoven.

I was too deeply moved, to be able to think of carrying out my aim at once. True, the first thing I did was to inquire for Beethoven's dwelling, but merely in order to lodge myself close by. Almost opposite the house in which the master lived there happened to be a not too stylish hostelry; I engaged a little room on its fifth floor, [29] and there began preparing myself for the greatest event of my life, a visit to Beethoven.

After having rested two days, fasting and praying, but never casting another look on the city, I plucked up heart to leave my inn and march straight across to the house of marvels. I was told Herr Beethoven was not at home. That suited me quite well; for it gave me time to collect myself afresh. But when four times more throughout the day the same reply was given me, and with a certain increasing emphasis, I held that day for an unlucky one, and abandoned my visit in gloom.

As I was strolling back to the inn, my Englishman waved his hand to me from a first-floor window, with a fair amount of affability.

"Have you seen Beethoven?" he shouted.

"Not yet; he wasn't in," I answered, wondering at our fresh encounter. The Englishman met me on the stairs, and with remarkable friendliness insisted upon my entering his apartment.

"*Mein Herr*," he said, "I have seen you go to Beethoven's house five times to-day. I have been here a good many days, and have taken up my quarters in this villainous hotel so as to be near Beethoven. Believe me, it is most difficult to get a word with him; the gentleman is full of crotchets. At first I went six times a-day to his house, and each time was turned away. Now I get up very early, and sit at my window till late in the evening, to see when Beethoven goes out. But the gentleman seems *never* to go out."

"So you think Beethoven was at home to-day, as well, and had me sent away?" I cried aghast.

"Exactly; you and I have each been dismissed. And to me it is very annoying, for I didn't come here to make Vienna's acquaintance, but Beethoven's."

That was very sad news for me. Nevertheless I tried my luck again on the following day; but once more in vain,—the gates of heaven were closed against me.

My Englishman, who kept constant watch on my fruitless attempts from his window, had now gained positive [30] information that Beethoven's apartments did not face the street. He was very irritating, but unboundedly persevering. My patience, on the contrary, was wellnigh exhausted, for I had more reason than he; a week had gradually slipped by, without my reaching my goal, and the returns from my galops allowed a by no means lengthy stay in Vienna. Little by little I began to despair.

I poured my griefs into my landlord's ear. He smiled, and promised to tell me the cause of my bad fortune if I would undertake not to betray it to the Englishman. Suspecting my unlucky star, I took the stipulated vow.

"You see," said the worthy host, "quite a number of Englishmen come here, to lie in wait for Herr von Beethoven. This annoys Herr von Beethoven very much, and he is so enraged by the push of these gentry that he has made it clean impossible for any stranger to gain admittance to him. He's a singular gentleman, and one must forgive him. But it's very good business for my inn, which is generally packed with English, whom the difficulty of getting a word with Herr Beethoven compels to be my guests for longer than they otherwise would. However, as you promise not to scare away my customers, I hope to find a means of smuggling you to Herr Beethoven."

This was very edifying; I could not reach my goal because, poor devil, I was taken for an Englishman. So ho! my fears were verified; the Englishman was my perdition! At first I thought of quitting the inn, since it was certain that everyone who lodged there was considered an Englishman at Beethoven's house, and for that reason I also was under the ban. However, the landlord's promise, to find me an opportunity of seeing and speaking with Beethoven, held me back. Meanwhile the Englishman, whom I now detested from the bottom of my heart, had been practising all kinds of intrigues and bribery, yet all without result.

Thus several fruitless days slipped by again, while the revenue from my galops was visibly dwindling, when at last the landlord confided to me that I could not possibly miss Beethoven if I would go to a certain beer-garden, [31] which the composer was in the habit of visiting almost every day at the same hour. At like time my mentor gave me such unmistakable directions as to the master's personal appearance, that I could not fail to recognise him. My spirits revived, and I resolved not to defer my fortune to the morrow. It was impossible for me to meet Beethoven on his going out, as he always left his house by a back-door; so there remained nothing but the beer-garden.

Alas! I sought the master there in vain on that and the two succeeding days. Finally, on the fourth, as I was turning my steps towards the fateful garden at the stated hour, to my despair I noticed that the Englishman was cautiously and carefully following me at a distance. The wretch, posted at his eternal window, had not let it escape him that I went out every day at a certain time in the same direction; struck by this, and guessing that I had found some means of tracking Beethoven, he had decided to reap his profit from my supposed discovery. He told

me all this with the calmest impudence, declaring at the same time that he meant to follow wherever I went. In vain were all my efforts to deceive him and make him believe that I was only going to refresh myself in a common beer-garden, far too unfashionable to be frequented by gentlemen of his quality: he remained unshaken, and I could only curse my fate. At last I tried impoliteness, and sought to get rid of him by abuse; but, far from letting it provoke him, he contented himself with a placid smile. His fixed idea was to see Beethoven; nothing else troubled him.

And in truth I was this day, at last, to look on the face of great Beethoven for the first time. Nothing can depict my emotion, and my fury too, as, sitting by side of my gentleman, I saw a man approach whose looks and bearing completely answered the description my host had given me of the master's exterior. The long blue overcoat, the tumbled shock of grey hair; and then the features, the expression of the face,—exactly what a good portrait had long left hovering before my mental eye. There could be no mistake: at the first glance I had recognised him! With [32] short, quick steps, he passed us; awe and veneration held me chained.

Not one of my movements was lost on the Englishman; with avid eyes he watched the newcomer, who withdrew into the farthest corner of the as yet deserted garden, gave his order for wine, and remained for a while in an attitude of meditation. My throbbing heart cried out: 'Tis he! For some moments I clean forgot my neighbour, and watched with eager eye and speechless transport the man whose genius was autocrat of all my thoughts and feelings since ever I had learnt to think and feel. Involuntarily I began muttering to myself, and fell into a sort of monologue, which closed with the but too meaning words:

*"Beethoven, it is thou, then, whom I see?"*

Nothing escaped my dreadful neighbour, who, leaning over to me, had listened with bated breath to my aside. From the depths of my ecstasy I was startled by the words:

*"Yes! this gentleman is Beethoven. Come, let us present ourselves to him at once!"*

In utter alarm and irritation, I held the cursed English man back by the elbow.

"What are you doing?" I cried, "Do you want to compromise us—in this place—so entirely without regard for manners?"

"Oh!" he answered, "it's a capital opportunity; we shall not easily find a better."

With that he drew a kind of notebook from his pocket, and tried to make direct for the man in the blue overcoat. Beside myself, I clutched the idiot's coat-tails, and thundered at him, "Are you possessed with a devil?"

This scene had attracted the stranger's attention. He appeared to have formed a painful guess that he was the subject of our agitation, and, hastily emptying his glass, he rose to go. No sooner had the Englishman remarked this, than he tore himself from my grasp with such violence that he left one of his coat-tails in my hand, and threw himself across Beethoven's path. The master sought to avoid him; but the good-for-nothing stepped in front, made a superfine [33] bow in the latest English fashion, and addressed him as follows:

"I have the honour to present myself to the much renowned composer and very estimable gentleman, Herr Beethoven."

He had no need to add more, for at his very first words, Beethoven, after casting a glance at myself, had sprung on one side and vanished from the garden as quick as lightning. Nevertheless the irrepressible Briton was on the point of running after the fugitive, when I seized his remaining coat-tail in a storm of indignation. Somewhat surprised, he stopped, and bellowed at me:

"Goddam! this gentleman is worthy to be an Englishman! He's a great man, and no mistake, and I shall lose no time in making his acquaintance."

I was petrified; this ghastly adventure had crushed my last hope of seeing my heart's fondest wish e'er fulfilled.

It was manifest, in fact, that henceforth every attempt to approach Beethoven in an ordinary way had been made completely futile for me. In the utterly threadbare state of my finances I now had only to decide whether I should set out at once for home, with my labour lost, or take one final desperate step to reach my goal. The first alternative sent a shudder to the very bottom of my soul. Who, so near the doors of the highest shrine, could see them shut for ever without falling into annihilation?

Ere thus abandoning my soul's salvation, I still would venture on one forlorn hope. But *what* step, what road should I take? For long I could think of nothing coherent. Alas! my brain was paralysed; nothing presented itself to my overwrought imagination, save the memory of what I had to suffer when I held the coat-tail of that terrible Englishman in my hand. Beethoven's side-glance at my unhappy self, in this fearful catastrophe, had not escaped me; I felt what that glance had meant; he had taken me for an Englishman!

What was to be done, to lay the master's suspicion? Everything depended on letting him know that I was a [34] simple German soul, brimful of earthly poverty but over-earthly enthusiasm.

So at last I decided to pour out my heart upon paper. And this I did. I wrote; briefly narrating the history of my life, how I had become a musician, how I worshipped him, how I once had come by the wish to know him in person, how I had spent two years in making a name as galop-composer, how I had begun and ended my pilgrimage, what sufferings the Englishman had brought upon me, and what a terrible plight my present was. As my heart grew sensibly lighter with this recital of my woes, the comfortable feeling led me to a certain tone of familiarity; I wove into my letter quite frank and fairly strong reproaches of the master's unjust treatment of my wretched self. Finally I closed the letter in genuine inspiration; sparks flew before my eyes when I wrote the address: "*An Herrn Ludwig van Beethoven.*" I only stayed to breathe a silent prayer, and delivered the letter with my own hand at Beethoven's house.

Returning to my hotel in the highest spirits—great heavens! what brought the dreaded Englishman again before my eyes? From his window he had spied my latest move, as well; in my face he had read the joy of hope, and that sufficed to place me in his power once more. In effect he stopped me on the steps with the question: "Good news? When do we see Beethoven?"

"Never, never"!—I cried in despair—"You will never see Beethoven again, in all your life. Leave me, wretch, we have nothing in common!"

"We have much in common," he coolly rejoined, "where is my coat-tail, sir? Who authorised you to forcibly deprive me of it? Don't you know that you are to blame for Beethoven's behaviour to me? How could he think it *convenable* to have anything to do with a gentleman wearing only one coat-tail?"

Furious at seeing the blame thrown back upon myself, I shouted: "Sir, your coat-tail shall be restored to you; may you keep it as a shameful memento of how you insulted [35] the great Beethoven, and hurled a poor musician to his doom! Farewell; may we never meet again!"

He tried to detain and pacify me, assuring me that he had plenty more coats in the best condition; would I only tell him when Beethoven meant to receive us?—But I rushed upstairs to my fifth-floor attic; there I locked myself in, and waited for Beethoven's answer.

How can I ever describe what took place inside, *around* me, when the next hour actually brought me a scrap of music-paper, on which stood hurriedly written: "Excuse me, Herr R..., if I beg you not to call on me until tomorrow morning, as I am busy preparing a packet of music for the post to-day. To-morrow I shall expect you.—Beethoven."

My first action was to fall on my knees and thank Heaven for this exceptional mercy; my eyes grew dim with scalding tears. At last, however, my feelings found vent in the wildest joy; I sprang up, and round my tiny room I danced like a lunatic. I'm not quite sure what it



was I danced; I only remember that to my utter shame I suddenly became aware that I was whistling one of my galops to it. (06) This mortifying discovery restored me to my senses. I left my garret, the inn, and, drunk with joy I rushed into the streets of Vienna.

My God, my woes had made me clean forget that I was in Vienna! How delighted I was with the merry ways of the dwellers in this empire-city. I was in a state of exaltation, and saw everything through coloured spectacles. The somewhat shallow sensuousness of the Viennese seemed the freshness of warm life to me; their volatile and none too discriminating love of pleasure I took for frank and natural sensibility to all things beautiful. I ran my eye down the [36] five stage-posters for the day. Heavens! On one of them I saw: *Fidelio*, an opera by Beethoven.

To the theatre I must go, however shrunk the profits from my galops. As I entered the pit, the overture began. It was the revised edition of the opera, which, to the honour of the penetrating public of Vienna, had failed under its earlier title, *Leonora*. (07) I had never yet heard the opera in this its second form; judge, then, my delight at making here my first acquaintance with the glorious new! A very young maiden played the rôle of Leonora; but youthful as she was, this singer seemed already wedded to Beethoven's genius. With what a glow, what poetry, what depth of effect, did she portray this extraordinary woman! She was called *Wilhelmine Schröder*. (08) Hers is the high distinction of having set open this work of Beethoven to the German public; for that evening I saw the superficial Viennese themselves aroused to the strongest enthusiasm. For my own part, the heavens were opened to me; I was transported, and adored the genius who had led me—like Florestan—from night and fetters into light and freedom. (09)

I could not sleep that night. What I had just experienced, and what was in store for me next day, were too great and overpowering for me to calmly weave into a dream. I lay awake, building castles in the air and preparing myself for Beethoven's presence.—At last the new day dawned; impatiently I waited till the seemly hour for a morning visit;—it struck, and I set forth. The weightiest [37] event of my life stood before me: I trembled at the thought.

However, I had yet one fearful trial to pass through.

Leaning against the wall of Beethoven's house, as cool as a cucumber, my evil spirit waited for me—the Englishman!—The monster, after suborning all the world, had ended by bribing our landlord; the latter had read the open note from Beethoven before myself, and betrayed its contents to the Briton.

A cold sweat came over me at the sight; all poesy, all heavenly exaltation vanished: once more I was in *his* power.

"Come," began the caitiff, "let us introduce ourselves to Beethoven."

At first I thought of helping myself with a lie, and pretending that I was not on the road to Beethoven at all. But he cut the ground from under my feet by telling me with the greatest candour how he had got to the back of my secret, and declaring that he had no intention of leaving me till we both returned from Beethoven. I tried soft words, to move him from his purpose—in vain! I flew into a rage—in vain! At last I hoped to outwit him by swiftness of foot; like an arrow I darted up the steps, and tore at the bell like a maniac. But ere the door was opened the gentleman was by my side, tugging at the tail of my coat and saying: "You can't escape me. I've a right to your coat-tail, and shall hold on to it till we are standing before Beethoven."

Infuriated, I turned about and tried to loose myself; ay, I felt tempted to defend myself against this insolent son of Britain by deeds of violence:—then the door was opened. The old serving-maid appeared, shewed a wry face at our queer position, and made to promptly shut the door again. In my agony I shouted out my name, and protested that I had been invited by Herr Beethoven himself.

The old lady was still hesitating, for the look of the Englishman seemed to fill her with a

proper apprehension, when Beethoven himself, as luck would have it, appeared [38] at the door of his study. Seizing the moment, I stepped quickly in, and moved towards the master to tender my apologies. At like time, however, I dragged the Englishman behind me, as he still was holding me tight. He carried out his threat, and never released me till we both were standing before Beethoven. I made my bow, and stammered out my name; although, of course, he did not hear it, the master seemed to guess that it was I who had written him. He bade me enter his room; without troubling himself at Beethoven's astonished glance, my companion slipped in after me.

Here was I—in the sanctuary; and yet the hideous perplexity into which the awful Briton had plunged me, robbed me of all that sense of well-being so requisite for due enjoyment of my fortune. Nor was Beethoven's outward appearance itself at all calculated to fill one with a sense of ease. He was clad in somewhat untidy house-clothes, with a red woollen scarf wrapped round his waist; long, bushy grey hair hung in disorder from his head, and his gloomy, forbidding expression by no means tended to reassure me. We took our seats at a table strewn with pens and paper.

An uncomfortable feeling held us tongue-tied. It was only too evident that Beethoven was displeased at receiving two instead of one.

At last he began, in grating tones: "You come from L...?" I was about to reply, when he stopped me; passing me a sheet of paper and a pencil, he added: "Please write; I cannot hear."

I knew of Beethoven's deafness, and had prepared myself for it. Nevertheless it was like a stab through my heart when I heard his hoarse and broken words, "I cannot hear." To stand joyless and poor in the world; to know no uplifting but in the might of Tone, and yet to be forced to say, "I cannot hear!" That moment gave me the key to Beethoven's exterior, the deep furrows on his cheeks, the sombre dejection of his look, the set defiance of his lips—*he heard not!*

[39]

Distraught, and scarcely knowing what, I wrote down an apology, with a brief account of the circumstances that had made me appear in the Englishman's company. Meanwhile the latter sat silently and calmly contemplating Beethoven, who, as soon as he had read my lines, turned rather sharply to him and asked what he might want.

"I have the honour —" commenced the Briton.

"I don't understand you!" cried Beethoven, hastily interrupting him; "I cannot hear, nor can I speak much. Please write down what you want of me."

The Englishman placidly reflected for a moment, then drew an elaborate music-case from his pocket, and said to me: "Very good. You write: 'I beg Herr Beethoven to look through my composition; if any passage does not please him, will he have the kindness to set a cross against it.'"

I wrote down his request, word for word, in the hope of getting rid of him at last. And so it happened. After Beethoven had read, he laid the Englishman's composition on the table with a peculiar smile, nodded his head, and said, "I will send it."

With this my gentleman was mighty pleased; he rose, made an extra-superfine bow, and took his leave. I drew a deep breath:—he was gone.

Now for the first time did I feel myself within the sanctuary. Even Beethoven's features visibly brightened; he looked at me quietly for an instant, then began:

"The Briton has caused you much annoyance? Take comfort from mine; these travelling Englishmen have plagued me wellnigh out of my life. To-day they come to stare at a poor musician, to-morrow at a rare wild beast. I am truly grieved at having confounded you with them.—You wrote me that you liked my compositions. I'm glad of that, for nowadays I count but little on folk being pleased with my things."

This confidential tone soon removed my last embarrassment; a thrill of joy ran through me

at these simple words. I wrote that I certainly was not the only one [40] imbued with such glowing enthusiasm for every creation of his; that I wished nothing more ardently than to be able to secure for my father-town, for instance, the happiness of seeing him. in its midst for once; that he then would convince himself what an effect his works produced on the entire public there.

"I can quite believe," answered Beethoven, "that my compositions find more favour in Northern Germany. The Viennese annoy me often; they hear too much bad stuff each day, ever to be disposed to take an earnest thing in earnest."

I ventured to dispute this, instancing the performance of "Fidelio" I had attended on the previous evening, which the Viennese public had greeted with the most demonstrative enthusiasm.

"H'm, h'm!" muttered the master. "Fidelio! But I know the little mites are clapping their hands to-day out of pure conceit, for they fancy that in revising this opera I merely followed their own advice. So they want to pay me for my trouble, and cry bravo! 'Tis a good-natured folk, and not too learned; I had rather be with them, than with sober people.—Do you like Fidelio now?"

I described the impression made on me by last night's performance, and remarked that the whole had splendidly gained by the added pieces.

"Irk some work!" rejoined Beethoven. "I am no opera-composer; at least, I know no theatre in the world for which I should care to write another opera! Were I to make an opera after my own heart, everyone would run away from it; for it would have none of your arias, duets, trios, and all the stuff they patch up operas with to-day; and what I should set in their place no singer would sing, and no audience listen to. They all know nothing but gaudy lies, glittering nonsense, and sugared tedium. Who ever wrote a true musical drama, would be taken for a fool; and so indeed he would be, if he didn't keep such a thing to himself, but wanted to set it before these people."

[41]

"And how must one go to work," I hotly urged, "to bring such a musical drama about?"

"As Shakespeare did, when he wrote his plays," was the almost passionate answer. Then he went on: "He who has to stitch all kinds of pretty things for ladies with passable voices to get *bravi* and hand-claps, had better become a Parisian lady's-tailor, not a dramatic composer.—For my part, I never was made for such fal-lals. Oh, I know quite well that the clever ones say I am good enough at instrumental music, but should never be at home in vocal. They are perfectly right, since vocal music for them means nothing but operatic music; and from being at home in that nonsense, preserve me heaven!"

I here ventured to ask whether he really believed that anyone, after hearing his "Adelaide," would dare to deny him the most brilliant calling as a vocal composer too?

"Eh!" he replied after a little pause,— "Adelaide and the like are but trifles after all, and come seasonably enough to professional virtuosi as a fresh opportunity for letting off their fireworks. But why should not vocal music, as much as instrumental, form a grand and serious genre, and its execution meet with as much respect from the feather-brained warblers as I demand from an orchestra for one of my symphonies? (10) The human voice is not to be gainsaid. Nay, it is a far more beautiful and nobler organ of tone, than any instrument in the orchestra. Could not one employ it with just the same freedom as these? What entirely new results one would gain from such a procedure! For the very character that naturally distinguishes the voice of man from the mechanical instrument would have to be given especial prominence, and that would lead to the most manifold combinations. The instruments represent the rudimentary organs of Creation and Nature; what they express can never be clearly defined or put into words, for they reproduce the primitive feelings themselves, those feelings which issued from the chaos of the first Creation, [42] when maybe there was not as



yet one human being to take them up into his heart. 'Tis quite otherwise with the genius of the human voice; that represents the heart of man and its sharp-cut individual emotion. Its character is consequently restricted, but definite and clear. Now, let us bring these two elements together, and unite them! Let us set the wild, unfettered elemental feelings, represented by the instruments, in contact with the clear and definite emotion of the human heart, as represented by the voice of man. The advent of this second element will calm and smooth the conflict of those primal feelings, will give their waves a definite, united course; whilst the human heart itself, taking up into it those primordial feelings, will be immeasurably reinforced and widened, equipped to feel with perfect clearness its earlier indefinite presage of the Highest, transformed thereby to godlike consciousness." (11)

Here Beethoven paused for a few moments; as if exhausted. Then he continued with a gentle sigh: "To be sure, in the attempt to solve this problem one lights on many an obstacle; to let men sing, one must give them words. Yet who could frame in words *that* poesy which needs must form the basis of such a union of all elements? The poem must necessarily limp behind, for words are organs all too weak for such a task.—You soon will make acquaintance with a new composition of mine, which will remind you of what I just have touched on. It is a symphony with choruses. I will ask you to observe how hard I found it, to get over the incompetence of Poetry to render thorough aid. At last I decided upon using our Schiller's beautiful hymn 'To Joy'; in any case it is a noble and inspiring poem, but far from speaking *that* which, certainly in this connection, no verses in the world could say."

To this day I scarce can grasp my happiness at thus being helped by Beethoven himself to a full understanding [43] of his titanic Last Symphony, which then at most was finished, but known as yet to no man. I conveyed to him my fervent thanks for this rare condescension. At the same time I expressed the delightful surprise it had been to me, to hear that we might look forward to the appearance of a new great work of his composition. Tears had welled into my eyes,—I could have gone down on my knees to him.

Beethoven seemed to remark my agitation. Half mournfully, half roguishly, he looked into my face and said: "You might take my part, when my new work is discussed. Remember me: for the clever ones will think I am out of my senses; at least, that is what they will cry. But perhaps you see, Herr R., that I am not quite a madman yet, though unhappy enough to make me one.—People want me to write according to *their* ideas of what is good and beautiful; they never reflect that I, a poor deaf man, must have my very own ideas,—that it would be impossible for me to write otherwise than I feel. And that I cannot think and feel their beautiful affairs," he added in irony, "is just what makes out my misfortune!"

With that he rose, and paced the room with short, quick steps. Stirred to my inmost heart as I was, I stood up too;—I could feel myself trembling. It would have been impossible for me to pursue the conversation either by pantomimic signs or writing. I was conscious also that the point had been reached when my visit might become a burden to the master. To *write* a farewell word of heartfelt thanks, seemed too matter-of-fact; so I contented myself with seizing my hat, approaching Beethoven, and letting him read in my eyes what was passing within me.

He seemed to understand. "You are going?" he asked. "Shall you remain in Vienna awhile?"

I wrote that my journey had no other object than to gain his personal acquaintance; since he had honoured me with so unusual a reception, I was overjoyed to view my goal as reached, and should start for home again next day.

Smiling, he replied: "You wrote me, in what manner [44] you had procured the money for this journey.—You ought to stop in Vienna and write galops,—that sort of ware is much valued here."

I declared that I had done with all that, as I now knew nothing worth a similar sacrifice.

"Well, well," he said, "one never knows! Old fool that I am, I should have done better, myself, to write galops; the way I have gone, I shall always famish. A pleasant journey,"—he added—"think of me, and let that console you in all your troubles."

My eyes full of tears, I was about to withdraw, when he called to me: "Stay, we must polish off the musical Englishman! Let's see where to put the crosses!"

He snatched up the Briton's music-case, and smilingly skimmed its contents; then he carefully put it in order again, wrapped it in a sheet of paper, took a thick scoring-pen, and drew a huge cross from one end of the cover to the other. Whereupon he handed it to me with the words: "Kindly give the happy man his masterwork! He's an ass, and yet I envy him his long ears!—Farewell, dear friend, and hold me dear!"

And so he dismissed me. With staggering steps I left his chamber and the house.



At the hotel I found the Englishman's servant packing away his master's trunks in the travelling-carriage. So his goal, also, was reached; I could but admit that *he*, too, had proved his endurance. I ran up to my room, and likewise made ready to commence my homeward march on the morrow. A fit of laughter seized me when I looked at the cross on the cover of the Englishman's composition. That cross, however, was a souvenir of Beethoven, and I grudged it to the evil genius of my pilgrimage. My decision was quickly taken. I removed the cover, hunted out my galops, and clapped them in this damning shroud. To the Englishman I sent his composition wrapperless, accompanying it with a little note in which I told him [45] that Beethoven envied him and had declared he didn't know where to set a cross.

As I was leaving the inn, I saw my wretched comrade mount into his carriage.

"Good-bye," he cried. "You have done me a great service. I am glad to have made Beethoven's acquaintance.—Will you come with me to Italy?"

"What would you there?"—I asked in reply.

"I wish to know Mr. Rossini, as he is a very famous composer."

"Good luck!"—called I: "I know Beethoven, and that's enough for my lifetime!"

We parted. I cast one longing glance at Beethoven's house, and turned to the north, uplifted in heart and ennobled.

## Notes

### Note 01 on page 7

This imaginary story originally appeared in the *Revue et Gazette Musicale de Paris* for Nov. 19, 22 and 29, and Dec. 3, 1840, with the title "Une visite à Beethoven: épisode de la vie d'un musicien allemand." Its German original, "Eine Pilgerfahrt zu Beethoven," first appeared in Nos. 181-86 of the Dresden *Abend-Zeitung*, July 30 to August 5, 1841, under the heading, "Zwei Epochen aus dem Leben eines deutschen Musikers" ("Two epochs from the life of a German musician," applying to the present article and its immediate successor) and with the additional sub-title "Aus den Papieren eines wirklich verstorbenen Musikers" ("From the papers of an actually deceased musician"). With that German version of 1841 the text in the *Gesammelte Schriften* agrees entirely, saving for two or three minute emendations of style and the omission of a tiny clause (p. 32 *inf.*) describing Beethoven as sitting "with his hands crossed over his stick" ("*die Hände über seinen Stock gelehnt*"). The prefatory note, [on the opposite page](#), also appeared in the *Abend-Zeitung* (but not in the *Gazette*), with exception of the few words between the dashes.—Tr.

### Note 02 on page 7

From "unless" to "like" does not appear in the French.—Tr.

### Note 03 on page 7

These two sentences are absent from the French.—Tr.

### Note 04 on page 7

"Were there a thousand royal theatres in Germany" is also absent from the French, and presumably was an addition made in 1841. On the other hand, instead of the two next short paragraphs there appeared, "L'adoption de cette prière quotidienne doit vous dire assez que je suis musicien et que L'Allemagne est ma patrie."—Tr.

### Note 05 on page 7

From "O honoured" to "executor," of course, is also absent from the French.—Tr.

### Note 06 on page 14

In the French the last part of this sentence ran: "Je m'interrompis subitement en entendant quelqu'un qui semblait m'accompagner en sifflant l'air d'un de mes galops." This reference to supernatural presences is significant, as Richard Wagner's favourite author, in early life, was the fantastic E. A. Hoffmann. The invisible whistler of 1840 is represented in 1841 by the "around me" of a previous sentence, which does not appear in the *Gazette*.—Tr.

### Note 07 on page 14

Between this and the succeeding sentence there appeared in the French: "On ne peut nier, à la vérité, que l'ouvrage n'ait beaucoup gagné à son remaniement; mais cela vient surtout de ce que l'auteur du second libretto offrit au musicien plus d'occasions de développer son brillant génie; *Fidelio* possède d'ailleurs en propre ses admirables finales et plusieurs autres morceaux d'élite. Je ne connaissais du reste que l'opéra primitif."—Tr.

[Note 08 on page 14](#)

In the French this was followed by: "Qui ne connaît aujourd'hui la réputation européenne de la cantatrice qui porte maintenant le double nom de Schröder-Devrient?"—In 1871 Frau Schröder-Devrient had been dead eleven years; her praises are constantly sung in the master's prose-works, especially at the close of *Actors and Singers* (Vol. V.).—Tr.

[Note 09 on page 14](#)

This sentence is simply represented in the French by "Pour ma part, j'étais ravi au troisième ciel."—Tr.

[Note 10 on page 16](#)

From "and its execution," to the end of the sentence, did not appear in the French.—Tr.

[Note 11 on page 17](#)

In the French the last clause of this sentence presents a slight shade of difference, perhaps due to the translator, "Alors le cœur humain s'ouvrant à ces émotions complexes, agrandi et dilaté par ces pressentiments infinis et délicieux, accueillera avec ivresse, avec conviction, cette espèce de révélation intime d'un monde surnaturel."—Tr.

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# *On the Overture*

By Richard Wagner

Translated by William Ashton Ellis



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Edition 1.0

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## Contents

About this Title .....	4
Translator's Note .....	5
On the Overture .....	7
Notes .....	13

## About this Title

### Source

*On the Overture*

By Richard Wagner

Translated by William Ashton Ellis

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Richard Wagner's Prose Works

Volume 7

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*Über die Ouvertüre*

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### Reading Information

This title contains 4764 words.

Estimated reading time between 14 and 24 minutes.

Notes are indicated using parenthesis, like (1).

Page numbers of the original source are indicated using square-bracketed parentheses, like [62].



[152]

## Translator's Note

The following article originally appeared in the *Gazette Musicale* of January 10, 14 and 17, 1841 under the title "De L'Ouverture." The few variants between the French and German forms I have noted *in loco*.



[153]

## On the Overture

IN earlier days a prologue preceded the play: it would appear that one had not the hardihood to snatch the spectator from his daily life and set him at one blow in presence of an ideal world; it seemed more prudent to pave the way by an introduction whose character already belonged to the sphere of art he was to enter. This Prologue addressed itself to the spectator's imagination, invoked its aid in compassing the proposed illusion, and supplied a brief account of events supposed to have taken place before, with a summary of the action about to be represented. When the whole play was set to music, as happened in Opera, it would have been more consistent to get this prologue sung as well; instead thereof one opened the performance with a mere orchestral prelude, which in those days could not fully answer the original purpose of the prologue, since purely instrumental music was not sufficiently matured as yet to give due character to such a task. These pieces of music appear to have had no other object than to tell the audience that singing was the order of the day. Were the weakness of the instrumental music of that epoch not in itself abundant explanation of the nature of these early overtures, one perhaps might suppose a deliberate objection to imitate the older prologue, as its sobering and undramatic tendency had been recognised; whichever way, one thing is certain—the Overture was employed as a mere conventional bridge, not viewed as a really characteristic prelude to the drama.

A step in advance was taken when the general character of the piece itself, whether sad or merry, was hinted in its overture. (01) But how little these musical introductions could [154] be regarded as real preparers of the needful frame of mind, we may see by Händel's overture to his *Messiah*, whose author we should have to consider most incompetent, had we to assume that he actually meant this tone-piece as an Introduction in the newer sense. In fact, the free development of the Overture, as a specifically characteristic piece of music, was still gainsaid to those composers whose means of lengthening a purely instrumental movement were confined to the resources of the art of counterpoint; the complex system of the "Fugue"—the only one at command for the purpose—had to help them out with their prologues to an oratorio or opera, and the hearer was left to decipher the fitting mood from "dux" and "comes," augmentation and diminution, inversion and stretto.

The great inelasticity of this form appears to have suggested the need of employing and developing the so-called "symphony," a conglomerate of diverse types. Here two sections in quicker time were severed by another of slower motion and soft expression, whereby the main opposing characters of the drama might at least be broadly indicated. It only needed the genius of a Mozart, to create at once a master-model in this form, such as we possess in his symphony to the "Seraglio"; it is impossible to hear [155] this piece performed with spirit in the theatre, without obtaining a very definite notion of the character of the drama which it introduces. However, there was still a certain helplessness in this division into three sections, with a separate tempo and character for each; and the question arose, how to weld the isolated fractions to a single undivided whole, whose movement should be sustained by just the contrast of those differing characteristic motives.

The creators of this perfect form of overture were Gluck and Mozart.

Even Gluck still contented himself at times with the mere introductory piece of older form, simply conducting to the first scene of the opera—as in *Iphigenia in Tauris*—with which this musical prelude at anyrate stood mostly in a very apt relation. Though even in his best of overtures the master retained this character of an introduction to the first scene, and therefore gave no independent close, he succeeded at last in stamping on this instrumental number itself the character of the whole succeeding drama. Gluck's most perfect masterpiece of this

description is the overture to *Iphigenia in Aulis*. Here the master draws the main ideas of the drama in powerful outline, and with an almost visual distinctness. We shall return to this glorious work, by it to demonstrate that form of overture which should rank as the most excellent.

After Gluck, it was Mozart that gave the Overture its true significance. Without toiling to express what music neither can nor should express, the details and entanglements of the plot itself—which the earlier Prologue had endeavoured to set forth—with the eye of a veritable poet he grasped the drama's leading thought, stripped it of all material episodes and accidentiæ, and reproduced it in the transfiguring light of music as a passion personified in tones, a counterpart both warranting that thought itself and explaining the whole dramatic action to the hearer's feeling. On the other hand, there thus arose an entirely independent tone-piece, no matter whether its outward structure [156] was attached to the first scene of the opera or not. To most of his overtures, however, Mozart also gave the perfect musical close, for instance, those to the *Magic Flute*, to *Figaro* and *Tito*; so that it might surprise us to find him denying it to the most important of them all, the overture to *Don Giovanni* were we not obliged to recognise in the marvellously thrilling passage of the last bars of this overture into the first scene a peculiarly pregnant termination to the introductory tone-piece of a *Don Giovanni*.

The Overture thus shaped by Gluck and Mozart became the property of Cherubini and Beethoven. Whilst Cherubini (02) on the whole remained faithful to the inherited type, Beethoven ended by departing from it in the very boldest manner. The former's overtures are poetical sketches of the drama's main idea, seized in its broadest features and musically reproduced in unity, concision and distinctness; this notwithstanding, we see by his overture to the *Water-Carrier (Deux Journées)* how even the dénouement of a stirring plot could be expressed in that form without damage to the unity of the artistic setting. Beethoven's overture to *Fidelio* (in E major) is unmistakably related to that of the *Water-Carrier*, just as the two masters approach the nearest to each other in these operas themselves. That Beethoven's impetuous genius in truth felt cramped by the limits thus drawn around it, however, we plainly perceive in several of his other overtures, above all in that to *Leonora*. Beethoven, never having obtained a fit occasion for the unfolding of his stupendous dramatic instinct, here seems to compensate himself by throwing the whole weight of his genius upon this field left open to his fancy, from pure tone-images to shape according to his inmost will the drama that he craved for; that drama which, freed from all the petty make-weights of the timid playwright, in this overture he let spring anew from a kernel magnified to [157] giant size. One can assign no other origin to this wondrous overture to *Leonora*: far from giving us a mere musical introduction to the drama, it sets that drama more complete and movingly before us than ever happens in the broken action which ensues. This work is no longer an overture, but the mightiest of dramas in itself.

Weber cast his overtures in Beethoven's and Cherubini's mould, and though he never dared the giddy height attained by Beethoven with his *Leonora*-overture, he happily pursued the dramatic path without wandering to a toilsome painting-in of minor details in the plot. Even where his fancy bade him embrace more subsidiary motives in his musical picture than were quite consistent with the form of overture expressly chosen, he at least knew always to preserve the dramatic unity of his conception; so that we may credit him with the invention of a new class, that of the "dramatic fantasia," whereof the overture to *Oberon* is one of the finest examples. This piece has had great influence upon the tendency of more recent composers; in it Weber took a step that, with the truly poetic swing of his musical inventiveness, as we have seen, could but attain a brilliant success. Nevertheless it is not to be denied that the independence of purely-musical production must suffer by subordination to a dramatic thought, if that thought is not grasped in one broad trait congenial to the spirit of

Music, and that the composer who would fain depict the details of an action cannot carry out his dramatic theme without breaking his musical work to atoms. As I propose to return to this point, for the moment I will content myself with the remark that the manner last described led necessarily downwards, inclining more and more towards the class of pieces branded with the name of "potpourri."

In a certain sense the history of this Potpourri begins with Spontini's overture to the *Vestale*: whatever fine and dazzling qualities one must grant this interesting tone-piece, it already shews traces of that loose and shallow mode of working-out which has become so prevalent in the operatic overtures of most composers of our age. To [158] forecast an opera's dramatic course, it was no longer a question of forming a new artistic concept of the whole, its complement and counterpart in music; no, one culled from here and there the most effective passages, less for their importance than their showiness, and strung them bit by bit together in a banal sequence. This was an arrangement often even still more tellingly effected by potpourri-concoctors working on the same material later. (03) Highly admired are the overture to *Guillaume Tell* by Rossini and even that to *Zampa* by Herold, plainly because the public here is much amused, and also, perhaps, because original invention is undeniably displayed, especially in the former: but a truly artistic ideal is no longer aimed at in such works, and they belong, not to the history of Art, but to that of theatrical entertainment.—

Having briefly reviewed the development of the Overture, and cited the most brilliant products of that class of music, the question remains: To what mode of conception and working-out shall we give the palm of fitness, and consequently of correctness? If we wish to avoid the appearance of exclusiveness, an entirely definite answer is no easy matter. Two unexampled masterpieces lie before us, to which we must accord a like sublimity both of intention and elaboration, yet whose actual treatment and conception are totally distinct. I mean the overtures to *Don Giovanni* and *Leonora*. In the first the drama's leading thought is given in two main features; their invention, as their motion, belongs quite unmistakably to nothing but the realm of Music. A passionate burst of arrogance stands in conflict with the threatenings of an implacable over-power, to which that Arrogance seems destined to submit: had Mozart but added the fearful termination of the story, the tone-work would have lacked nothing to be [159] regarded as a finished whole, a drama in itself; but the master lets us merely guess the combat's outcome: in that wonderful transition to the first scene he makes both hostile elements bow beneath a higher will, and nothing but a wailing sigh breathes o'er the place of battle. Clearly and plainly as is the opera's tragic principle depicted in this overture, you shall not find in all the musical tissue one single spot that could in any way be brought into direct relation with the action's course; unless it were its introduction, borrowed from the ghost-scene—though in that case we should have expected to meet the allusion at the piece's end, and not at its beginning. (04) No: the main body of the overture is free from any reminiscence of the opera, and whilst the hearer is fascinated by the purely-musical development of the themes, his mind is given to the changing fortunes of a deadly duel, albeit he never expects to see it set before him in dramatic guise.

Now, that is just the radical distinction of this overture from that to *Leonora*; while listening to the latter, we can never ward off that feeling of breathless apprehension with which we watch the progress of a moving action taking place before our eyes. In this mighty tone-piecer as said before, Beethoven has given us a musical drama, a drama founded on a playwright's piece, and not the mere sketch of one of its main ideas, or even a purely preparatory introduction to the acted play: but a drama, be it said, in the most ideal meaning of the term. (05) The master's method, so far as we here can follow it, lets us divine the depth of that inner need which must have ruled him in conceiving this titanic overture: his object was to condense to its noblest unity the *one* sublime action which the dramatist had weakened. and delayed by paltry details in order to spin out his tale; to give it a new, an ideal

motion, fed solely by its inmost springs. This action is the deed of a staunch and loving heart, fired by the one sublime desire to descend as angel of salvation into the very pit of death. [160] One sole idea pervades the work: the freedom brought by a jubilant angel of light to suffering manhood. We are plunged into a gloomy dungeon; no beam of day strikes through to us; night's awful silence breaks only to the moans, the sighs, of a soul that longs from its deepest depths for freedom, freedom. As through a cranny letting in the sun's last ray, a yearning glance peers down: 'tis the glance of the angel that feels the pure air of heavenly freedom a crushing load the while its breath cannot be shared by you, close-pent within the prison's walls. Then a swift resolve inspires it, to tear down all the barriers hedging you from heaven's light: higher, higher and ever fuller swells the soul, its might redoubled by the blest resolve; 'tis the evangel of redemption to the world. (06) Yet this angel is but a loving woman, its strength the puny strength of suffering humanity itself: it battles alike with hostile hindrances and its own weakness, and threatens to succumb. But the suprahuman Idea, which ever lights its soul anew, lends finally the superhuman force: one last, one utmost strain of every fibre, and the last bolt falls, the latest stone is heaved away. In floods the sunlight streams into the dungeon: "Freedom! Freedom!" shouts the redemptrix; "Freedom! Godlike freedom!" the redeemed.

This is the *Leonora*-overture, *Beethoven's* poem. Here all is alive with unceasing dramatic progress, from the first yearning thought to the execution of a vast resolve.

But this work is unique of its kind, and no longer can be called an Overture, if we mean by that term a tone-piece destined for performance before the opening of a drama, merely to prepare the mind for the action's character. On the other hand, as we now are dealing, not with the musical artwork in general, but with the true vocation of the Overture in particular, this overture to *Leonora* cannot be accepted as a model, for it offers us in all-too-warm anticipation the whole completed drama in itself; consequently it [161] either is un-understood or misconstrued by the hearer not already well-acquainted with the story, or, if thoroughly understood, it undoubtedly weakens the enjoyment of the explicit dramatic artwork it precedes.

Let us therefore leave this prodigious tone-work on one side, and return to the overture to *Don Giovanni*. Here we found the drama's leading thought delineated in a purely musical, but not in a dramatic shape. We unhesitatingly declare this mode of conception and treatment to be the fittest for such pieces, above all because the musician here withdraws himself from all temptation to outstep the bounds of his specific art, i.e., to sacrifice his freedom. Moreover, the musician thus most surely attains the Overture's artistic end, to act as nothing but an ideal prologue, translating us to that higher sphere in which to prepare our minds for Drama. Yet this in nowise prevents the musical conception of the drama's main idea being given most distinct expression, and brought to a definite close; on the contrary, the overture should form a musical artwork entire in itself.

In this sense we can point to no clearer and finer model for the Overture than that to Gluck's *Iphigenia in Aulis*, and will therefore endeavour to illustrate by this particular work our general conclusions as to the best method of conceiving an overture. (07)

Here again, as in the overture to *Don Giovanni*, it is a contest, or at least an opposition of two hostile elements, that gives the piece its movement. The plot of *Iphigenia* itself includes this pair of elements. The army of Greek heroes is assembled for a great enterprise in common: under the inspiring thought of its execution, each separate human interest pales before this one great interest of the gathered mass. Now this is confronted with the special interest of preserving a human life, the rescue of a tender maiden. With what truth and distinctness of characterisation has Gluck as though personified these opposites in music! In what sublime proportion has he measured out the two, and [162] set them face to face in such a mode as of itself to give the conflict, and accordingly the motion! In the ponderous unison of the iron



principal motive we recognise at once the mass united by a single interest; whilst in the subsequent theme that other interest, that interest of the tender suffering individual, forthwith arrests our sympathy. This solitary contrast is pursued throughout the piece, and gives into our hands the broad idea of old Greek Tragedy, for it fills us with terror and pity in turn. Thus we attain that lofty state of excitation which prepares us for a drama whose highest meaning is revealed to us already, and thus are we led to understand the ensuing action in this meaning.

May this glorious example serve as rule in future for the framing of all overtures, and demonstrate withal how much a grand simplicity in the choice of musical motives enables the musician to evoke the swiftest and the plainest understanding of his never so unwonted aims. How hard, nay, how impossible would a like success have been to Gluck himself, had he sorted out all kinds of minor motives to signal this or that occurrence of the drama's, and worked them in between these eloquent chief-motives of his overture; they here would either have been swallowed up, or have distracted and misled the attention of the musical hearer. Yet, despite this simplicity in the means employed, to sustain a longer movement it is permissible to give wider play to the drama's influence over the development of the main musical thought in its overture. Not that one should admit a motion such as dramatic action alone can supply, but merely such as lies within the nature of instrumental music. The motion of two musical themes assembled in one piece will always evince a certain leaning, a struggle toward a culmination; then a sure conclusion seems indispensable for our appeasement, as our feeling longs to cast its final vote on one or other side. As a similar combat of principles first lends to a drama its higher life, it is thus by no means contrary to the purity of music's means of effect to give its contest of tone-motives a termination in keeping [163] with the drama's tendency. Cherubini, Beethoven, and Weber, were led by such a feeling in the conception of most of their overtures; in that to the *Water-Carrier* this crisis is painted with the greatest definition; the overtures to *Fidelio*, *Egmont*, *Coriolanus*, with that to the *Freischütz*, quite clearly express the issue of a strenuous fight. The point of contact with the dramatic story would accordingly reside in the character of the two main themes, as also in the motion given to them by their musical working-out. This working-out, on the other hand, would always have to spring from the purely musical import of those themes; never should it take account of the sequence of events in the drama itself, since such a course would at once destroy the sole effectual character of a work of Tone.

In this conception of the Overture, then, the highest task would be to reproduce the characteristic idea of the drama by the intrinsic means of independent music, and to bring it to a conclusion in anticipatory agreement with the solution of the problem in the scenic play. For this purpose the composer will do well to weave into the characteristic motives of his overture certain melismic or rhythmic features which acquire importance in the dramatic action itself: not features strewn by accident amid the action, but such as intervene therein with determinant weight, and thus can lend the very overture an individual stamp—demarcations, as it were, of the special domain on which a human action runs its course. Obviously these features must be in themselves of purely musical nature, therefore such as bring the influence of the sound-world to bear upon our human life; whereof I may cite as excellent instances the trombones of the Priests in the *Magic Flute*, the trumpet-signal in *Leonora*, and the call of the magic horn in *Oberon*. (08) These musical motives from the opera, [164] employed at a decisive moment in its overture, here serve as actual points of contact of the dramatic with the musical motion, and thus effect a happy individualisation of the tone-piece, which in any case is meant as a suggestive introduction to one particular dramatic story.

Now if we allow that the working-out of purely musical elements in the overture should in so far accord with the dramatic idea that even its issue should harmonise with the dénouement of the scenic action, the question arises whether the actual development of the drama or the changes in the fortunes of its principal personages should exert an immediate influence on the

conception of the overture, and above all on the characteristics of its close. Certainly we could only adjudge that influence a most conditional exercise; for we have found that a purely musical conception may well embrace the drama's leading thoughts, but not the individual fate of single persons. In a very weighty sense the composer plays the part of a philosopher, who seizes nothing but the *idea* in all phenomena; his business, as that of the great poet, lies solely with the victory of an Idea; the tragic downfall of the hero, taken personally, does not affect him. (09) From this point of view, he holds aloof from the entanglements of individual destinies and their attendant haps: he triumphs, though the hero goes under. Nowhere is this sublimest conception more finely expressed than in the overture to *Egmont*, whose closing section raises the tragic idea of the drama to its highest dignity, and at like time gives us a perfect piece of music of enthralling power. (10) On the other hand I know but one exception, of the first rank, [165] which seems to flatly contradict the axiom just laid down: the overture to *Coriolanus*. If we view this mighty tragic artwork closer, however, the different conception of the subject is explained by the tragic idea here lying solely in the hero's personal fate. An inconciliabile pride, an overbearing, overpowering, and overweening nature can only rouse our sympathy through its collapse: to make us forebode this, horror-struck see it arrive, was the master's incommensurable work. (11) But with this overture, as with that to *Leonora*, Beethoven stands alone and past all imitation: the lessons to be drawn from creations of such high originality can only be of fruit for us when we combine them with the legacies of other masters. In the triad, *Gluck*, *Mozart*, and *Beethoven* we have the lodestar whose pure light will always lead us rightly even on the most bewildering paths of art; but who should single *one* of them for his exclusive star, of a surety would fall into the maze from which but one has ever issued victor, that one Inimitable.



## Notes

### Note 01 on page 7

From here to the end of this paragraph the French differs a little: "Ces ouvertures étaient courtes, consistaient souvent en un seul mouvement lent, et l'on peut retrouver les exemples les plus frappants de ce mode de construction, quoique étendu considérablement, dans les oratorios de Haendel. Le libre développement de l'ouverture fut paralysé par cette fâcheuse circonstance qui arrêta les compositeurs dans les premières périodes de la musique, savoir l'ignorance où us étaient des procédés sûrs par lesquels on peut, l'aide des hardiesses légères et des successions de fraîches nuances, étendre un morceau de musique de longue haleine. Cela ne leur était guère possible qu'au moyen des finesses du contre-point, la seule invention de ces temps qui permit un compositeur de dévider un thème unique en un morceau de quelque durée. On écrivait des fugues instrumentales; on se perdait dans les détours de ces curieuses monstruosité de la spéculation artistique. La monotonie et l'uniformité furent les produits nets de cette direction. Ces sortes de compositions étaient surtout impuissantes exprimer un caractère déterminé et individuel. Haendel lui-même ne paraît pas s'être aucunement soucie que l'ouverture s'accordât exactement avec la pièce ou l'oratorio. Il est par exemple impossible de pressentir par l'ouverture du *Messie* qu'elle doit servir d'introduction une création aussi fortement caractérisée, aussi sublime que l'est ce célèbre oratorio."—Tr.

### Note 02 on page 8

The French had: "Il faut seulement remarquer que dans la manière de voir de ces deux grands compositeurs, qui ont du reste de nombreux points d'affinité, Cherubini" etc.—Tr.

### Note 03 on page 9

This sentence was represented in the French by: "Pour un public auquel on demandait ainsi moins de réflexion profonde, la séduction de cette manière de procéder consistait tout la fois dans un choix habile des motifs les plus brillants et dans le mouvement agréable, dans le papillotage varié qui résultait de leur arrangement. C'est ainsi que naquirent l'ouverture si admirée de *Guillaume Tell*" etc.—Tr.

### Note 04 on page 9

From "unless" to the end of the sentence, did not appear in the French.—Tr.

### Note 05 on page 9

This last clause was absent from the French.—Tr.

### Note 06 on page 10

From "higher" to the end of the sentence was represented in the French by: "Semblable à un second messie, il veut accomplir l'oeuvre de rédemption."—Tr.

### Note 07 on page 10

See also the special article upon this work in Vol. III.—Tr.

### Note 08 on page 11

In the French this sentence took the following form: "Mais on ne doit jamais perdre de vue qu'ils doivent être de source entièrement musicale et non emprunter leur signification aux paroles qui les accompagnent dans l'opéra. Le compositeur commettrait alors la faute de se sacrifier lui et l'indépendance de son art devant l'intervention d'un art étranger. Il faut, dis-je, que ces éléments soient de nature purement musicale, et je citerai comme exemples" etc.—Tr.

[Note 09 on page 12](#)

In the French this sentence ran: "Le compositeur ne doit résoudre que la question supérieure et philosophique de l'ouvrage, et exprimer immédiatement le sentiment qui s'y répand et le parcourt dans toute son étendue comme un fil conducteur. Ce sentiment arrive-t-il dans le drame à un dénouement victorieux, le compositeur n'a guère à s'occuper que de savoir si le héros de la pièce remporte cette victoire, ou s'il éprouve une fin tragique."—Tr.

[Note 10 on page 12](#)

The French contained the following additional passage: "Le destin élève [?-enlève] ici par un coup décisif le héros au triomphe. Les derniers accents de l'ouverture qui se montent à la sublimité de l'apothéose, rendent parfaitement l'idée dramatique, tout en formant l'œuvre la plus musicale. Le combat des deux éléments nous entraîne ici impérieusement, même dans la musique, à un dénouement nécessaire, et il est surtout de l'essence de la musique de faire apparaître cette conclusion comme un fait consolateur."—Tr.

[Note 11 on page 12](#)

The second half of this sentence is not represented in the French.—Tr.

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*An End in Paris*

By Richard Wagner

Translated by William Ashton Ellis



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## Contents

About this Title .....	4
An End in Paris .....	5
Notes .....	17

## About this Title

### Source

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[46]

## An End in Paris

(1)

WE have just laid him in the earth. It was cold and dreary weather, and few there were of us. The Englishman, too, was there: he wants to erect a memorial to him; 'twere better he paid our friend's debts.

It was a mournful ceremony. The first keen wind of winter cut the breath; no one could speak, and the funeral oration was omitted. Nevertheless I would have you to know that he whom we buried was a good man and a brave German musician. He had a tender heart, and wept whenever men hurt the poor horses in the streets of Paris. He was mild of temper, and never put out when the street-urchins jostled him off the narrow pavement. Unfortunately he had a sensitive artistic conscience, was ambitious, with no talent for intrigue, and once in his youth had seen Beethoven, which so turned his head that he could never set it straight in Paris.

It is more than a year since I one day saw a magnificent Newfoundland dog taking a bath in the fountain of the Palais Royal. Lover of dogs that I am, I watched the splendid animal; it left the basin at last, and answered the call of a man who at first attracted my attention merely [47] as the owner of this dog. The man was by no means so fair to look on, as his dog; he was clean, but dressed in God knows what provincial fashion. Yet his features arrested me; soon I distinctly remembered having seen them before; my interest in the dog relaxed; I fell into the arms of my old friend R . . . .

We were delighted at meeting again; he was quite overcome with emotion. I took him to the *Café de la Rotonde*; I drank tea with rum,—he, coffee with tears.

"But what on earth," I began at last, "can have brought you to Paris—you, the musical hermit of the fifth floor of a provincial back-street?"

"My friend," he replied, "call it the over-earthly passion for experiencing what life is like on a Parisian sixth, or the worldly longing to see if I might not be able in time to descend to the second, or even the first,—I myself am not quite certain which. At anyrate I couldn't resist the temptation of tearing myself from the squalor of the German provinces, and, without tasting the far sublimer pinches of a German capital, throwing myself straight upon the centre of the world, where the arts of every nation stream together to one focus; where the artists of each race find recognition; and where I hope for satisfaction of the tiny morsel of ambition that Heaven—apparently in inadvertence—has set in my own breast."

"A very natural desire," I interposed; "I forgive it you, though in yourself it astonishes me. But first let us see what means you have of pursuing your ambitious purpose. How much money a-year can you draw?—Oh, don't be alarmed! I know that you were a poor devil, and it is self-evident that there can be no question of a settled income. Yet I am bound to suppose either that you have won money in a lottery, or enjoy the protection of some rich patron or relative to such a degree that you are provided for ten years, at least, with a passable allowance."

"That is how you foolish people look at things!" replied my friend, with a good-humoured smile, after recovering from his first alarm. "Such are the prosaic details that [48] rise at once before your eyes as chief concern. Nothing of the kind, my dear friend! I am poor; in a few weeks, in fact, without a sou. But what of that? I have been told that I have talent;—was I to choose *Tunis* as the place for pushing it? No; I have come to *Paris*! Here I shall soon find out if folk deceived me when they credited me with talent, or if I really own any. In the first case I shall be quickly disenchanted, and, clear about myself, shall journey back contented to my garret-home; in the second case I shall get my talent more speedily and better paid in Paris,

than anywhere else in the world.—Nay, don't smile, but try to raise some serious objection!"

"Best of friends," I resumed, "I smile no longer; for I now am possessed by a mournful compassion for yourself and your splendid dog. I know that, however frugal yourself, your magnificent beast will eat a good deal. You intend to feed both him and yourself by your talent? That's grand; for self-preservation is the first duty, and human feeling for the beasts a second and the noblest. But tell me: how are you going to bring your talent to market? What plans have you made? Let me hear them."

"It is well that you ask for my plans," was the answer. "You shall have a long list of them; for, look you, I am rich in plans. In the first place, I think of an opera: I am provided with finished works, with half-finished, and with any number of sketches for all kinds—both grand and comic opera.—Don't interrupt!—I'm well aware that these are things that will not march too quickly, and merely consider them as the basis of my efforts. Though I dare not hope to see one of my operas produced at once, at least I may be permitted to assume that I shall soon be satisfied as to whether the Directors will accept my compositions or not—For shame, friend—you're smiling again! Don't speak! I know what you were going to say, and will answer it at once.—I am convinced that I shall have to contend with difficulties of all sorts here also; but in what will they consist? Certainly in nothing but competition. The most eminent talents converge here, and offer their [49] works for acceptance; managers are therefore compelled to exercise a searching scrutiny: a line must be drawn against bunglers, and none but works of exceptional merit can attain the honour of selection. Good! I have prepared myself for this examination, and ask for no distinction without deserving it. But what else have I to fear, beyond that competition? Am I to believe that here, too, one 'needs the wonted tactics of servility? (2) Here in Paris, the capital of free France, where a Press exists that unmask and makes impossible all humbug and abuse; where merit alone can win the plaudits of a great incorruptible public?"

"The public?" I interrupted; "there you are right. I also am of opinion that, with your talent, you well might succeed, had you only the public to deal with. But as to the easiness of reaching that public you hugely err, poor friend! It is not the contest of talents, in which you will have to engage, but the contest of reputations and personal interests. If you are sure of firm and influential patronage, by all means venture on the fight; but without this, and without money,—give up, for you're sure to go under, without so much as being noticed. It will be no question of commending your work or talent (a favour unparalleled!), but what will be considered is the name you bear. Seeing that no renommée attaches to that name as yet, and it is to be found on no list of the moneyed, you and your talent remain in obscurity." (3)

[50]

My objection failed to produce the intended effect on my enthusiastic friend. He turned peevish, but refused to believe me. I went on to ask what he thought of doing as a preliminary, to earn some little renommée in another direction, which perchance might be of more assistance to the later execution of his soaring plan.

This seemed to dispel his ill-humour.

"Hear, then!" he answered: "You know that I have always had a great preference for instrumental music. Here, in Paris, where a regular cult of our great Beethoven appears to have been instituted, I have reason to hope that his fellow-countryman and most ardent worshipper will easily find entrance when he undertakes to give the public a hearing of his own attempts, however feeble, to follow in the footsteps of that unattainable example."

"Excuse me for cutting you short," I interposed. "Beethoven is getting deified,—in that you are right; but mind you, it is his name, his renown that is deified. That name, prefixed to a work not unworthy of the great master, will suffice to secure its beauties instant recognition. By any other name, however, the selfsame work will never gain the attention of the directorate of a concert-establishment for even its most brilliant passages." (4)



"You lie!"—my friend rather hastily exclaimed. "Your purpose is becoming clear, to systematically discourage me, and scare me from the path of fame. You shall not succeed, however!"

"I know you," I replied, "and forgive you. Nevertheless I must add that in your last proposal you will stumble on the very same difficulties, which rear themselves against every artist without renown, however great his talent, in a place where people have far too little time to bother themselves [51] about hidden treasures. Both plans are modes of fortifying an already established position, and gaining profit from it, but by no manner of means of creating one. People will either pay no heed at all to your application for a performance of your instrumental compositions, or—if your works are composed in that daring individual spirit which you so much admire in Beethoven, they will find them turgid and indigestible, and send you home with a flea in your ears." (5)

"But," my friend put in, "what if I have already circumvented such a reproach? What if I have written works expressly to aid me with a more superficial public, and adorned them with those favourite modern effects which I abhor from the bottom of my heart, but are not despised by even considerable artists as preliminary bids for favour?"

"They will give you to understand," I replied, "that your work is too light, too shallow, to be brought to the public ear between the creations of a Beethoven and a Musard."

"Dear man!" my friend exclaimed, "That's good indeed! At last I see that you are making fun of me. You always were a wag!"

My friend stamped his foot in his laughter, and trod so forcibly upon the lordly paw of his splendid dog that the latter yelped aloud, then licked his master's hand, and seemed to humbly beg him to take no more of my objections as jokes.

"You see," I said, "it is not always well to take earnestness as jest. Passing that by, come tell me what other plans could have moved you to exchange your modest home for this monster of a Paris. In what other way, if you will please me by provisionally abandoning the two you have spoken of, do you propose to get the requisite renown?"

"So be it," was the reply I received. "In spite of your singular love of contradiction, I will proceed with the narration of my plans. Nothing, as I know, is more popular in Paris drawing-rooms than those charming sentimental [52] ballads and romances, which are just to the taste of the French people, and some of which have even emigrated from our fatherland. Think of Franz Schubert's songs, and the vogue they enjoy here! This is a genre that admirably suits my inclination; I feel capable of turning out something worth noticing there. I will get my songs sung, and perchance I may share the good luck which has fallen to so many—namely of attracting by these unpretentious works the attention of some Director of the Opéra who may happen to be present, so that he honours me with the commission for an opera."

The dog again uttered a violent howl. This time it was I who, in an agony of laughter, had trodden on the paw of the excellent beast.

"What!" I cried, "is it possible that you seriously entertain such an idiotic idea? What on earth could entitle you—"

"My God!" the enthusiast broke in; "have not similar cases happened often enough? Must I bring you the newspapers in which I have repeatedly read how such-and-such a Director was so carried away by the hearing of a Romance, how such-and-such a famous poet was suddenly so impressed by the talent of a totally unknown composer, that both of them at once united in the resolve, the one to supply him with a libretto, the other to produce the opera to-be-written to order?"

"Ah! is that it?" I sighed, filled with sudden sadness; "Press notices have led astray your simple childlike head? Dear friend, of all you come across in that way take note of but a third, and even of that don't trust four quarters! Our Directors have something else to do, than to

hear Romances sung and fall into raptures over them. (6) And, admitting that to be a feasible mode of gaining a reputation,—by whom would you get your Romances sung?"

"By whom else," was the rejoinder, "than the same world-famed singers who so often, and with the greatest [53] amiability, have made it their duty to introduce the productions of unknown or downtrod talent to the public? Or am I here again deceived by lying paragraphs?"

"My friend," I replied, "God knows how far I am from wishing to deny that noble hearts of this kind beat below the throats of our foremost singers, male and female. But to attain the honour of such patronage, one needs at least some other essentials. You can easily imagine what competition goes on here also, and that it requires an infinitely influential recommendation, to make it dawn upon those noble hearts that one in truth is an unknown genius.—Poor friend, have you no other plans?"

Here my companion took leave of his senses. In a violent passion—though with some regard for his dog—he turned away from me. "And had I as many more plans as the sands of the sea," he shouted, "you should not hear a single one of them. Go! You are my enemy!—Yet know, inexorable man, you shall not triumph over me! Tell me—the last question I will put to you—tell me, wretch, how then have the myriads commenced, who first became known, and finally famous, in Paris?"

"Ask one of them," I replied, in somewhat ruffled composure, "and perhaps you may discover. For my part, I don't know."

"Here, here!" called the infatuate to his wonderful dog. "You are my friend no longer,"—he volleyed at me,—"*Your cold derision shall not see me blench. In one year from now—remember this—in one year from now every gamin shall be able to tell you where I live, or you shall hear from me whither to come—to see me die. Farewell!*"

He whistled shrilly to his dog,—a discord. He and his superb companion had vanished like a lightning-flash. Nowhere could I overtake them.



It was only after a few days, when all my efforts to ascertain the dwelling of my friend had proved futile, that I began to realise the wrong I had done in not shewing more consideration for the peculiarities of so profoundly [54] enthusiastic a nature, than unfortunately had been the case with my tart, perhaps exaggerated, objections to his very innocent plans. In the good intention of frightening him from his projects as much as possible, because I did not deem him fitted either by his outward or his inward condition to successfully pursue so intricate a path of fame—in this good intention, I repeat, I had not reckoned with the fact that I had by no means to do with one of those tractable and easily-persuaded minds, but with a man whose deep belief in the divine and irrefutable truth of his art had reached such a pitch of fanaticism, that it had turned one of the gentlest of tempers to a dogged obstinacy.

For sure—I could but think—he now is wandering through the streets of Paris with the firm conviction that he has only to decide which of his plans he shall realise first, in order to figure at once on one of those advertisements that, so to say, make out the vista of his scheme. For sure, he is giving an old beggar a sou to-day, with the determination to make it a napoleon a few months hence.

The more the time slipped by since our last parting, and the more fruitless became my endeavours to unearth my friend, so much the more—I admit my weakness—was I infected by the confidence he then displayed; so that I allowed myself at last to search the advertisements of musical performances, now and again, with eyes astrain to spy out in some corner of them the name of my assured enthusiast. Yes, the smaller my success in these attempts at discovery, the more—remarkable to say!—was my friendly interest allied with an ever-increasing belief that my friend might not impossibly succeed; that perchance even now, while I was seeking anxiously for him, his peculiar talent might already have been discovered

and acknowledged by some important person or other; that perhaps he had received one of those commissions whose happy execution brings fortune, honour, and God knows what beside. And why not? Is there no star that rules the fate of each inspired soul? May not his be a star of luck? [55] Cannot miracles take place, to expose a hidden treasure?—The very fact of my nowhere seeing the announcement of a single Romance, an Overture or the like, under the name of my friend, made me believe that he had gone straight for his grandest plan, and, despising those lesser adits to publicity, was already up to his eyes in work on an opera of at least five acts. True, I had never come across him in the haunts of artists, or met a creature who knew anything about him; still, as my own access to those sanctuaries was but rare, 'twas conceivable that it was *I* who was the unfortunate that could not penetrate where his fame maybe already shone with dazzling rays.—

You may easily guess that it needed a considerable time, for my first sad interest in my friend to change into a confident belief in his good star. It was only through all the phases of fear, of doubt, of hope, that I could arrive at this point. Such things are somewhat slow with me, and so it happened that almost a year had already elapsed since the day when I met a splendid dog and an enthusiastic friend in the Palais Royal. Meanwhile some wonderfully lucky speculations had brought me to so unprecedented a pitch of prosperity that, like Polycrates of old, I began to fear an imminent reverse. I fancied I could plainly see it coming; thus it was in a gloomy frame of mind, that I one day took my customary walk in the Champs Élysées.

'Twas autumn; the leaves fell withered from the trees, and the sky hung grey with age above the Elysian pomp below. But, nothing daunted, Punch renewed his old mad onslaught; in blind rage that scoundrel constantly defied the justice of this world, until at last the dæmonic principle, so forcibly depicted by the chained-up cat, with super-human claws laid low the saucy bounce of the presumptuous mortal.

Close by my side, a few paces from the humble scene of Polichinel's misdeeds I heard the following remarkable soliloquy in German:—

"Excellent! excellent! Where, in the name of all the world, have I allowed myself to seek, when I could have [56] found so near? What! Am I to despise this stage, on which the most thrilling political and poetic truths are set in realistic dress, so directly and intelligibly, before the most receptive and least assuming public? Is this braggart not Don Juan? Is that terribly fair white cat not the Commander on horseback, in very person?—How the artistic import of this drama will be heightened and transfigured when my music adds its quota!—What sonorous organs in these actors!—And the cat—ah, that cat! What hidden charms lie buried in her glorious throat!—Now she gives no sound—now she is still mere demon:—but how she will fascinate when she sings the roudades I'll write expressly for her! What a magnificent *portamento* she'll put into the execution of that supernatural chromatic scale!—How treacherous will be her smile, when she sings that famous passage of the future: "*O Polichinel, thou art lost!*"— —What a plan!—And then, what a splendid pretext for incessant use of the big drum, will Punch's constant truncheon-beats afford me!—Come, why delay? Quick, for the Director's favour! Here I can walk straight in,—no ante-chambers here! With one step I'm in the sanctuary—before him whose god-like piercing eye will recognise at once my genius. Or must I light on competition here as well?—Should the cat—?—Quick, ere it is too late!"

With these last words the soliloquist was about to make straight for the Punch-and-Judy box. I had speedily recognised my friend, and determined to avert a scandal. I seized him by the arm, and span him round towards me.

"Who is it?"—he pettishly cried. He soon remembered me, quietly detached himself, and added coldly: "I might have known that it could only be *you*, that would thwart me in this step as well, the last for my salvation.—Leave me; it may become too late."

I grasped him afresh; but, though I was able to keep him from rushing forward to the little theatre, it was quite impossible to move him from the spot. Still, I gained the leisure to observe him closely. Great heavens, in what a [57] condition he was ! I say nothing of his dress, but of his features; the former was poor and threadbare, but the latter were terrible. The free and open look was gone; lifeless and vacant, his eye travelled to and fro; his pallid, sunken cheeks told not alone of trouble,—the hectic flush upon them told of sufferings too,—of hunger!

As I studied him with deepest sorrow, he too seemed touched, for he struggled less to tear himself away from me.

"How goes it with you, dear R . . .?" I asked with choking voice. With a mournful smile I added: "Where is your beautiful dog?"

He looked black at once. "Stolen!" was the abrupt reply.

"Not sold?" I asked again.

"Wretch," he sullenly replied, "are you also like the Englishman?"

I did not understand his meaning. "Come," I said in faltering tones—"come! take me to your house; I have much to speak with you."

"You soon will know my house without my aid," he answered, "the year is not yet up. I'm now on the high road to recognition, fortune!—Go, you do not yet believe it! What boots it to preach to the deaf? You people must *see*, to believe; very good! You soon shall see. But loose me now, if I am not to take you for my sworn foe."

I held his hands the faster. "Where do you live?" I asked. "Come, take me there! We'll have a friendly, hearty chat,—about your plans, if it must be!"

"You shall learn them as soon as they are carried out," he answered. "Quadrilles, galops ! Oh, that is my forte!—You shall see and hear!—Do you see that cat?—She's to help me to fat fees!—See how sleek she is, how daintily she licks her chops! Imagine the effect when from that little mouth, between those pearly rows of teeth, the most inspired of chromatic scales well forth, accompanied by the most delicate moans and sobs in all the world ! Imagine [58] it, dear friend! Oh, you have no fancy, you!—Leave me, leave me!—You have no phantasy!"

I held him tighter, and implored him to conduct me to his lodgings; without making the slightest impression, however. His eye was fixed with anxious strain upon the cat.

"Everything depends on her," he cried. "Fortune, honour, fame, reside within her velvet paws. May Heaven guide her heart, and turn on me her favour!—She looks friendly,—yes, that's the feline nature ! And she *is* friendly, polite, polite beyond measure! But she's a cat, a false and treacherous cat!—Wait,—thee at least I can rule! I have a noble dog; he'll make thee respect me.—Victory! I've won the day!—Where is my dog?"

He had shot forth the last few words in mad excitement, with a piercing cry. He looked hastily round, as if seeking for his dog. His eager glance fell on the roadway. There rode upon a splendid horse an elegant gentleman, by his physiognomy and the peculiar cut of his clothes an Englishman; by his side ran, proudly barking, a fine Newfoundland dog.

"Ha! my presentiment!" shrieked my friend, in a fury of wrath at the sight. "The cursed brute ! My dog; my dog !" My strength was unavailing against the violence with which the unhappy creature tore himself away. Like an arrow he fled after the horseman, who happened just then to be spurring his horse to a gallop, which the dog accompanied with the liveliest gambols. I rushed after—in vain! What effort of strength can compare with the feats of a madman?—I saw the rider, the dog, and my friend, all vanish down one of the side streets that lead to the Faubourg du Roule. When I reached the same street, they were gone.

Suffice it to mention that all my endeavours to track them were fruitless.—

Alarmed, and almost driven to madness myself I was forced at last to give up my inquiries for the moment. But you may readily imagine that I none the less bestirred [59] myself each day to find some clue to the retreat of my unhappy friend. I sought for news in every place

that had the remotest connection with music:—nowhere the smallest intimation ! It was only in the sacred ante-chambers of the Opéra that the subordinates remembered a pitiable apparition, which had often presented itself and waited for an audience, but of whose name or dwelling they naturally were ignorant. Every other path, even that of the police, led to no surer traces; the very guardians of the public safety seemed to have thought it needless to worry themselves about the poor soul.

I fell into despair. Then one day, about two months after that affair in the Champs Élysées, I received a letter sent me in a roundabout fashion through one of my acquaintances. I opened it with a heavy heart, and read the brief words:

"*Dear friend, come and see me die!*"

The address denoted a narrow little street on Montmartre.—It was no time for tears, and I ascended the hill of Montmartre. Following my directions, I arrived at one of those poverty-stricken houses which are common enough in the side-alleys of that little town. Despite its poor exterior, this building did not fail to rear itself to a *cinquième*; my unfortunate friend would appear to have welcomed the fact, and thus I also was compelled to mount to the same giddy height. It was worth the while, for, on asking for my friend, I was referred to the back attic; from this hinder side of the estimable building one certainly forwent all outlook on the four-foot-wide magnificence of the causeway, but was rewarded by the incomparably finer one on the whole of Paris.

I found my poor enthusiast propped-up on a wretched sick-bed, drinking in this wonderful prospect. His face, his whole body, were infinitely more haggard and emaciated than on that day in the Champs Élysées; nevertheless the expression of his features was far more reassuring. The scared, wild, almost maniacal look, the uncanny fire in his eyes, had vanished; his glance was dulled and half-extinguished; [60] the dark and ghastly flecks upon his cheeks seemed quenched in a universal wasting.

Trembling, but still composed, he stretched his hand to me with the words: "Forgive me, old fellow, and take my thanks for coming."

The softness and sonority of the tone in which he uttered these few words produced on me an even more touching impression, if possible, than his appearance had already done. I pressed his hand, but could not speak for weeping.

"I think,"—went on my friend, after an affecting pause,—"it is already well over a year, since we met in that glittering Palais Royal;—I have not quite kept my word:—to become renowned within a year, was impossible to me, with the best will in the world; on the other hand it's no fault of mine that I could not write you punctually upon the year's elapse, where you must come to see me die: spite all my struggles, I had not yet got quite so far.—Nay, do not weep, my friend ! There was a time when I must beg you not to laugh."

I tried to speak, but speech forsook me.—"Let me speak!" the dying man put in: "it is becoming easy to me, and I owe you a long account. I'm sure that I shall not be here to-morrow, so listen to my narrative to-day 'Tis a simple tale, my friend!—most simple. In it you'll find no wondrous complications, no hair-breadth strokes of luck, no ostentatious details. Fear not that your patience will be wearied by the easiness of speech which now is granted me, and certainly might tempt me to long-windedness; for there have been days, dear old man, when I couldn't utter a sound. Listen!—When I reflect on the state in which you find me, I hold it needless to assure you that my fate has been no bright one. Nor do I altogether need to count you up the trivialities among which my enthusiasm has come to ground. Suffice it to say, that they were no *breakers*, on which I foundered!—Happy the shipwrecked who goes down in *storm!*—No: they were *quagmires* and *swamps*, in which I sank. These swamps, dear friend, surround all proud and dazzling Art-fanes, to [61] which we poor fools make such ardent pilgrimage, as though they held the saving of our souls. Happy the feather-brained ! With one successful entreaty he leaps the quagmire. Happy the rich ! His well-trained horse



needs but one prick of the golden spur, to bear him swiftly over. But woe to the enthusiast who, taking that swamp for a flowery meadow, is swallowed in it past all rescue, a meal for frogs and toads!—See, dear friend, this vermin has devoured me; there's not a drop of blood left in me!— —Must I tell you how it happened? But why? You see me done for;—be content to hear that I was not vanquished on the field of battle, but—horrible to utter—in *the Ante-chambers of Hunger I fell!*—They are something terrible, those Ante-chambers; and know that there are many, very many of them in Paris,—with seats of wood or velvet, heated and not heated, paved and unpaved!—"

"In those Ante-chambers,"—continued my friend,—"I dreamed away a fair year of my life. I dreamt of many wondrous mad and fabled stories from the "Thousand-and-one Nights," of men and beasts, of gold and offal. My dreams were of gods and contrabassists, of jewelled snuff-boxes and prima-donnas, of satin gowns and lovesick lords, of chorus-girls and five-franc pieces. Between I sometimes seemed to hear the wailing, ghost-like note of an oboe; that note thrilled through my every nerve, and cut my heart. One day when I had dreamed my maddest, and that oboe-note was tingling through me at its sharpest, I suddenly awoke and found I had become a madman. At least I recollect, that I had forgotten to make my usual obeisance to the theatre-lackey as I left the anteroom,—the reason, I may add, of my never daring to return to it; for *how* would the man have received me?—With tottering steps I left the haven of my dreams; on the threshold of the building I fell of a heap. I had stumbled over my poor dog, who, after his wont, was ante-chambering in the street, in waiting for his fortunate master who was allowed to ante-chamber among men. This dog, I must tell you, had been of the utmost service to me, for to him and his beauty [62] alone I owed it that now and then the lackey of the ante-chamber would honour me with a passing glance. Alas ! with every day he lost a portion of his beauty, for hunger gnawed his entrails too. This gave me fresh alarm, as I clearly foresaw that the servant's favour would soon be lost to me; already a contemptuous smile would often purse his lips.—As said, I fell over this dog of mine. How long I lay, I know not; of the kicks which I may have received from passers-by I took no notice; but at last I was awoken by the tenderest kisses,—the warm licks of my dear beast. I leapt to my feet, and in a lucid interval I recognised at once my weightiest duty: to buy the dog some food. A shrewd *Marchand d'Habits* gave me a handful of sous for my villainous waistcoat. My dog ate, and what he left I devoured. With *him* this answered admirably, but I was past mending. The produce of an heirloom, an old ring of my grandmother's, sufficed to restore the dog to his ancient beauty; he bloomed afresh—oh, fatal blooming!

"With my brain it grew ever darker; I know not rightly what took place within it,—but I remember being seized one day by an irresistible longing to seek out the Devil. My dog, in all his former glory, accompanied me to the gates of the *Concerts Musard*. Did I hope to meet the Devil, there? That also I cannot tell. I scanned the people trooping in, and whom did I espy among them? The abominable *Englishman*: the same, as large as life, and not one atom changed from when, as I related to you, he harmed me so with Beethoven!—Fear took me; I was prepared to face a demon from the nether world, but never more this phantom of the upper. O how I felt, when the wretch also recognised *me!* I couldn't avoid him,—the crowd was pressing us towards each other. Involuntarily, and quite against the customs of his countrymen, he was compelled to fall into my arms, raised up to force myself an exit. There he lay, wedged tight against my breast, with its thousand torturing emotions. It was a fearful moment ! We were soon released a little, and he shook [63] me off with a shade of indignation. I tried to escape; but it still was impossible.—'Welcome, mein Herr!'—the Briton shouted:—'I always meet you on the ways of Art This time we'll go to *Musard!*'—For very wrath I could say nothing but: 'To the Devil!'—'Quite so,' he answered, 'it seems that things go devilish there!—Last Sunday I threw off a composition, which I shall offer to Musard. Do you know this Musard? Will you introduce me to him?'

"My horror at this bugbear turned to speechless fear; impelled by it, I gained the strength to free myself and flee towards the Boulevard; my lovely dog rushed barking after me. But in a trice the Englishman was by my side once more, holding me, and asking in excited tones: 'Sir, does this splendid dog belong to you? Yes.'—'But it is superb! Sir, I will pay you fifty guineas for this dog. A dog like this, you know, is the proper thing for a gentleman, and I have already owned a number of them. Unfortunately, the beasts were all unmusical; they could not stand my practising the horn or flute, and so they always ran away. But I take it for granted that, as you have the good fortune to be a musician, your dog is musical also; I accordingly may hope that he will stop with me. So I offer you fifty guineas for the beast.'—'Villain!' I cried:—'not for the whole of Britain would I sell my friend !' So saying, I hurried off, my dog in front. I dodged down the back streets that led to my usual night's-lodging—It was bright moonshine; now and then I looked furtively back:—to my alarm, I thought I saw the Englishman's long figure following me. I redoubled my pace, and peered round still more anxiously; now I caught sight of the shadow, now lost it. Panting for breath, I reached my refuge, gave my dog to eat, and threw myself all hungry on my rough, hard bed.—I slept long, and dreamt of horrors. When I awoke,—my beautiful dog had vanished. How he had got away from me, or been enticed through the badly fastened door, to this day is a mystery to me. I called, I hunted for him, till sobbing I fainted away.—

[64]

"You remember that I saw the faithless one again one day in the Champs Élysées;—you know what efforts I made to regain possession of him;—but you do not know that this animal recognised me, yet fled from my call like an untamed beast of the wilderness ! Nevertheless I followed him and his Satanic cavalier till the latter dashed into a gateway, whose doors were slammed behind him and the dog. In my anger I thundered at the gates;—a furious bark was the answer.—Dazed and crushed, I leant against the archway,—until at last a hideous scale on the horn aroused me from my stupefaction; it reached me from the ground-floor of the mansion, and was followed by the agonised moan of a dog. Then I laughed out loud, and went my way.—"

My friend here ceased; though speech had become easy, his inward agitation taxed him terribly. It was no longer possible for him to hold himself erect in bed,—with a smothered groan he sank back.—A long pause occurred; I watched the poor fellow with painful feelings: that faint flush so peculiar to the consumptive had risen to his cheeks. He had closed his eyes, and lay as if in slumber; his breath came lightly, almost in ethereal waves.

I waited anxiously for the moment when I durst speak to him, and ask what earthly service I could render.—At last he opened his eyes once more; a dim but wondrous light was in the glance he straightway fixed on me.

"My poor friend,"—I began—"I came here with the sad desire to serve you somehow. Have you a wish, O speak it !"

With a smile he resumed: "So impatient, friend, for my last testament?—Nay, have no care; you too are mentioned in it.—But will you not first learn how it befell that your poor brother came to die? Look you, I wished my history to be known to *one* soul at the least; but I know of no one who would worry himself about me, unless it be *yourself*— —Fear not that I am overexerting myself! 'Tis well with me and easy—no laboured breath oppresses me—the words come freely to my lips.—And see, I have little left [65] to narrate. You can imagine that, from the point where I broke off my story, I had no more outer incidents to do with. From there begins the history of my inner life, for then I knew I soon should die. That terrible scale on the horn in the Englishman's hôtel filled me with so overpowering a weariness of life, that I there and then resolved to die. Indeed, I should not boast of that decision, for I must confess that it no longer lay entirely within my own free will. Something had cracked within my breast, that left a long and whirring sound behind;—when this died out 'twas light and

well with me, as never before, and I knew my end was near. O how happy that conviction made me ! How the presage of a speedy dissolution cheered me, as I suddenly perceived its work in every member of this wasted body!—Insensible to outward things, unconscious where my faltering steps were bearing me, I had gained the summit of Montmartre. Thrice welcoming the Mount of Martyrs, I resolved on it to die. I too was dying for the wholeness of my faith; I too could therefore call myself a martyr, albeit this my faith was challenged by none else—than Hunger.

"Houseless, I took this lodging, asking nothing further than this bed, and that they would send for my scores and papers, which I had stowed in a wretched hovel of the city; for, alas ! I had never succeeded in pawning them. So here I lie, determined to pass away in God and pure Music. A friend will close my eyes, my effects will cover all my debts, and for a decent grave I shall not want.—Say, what more could I wish?"

At last I gave vent to my pent-up feelings.—"What !" I cried, "was it only for this last mournful service, that you could use me? Could your friend, however powerless, have helped you in nothing else? I conjure you, for my peace of mind tell me this: Was it a doubt of my friendship, that kept you from discovering my whereabouts and acquainting me before with your distress?"

"O don't be angry," he answered coaxingly, "don't chide me if I own that I had fallen into the stubborn belief that you [66] were my enemy! When I recognised that you were not, my brain was already in a condition that robbed me of all responsibility of will. I felt that I was no longer fit to associate with men of sense. Forgive me, and be kindlier toward me, than I have been to you!—Give me your hand, and let this debt of my poor life be cancelled!"

I could not resist, but seized his hand, and melted into tears. Yet I saw how markedly the powers of my friend were ebbing; he was now too weak to raise himself in bed; that flickering flush came ever paler to his sunken cheeks.

"A little business, dear chum," he began afresh. "Call it my last Will ! For I will, in the first place: that my debts be paid. The poor people who took me in, have nursed me willingly and dunned me little; they must be paid. The same with a few other creditors, whose names you will find on that paper. I bequeath all my property in payment, there my compositions and here my diary, in which I have jotted down my musical whims and reflections. I leave it to your judgment, my experienced friend, to sell so much of these remains as will liquidate my earthly debts.—I will, in the second place: that you do not beat my dog, if you ever should meet him; I assume that, in punishment of his faithlessness, he has already suffered torments from the Englishman's horn. I forgive him!—Thirdly, I will that the history of my Paris sufferings, with omission of my name, be published as a wholesome warning to all soft fools like me.—Fourthly, I wish for a decent grave, yet without any fuss or parade; few persons suffice for my following; their names and addresses you'll find in my diary. The costs of the burial must be mustered up by you and them.—Amen !"

"Now,"—the dying man continued, after a pause occasioned by his growing weakness,—"now one last word on my belief.—I believe in God, Mozart and Beethoven, and likewise their disciples and apostles;—I believe in the Holy Spirit and the truth of the one, indivisible Art;—I believe that this Art proceeds from God, and lives within the hearts of all illumined men;—I believe that he who [67] once has bathed in the sublime delights of this high Art, is consecrate to Her for ever, and never can deny Her;—I believe that through this Art all men are saved, and therefore each may die for Her of hunger;—I believe that death will give me highest happiness;—I believe that on earth I was a jarring discord, which will at once be perfectly resolved by death. I believe in a last judgment, which will condemn to fearful pains all those who in this world have dared to play the huckster with chaste Art, have violated and dishonoured Her through evilness of heart and ribald lust of senses;—I believe that these will be condemned through all eternity to hear their own vile music. I believe, upon



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the other hand, that true disciples of high Art will be transfigured in a heavenly fabric of sun-drenched fragrance of sweet sounds, and united for eternity with the divine fount of all Harmony.—May mine be a sentence of grace!—Amen!"

I could almost believe that my friend's fervent prayer had been granted already, so heavenly a light shone in his eye, so enraptured he remained in breathless quiet. But his gentle, scarce palpable breathing assured me that he yet lived on.—Softly, but quite audibly, he whispered: "Rejoice, ye faithful ones; the joy is great, toward which ye journey!"

Then he grew dumb,—the radiance of his glance was quenched; a smile still wreathed his lips. I closed his eyes, and prayed God for such a death.— —

Who knows what died in this child of man, leaving no trace behind? Was it a Mozart,—a Beethoven? Who can tell, and who 'gainsay me when I claim that in him there fell an artist who would have enriched the world with his creations, had he not been forced to die too soon of hunger?—I ask, who will prove me the contrary?—

None of those who followed his body. Besides myself there were but two, a philologist and a painter; a third was hindered by a cold, and others had no time to spare.—As we were modestly approaching the churchyard of Montmartre, we noticed a beautiful dog, who anxiously [68] sniffed at the bier and coffin. I recognised the animal, and Looked behind me;—bolt-upright on his horse, I perceived the Englishman. He seemed unable to understand the strange behaviour of his dog, who followed the coffin into the graveyard; he dismounted, gave the reins to his groom, and overtook us in the cemetery.

"Whom are you burying, mein Herr?" he asked me.—"The master of that dog," I gave for answer.

"Goddam!" he cried, "it is most annoying that this gentleman should have died without receiving the money for his beast. I set it aside for him, and have sought an opportunity of sending it, although this animal howls at my musical exercises like all the rest. But I will make good my omission, and devote the fifty guineas for the dog to a memorial stone, which shall be erected on the grave of the estimable gentleman!"—He left us, and mounted his horse; the dog remained beside the grave,—the Briton rode away. (7)



## Notes

### Note 1 on page 5

Under the title "Un musicien étranger à Paris," this story appeared in the *Gazette Musicale* of Jan. 31 and Feb. 7 and 11, 1841. Its German original was first printed in Nos. 187-91 of the *Abend-Zeitung* (Aug. 6 to 11, 1841) as a sequel to the "Pilgrimage", and with the special title "Das Ende zu Paris. (Aus der Feder eines in Wahrheit noch lebenden Notenstechers.)"—i.e. "The end at Paris: from the pen of an in reality still living note-engraver." The title in the *Ges. Schr.* becomes "Ein Ende in Paris," but otherwise the two German texts are identical, saving for one or two quite trifling stylistic alterations and the appearance in the *A.Z.* of "—denn ich bin mehr Banquier als Notenstecher—", i.e. "—for I am more of a banker than a note-engraver—", following the words "as my own access to those sanctuaries was but rare" on [page 55](#) *infra*.—Tr.

### Note 2 on page 6

In the French this sentence ran, "Me faudrait-il craindre par hasard de me trouver, ici comme en Allemagne, dans l'obligation d'avoir recours à des voies tortueuses pour me procurer l'entrée des théâtres royaux?"—and was immediately followed by "Dois-je croire que, pendant des années entières, il me faudra mendier la protection de tel on tel laquais de cour pour finir par arriver, grâce à un mot de recommandation qu'aura daigné m'accorder quelque femme de chambre, à obtenir pour mes œuvres l'honneur de la représentation? Non sans doute, et à quoi bon d'ailleurs des démarches si serviles, ici, à Paris" etc.—Some specific case appears to be referred to here, for, although the passage drops out of this connection in the *Abendzeitung* and *Ges. Schr.*, we meet with an identical allusion in the essay on "Conducting," see Vol. IV., pp. 294 and 297.—Tr.

### Note 3 on page 6

Between this paragraph and the next there appeared in the *Gazette Musicale* "(Je n'ai nul besoin, je pense, de faire remarquer au lecteur que, dans les objections dont je me sers et dont j'aurai encore à me servir vis-à-vis de mon ami, il ne s'agit nullement de voir l'expression complète de ma conviction personnelle, mais seulement une série d'arguments que je regardais comme urgent d'employer pour amener mon enthousiaste à abandonner ses plans chimériques, sans diminuer pourtant en rien sa confiance en son talent.)"—Tr.

### Note 4 on page 6

In the *Gazette* here appeared "(Le lecteur voudra bien ne pas oublier de faire ici une nouvelle application de la remarque que je lui ai recommandée ci-dessus.)"—Tr.

### Note 5 on page 7

Here, as also at the end of the next paragraph but one, the *Gazette* had "(Le lecteur voudra bien ne pas oublier, etc.)"—Tr.

### Note 6 on page 8

Here again, and after the first sentence of the next paragraph but one, the *G. M.* had "(Le lecteur voudra bien ne pas oublier, etc.)"—Tr.

Note 7 on page 15

Translator's note:—In the *Gazette Musicale* there was an additional paragraph: "Il me reste maintenant à exécuter le testament. Je publierai dans les prochains numéros de cette gazette, sous le titre de *Caprices esthétiques d'un musicien*, les différentes parties du journal du défunt, pour lesquels l'éditeur a promis de payer un prix élevé, par égard pour la destination respectable de cet argent. Les partitions qui composent le reste de sa succession sont à la disposition de MM. les directeurs d'Opéra, qui peuvent, pour cet objet, s'adresser, par lettres non affranchies, à l'exécuteur testamentaire,

RICHARD WAGNER."

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# *The Artist and Publicity*

By Richard Wagner

Translated by William Ashton Ellis



The Wagner Library

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## Contents

About this Title .....	4
The Artist and Publicity .....	5
Notes .....	9
Summary .....	11

## About this Title

### Source

*The Artist and Publicity*

By Richard Wagner

Translated by William Ashton Ellis

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### Reading Information

This title contains 3138 words.

Estimated reading time between 9 and 16 minutes.

Notes are indicated using parenthesis, like (1).

Page numbers of the original source are indicated using square-bracketed parentheses, like [62].



[134]

## The Artist and Publicity

(1)

WHEN I am alone, and the musical strings begin to stir within me, strange whirling sounds take shape of chords, until at last a melody springs forth, revealing to me the idea of my whole being; when the heart beats time thereto in loud impatient strokes, and inspiration streams in tears immortal through the mortal eye, no longer seeing,—I often tell myself: Fool that thou art, not to bide forever by thyself, to live for these unequalled blisses, in lieu of rushing out to face that awful mass yclept the Public, to earn thee by its nothing-saying nod the fatuous authority to go on practising thy gift of composition! (2) What can the most brilliant welcome of this public give thee worth a hundredth fraction of that hallowed joy which wells from thine own heart? Why do mortals fired with a spark divine forsake their sanctuary, run breathless through the city's muddy streets, and seek in hottest haste for dull and sated men on whom to force a happiness indelible? And what exertions, turmoils and illusions, before they can even arrive at compassing the sacrifice! What plots and [135] artifices must they ply, for a good part of their life, to bring to the ears of the crowd what it can never understand! Is it for fear the history of Music might one fine day stand still? Is it for that, they pluck the fairest pages from the secret history of their heart, and snap the magic chain that fastens sympathetic souls to one another throughout the centuries, whilst here the only talk can be of schools and manners? (3)

[136]

There must be some inexplicable force at work: who feels himself subjected to its power, must hold it ruinous. Certainly the first assumption to occur to one, would be that it was the bent of Genius to impart itself without regard to consequences: loud does it sound in thyself, aloud let it ring out to others! Eh, folk say 'tis the *duty* of Genius, to live for Man's pleasure; who imposed it, God alone knows! Merely it so happens that this duty never comes to consciousness, and least of all when Genius is engaged in its ownest function, of creation. But that perhaps is not the question; when it has created, it is then to feel the obligation to divest itself of the immense advantage it has above all other mortals, by surrendering its creation to them. In respect of Duty, however, Genius is the most conscienceless of beings: nothing does it bring to birth thereby, and I believe it neither regulates by that its traffic with the world. No, it abides by its nature for ever and ever: in its most foolish act it still stays Genius, and I rather fancy that at bottom of its bent to gain publicity there lies a motive of ill moral import, which again does not come to clear consciousness, but yet is serious enough to expose the very greatest artist to contemptuous treatment. In any case this passion for publicity is hard to comprehend: each experience teaches it that it is in an evil sphere, and can only hope to move a little smoothly by putting on an evil look itself. Genius,—would not all men run away from it, were it once to shew itself in its god-like nakedness as it is? Perhaps this really is its saving instinct; for nursed it not the knowledge of its purest chastity, how might it not be ravished by a ribald self-delight in its own fashionings? But the first contact with the outer world compels all genius to clothe itself. Here reads the rule: the Public wills to be amused, and thou must seek to smuggle in thine Own beneath the mantle of Amusement. Very well, we will say that Genius draws the needful act of self-denial from a feeling of duty: for Duty holds alike the command and compulsion to self-denial, self-sacrifice. Yet what duty bids a man to sacrifice his [137] honour, a woman her shame? For sake of these they ought to offer up all personal welfare, if need so be. But more than to man his honour, to woman her shame, to Genius is itself; and if it bears the smallest wound in its own essence, compact of shame and honour in

the very highest measure, then is it nothing, absolutely nothing more.

Impossible, that Duty urges Genius to the fearful act of self-denial whereby it makes itself away to public life. Some dæmonic secret must lie hidden here. He, the blest, the over-joyed, the over-rich,—goes begging. He begs for your favour, ye victims of boredom, ye seekers after amusement, ye vain presumptuous, ye ignorant all-wise, bad-hearted, venal, envious reporters,—and God knows of what else thou mayst consist, thou modern Art-public, thou institute of Public Opinion! And what humiliations he endures! The tortured Saint can smile transfigured: for what no rack can ever reach, is just the hallowed soul; the wounded warrior dragging through the shades of night may smile, for what stays whole is his honour, his courage; the woman smiles, who suffers shame and scorn for sake of love: for the soul's salvation, honour, love, now first shine all transfigured in a higher glory. But Genius, that gives itself a mark for scorn when it gives itself the air of *pleasing*?—Happy may the world regard itself, that to it the pains of Genius can be so relatively little known!

No! These sufferings no one seeks from sense-of-duty, and whoever could imagine it, his duty necessarily rises from a very different source. One's daily bread, the maintenance of a family: most weighty motors. Only, they do not operate in the genius. They prompt the journeyman, the hand-worker; they may even move the man of genius to handiwork, but they cannot spur him to create, nor even to bring his creations to market. Yet that's the point we are discussing, namely how to explain the impulse that drives a man with demon force to carry just his noblest, ownest good to open market.

Certainly a mixture of the most mysterious sort here comes to pass, and could we ever clearly see it, 'twould [138] shew the spirit of the highly-gifted artist quite strictly hovering 'twixt heaven and hell. Undoubtedly the god-like longing to impart an own interior bliss to human hearts, is the predominant motive, and in hours of awful stress the only strength-giver. This impulse feeds at all times on the genius's belief in self, to which no other can compare in vigour, and this faith again informs the artist with that very pride which works his fall in commerce with the miseries of earthly squalor. He feels himself free, and in life, too, will he be it: he will have nothing in common with his want; he will be wafted, light and quit of every care. This may happen in fact when his genius is generally recognised, and so the object is to bring it to acknowledgment. Though he thus appear to be ambitious (*ehrgeizig*), he yet is not; for he wants no honour (*Ehre*) paid him; but its fruit he wants, in Freedom. He only meets ambitious men, or such as dwell content with fruits apart from honour. How mark himself from these? He falls into a throng midst which he necessarily must pass for other than he truly is. What exceptional prudence, what cautiousness in every tiniest step, would it need for him to always walk securely here, and ward off all misapprehension! But he is awkwardness personified; confronted with the meannesses of Life, he can only use the privilege of Genius to get entangled in a constant contradiction with himself: and so, a prey for every springe, his own prodigious gift he casts before the swine, and squanders on the aimlessest of objects.—In truth he merely longs for freedom to give full play to his beneficence. To him it seems so natural a claim, that he can never fathom why its due should be denied him: is it not a mere question of manifesting Genius clearly to the world? That, he never ceases thinking, he is bound to bring about, if not to-morrow, assuredly the next day after. As if death were nothing! And Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Weber?—Nay, but it yet might happen!—A sad, sad tale!—

And with it all to be so laughable!—

Could he only see himself, as we now see him, he must [139] end by laughing at his very self. And that laughter is perhaps his direst danger, for it alone can move him to begin the frantic dance again. Yet his laughter is quite another thing from yours: the latter is mockery, the former Pride. For he just sees himself; and his self-recognition, in this infamous *quid-pro-quo* that he has tumbled into, attunes him to that monstrous merriment of which no other man is capable. So levity rescues him, to bear him to yet more fearful pains. Now he

credits himself with the strength to play with even Evil: he knows that, lie as much as he will, his truthfulness will ne'er be sullied, for he feels with every gnaw of grief that Truth is his very soul; and he finds a curious consolation in the fact that not one of his lies is believed, that he can dupe no man. Who would take him for a jester?—But why does he give himself the look? The world leaves him no other road to freedom: and this latter (as dressed for the world's understanding) resembles little else than—*money*. That is to win him recognition of his genius, and for that is the whole mad game laid out. Then he dreams: "God, if only I were so-and-so, for instance *Meyerbeer!*" So *Berlioz* lately dreamt of what he would do, were he one of those unfortunates who pay five hundred francs for the singing of a Romance not worth five sous: then would he take the finest orchestra in the world to the ruins of Troy, to play him the "*Sinfonia eroica.*" (4) —You see, what heights the genius-beggar's [140] phantasy can climb!—But such a thing seems possible. Now and then there really passes something quite unusual. *Berlioz* himself experienced it, when the marvellously stingy *Paganini* paid him the homage of a handsome present. That kind of thing is the beginning. To everyone there once comes such an omen: 'tis the wages of Hell; you now have conjured Envy up for good: now the world won't any longer give you even pity, for "You have already had more than you deserved."—

Happy the genius that Fortune ne'er has smiled on!—It is so wondrous precious to itself: what more could Fortune give it?

And that's what he tells himself, smiles and—laughs, renews his strength; it glimmers and leaps up in him: anew it rings from him, brighter and fairer than ever. A work, such as he himself had ne'er yet dreamt of, is growing up in silent solitude. This is it! That's the right thing! All the world must be entranced by this: to hear it once, and then—! Look how the madman is running! 'Tis the old, old road, that seems to him so new and glorious: mud splashes him; here he bumps against a lackey, whose finery he takes for a General's, and bows respectfully; there against a no less worshipful bank-porter, whose heavy gold-bag slung across the shoulders makes his nose bleed. They are all good omens. He runs and trips, until at last he stands once more within the temple of his shame! And everything comes back again: for, as *Schiller* sings, "each crime itself on earth avenges."

And yet a good spirit protects him, apparently his own: for he is spared fulfilment of his wishes. If he once succeeded in gaining welcome to that wondrous sanctuary, what else than a stupendous misunderstanding could have helped him thither? What Hell could compare with the slow torture of its dissolution day by day? We took you for a sensible fellow who would accommodate yourself, as you really were so anxious for "success": here it is, all guaranteed; only set this and that to rights; there is the prima donna, there the ballerina, here the great virtuoso: [141] arrange affairs with them! There they stand, and group themselves into that strangely curtained porch through which you travel to the one Supreme, the great Public itself. Why! everyone who passed through here to the realms of bliss, had to make his little sacrifice. What the devil! do you think the "grand" Opera could have ever held on, had it raised such a fuss about trifles?—

Can you lie?—

No!— —

Then you are done for, dismissed, as in England the "Atheists." No respectable person will talk to you again.—Well, well: still hope that thy good genius will spare thee that.—Laugh, be light-minded,—but have patience and suffer: then all will be well.—

Dream! 'Tis the best thing!—



## Notes

### Note 1 on page 5

"Der Künstler und die Öffentlichkeit" appeared in the *Gazette Musicale* of April 1, 1841, under the title "Caprices esthétiques extraits du journal d'un musicien défunt. Le Musicien et la Publicité." After the first paragraph, however, the French again materially differs, besides bearing marks of the editorial scissors, for it is reduced to about a quarter of the usual length. In the first sentence "die als Idee mir mein ganzes Wesen offenbart" so strikingly resembles Schopenhauer's philosophy of Music that one might have taken it for an interpolation of 1871, did not the French of 1841 (i.e. thirteen years before the master read a line of Schopenhauer) give us its counterpart in "et que j'en sens jaillir enfin l'idée qui révèle tout mon être."—Tr.

### Note 2 on page 5

From "to earn," to the end of the sentence, did not appear in the French.—Tr.

### Note 3 on page 5

As said, from this point the French diverges: "Il y a là quelque puissance occulte et inexplicable, dont moi-même, hélas ! je subis l'influence funeste. Plus j'y songe, moins je puis me rendre compte des motifs qui poussent les artistes à rechercher le grand jour de la publicité. Est-ce l'ambition, le désir du bien-être? motifs bien puissants sans doute; mais quel est l'homme sur lequel ils aient prise à l'heure de l'enthousiasme on dont ils puissent émouvoir le génie? Dans la vie ordinaire, je conçois qu'on cède à ces motifs, quand il est question d'un bon dîner, d'un article louangeur dans les journaux; mais jamais quand il s'agit de sacrifier les plus hautes jouissances qu'il soit donné à l'homme de goûter. Pour les cœurs aimants, ce pourrait bien être le désir irrésistible de laisser s'épancher le surplus de l'enthousiasme qui les enivre et de faire participer le monde entier leur extase. Malheureusement l'artiste ne voit point le monde tel qu'il est ; il se le représente comme étant à sa hauteur, il oublie qu'il n'est composé que de gens en fracs à la dernière mode et en mantilles de soie.

"Ce désir immodéré et funeste de la publicité paraît être tellement vivace, que même aux heures où l'inspiration a cessé, il continue à nous travailler le cerveau, et c'est dans ces heures qu'il faut lui donner le nom d'ambition. O ambition pernicieuse, à qui nous devons tous les airs, airs variés, etc., c'est toi qui nous enseignes à ravager systématiquement le sanctuaire de la poésie que nous portons en nous! c'est toi qui dans ton ironie démoniaque nous pousses à souiller de roulades impudiques un chaste et pur accord ; à resserrer une pensée vigoureuse et large dans un lit étroit de cadences et de niaiseries!

"O vous, *heureux infortunés*, aux joues creuses et pâles, aux yeux usés, vous vous êtes flétris au souffle brûlant de l'étude et du travail, afin que le public vous criât bravo! pour l'enveloppe mensongère dont vous entouriez votre poésie dans les moments de calcul et de réflexion prosaïque, et que vous lui arracheriez avec joie si vous ne craigniez que votre création, si elle se montrait dans sa nudité, ne fût obligée de fuir honteuse et éperdue devant les railleries du vulgaire. Oh ! si vous étiez tous mes frères et mes amis, je vous ferais une proposition à l'aimable: je vous engagerais faire de la musique pour votre compte, et à exercer en même temps quelque bon métier ou à spéculer à la Bourse. Vous seriez alors tout-à-fait heureux et vous pourriez mener bonne et joyeuse vie. Je veux vous donner l'exemple; deux heures sonnent, je vais à la Bourse; si j'échoue dans mes opérations, j'écrirai des quadrilles; c'est un bon métier, qui fort heureusement n'a rien de commun avec la musique."

With that the article ends : it was signed "Werner," but a note to the Index of the *Gaz. Mus.*

corrects the error.—Tr.

[Note 4 on page 7](#)

Proof positive that at least this portion of the article was contained in the original M. S. for the *Gazette Musicale*, as it was only two months previously (Jan. 28, 1841) that Berlioz had written in that journal: "Si j'étais riche, bien riche, riche comme ces malheureux du siècle qui donnent cinq cents francs à un chanteur pour une cavatine de cinq sous, . . . je partirais pour la Troade . . . j'en ferais à peu près une solitude . . . je bâtirais un temple sonore au pied de mont Ida, deux statues en décoreraient seules l'intérieur, et un soir, au soleil couchant, après avoir lu Homère et parcouru les lieux qu'immortalisa son génie, je me ferais réciter par le roi des orchestres l'autre poème du roi des musiciens, la symphonie héroïque de Beethoven." Is it too much to fancy that this passage of Berlioz may have sown in Wagner's mind the first seed of the "Bayreuth idea," which came to its earliest recorded expression just ten years later, and twenty-one years after that, again, was celebrated by the crowning of a certain foundation-stone ceremony with the performance of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony?—Tr.

[364]

## Summary

Solitude and the inner chords vibrating into melody. What drives the genius to bring to the ears of the crowd what it can never understand? It cannot be Duty; for all men would run away from Genius, did it shew itself naked. The saint, the wounded soldier, the taunted woman, bear less humiliation than the genius: happy the world, that knows so little of his pains! (137). Duty of supporting one's family can never prompt a work of genius. Freedom he wants, not honour or money. Laughter his only salvation (139). Happy the genius whom Fortune ne'er has smiled on! His awkwardness in dealing with the world; concessions asked of him. Wait and dream; 'tis the best! (141).

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# *A Happy Evening*

By Richard Wagner

Translated by William Ashton Ellis



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## Contents

About this Title .....	4
A Happy Evening .....	5
Notes .....	11

## About this Title

### Source

*A Happy Evening*

By Richard Wagner

Translated by William Ashton Ellis

*In Paris and Dresden*

Richard Wagner's Prose Works

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*Ein glücklicher Abend*

Published in 1841

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Notes are indicated using parenthesis, like (1).

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[70]

## A Happy Evening

IT was a fine Spring evening; the heat of Summer had already sent its messengers before, delicious breaths that thronged the air like sighs of love and fired our senses. We had followed the stream of people pouring toward a public garden; here an excellent orchestra was to give the first of its annual series of summer-evening concerts. It was a red-letter day. My friend R . . . , not dead in Paris yet, (1) was in the seventh heaven; even before the concert began, he was drunk with music: he said it was the inner harmonies that always sang and rang within him when he felt the happiness of a beautiful Spring evening.

We arrived, and took our usual places at a table beneath a great oak-tree; for careful comparison had taught us, not only that this spot was farthest from the buzzing crowd, but that here one heard the music best and most distinctly. We had always pitied the poor creatures who were compelled, or actually preferred to stay in the immediate vicinity of the orchestra, whether in or out of doors; we could never understand how they found any pleasure in *seeing* music, instead of hearing it; and yet we could account no otherwise for their rapt attention to the various movements of the band, their enthusiastic interest in the kettle-drummer when, after an anxious counting of his bars of rest, he came in at last with a rousing thwack. We were agreed that nothing is more prosaic and upsetting, than the hideous aspect of the swollen cheeks and puckered features of the wind-players, the unæsthetic grabbings of the double-bass and violoncelli, ay, even the wearisome sawing of the violin-bows, when it is a question of listening to the [71] performance of fine instrumental music. For this reason we had taken our seats where we could hear the lightest nuance of the orchestra, without being pained by its appearance.

The concert began: grand things were played; among others, Mozart's Symphony in E flat, and Beethoven's in A.

The concert was over. Dumb, but delighted and smiling, my friend sat facing me with folded arms. The crowd departed, group by group, with pleasant chatter; here and there a few tables still were occupied. The evening's genial warmth began to yield to the colder breath of night.

"Let's have some punch!" cried R . . . , suddenly changing his attitude to look for a waiter.

Moods like that in which we found ourselves, are too precious not to be maintained as long as possible. I knew how comforting the punch would be, and eagerly chimed in with my friend's proposition. A decent-sized bowl soon steamed on our table, and we emptied our first glasses.

"How did you like the performance of the symphonies?" I asked.

"Eh? Performance!" exclaimed R . . . . "There are moods in which, however critical at other times, the worst execution of one of my favourite works would transport me. These moods, 'tis true, are rare, and only exercise their sweet dominion over me when my whole inner being stands in blissful harmony with my bodily health. Then it needs but the faintest intimation, to sound in me at once the whole piece that answers to my full conception; and in so ideal a completeness, as the best orchestra in the world can never bring it to my outward sense. In such moods my else so scrupulous musical ear is complaisant enough to allow even the quack of an oboe to cause me but a momentary twinge; with an indulgent smile I let the false note of a trumpet graze my ear, without being torn from the blessed feeling that cheats me into the belief that I am hearing the most consummate execution of my favourite work. In such [72] a mood nothing irritates me more, than to see a well-combed dandy airing high-bred indignation at one of those musical slips that wound his pampered ear, when I know that to-morrow he will be applauding the most excruciating scale with which a popular prima

donna does violence to nerves alike and soul. Music merely ambles past the ear of these super-subtle fools; nay, often merely past their eye: for I remember noticing people who never stirred a muscle when a brass instrument really went wrong, but stopped their ears the instant they saw the wretched bandsman shake his head in shame and confusion."

"What?"—I interposed—"Must I hear you girding at people of delicate ear? How often have I seen you raging like a madman at the faulty intonation of a singer?"

"My friend," cried R . . . , "I simply was speaking of now, of to-night. God knows how often I have been nearly driven mad by the mistakes of a famous violinist; how often have I cursed the first of prima-donnas when she thought her tone so pure in vocalising somewhere between *mi fa sol*; eh! how often I have been unable to find the smallest consonance among the instruments of the very best-tuned orchestra. But look you! that is on the countless days when my good spirit has departed from me, when I put on my Sunday coat and squeeze between the perfumed dames and frizzled sirs to woo back happiness into my soul through these ears of mine. O you should feel the pains with which I then weigh every note and measure each vibration! When my heart is dumb I'm as subtle as any of the prigs who vexed me to-day, and there are hours when a Beethoven Sonata with violin or 'cello will put me to flight.—Blessed be the god who made the Spring and Music: to-night I'm happy, I can tell you." With that he filled our glasses again, and we drained them to the dregs.

"Need I declare,"—I began in turn,—"that I feel as happy as yourself? Who would not be, after listening in peace and comfort to the performance of two works which seem created by the very god of high æsthetic joy? [73] I thought the conjunction of the Mozartian and the Beethovenian Symphony a most apt idea; I seemed to find a marked relationship between the two compositions; in both the clear human consciousness of an existence meant for rejoicing, is beautifully transfigured by the presage of a higher world beyond. The only distinction I would make, is that in Mozart's music the language of the heart is shaped to graceful longing, whereas in Beethoven's conception this longing reaches out a bolder hand to seize the Infinite. In Mozart's symphony the fulness of Feeling predominates, in Beethoven's the manly consciousness of Strength."

"It does me good to hear such views expressed about the character and meaning of such sublime instrumental works," replied my friend. "Not that I believe you have anything like exhausted their nature with your brief description; but to get to the bottom of that, to say nothing of defining it, lies just as little within the power of human speech as it resides in the nature of Music to express in clear and definite terms what belongs to no organ save the Poet's. 'Tis a great misfortune that so many people take the useless trouble to confound the musical with the poetic tongue, and endeavour to make good or replace by the one what in their narrow minds remains imperfect in the other. It is a truth for ever, that where the speech of man stops short there Music's reign begins. Nothing is more intolerable, than the mawkish scenes and anecdotes they foist upon those instrumental works. What poverty of mind and feeling it betrays, when the listener to a performance of one of Beethoven's symphonies has to keep his interest awake by imagining that the torrent of musical sounds is meant to reproduce the plot of some romance! These gentry then presume to grumble at the lofty master, when an unexpected stroke disturbs the even tenour of their little tale; they tax the composer with unclearness and inconsequence, and deplore his lack of continuity!—The idiots!"

[74]

"Never mind!" said I. "Let each man trump up scenes and fancies according to the strength of his imagination; by their aid he perhaps acquires a taste for these great musical revelations, which many would be quite unable to enjoy for themselves. At least you must admit that the number of Beethoven's admirers has gained a large accession this way, eh! that it is to be hoped the great musician's works will thereby reach a popularity they could never have attained if left to none but an ideal understanding."

"Preserve us Heaven!" R . . . exclaimed.—"Even for these sublimest sanctities of Art you ask that banal Popularity, the curse of every grand and noble thing? For *them* you would also claim the honour of their inspiring rhythms—their only temporal manifestation—being danced-to in a village-tavern?"

"You exaggerate," I calmly answered: "I do not claim for Beethovenas symphonies the vogue of street and tavern. But would you not count it a merit the more, were they in a position to give a gladder pulse to the blood in the cribbed and cabined heart of the ordinary man of the world ?,"

"They shall have no merit, these Symphonies!"—my friend replied, in a huff "They exist for themselves and their own sake, not to flip the circulation of a philistine's blood. Who *can*, for his eternal welfare let him earn the merit of understanding those revelations; on them there rests no obligation to force themselves upon the understanding of cold hearts."

I filled up, and exclaimed with a laugh: "You're the same old phantast, who declines to understand me on the very point where we both are certainly agreed at bottom! So let's drop the Popularity question. But give me the pleasure of learning your own sensations when you heard the two symphonies to-night."

Like a passing cloud, the shade of irritation cleared from my friend's lowered brow. He watched the steam ascending from our punch, and smiled. "My sensations?—I felt [75] the soft warmth of a lovely Spring evening, and imagined I was sitting with you beneath a great oak and looking up between its branches to the star-strewn heavens. I felt a thousand things besides, but them I cannot tell you (2): there you have all."

"Not bad!" I remarked.—"Perhaps one of our neighbours imagined he was smoking a cigar, drinking coffee, and making eyes at a young lady in a blue dress."

"Without a doubt," R . . . pursued the sarcasm, "and the drummer apparently thought he was beating his ill-behaved children, for not having brought him his supper from town.—Capital! At the gate I saw a peasant listening in wonder and delight to the Symphony in A:—I would wager my head he understood it best of all, for you will have read in one of our musical journals a short while ago that Beethoven had nothing else in mind, when he composed this symphony, than to describe a peasant's wedding. The honest rustic will thus at once have called his wedding-day to memory, and revived its every incident: the guests' arrival and the feast, the march to church and blessing, the dance and finally the crowning joy, what bride and bridegroom shared alone."

"A good idea!" I cried, when I had finished laughing.—"But for heaven's sake tell me why you would prevent this symphony from affording the good peasant a happy hour of his own kind? Did he not feel, proportionately, the same delight as yourself when you sat beneath the oak and watched the stars of heaven through its branches?"

"There I am with you,"—my friend complacently replied,—"I would gladly let the worthy yokel recall his wedding-day when listening to the Symphony in A. But the civilised townsfolk who write in musical journals, I should like to tear the hair from their stupid heads when they foist such fudge on honest people, and rob them of all the ingenuousness [76] with which they would otherwise have settled down to hear Beethoven's symphony.—Instead of abandoning themselves to their natural sensations, the poor deluded people of full heart but feeble brain feel obliged to look out for a peasant's wedding, a thing they probably have never attended, and in lieu of which they would have been far more disposed to imagine something quite within the circle of their own experience."

"So you agree with me," I said, "that the nature of those creations does not forbid their being variously interpreted, according to the individual ? On the contrary," was the answer, "I consider a stereotype interpretation altogether inadmissible. Definitely as the musical fabric of a Beethovenian Symphony stands rounded and complete in all artistic proportions, perfect and indivisible as it appears to the higher sense,—just as impossible is it to reduce its effects on

the human heart to one authoritative type. This is more or less the case with the creations of every other art: how differently will one and the same picture or drama affect two different human beings, nay, the heart of one and the same individual at different times! Yet how much more definitely and sharply the painter or poet is bound to draw his figures, than the instrumental composer, who, unlike them, is not compelled to model his shapes by the features of the daily world, but has a boundless realm at his disposal in the kingdom of the supramundane, and to whose hand is given the most spiritual of substances in that of Tone! It would be to drag the musician from this high estate, if one tried to make him fit his inspiration to the semblance of that daily world; and still more would that instrumental composer disown his mission, or expose his weakness, who should aim at carrying the cramped proportions of purely worldly things into the province of his art."

"So you reject all tone-painting," I asked?

"Everywhere," answered R . . . , "save where it either is employed in jest, or reproduces purely musical phenomena. In the province of Jest all things are allowed, [77] for its nature is a certain purposed angularity, and to laugh and let laugh is a capital thing. But where tone-painting quits this region, it becomes absurd. The inspirations and incitements to an instrumental composition must be of such a kind, that they can arise in the soul of none save a musician."

"You have just said something you will have a difficulty in proving," I objected. "At bottom, I am of your opinion; only I doubt if it is quite compatible with our unqualified admiration for the works of our great masters. Don't you think that this maxim of yours flatly contradicts a part of Beethoven's revelations?"

"Not in the slightest: on the contrary, I hope to found my proof on Beethoven."

"Before we descend to details," I continued, "don't you feel that Mozart's conception of instrumental music far better corresponds with your assertion, than that of Beethoven?"

"Not that I am aware," replied my friend. "Beethoven immensely enlarged the form of Symphony when he discarded the proportions of the older musical 'period,' which had attained their utmost beauty in Mozart, and followed his impatient genius with bolder but ever more conclusive freedom to regions reachable by *him* alone; as he also knew to give these soaring flights a philosophical coherence, it is undeniable that upon the basis of the Mozartian Symphony he reared a wholly new artistic genre, which he at like time perfected in every point. But Beethoven would have been unable to achieve all this, had Mozart not previously addressed his conquering genius to the Symphony too; had his animating, idealising breath not breathed a spiritual warmth into the soulless forms and diagrams accepted until then. From here departed Beethoven, and the artist who had taken Mozart's divinely pure soul into himself could never descend from that high altitude which is true Music's sole domain."

"By all means,"—I resumed. "You will hardly deny, [78] however, that Mozart's music flowed from none but a musical source, that his inspiration started from an indefinite inner feeling, which, even had he had a poet's faculty, could never have been conveyed in words, but always and exclusively in tones. I am speaking of those inspirations which arise in the musician simultaneously with his melodies, with his tone-figures. Mozart's music bears the characteristic stamp of this instantaneous birth, and it is impossible to suppose that he would ever have drafted the plan of a symphony, for instance, whereof he had not all the themes, and in fact the entire structure as we know it, already in his head. On the other hand, I cannot help thinking that Beethoven first planned the order of a symphony according to a certain philosophical idea, before he left it to his phantasy to invent the musical themes."

"And how do you propose proving that?"—my friend ejaculated. "By this evening's Symphony perhaps?"

"With *that* I might find it harder," I answered,—"but is it not enough to simply name the Heroic Symphony, in support of my contention? You know, of course, that this symphony



was originally meant to bear the title: 'Bonaparte.' Can you deny, then, that Beethoven was inspired and prompted to the plan of this giant work by an idea outside the realm of Music?"

"Delighted at your naming that symphony!" R. . . . quickly put in. "You surely don't mean to say that the idea of a heroic force in mighty struggle for the highest, is outside the realm of Music? Or do you find that Beethoven has translated his enthusiasm for the young god of victory into such petty details as to make you think he meant this symphony for a musical bulletin of the first Italian campaign?"

"Where are you off to?"—I interposed: "Have I said anything like it?"

"It's at the back of your contention," my friend went passionately on.—"If we are to assume that Beethoven sat down to write a composition in honour of Bonaparte, [79] we must also conclude that he would have been unable to turn out anything but one of those 'occasional' pieces which bear the stamp of still-born, one and all. (3) But the *Sinfonia eroica* is all the breadth of heaven from justifying such a view! No: had the master set himself a task like that, he would have fulfilled it most unsatisfactorily:—tell me, where, in what part of this composition do you find one colourable hint that the composer had his eye on a specific event in the heroic career of the young commander? What means the Funeral March, the Scherzo with the hunting-horns, the Finale with the soft emotional Andante woven in? Where is the bridge of Lodi, where the battle of Arcole, where the victory under the Pyramids, where the 18th Brumaire? Are these not incidents which no composer of our day would have let escape him, if he wanted to write a biographic Symphony on Bonaparte?—Here, however, the case was otherwise; and permit me to tell you my own idea of the gestation of this symphony.—When a musician feels prompted to sketch the smallest composition, he owes it simply to the stimulus of a feeling that usurps his whole being at the hour of conception. This mood may be brought about by an outward experience, or have risen from a secret inner spring; whether it shews itself as melancholy, joy, desire, contentment, love or hatred, in the musician it will always take a musical shape, and voice itself in tones or ever it is cast in notes. But grand, passionate and lasting emotions, dominating all our feelings and ideas for months and often half a year, these drive the musician to those vaster, more intense conceptions to which we owe, among others, the origin of a *Sinfonia eroica*. These greater moods, as deep suffering of soul or potent exaltation, may date from outer causes, for we all are men and our fate is ruled by outward circumstances; but *when* they force the musician to production, these greater moods have already turned to music [80] in him, so that at the moment of creative inspiration, it is no longer the outer event that governs the composer, but the musical sensation which it has begotten in him. Now, what phenomenon were worthier to rouse and keep alive the sympathy, the inspiration of a genius so full of fire as Beethoven's, than that of the youthful demigod who razed a world to mould a new one from its ruins? Imagine the musician's hero-spirit following from deed to deed, from victory to victory, the man who ravished friend and foe to equal wonder! And the republican Beethoven, to boot, who looked to that hero for the realising of his ideal dreams of universal human good! How his blood must have surged, his heart glowed hot, when that glorious name rang back to him wherever he turned to commune with his Muse!—*His* strength must have felt incited to a like unwonted sweep, his will-of-victory spurred on to a kindred deed of untold grandeur. He was no General,—he was Musician; and in *his* domain he saw the sphere where he could bring to pass the selfsame thing as Bonaparte in the plains of Italy. His musical force at highest strain bade him conceive a work the like of which had ne'er before been dreamt of; he brought forth his *Sinfonia eroica*, and knowing well to whom he owed the impulse to this giant-work, he wrote upon its title-page the name of "Bonaparte." And in fact is not this symphony as grand an evidence of man's creative power, as Bonaparte's glorious victory? Yet I ask you if a single trait in its development has an immediate outer connection with the fate of the hero, who at that time had not even reached the zenith of his destined fame? I am happy enough to admire



in it nothing but a gigantic monument of Art, to fortify myself by the strength and joyous exaltation which swell my breast on hearing it; and leave to learned other folk to spell out the fights of Rivoli and Marengo from its score's mysterious hieroglyphs!"

The night air had grown still colder; during this speech a passing waiter had taken my hint to remove the punch and warm it up again; he now came back, and once more [81] the grateful beverage was steaming high before our eyes. I filled up, and reached my hand to R . .

.. "We are at one," I said, "as ever, when it touches the innermost questions of art. However feeble our forces, we shouldn't deserve the name of musicians, could we fall into such blatant errors about the nature of our art as you have just denounced. What Music expresses is eternal, infinite, and ideal; she expresses not the passion, love, desire, of this or that individual in this or that condition, but Passion, Love, Desire itself, and in such infinitely varied phases as lie in her unique possession and are foreign and unknown to any other tongue. Of her let each man taste according to his strength, his faculty and mood, what taste and feel he can"—

"And to-night,"—my friend broke in, in full enthusiasm,—"'tis joy I taste, the happiness, the presage of a higher destiny, won from the wondrous revelations in which Mozart and Beethoven have spoken to us on this glorious Spring evening. So here's to Happiness, to Joy! Here's to Courage, that enheartens us in fight with our fate! Here's to Victory, gained by our higher sense over the worthlessness of the vulgar! To Love, which crowns our courage; to friendship, that keeps firm our Faith! To Hope, which weds itself to our foreboding! To the day, to the night! A cheer for the sun, a cheer for the stars! And three cheers for Music and her high priests! Forever be God adored and worshipped, the god of Joy and Happiness,—the god who created Music! Amen.—

Arm-in-arm we took our journey home; we pressed each other's hand, and not a word more did we say.

## Notes

### Note 1 on page 5

"Not dead in Paris yet" did not appear in the French. The tale was originally styled "Une soirée heureuse: Fantaisie sur la musique pittoresque," and published in the *Gazette Musicale* of Oct. 24 and Nov. 7, 1841.—Tr.

### Note 2 on page 7

Cf. "Wo ich erwacht, weilt' ich nicht; doch wo ich weilte, das kann ich dir nicht sagen. . . . Ich war—wo ich von je gewesen, wohin auf je ich gehe: im weiten Reich der Welten Nacht." *Tristan*, act iii.—Tr.

### Note 3 on page 9

In the *Gazette* there was a footnote here: "Il y a huit ans, à l'époque où cette conversation eut lieu, mon ami R... ne pouvait connaître la symphonie de Berlioz pour la translation des victimes de Juillet."—Tr.

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*Rossini's Stabat Mater*

By Richard Wagner

Translated by William Ashton Ellis



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## Contents

About this Title .....	4
Preface .....	5
Rossini's Stabat Mater .....	7
Notes .....	11
Summary .....	13

## About this Title

### Source

*Rossini's Stabat Mater*

By Richard Wagner

Translated by William Ashton Ellis

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Notes are indicated using parenthesis, like (1).

Page numbers of the original source are indicated using square-bracketed parentheses, like [62].

[142]

## Preface

The account of this remarkable occurrence in the highest Paris world of music our friend despatched to Robert Schumann, who at that time was editor of the "Neue Zeitschrift für Musik" and headed the skit—signed with an inexplicable pseudonym—with the following motto:

"Das ist am allermeisten unerquickend,  
Dass sich so breit darf machen das Unächte,  
Das Ächte selbst mit falscher Scheu umstrickend."

("Of all our evils 'tis the sorriest token  
How wide the spurious has spread its rule,  
That e'en the genuine with false shame is spoken.")

RÜCKERT.





[143]

## Rossini's Stabat Mater

WHILE waiting for other musical treats in preparation for the glorious Paris public; while waiting for Halévy's "Maltese Knight," the "Water-carrier" of Cherubini, and finally, in the dimmest background, the "*Nonne Sanglante*" of Berlioz,—nothing so excites and captivates the interest of this fevered world of dilettanti, as—*Rossini's piety*. (1) Rossini is pious,—all the world is pious, and the Parisian salons have been turned into praying-cells.—It is extraordinary! So long as this man lives, he'll always be the mode. Makes he the Mode, or makes it him? 'Tis a ticklish problem. True, that this piety took root a long time since, especially in high society;—what time this ardour has been catered-for in Berlin by philosophic Pietism; what time the whole of Germany lays bare its heart to' the musical gospel according to Felix Mendelssohn,—the Paris world of quality has no idea of being left behind. For some while past they have been getting their first quadrille-composers to write quite exquisite *Ave Marias* or *Salve Reginas*; and themselves, the duchesses and countesses, have made it their duty to study the two, or three parts of them, and edify therewith their thronging guests, groaning for very reverence and overcrowding. This glowing stress of piety had long burnt through the charming corsets of these lion-hearted duchesses and countesses, and threatened to singe the costly tulle and [144] laces which theretofore had heaved so blamelessly and unimpassioned on their modest chests—when at last, at a most appropriate opportunity, it kindled into vivid flame. That opportunity was none other than the *in memoriam* service for the Emperor Napoleon, in the chapel of the Invalides. All the world knows that for these obsequies the most entrancing singers of the Italian and French Operas felt themselves impelled to render Mozart's Requiem, and all the world may see that that was no small matter. Above all, however, the *high* world of Paris was quite carried away by this flash of insight: it is wont to melt, without conditions, in presence of *Rubini's* and *Persiani's* singing; to close its fan with nerveless hand, to sink back upon its satin mantle, to close its eyes, and lisp: "*c'est ravissant!*" Further is it wont, when recovering from the exhaustion of its transports, to breathe out the yearning question: "By whom, this composition?" For this it really is quite requisite to know, if in one's stress to imitate those singers one means to send one's gold-laced chasseur next morning to the music-sellers, to fetch one home that heavenly aria or that divine duet. By strict observance of this custom the high Parisian world had come to learn that it was *Rossini*, *Bellini*, *Donizetti*, who had provided those intoxicating singers with the wherewithal to melt it; it recognised the merit of these masters, and it loved them.

So the destiny of France would have it that, to hear the adored *Rubini* and the bewitching *Persiani*, instead of in the *Théâtre des Italiens* one must assemble beneath the dome of the Invalides. In view of all the circumstances, the Ministry of Public Affairs had formed the wise resolve that this time, in lieu of Rossini's *Cenerentola*, *Mozart's* Requiem should be sung; and thus it came to pass, quite of itself, that our dilettantist duchesses and countesses were given something very different to hear, for once, from what they were accustomed-to at the Italian Opera. With the most touching lack of prejudice, however, they accommodated themselves to everything: they heard *Rubini* and *Persiani*,—they [145] melted away; instead of their fans, they dropped their muffs; they leant back on their costly furs (for it was mortal cold in church on December 15, 1840)—and, just as at the Opera, they lisped: "*c'est ravissant!*" Next day one sends for Mozart's Requiem, and turns its first few pages over: it has plenty of *colorature!* One tries them,—but: "Good Heavens! It tastes like physic! They're fugues!" "Powers above! where have we got to?" "How is it possible? This can't be the right thing!", "And yet!"—What's to be done?—One tortures oneself,—one tries,—it won't go at all!—But there's no help for it; sacred music must be sung! Did not *Rubini* and *Persiani* sing sacred

music?—Then kindly music-dealers, beholding the anguish of these pious ladies' hearts, rush in to the rescue: "Here you have brand-new Latin pieces by Clapisson, by Thomas, by Monpou, by Musard, &c., &c. All cut and dried for you! Made expressly for you! Here an *Ave*; there a *Salve*!"

Ah! how happy they were, the pious Paris duchesses, the fervent countesses! They all sing Latin: two soprani in thirds, with occasionally the purest fifths in all the world,—a tenor *col basso*! Their souls are calmed; no one now need be afraid of purgatory!—

Yet,—quadrilles of Musard's, or Clapisson's, one only dances *once*,—their *Ave*! and *Salve*!, with any good grace, one can sing but *twice* at most; that, however, is too little for the fervour of our high-class world; it asks for edifying songs which one may sing at least fifty times over, just like the lovely operatic arias and duets of Rossini, Bellini and Donizetti. Someone had read indeed, in a theatrical report from Leipzig, that Donizetti's *Favorite* was full of old-Italian church-style; however, the fact that this opera's church-pieces were composed to a French, and not to a Latin text, obstructed our high world from giving vent to its religious stress by singing them; and it still remained to find the man whose church-songs one might sing with orthodox belief.

About this time it happened that *Rossini* had let nothing [146] be heard of him for ten long years: he sat in Bologna, ate pastry, and made wills. Among the pleadings in the recent action between Messieurs *Schlesinger* (2) and *Troupenas*, an inspired advocate declared that during those ten years the musical world had "moaned" beneath the silence of the giant master; and we may assume that, on this occasion, the Parisian *high* world even "groaned." Nevertheless there circulated dismal rumours about the extraordinary mood the *maestro* was in; at one moment we heard that his hypogastrium was much incommoded, at another—his beloved father had died [April 29, 1839];—one said that he meant to turn fishmonger; another, that he refused to hear his operas any more. But the truth of it seems to have been, he felt penitent and meant to write church-music; for this one relied on an old, a well-known proverb, and the fact is that Rossini evinced an invincible longing to make this proverb's second half come true, since he positively had no more need to verify its first. The earliest stimulus to carry out his expiation seems to have come to him in Spain: in Spain, where Don Juan found the amplest, choicest opportunities of sin, Rossini is said to have found the spur to penance.

It was on a journey which he was making with his good friend the Paris banker, Herr *Aguado*;—they were sitting at ease in a well-appointed chariot, and admiring the beauties of Nature,—Herr *Aguado* was nibbling chocolate, Rossini was munching pastry. Then it suddenly occurred to Herr *Aguado* that he really had robbed his compatriots more than was proper, and, smitten with remorse, he drew the chocolate from his mouth;—not to be behind such a beautiful example, Rossini gave his teeth a rest, and confessed that all through life he had devoted too much time to pastry. Both agreed that it would well beseem their present mood to stop their chariot at the nearest cloister, and go through some fit act of penance: no sooner said than done. The Prior of the nearest monastery received the travellers like a friend: he kept a capital [147] cellar, excellent *Lacrymæ Christi* and other good sorts, which quite uncommonly consoled the contrite sinners. Nevertheless it struck Messrs *Aguado* and *Rossini*, as they were in the right humour, that they really had meant to undergo a penance: Herr *Aguado* seized his pocket-book in haste, drew out a few telling banknotes, and dedicated them to the sagacious Prior. Behind this fine example of his friend's, again, Rossini felt he must not linger,—he produced a solid quire of music-paper, and what he wrote on it post-haste was nothing less than a whole *Stabat mater* with grand orchestra; that *Stabat* he presented to the estimable Prior. The latter gave them absolution, and they both got back into their chariot. But the worthy Prior soon was raised to lofty rank, and translated to Madrid; where he lost no time in having the *Stabat* of his confessional child performed, and dying at the earliest opportunity. Among a thousand memorable relics, his executors found the score of

that contrite *Stabat mater*; they sold it, at not at all a bad figure, for good of the poor—and thus, from hand to hand, this much-prized composition became at last the property of a Paris music-publisher.

Now this music-publisher, deeply moved by its countless beauties, and no less touched on the other side by the growing pain of unallayed religious fervour among the high Parisian dilettanti, resolved to make his treasure public. With stealthy haste he was having the plates engraved when up there sprang another publisher, who with astounding cruelty clapped an injunction on his busy, hidden offering. That other publisher, a stiff-necked man by the name of *Troupenas*, maintained he had far better claims to the copyright of that *Stabat mater*, for his friend Rossini had pledged it to him against a huge consignment of pastry. He further averred that the work had been in his possession quite a number of years, and his only reason for not publishing it had been Rossini's wish to first provide it with a fugue or two, and a counterpoint in the seventh; these, however, were still a hard task for the [148] master, as he had not quite completed his many years' study with that end in view; nevertheless, the master of late had gained so profound an insight into double counterpoint that his *Stabat* no longer pleased him in its present shape, and he had decided under no conditions to lay it thus—without fugues and such-like—before the world. (3) Unfortunately Herr *Troupenas*' letters of authorisation date merely from quite recent times; so that it would be difficult for this publisher to prove his prior rights, did he not believe he had one crushing argument, namely that so long ago as the obsequies of the Emperor Napoleon on December 15th, 1840, he had proposed this *Stabat* for performance in the chapel of the Invalides.

A shriek of horror and indignation rose from every salon of high Paris, when this latter statement was made known. "What!" cried everyone: "A composition of Rossini's was in existence,—it was offered you, and you Minister of Public Affairs, you rejected it? You dared, instead, to foist on us that hopeless Requiem by Mozart?"—In effect, the Ministry trembled; all the more, as its uncommon popularity had made it most obnoxious to the upper classes. It feared dismissal, an indictment for high treason, and therefore held it opportune to spread a secret rumour that Rossini's *Stabat mater* wouldn't at all have done for the Emperor's obsequies as its text was concerned with quite other things than were meet for Napoleon's shade to hear, and so forth.—That this was merely a herring drawn across the scent, one thought one saw at once; for one could justly reply that not a creature understood this Latin text, and finally—what mattered the text at all, if *Rossini's* [149] heavenly melodies were to be sung by the most ravishing singers in the world?—

But the strife of parties round this fateful *Stabat mater* rages all the fiercer, since there is a further point involved in those awaited fugues. At last, then, is this mysterious class of composition about to be made presentable for salons of the higher dilettanti! At last, then, shall they learn the secret of that silly stuff which so racked their brains in Mozart's Requiem! At last will *they* be able, too, to boast of singing fugues; and these fugues will be oh! so charming and adorable, so delicate, so aërial! And these *counterpointlets*—they'll make everything else quite foolish,—they'll look like Brussels lace, and smell like patchouli!—What?—And without these fugues, without these counterpointlets, we were to have had the *Stabat*? How shameful! No, we'll wait till Herr *Troupenas* receives the fugues.—Heavens!—but there arrives a *Stabat*, straight from Germany! Finished, bound in a yellow cover There, too, are publishers who maintain they have sent baked goods to Rossini, at heavy prices! Is the bewilderment to have no end? Spain, France, Germany, all fall to blows around this *Stabat*:—Action! Fight! Tumult! Revolution! Horror!—

Then Herr *Schlesinger* decides to shed a friendly ray upon the night of trouble: he publishes a *Waltz by Rossini*. All smooth the wrinkles from their brow,—eyes beam with joy,—lips smile: ala! what lovely waltzes!—But Destiny descends:—Herr *Troupenas* impounds the friendly ray! That dreadful word: *Copyright*—growls through the scarce laid

breezes. Action! Action! Once more, Action! And money is fetched out, to pay the best of lawyers, to get documents produced, to enter caveats.— — —O ye foolish people, have ye lost your hiking for your gold? I know somebody who for five francs will make you five waltzes, each of them better than that misery of the wealthy master's!

Paris, 15th December, 1841.

## Notes

### Note 1 on page 7

This article (to which a little editorial note was added, "From a new correspondent") formed the 'leader' in the *N.Z.f.M.* of December 28, 1841, and was signed "H. Valentino." The quotation from Friedrich Rückert (a celebrated German poet, 1788-1866) appears to have been Schumann's own selection, for it was assigned the usual place of honour beneath the journal's superscription. The text in the *Ges. Schr.* is absolutely identical with that in the *N.Z.*—Tr.

### Note 2 on page 8

Publisher of the *Gazette Musicale.*—Tr.

### Note 3 on page 9

According to Grove's Dictionary of Music, it was at the request of Aguado that Rossini composed six numbers of his *Stabat Mater* in 1832 for the Spanish Minister, Señor Valera, the work being then completed with four numbers by Tadolini. In 1839 the heirs of Valera sold the MS. for 2,000 fr. to a Paris publisher, at which Rossini was most indignant and instructed Troupenas to stop the publication and performance. He then wrote the remaining four numbers, and sold the whole to Troupenas for 6,000 fr. The first six numbers were produced at the Salle Herz in Paris on Oct. 31, 1841; the complete work was first performed at the Salle Ventadour, Jan. 7, 1842, by Grisi, Albertazzi, Mario and Tamburini.—Tr.



[364]

## Summary

Religious fervour in Parisian salons; duchesses and countesses singing their little *Ave* etc.; re-interment of Bonaparte's remains to accompaniment of Mozart's *Requiem*—they melt away, then try its music, "it tastes like physic"; so they get their quadrille-composers to write Latin pieces (145). Rossini's retirement at Bologna; his tour in Spain with Aguado; a *Stabat Mater* of contrition. Disputes about its copyright (147). The maestro learning counterpoint; at last the duchesses will be able to sing fugues. A "friendly ray" impounded (149).

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# *Autobiographic Sketch*

By Richard Wagner

Translated by William Ashton Ellis



The Wagner Library

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## Contents

About this Title .....	4
Translator's Note .....	5
Autobiographic Sketch .....	7
Notes .....	17

## About this Title

### Source

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By Richard Wagner

Translated by William Ashton Ellis

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This title contains 6320 words.

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Notes are indicated using parenthesis, like (1).

Page numbers of the original source are indicated using square-bracketed parentheses, like [62].

[2]

## Translator's Note

This sketch of his life, down to the year 1842, was drawn up by Wagner, at the request of his friend Heinrich Laube, for publication (1843) in a Journal edited by the latter, and called the "*Zeitung für die Elegante Welt*." The editor then prefaced it by the following remark:—

"The storm and stress of Paris have rapidly developed the Musician into a Writer. I should only spoil the life-sketch, did I attempt to alter a word of it."



[3]

## Autobiographic Sketch

My name is *Wilhelm Richard Wagner*, and I was born at Leipzig on May the 22nd, 1813. My father was a police-actuary, and died six months after I was born. My step-father, Ludwig Geyer, was a comedian and painter; he was also the author of a few stage plays, of which one, "*Der Bethlehemitische Kindermord*" (The Slaughter of the Innocents), had a certain success. My whole family migrated with him to Dresden. He wished me to become a painter, but I showed a very poor talent for drawing.

My step-father also died ere long,—I was only seven years old. Shortly before his death I had learnt to play "*Üb' immer Treu und Redlichkeit*" and the then newly published "*Jungfernkranz*" upon the pianoforte; the day before his death, I was bid to play him both these pieces in the adjoining room; I heard him then, with feeble voice, say to my mother: "Has he perchance a talent for music?" On the early morrow, as he lay dead, my mother came into the children's sleeping-room, and said to each of us some loving word. To me she said: "He hoped to make *something* of thee." I remember, too, that for a long time I imagined that something indeed would come of me.

In my ninth year I went to the Dresden *Kreuzschule*: I wished to study, and music was not thought of. Two of my sisters learnt to play the piano passably; I listened to them, but had no piano lessons myself. Nothing pleased me so much as *Der Freischütz*; I often saw *Weber* pass before our house, as he came from rehearsals; I always watched him with a reverent awe. A tutor who explained to me [4] *Cornelius Nepos*, was at last engaged to give me pianoforte instructions; hardly had I got past the earliest finger-exercises, when I furtively practised, at first by ear, the Overture to *Der Freischütz*; my teacher heard this once, and said nothing would come of me.—He was right; in my whole life I have never learnt to play the piano properly.—Thenceforward I only played for my own amusement, nothing but overtures, and with the most fearful 'fingering.' It was impossible for me to play a passage clearly, and I therefore conceived a just dread of all scales and runs. Of Mozart, I only cared for the *Magic Flute*; *Don Juan* was distasteful to me, on account of the Italian text beneath it: it seemed to me such rubbish.

But this music-strumming was quite a secondary matter: Greek, Latin, Mythology, and Ancient History were my principal studies. I wrote verses too. Once there died one of my schoolfellows, and our teacher set us the task of writing a poem upon his death; the best lines were then to be printed:—my own were printed, but only after I had cleared them of a heap of bombast. I was then eleven years old. I promptly determined to become a poet; and sketched out tragedies on the model of the Greeks, urged by my acquaintance with *Apel's* works: *Polyidos*, *Die Ätolier*, &c., &c. Moreover, I passed in my school for a good head "*in litteris*;" even in the 'Third form' I had translated the first twelve books of the *Odyssey*. For a while I learnt English also, merely so as to gain an accurate knowledge of Shakespeare; and I made a metrical translation of Romeo's monologue. Though I soon left English on one side, yet Shakespeare remained my exemplar, and I projected a great tragedy which was almost nothing but a medley of *Hamlet* and *King Lear*. The plan was gigantic in the extreme; two-and-forty human beings died in the course of this piece, and I saw myself compelled, in its working-out, to call the greater number back as ghosts, since otherwise I should have been short of characters for my last Acts. This play occupied my leisure for two whole years.

[5]

Meanwhile, I left Dresden and its *Kreuzschule*, and went to Leipzig. In the *Nikolaischule* of that city I was relegated to the 'Third form,' after having already attained to the 'Second' in

Dresden. This circumstance embittered me so much, that thenceforward I lost all liking for philological study. I became lazy and slovenly, and my grand tragedy was the only thing left me to care about. Whilst I was finishing this I made my first acquaintance with Beethoven's music, in the Leipzig *Gewandhaus* concerts; its impression upon me was overpowering. I also became intimate with Mozart's works, chiefly through his *Requiem*. Beethoven's music to *Egmont* so much inspired me, that I determined—for all the world—not to allow my now completed tragedy to leave the stocks until provided with suchlike music. Without the slightest diffidence, I believed that I could myself write this needful music, but thought it better to first clear up a few of the general principles of thorough-bass. To get through this as swiftly as possible, I borrowed for a week Logier's "*Method of Thorough-bass*," and studied it in hot haste. But this study did not bear such rapid fruit as I had expected: its difficulties both provoked and fascinated me; I resolved to become a musician.

During this time my great tragedy was unearthed by my family: they were much disturbed thereat, for it was clear as day that I had woefully neglected my school lessons in favour of it, and I was forthwith admonished to continue them more diligently. Under such circumstances, I breathed no word of my secret discovery of a calling for music; but, notwithstanding, I composed in silence a Sonata, a Quartet, and an Aria. When I felt myself sufficiently matured in my private musical studies, I ventured forth at last with their announcement. Naturally, I now had many a hard battle to wage, for my relations could only consider my penchant for music as a fleeting passion—all the more as it was unsupported by any proofs of preliminary study, and especially by any already won dexterity in handling a musical instrument.

[6]

I was then in my sixteenth year, and, chiefly from a perusal of E. A. Hoffmann's works, on fire with the maddest mysticism: I had visions by day in semi-slumber, in which the 'Keynote,' 'Third,' and 'Dominant' seemed to take on living form and reveal to me their mighty meaning: the notes that I wrote down were stark with folly.—At last a capable musician was engaged to instruct me: the poor man had a sorry office in explaining to me that what I took for wondrous shapes and powers were really chords and intervals. What could be more disturbing to my family than to find that I proved myself negligent and refractory in this study also? My teacher shook his head, and it appeared that here too no good thing could be brought from me. My liking for study dwindled more and more, and I chose instead to write Overtures for full orchestra—one of which was once performed in the Leipzig theatre. This Overture was the culminating point of my foolishness. For its better understanding by such as might care to study the score, I elected to employ for its notation three separate tints of ink: red for the 'strings,' green for the 'wood-wind,' and black for the 'brass.' Beethoven's Ninth Symphony was a mere Pleyel Sonata by the side of this marvellously concocted Overture. Its performance was mainly prejudiced by a *fortissimo* thud on the big drum, that recurred throughout the whole overture at regular intervals of four bars; with the result, that the audience gradually passed from its initial amazement at the obstinacy of the drum-beater to undisguised displeasure, and finally to a mirthful mood that much disquieted me. This first performance of a composition of mine left on me a deep impression.

But now the July Revolution took place; with one bound I became a revolutionist, and acquired the conviction that every decently active being ought to occupy himself with politics exclusively. I was only happy in the company of political writers, and I commenced an Overture upon a political theme. Thus was I minded, when I left school and went to the university: not, indeed, [7] to devote myself to studying for any profession—for my musical career was now resolved on—but to attend lectures on philosophy and aesthetics. By this opportunity of improving my mind I profited as good as nothing, but gave myself up to all the excesses of student life; and that with such reckless levity, that they very soon revolted me. My relations were now sorely troubled about me, for I had almost entirely abandoned my

music. Yet I speedily came to my senses; I felt the need of a completely new beginning of strict and methodical study of music, and Providence led me to the very man best qualified to inspire me with fresh love for the thing, and to purge my notions by the thoroughness of instruction. This man was *Theodor Weinlig*, the Cantor of the Leipzig *Thomasschule*. Although I had previously made my own attempts at Fugue, it was with him that I first commenced a thorough study of Counterpoint, which he possessed the happy knack of teaching his pupils while playing.

At this epoch I first acquired an intimate love and knowledge of Mozart. I composed a Sonata, in which I freed myself from all buckram, and strove for a natural unforced style of composition. This extremely simple and modest work was published by Breitkopf und Härtel. My studies under Weinlig were ended in less than half a year, and he dismissed me himself from his tuition as soon as he had brought me so far forward that I was in a position to solve with ease the hardest problems of Counterpoint. "What you have made your own by this dry study," he said, "we call Self-dependence." In that same half year I also composed an Overture on the model of Beethoven; a model which I now understood somewhat better. This Overture was played in one of the Leipzig Gewandhaus concerts, to most encouraging applause. After several other works, I then engaged in a Symphony: to my head exemplar, Beethoven, I allied Mozart, especially as shewn in his great C major Symphony. Lucidity and force—albeit with many a strange aberration—were my end and aim.

[8]

My Symphony completed, I set out in the summer of 1832 on a journey to Vienna, with no other object than to get a hasty glimpse of this renowned music-city. What I saw and heard there edified me little; wherever I went, I heard *Zampa* and Straussian pot pourris on *Zampa*. Both—and especially at that time—were to me an abomination. On my homeward journey I tarried a while in Prague, where I made the acquaintance of Dionys Weber and Tomaschek; the former had several of my compositions performed in the conservatoire, and among them my Symphony. In that city I also composed an opera-book of tragic contents: "*Die Hochzeit*." I know not whence I had come by the mediaeval subject-matter: — a frantic lover climbs to the window of the sleeping chamber of his friend's bride, wherein she is awaiting the advent of the bridegroom; the bride struggles with the madman and hurls him into the courtyard below, where his mangled body gives up the ghost. During the funeral ceremony, the bride, uttering one cry, sinks lifeless on the corpse.

Returned to Leipzig, I set to work at once on the composition of this opera's first 'number,' which contained a grand Sextet that much pleased Weinlig. The textbook found no favour with my sister; I destroyed its every trace.

In January of 1833 my Symphony was performed at a Gewandhaus concert, and met with highly inspiring applause. At about this time I came to know Heinrich Laube.

To visit one of my brothers, I travelled to Wurzburg in the spring of the same year, and remained there till its close; my brother's intimacy was of great importance to me, for he was an accomplished singer. During my stay in Wurzburg I composed a romantic opera in three Acts: "*Die Feen*," for which I wrote my own text, after Gozzi's: "*Die Frau als Schlange*." Beethoven and Weber were my models; in the *ensembles* of this opera there was much that fell out very well, and the Finale of the Second Act, especially, promised a good effect. The 'numbers' from [9] this work which I brought to a hearing at concerts in Wurzburg, were favourably received. Full of hopes for my now finished opera, I returned to Leipzig at the beginning of 1834, and offered it for performance to the Director of that theatre. However, in spite of his at first declared readiness to comply with my wish, I was soon forced to the same experience that every German opera-composer has nowadays to win: we are discredited upon our own native stage by the success of Frenchmen and Italians, and the production of our operas is a favour to be cringed for. The performance of my *Feen* was set upon the shelf.



Meanwhile I heard the *Devrient* sing in Bellini's *Romeo and Juliet*. I was astounded to witness so extraordinary a rendering of such utterly meaningless music. I grew doubtful as to the choice of the proper means to bring about a great success; far though I was from attaching to Bellini a signal merit, yet the subject to which his music was set seemed to me to be more propitious and better calculated to spread the warm glow of life, than the painstaking pedantry with which we Germans, as a rule, brought naught but laborious make-believe to market. The flabby lack of character of our modern Italians, equally with the frivolous levity of the latest Frenchmen, appeared to me to challenge the earnest, conscientious German to master the happily chosen and happily exploited means of his rivals, in order then to outstrip them in the production of genuine works of art.

I was then twenty-one years of age, inclined to take life and the world on their pleasant side. "*Ardinghello*" (by Heinse) and "*Das Junge Europa*" (by H. Laube) tingled through my every limb; while Germany appeared in my eyes a very tiny portion of the earth. I had emerged from abstract Mysticism, and I learnt a love for Matter. Beauty of material and brilliancy of wit were lordly things to me: as regards my beloved music, I found them both among the Frenchmen and Italians. I forswore my model, Beethoven; his last Symphony I deemed the keystone [10] of a whole great epoch of art, beyond whose limits no man could hope to press, and within which no man could attain to independence. Mendelssohn also seemed to have felt with me, when he stepped forth with his smaller orchestral compositions, leaving untouched the great and fenced-off form of the Symphony of Beethoven; it seemed to me that, beginning with a lesser, completely unshackled form, he fain would create for himself therefrom a greater.

Everything around me appeared fermenting: to abandon myself to the general fermentation, I deemed the most natural course. Upon a lovely summer's journey among the Bohemian watering-places, I sketched the plan of a new opera, "*Das Liebesverbot*," taking my subject from Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*—only with this difference, that I robbed it of its prevailing earnestness, and thus re-moulded it after the pattern of *Das Junge Europa*; free and frank physicalism (*Sinnlichkeit*) gained, of its own sheer strength, the victory over Puritanical hypocrisy.

In the summer of this same year, 1834, I further took the post of Music-Director at the Magdeburg theatre. The practical application of my musical knowledge to the functions of a conductor bore early fruit; for the vicissitudes of intercourse with singers and singeresses, behind the scenes and in front of the footlights, completely matched my bent toward many-hued distraction. The composition of my *Liebesverbot* was now begun. I produced the Overture to *Die Feen* at a concert; it had a marked success. This notwithstanding, I lost all liking for this opera, and, since I was no longer able to personally attend to my affairs at Leipzig, I soon resolved to trouble myself no more about this work, which is as much as to say that I gave it up.

For a festival play for New Year's day, 1835, I hastily threw together some music, which aroused a general interest. Such lightly won success much fortified my views that in order to please, one must not too scrupulously choose one's means. In this sense I continued the composition of my *Liebesverbot*, and took no care whatever to avoid the echoes [11] of the French and Italian stages. Interrupted in this work for a while, I resumed it in the winter of 1835-6, and completed it shortly before the dispersal of the Magdeburg opera troupe. I had now only twelve days before the departure of the principal singers; therefore my opera must be rehearsed in this short space of time, if I still wished them to perform it. With greater levity than deliberation, I permitted this opera—which contained some arduous rôles—to be set on the stage after a ten days' study. I placed my trust in the prompter and in my conductor's baton. But, spite of all my efforts, I could not remove the obstacle, that the singers scarcely half knew their parts. The representation was like a dream to us all: no human being could

possibly get so much as an idea what it was all about; yet there was some consolation in the fact that applause was plentiful. From various reasons, a second performance could not be given.

In the midst of all this, the 'earnestness of life' had knocked at my door; my outward independence, so rashly grasped at, had led me into follies of every kind, and on all sides I was plagued by penury and debts. It occurred to me to venture upon something out of the ordinary, in order not to slide into the common rut of need. Without any sort of prospect, I went to Berlin and offered the Director to produce my *Liebesverbot* at the theatre of that capital. I was received at first with the fairest promises; but, after long suspense, I had to learn that not one of them was sincerely meant. In the sorriest plight I left Berlin, and applied for the post of Musical Director at the Königsberg theatre, in Prussia—a post which I subsequently obtained. In that city I got married in the autumn of 1836, amid the most dubious outward circumstances. The year which I spent in Königsberg was completely lost to my art, by reason of the pressure of petty cares. I wrote one solitary Overture: "*Rule Britannia*."

In the summer of 1837 I visited Dresden for a short time. There I was led back by the reading of Bulwer's "*Rienzi*" [12] to an already cherished idea, viz., of turning the last of Rome's tribunes into the hero of a grand tragic opera. Hindered by outward discomforts, however, I busied myself no further with dramatic sketches. In the autumn of this year I went to Riga, to take up the position of first Musical Director at the theatre recently opened there by Holtei. I found there an assemblage of excellent material for opera, and went to its employment with the greatest liking. Many interpolated passages for individual singers in various operas, were composed by me during this period. I also wrote the libretto for a comic opera in two Acts: "*Die Glückliche Bärenfamilie*," the matter for which I took from one of the stories in the "Thousand and One Nights." I had only composed two 'numbers' for this, when I was disgusted to find that I was again on the high road to music-making *à la Adam*. My spirit, my deeper feelings, were wounded by this discovery, and I laid aside the work in horror. The daily studying and conducting of Auber's, Adam's, and Bellini's music contributed its share to a speedy undoing of my frivolous delight in such an enterprise.

The utter childishness of our provincial public's verdict upon any art-manifestation that may chance to make its first appearance in their own theatre—for they are only accustomed to witness performances of works already judged and accredited by the greater world outside—brought me to the decision, at no price to produce for the first time a largish work at a minor theatre. When, therefore, I felt again the instinctive need of undertaking a major work, I renounced all idea of obtaining a speedy representation of it in my immediate neighbourhood: I fixed my mind upon some theatre of first rank, that would some day produce it, and troubled myself but little as to where and when that theatre would be found. In this wise did I conceive the sketch of a grand tragic opera in five Acts: "*Rienzi, the last of the Tribunes*;" and I laid my plans on so important a scale, that it would be impossible to produce this opera—at any rate for the first time—at [13] any lesser theatre. Moreover, the wealth and force of the material left me no other course, and my procedure was governed more by necessity than set purpose. In the summer of 1838 I completed the poem; at the same time, I was engaged in rehearsing our opera troupe, with much enthusiasm and affection, in Méhul's "*Jacob and his Sons*."

When, in the autumn, I began the composition of my *Rienzi*, I allowed naught to influence me except the single purpose to answer to my subject. I set myself no model, but gave myself entirely to the feeling which now consumed me, the feeling that I had already so far progressed that I might claim something significant from the development of my artistic powers, and expect some not insignificant result. The very notion of being consciously weak or trivial—even in a single bar—was appalling to me.

During the winter I was in the full swing of composition, so that by the spring of 1839 I had finished the long first two Acts. About this time my contract with the Director of the theatre terminated, and various circumstances made it inconvenient to me to stay longer at Riga. For two years I had nursed the plan of going to Paris, and with this in view, I had, even while at Königsberg, sent to Scribe the sketch of an opera plot, with the proposal that he should elaborate it for his own benefit and procure me, in reward, the commission to compose the opera for Paris. Scribe naturally left this suggestion as good as unregarded. Nevertheless, I did not give up my scheme; on the contrary, I returned to it with renewed keenness in the summer of 1839; and the long and the short of it was, that I induced my wife to embark with me upon a sailing vessel bound for London.

This voyage I never shall forget as long as I live; it lasted three and a half weeks, and was rich in mishaps. Thrice did we endure the most violent of storms, and once the captain found himself compelled to put into a Norwegian haven. The passage among the crags of Norway made a wonderful impression on my fancy; the legends of [14] the Flying Dutchman, as I heard them from the seamen's mouths, were clothed for me in a distinct and individual colour, borrowed from the adventures of the ocean through which I then was passing.

Resting from the severe exhaustion of the transit, we remained a week in London; nothing interested me so much as the city itself and the Houses of Parliament,—of the theatres, I visited not one. At Boulogne-sur-mer I stayed four weeks, and there made the acquaintance of Meyerbeer. I brought under his notice the two finished Acts of my *Rienzi*; he promised me, in the friendliest fashion, his support in Paris. With very little money, but the best of hopes, I now set foot in Paris. Entirely without any personal references, I could rely on no one but Meyerbeer. He seemed prepared, with the most signal attentiveness, to set in train whatever might further my aims; and it certainly seemed to me that I should soon attain a wished-for goal—had it not unfortunately so turned out that, during the very period of my stay in Paris, Meyerbeer was generally, nay almost the whole time, absent from that city. It is true that he wished to serve me even from a distance; but, according to his own announcement, epistolary efforts could avail nothing where only the most assiduous personal mediation is of any efficacy.

First of all, I entered upon negotiations with the *Théâtre de la Renaissance*, where both comedy and opera were then being given. The score of my *Liebesverbot* seemed best fitted for this theatre, and the somewhat frivolous subject appeared easily adaptable to the French stage. I was so warmly recommended by Meyerbeer to the Director of the theatre, that he could not help receiving me with the best of promises. Thereupon, one of the most prolific of Parisian dramatists, *Dumersan*, offered to undertake the poetical setting of the subject. He translated three 'numbers,' destined for a trial hearing, with so great felicity that my music looked much better in its new French dress than in its original German; in fact, it was music such as Frenchmen most readily comprehend, and [15] everything promised me the best success—when the *Théâtre de la Renaissance* immediately became bankrupt. All my labours, all my hopes, were thus in vain.

In the same winter, 1839-40, I composed — besides an Overture to the first part of Goethe's *Faust* — several French Ballads; among others, a French translation made for me of H. Heine's *The Two Grenadiers*. I never dreamt of any possibility of getting my *Rienzi* produced in Paris, for I clearly foresaw that I should have had to wait five or six years, even under the most favourable conditions, before such a plan could be carried out; moreover, the translation of the text of the already half-finished composition would have thrown insuperable obstacles in the way.

Thus I began the summer of 1840, completely bereft of immediate prospects. My acquaintance with Habeneck, Halévy, Berlioz, &c., led to no closer relations with these men: in Paris no artist has time to form a friendship with another, for each is in a red hot hurry for

his own advantage. Halévy, like all the composers of our day, was aflame with enthusiasm for his art only so long as it was a question of winning a great success: so soon as he had carried off this prize, and was enthroned among the privileged ranks of artistic 'lions,' he had no thought for anything but making operas and pocketing their pay. Renown is everything in Paris: the happiness and ruin of the artist. Despite his stand-off manners, Berlioz attracted me in a far higher degree. He differs by the whole breadth of heaven from his Parisian colleagues, for he makes no music for gold. But he cannot write for the sake of purest art; he lacks all sense of beauty. He stands, completely isolated, upon his own position; by his side he has nothing but a troupe of devotees who, shallow and without the smallest spark of judgment, greet in him the creator of a brand new musical system and completely turn his head;—the rest of the world avoids him as a madman.

My earlier easy-going views of the means and ends of [16] music received their final shock—from the Italians. These idolised heroes of song, with Rubini at their head, finished by utterly disgusting me with their music. The public to whom they sang, added their quota to this effect upon me. The Paris Grand Opera left me entirely unsatisfied, by the want of all genius in its representations: I found the whole thing commonplace and middling. I openly confess that the *mise en scène* and the decorations are the most to my liking of anything at the *Académie Royale de Musique*. The *Opéra Comique* would have had much more chance of pleasing me — it possesses the best talents, and its performances offer an *ensemble* and an individuality such as we know nothing of in Germany—but the stuff that is nowadays written for this theatre belongs to the very worst productions of a period of degraded art. Whither has flown the grace of Méhul, Isouard, Boieldieu, and the *young* Auber, scared by the contemptible quadrille rhythms which rattle through this theatre to-day? The only thing worthy the regard of a musician that Paris now contains, is the *Conservatoire* with its orchestral concerts. The renderings of German instrumental compositions at these concerts produced on me a deep impression, and inducted me afresh into the mysteries of noble art. He who would fully learn the Ninth Symphony of Beethoven, must hear it executed by the orchestra of the Paris Conservatoire. But these concerts stand alone in utter solitude; there is naught that answers to them.

I hardly mixed at all with musicians: scholars, painters, &c., formed my *entourage*, and I gained many a rare experience of friendship in Paris.—Since I was so completely bare of present Paris prospects, I took up once more the composition of my *Rienzi*. I now destined it for Dresden: in the first place, because I knew that this theatre possessed the very best material—Devrient, Tichatschek, &c; secondly, because I could more reasonably hope for an *entrée* there, relying upon the support of my earliest acquaintances. My *Liebesverbot* I now gave up almost completely; I felt that I could no longer regard [17] myself as its composer. With all the greater freedom, I followed now my true artistic creed, in the prosecution of the music to my *Rienzi*. Manifold worries and bitter need besieged my life. On a sudden, Meyerbeer appeared again for a short space in Paris. With the most amiable sympathy he ascertained the position of my affairs, and desired to help. He therefore placed me in communication with Léon Pillet, the Director of the Grand Opera, with a view to my being entrusted with the composition of a two- or three-act opera for that stage. I had already provided myself for this emergency with an outline plot. The "Flying Dutchman," whose intimate acquaintance I had made upon the ocean, had never ceased to fascinate my phantasy; I had also made the acquaintance of H. Heine's remarkable version of this legend, in a number of his '*Salon*'; and it was especially his treatment of the redemption of this Ahasuerus of the seas—borrowed from a Dutch play under the same title—that placed within my hands all the material for turning the legend into an opera-subject. I obtained the consent of Heine himself; I wrote my sketch, and handed it to M. Léon Fillet, with the proposal that he should get me a French text-book made after my model. Thus far was everything set on foot when Meyerbeer



again left Paris, and the fulfilment of my wish had to be relinquished to destiny. I was very soon astounded by hearing from Pillet that the sketch I had tendered him pleased him so much that he should be glad if I would cede it to him. He explained: that he was pledged by a previous promise to supply another composer with a libretto as soon as possible; that my sketch appeared to be the very thing for such a purpose, and I should probably not regret consenting to the surrender he begged, when I reflected that I could not possibly hope to obtain a direct commission for an opera before the lapse of four years, seeing that he had in the interval to keep faith with several candidates for grand opera; that such a period would naturally be too long for myself to be brooding over this subject; and that I should certainly discover a [18] fresh one, and console myself for the sacrifice. I struggled obstinately against this suggestion, without being able, however, to effect anything further than a provisional postponement of the question. I counted upon the speedy return of Meyerbeer, and held my peace.

During this time I was prompted by Schlesinger to write for his "*Gazette Musicale*." I contributed several longish articles on "German Music," &c., &c., among which the one which found the liveliest welcome was a little romance entitled, "A Pilgrimage to Beethoven." These works assisted not a little to make me known and noticed in Paris. In November of this year I put the last touches to my score of *Rienzi*, and sent it post-haste to Dresden. This period was the culminating point of the utter misery of my existence. I wrote for the *Gazette Musicale* a short story: "The Life's End of a German Musician in Paris," wherein I made the wretched hero die with these words upon his lips: "I believe in God, Mozart, and Beethoven."

It was well that my opera was finished, for I saw myself now compelled to bid a long farewell to any practice of my art. I was forced to undertake, for Schlesinger, arrangements of airs for all the instruments under heaven, even the *cornet à piston*; thus only was a slight amelioration of my lot to be found. In this way did I pass the winter of 1840-1, in the most inglorious fashion. In the spring I went into the country, to Meudon; and with the warm approach of summer I began to long again for brain-work. The stimulus thereto was to touch me quicker than I had thought for; I learnt, forsooth, that my sketch of the text of the *Flying Dutchman* had already been handed to a poet, Paul Fouché, and that if I did not declare my willingness to part therewith, I should be clean robbed of it on some pretext or other. I therefore consented at last to make over my sketch for a moderate sum. (01) I had now to [19] work post-haste to clothe my own subject with German verses. In order to set about its composition, I required to hire a pianoforte; for, after nine months' interruption of all musical production, I had to try to surround myself with the needful preliminary of a musical atmosphere. As soon as the piano had arrived, my heart beat fast for very fear; I dreaded to discover that I had ceased to be a musician. I began first with the "Sailors' Chorus" and the "Spinning-song"; everything sped along as though on wings, and I shouted for joy as I felt within me that I still was a musician. In seven weeks the whole opera was composed; but at the end of that period I was overwhelmed again by the commonest cares of life, and two full months elapsed before I could get to writing the overture to the already finished opera—although I bore it almost full-fledged in my brain. Naturally nothing now lay so much at my heart as the desire to bring it to a speedy production in Germany; from Munich and Leipzig I had the disheartening answer: the opera was not at all fitted for Germany. Fool that I was! I had fancied it was fitted for Germany alone, since it struck on chords that can only vibrate in the German breast.

At last I sent my new work to Meyerbeer, in Berlin, with the petition that he would get it taken up for the theatre of that city. This was effected with tolerable rapidity. As my *Rienzi* had already been accepted for the Dresden Court theatre, I therefore now looked forward to the production of two of my works upon the foremost German stages; and involuntarily I reflected on the strangeness of the fact, that Paris had been to me of the greatest service for

Germany. As regards Paris itself, I was completely without prospects for several years: I therefore left it in the spring of 1842. For the first time I saw the Rhine—with hot tears in my eyes, I, poor artist, swore eternal fidelity to my German fatherland.



## Notes

### Note 01 on page 14

Herr C. F. Glasenapp, in his "*Richard Wagner's Leben und Wirken*," tells us that the name of the composer for whom Fouché adapted Wagner's sketch was Dietsch; that his opera was called "*Le Vaisseau Fantôme*," was produced a few years later at the Paris Grand Opera, and was so overloaded with minor personages that it had no more dramatic than musical success.—A righteous nemesis!—Tr.



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# *The Wibelungen*

By Richard Wagner

Translated by William Ashton Ellis



The Wagner Library

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## Contents

About this Title .....	4
The Wibelungen. - World-History as told in Saga. ....	5
The Ur-Kinghood. ....	7
The Nibelungen. ....	9
Wibelingen or Wibelungen .....	11
The Welfen. ....	13
The Nibelungen-hoard in the Frankish Royal race. ....	15
Origin and evolution of the Nibelungen-myth. ....	17
The rank of Romish Kaiser and the Roman stem-saga. ....	19
Trojan descent of the Franks. ....	21
Material and Ideal contents of the Nibelungen-Hoard. ....	25
The "Ghibeline" Kaiserdom and Friedrich I. ....	27
Ascent of the Ideal content of the Hoard into the "Holy Grail." ....	31
Historic residue of the Material content of the Hoard, in "Real Property." .....	33
Notes .....	35

## About this Title

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[258]

## The Wibelungen.

### World-History as told in Saga.

In the stimulating recent past I too was occupied with the reawakening of *Frederick the Red-beard*, so longed for by so many, and strove with added zeal to satisfy an earlier wish to use my feeble breath to breathe poetic life into the hero-Kaiser for our acting stage. The outcome of the studies by which I sought to master my subject I have embodied in the following work: though its details may contain nothing new to the researcher or student of that branch of literature, yet their allocation and employment seemed interesting enough to some of my friends to justify the printing of the little sketch. I consented the more readily, as this prelude will remain the only fruit of my labours on the stuff itself; labours which themselves impelled me to abandon my dramatic plan, for reasons that will not escape the attentive reader.



[259]

## The Ur-Kinghood.

(1)

THEIR coming from the East has lingered in the memory of European peoples down to farthest times: Sagas preserved this recollection, however much disfigured. The maintenance of the Kingly power among the different nations, its restriction to one favoured race, the fidelity with which it was accorded solely to that race even in the latter's deepest degeneracy,—must have had a deep foundation in the people's consciousness: it rested on the memory of the Asiatic ur-home, on the origin of folk-stems in the Family, and on the might of the family's Head, the Stem-father "sprung from the Gods."

To gain a concrete idea of this, we must think of that ur-Folk somewhat as follows.—

At the epoch which most Sagas call the "Sint-Fluth" or Great Deluge, when our earth's Northern hemisphere was about as much covered by water as now is the Southern, (2) the largest island of this northern world-sea [260] would have been the highest mountain-range of Asia, the so-called Indian Caucasus: upon this island, i.e. these mountains, we have to seek the cradle of the present Asiatic peoples, as also of those who wandered forth to Europe. Here is the ancestral seat of all religions, of every tongue, of all these nations' Kinghood.

But the Ur-kinghood is the Patriarchate: the father was the bringer-up and teacher of his children; to them his discipline and doctrine seemed the power and wisdom of a higher being, and the larger grew the family, the more prolific in collateral branches, the more peculiar and divine must seem to it the mould of its original head, to whom it owed not only its body, but also all its spiritual life and customs. As this Head laid down both discipline and doctrine, in him the royal and priestly powers united of themselves, and his authority was bound to grow in measure as the family became a Stem, above all in degree as his original might descended to his body's heirs direct: as the stem became accustomed to behold in these its chieftains, at last the long-deceased Stem-father, from whom that undisputed honour flowed, was certain to appear a god himself, or at least the earthly avatar of an ideal god; and this idea in turn, enshrined by age, could only serve to perpetuate the fame of that ur-race whose most immediate scions formed the chieftains of the day. (3)

Now, when the waters retreated from the northern hemisphere to flood the southern once again, and the earth thus took its present guise, the teeming population of that mountain-isle descended to the new-found valleys, the gradually emerging plains. What brought about the hardening of the Patriarchate to a Monarchic despotism among the races dwelling in the broad and fruitful plains of Asia, has been sufficiently set forth: the races wandering farther westwards, and reaching Europe in the end, [261] commenced a livelier and freer evolution. Constant war and want in rawer climes and regions brought forth betimes the feeling and consciousness of the racial unit's independence, with its immediate result in the formation of the Commune. Every head-of-a-family exerted his power over his nearest of kin in similar fashion as the Stem-head claimed the right of ancient usage over the whole stem: in the bond of all the heads of families the king thus found his counterpart, and finally his limitation. The weightiest point, however, was that the king soon lost his priestly office, i.e. the first interpreting of God's decree—the sight of God—since this was now fulfilled for his immediate clan by every single head-of-family with the same authority as the Ur-father had fulfilled it for his family. The King accordingly was left with little more than the application and execution of the god's decree, as rendered by the members of the commune, in the equal interest of all and pursuant to the customs of the tribe. But the more the voice of the community was busied with ideas of worldly Right, i.e. with Property and the Individual's right to its enjoyment, the more that Sight of God—which originally had ranked as an

essentially higher prerogative of the Stem-father—would pass to a personal verdict in matters of worldly dispute, and consequently the religious element of the patriarchate would dwindle more and more. Only to the person of the King and his immediate kinsmen, would the feeling of the stem still cleave: he was the visible point-of-union of all its members; in him they saw the successor to the Ur-father of the widely-branching fellowship, and in each member of his family the purest of that blood whence the whole Folk had sprung. Though even this idea grew dim in time, yet awe and honour of the royal stem abode the deeper in the people's heart the more incomprehensible to it the reason for original distinction of this house, of which the sole unchanged tradition said that from no other must its kings be chosen. This relation we find in almost all the stems that wandered into Europe, and plainly recognise its bearing [262] on the tribal kings of Greek pre-history; but it manifests itself the clearest in the German stems, and above all in the ancient royal lineage of the *Franks*, in which, under the name of the "Wibelingen" or "Gibelingen," an ur-old royal claim advanced to the demand of world-dominion.

The Frankish royal race makes its first appearance in history under the name of "Merovingians" ("*Merwingen*"): we know that, even in the deepest degeneration of this race, it never occurred to the Franks to choose their kings from any other; every male member of this family was competent to rule; could men not tolerate the vices of the one, they sided with the other, but never left the family itself; and this at a time of such corruption of the national code by willing acceptance of the Romanic taint that almost every bond of noble wont was loosed, so that the Folk indeed could hardly have been recognised without its Royal race. 'Twas as if the people knew that, sans this royal stem, it would cease to be the Folk of Franks. The idea of the inalienable title of this race must therefore have been as deeply rooted, as it needed centuries of fearful struggles to root it out when it had reached its highest ideal meaning, and with its death begin a wholly new ordainment of the world. We refer to the going-under of the "Ghibelines."



## The Nibelungen.

The ceaseless strain of men and races toward never-compassed goals will mostly find a clearer explanation in their Ur- and Stem-sagas than can be gathered from their entrance into naked History, which tells us but the consequences of their essential attributes. If we read the Stem-saga of the Frankish royal race aright, we find therein an explanation of its historic deeds past anything obtainable on other paths of scrutiny.

Unquestionably the *Saga of the Nibelungen* is the birthright [263] of the Frankish stem. Research has shewn the basis of this saga, too, to be of religio-mythic nature: its deepest meaning was the ur-conscience of the Frankish stem, the soul of its royal race, under whatsoever name the primal Asiatic highlands may first have seen that race arise.—

For the moment we will neglect the oldest meaning of the myth, in which we shall recognise *Siegfried* as God of Light or Sun-god: to prepare ourselves for its connection with history, we now will merely take the saga where it clothes itself with the more human garb of ancient hero-dom. Here we find Siegfried as the winner of the *Nibelung's Hoard* and with it might unmeasurable. This Hoard, and the might in it residing, becomes the immovable centre round which all further shaping of the saga now revolves: the whole strife and struggle is aimed at this Hoard of the Nibelungen, as the epitome of earthly power, and he who owns it, who governs by it, either is or becomes a Nibelung.

Now the Franks, whom we first meet in history in the region of the Lower Rhine, have a royal race in which appears the name "Nibelung"; especially among its purest scions, who even before the time of Chlodwig were ousted by a kinsman, Merwig [5th cent.], but regained the kingship later as Pippingen or Karlingen [Pepins or Carolingians]. Let this suffice for the present, to shew, if not the genealogic, at least the mythical identity of the Frankish royal family with those Nibelungen of the saga; which has adopted unmistakable features from the history of this stem into its later, more historical development, where the focus still remains possession of that Hoard, the cynosure of earthly rule.—

After the founding of their reign in Roman Gallia, the Frankish Kings attacked and overthrew the other German national stems, the Allemani, Bavarians, Thuringians and Saxons; so that the latter henceforth bore the relation of [264] subjects to the Franks, and though their tribal usages were mostly left them, they had to suffer the indignity of being totally robbed of their royal races, so far as these had not already disappeared; this loss brought home to them the full extent of their dependence, and in the deprivation of its symbol they mourned the downfall of their native freedom. Though the heroic lustre of Karl the Great [Charlemagne]—in whose might the germ of the Nibelungen-hoard appeared to reach its fullest force—diverted for some time the German stems' deep discontent, and made them gradually forget the fame of their own dynasties, yet never did their loathing vanish quite away; under Karl's successors it leapt so strongly back to life, that the division of the great Reich, and the severance therefrom of stricter Germany, must be mainly attributed to the struggle of the downtrod German stems for freedom from the Frankish rule. A total severance from that royal Stem of Rulers, however, was not to take place before still later times; for though the purely German stems were now united in one independent kingdom, yet the bond of this union of earlier autonomous and severed national stems consisted ever in the Kingly function, and this could only be arrogated by a member of that Frankish ur-race. The whole inner movement of Germany therefore made for independence of the separate stems under new derivatives of old stem-races, and through annulment of the unifying royal power exerted by that hated foreign race.

With the death of the last male Karling in Germany we consequently are brought to the point when a total sundering of the German stems almost arrived, and would surely have arrived in full, had there still existed any plainer vestiges of the ur-old royal races of the single stems. The German Church in the person of its virtual patriarch, the Archbishop of Mainz, then saved the (always tottering) unity of the Reich by delivering the royal authority to Duke Konrad von Franken, who likewise sprang on the female side from the ancient race of kings: only the weakness of his rule, [265] again, brought the inevitable reaction to a final head, as shewn in the attempt to choose a king from among the strongest of the earlier subject, but now no longer manageable German folk-stems.

In the choice of the Saxon Duke *Heinrich*, however, and as if for hallowing it, the consideration may have counted, that his race also was allied by marriage with the Karlingen. But what a resistance the whole new Saxon royal-house had constantly to combat, is evident from the mere fact that the Franks and Lothringians, i.e. those peoples who numbered themselves with the originally ruling stem, would never recognise as lawful King the scion of a folk once conquered by them, whilst the other German stems felt just as little called to pay allegiance to a king imposed upon them by a stem no higher than their own, and equally subjected by the Franks in former times. Otto I. was the first to subdue the whole of Germany, and chiefly through his rousing against the violent and proud hostility of the strictly Frankish stems the national feeling of the Allemani and Bavarians—German stems once trodden down by them—so that the combination of their interests with his kingly interest supplied the force to crush the old Frankish pretensions. The consolidation of his sovereignty, however, appears to have been no little helped by his attainment of the Romish Cæsarate, renewed in former days by Karl the Great; for this conferred on him the lustre of the old Frank ruling-stem, compelling a respect not yet extinct. As if his family had plainly seen this, his successors made incessant journeys to Rome and Italy; to return with that halo of reverence so evidently meant to veil their native lineage in oblivion and translate them to the rank of that ur-race alone equipped for rule. They thus had won the "Hoard" and turned to "Nibelungen."

The century of kingship of the Saxon house, however, forms a relatively short interregnum in the infinitely longer empire of the Frankish stem; for after extinction of the Saxon house the royal power returned to a scion of that Frankish stem, Konrad the Salier,—in whom, again, a [266] female kinship with the Karlingen was proved and taken in view,—and remained with it until the downfall of the "Ghibelines." The choice of Lothar of Saxony, between the extinction of the male Frankish stem and its continuation by descendants on the distaff side, the Hohenstaufen, may be deemed a mere reactionary attempt, and this time of little durability; still more so, the later choice of the Guelph Otto IV. Only with the beheading of young Konrad at Naples can one view the ur-old royal race of the "Wibelingen" as totally extinct; strictly speaking, we must recognise that after him there were no more German Kings, and still less Kaisers, in the high ideal import of that dignity indwelling in the Wibelingen.

## Wibelingen or Wibelungen

The name *Wibelingen*, designating the Kaiser-party in opposition to the *Welfen*, is of frequent occurrence, especially in Italy, where the two opponents gained their ideal scope; upon a closer search, however, we find how utterly impossible it is to explain these highly significant names by *historical* documents. And this is natural: bare History scarcely ever offers us, and always incompletely, the material for a judgment of the inmost (so to say, instinctive) motives of the ceaseless struggles of whole folks and races; that we must seek in Religion and Saga, where we mostly shall find it in convincing clearness.

Religion and Saga are the pregnant products of the people's insight into the nature of things and men. From of old the Folk has had the inimitable faculty of seizing its own essence according to the Generic idea, and plainly reproducing it in plastic personification. The Gods and Heroes of its religion and saga are the concrete personalities in which the Spirit of the Folk portrays its essence to itself: however sharp the individuality of these personages, their content (*Inhalt*) is of most universal, wide-embracing type, and therefore lends these shapes a strangely lasting lease [267] of life; as every new direction of the people's nature can be gradually imparted to them, they are always in the mood to suit it. Hence the Folk is thoroughly sincere and truthful in its stories and inventions, whereas the learned historian who holds by the mere pragmatic surface of events, without regard to the direct expression of the people's bond of solidarity, (4) is pedantically untrue because unable to understand the very subject of his work with mind and heart, and therefore is driven, without his knowing it, to arbitrary subjective speculations. The Folk alone understands the Folk, because each day and hour it does and consummates in truth what of its very essence it both can and should; whereas its learned schoolmaster cudgels his head in vain to comprehend what the Folk does purely of itself.

If—to prove the truthfulness of the people's insight with reference to our present case—instead of a history of Lords and Princes we had a Folk-history, we certainly should also find there how the German peoples always knew a name for that wondrous Frankish race of Kings which filled them all with awe and reverence of a higher type; a name we find again in history at last, Italianly disguised as "*Ghibelini*." That this name applied not only to the Hohenstaufen in Italy, but already to their forerunners in Germany, the Frankish Kaisers, is historically attested by Otto von Freisingen: the current form of this name in the Upper Germany of his time was "*Wibelingen*" or "*Wibelungen*." Now this title would entirely conform with the name of the chief heroes of the ur-Frank stem-saga, as also with the demonstrably frequent family-name among the Franks, of Nibelung, if the change of the initial letter N to W could be accounted for. The linguistic difficulty here is met with ease, if we rightly weigh the origin of just that consonantal change; this [268] lay in the people's mouth, which, following the German idiom's native bent, made a Stabreim of the two opposing parties, Welfs and Nibelungs, and gave the preference to the party of the German folk-stems by placing first the name of the "*Welfen*" and making that of the foes of their independence come after it as rhyme. "*Welfen und Wibelungen*" the Folk will long have known and named or ever it occurred to learned chroniclers to plague themselves with the derivation of these, to them, recondite popular nicknames. The Italian people, likewise standing nearer to the Welfs in their feud against the Kaisers, adopted these names from the German folk-mouth, and turned them quite according to their dialect to "*Guelphi*" and "*Ghibelini*." But the learned agony of Bishop Otto of Freisingen inspired him to derive the title of the Kaiser-party from the name of a wholly indifferent hamlet, Waiblingen—a charming trait that plainly proves how fit are clever folk to understand phenomena of world-historic import, such as these immortal names in the people's mouth! The Swabian Folk knew better who the "*Wibelungen*" were, for it called the *Nibelungen* so, and from the time of the ascendance of its native

blood-related Welfs.

If we borrow from the Folk its conviction of the identity of this name with that of the ur-old Frankish dynasty, the consequences for an exact and intimate understanding of this race's wondrous strivings and ambitions, as also of the doings of its physical and spiritual opponents, in Folk and Church, are so incalculable that its light alone will let us look into the mainsprings of one of the most eventful periods of world-historic evolution with clearer eye and fuller heart than our dry-as-dust chronicles ever can give us; for in that mighty Nibelungen-saga we are shewn as if the embryo of a plant, whose natural conditions of growth, of flower-time and death, are in it certainly foretold to the attentive observer.

So let us embrace that conviction: and we cannot do so with a stronger confidence than it inspired in the popular [269] mind of the Middle Ages coeval with that race's deeds; a confidence that survived to the poetic literature of the Hohenstaufen period, where we may plainly distinguish in the Christian-chivalrous poems the Welfian element become at last a churchly one, in the newly-furbished Nibelungenlieder that utterly contrasting Wibelingian principle with its often still ur-pagan cut.

## The Welfen.

Before proceeding to a minuter examination of the point last touched, it is requisite to define more closely the direct opponents of the Wibelungen, the party of the *Welfen*. In the German language "Welfe" means sucklings, at first of dogs, and then of quadrupeds in general. The notion of pure descent and nurture at the mother's breast was easily conjoined to this, and in the poetic people's-mouth a "whelp" would soon be tantamount to a pure-bred son, born and suckled by the lawful mother.

In the times of the Karlingen, at its ancient Swabian stem-seat there enters history a race in which the name of *Welf* is handed down to farthest generations. It is a Welf who first arrests the eye of History by declining to accept enfeoffments from Frankish kings; as he could not stop his sons from entering relations partly connubial and partly feudal with the Karlings, the old father left his lands in deep disgust and withdrew into the wilderness, to be no witness of his race's shame.

If the dry chronicles of that time thought good to record this trait, to them so unimportant, we certainly may assume that it was far more actively embraced and spread abroad by the people of the downtrod German stem; for this incident, whose like may have often occurred before, expressed with energy the proud yet suffering self-consciousness of all the German stems as against the ruling tribe. Welf may thus have been acclaimed a "true whelp," a genuine son of the genuine stem-mother; and, [270] with the constantly increasing wealth and honour of his race, it might easily end in the people's viewing the name *Welf* as synonymous with German tribal independence against the feared but ne'er-beloved Frankish sovereignty.

In Swabia, their ancestral seat, the Welfs at last beheld in the advancement of the petty Hohenstaufen through intermarriage with the Frankish Kaisers and arrival at the dignity of Swabian, and thereafter Frankish Dukes, a fresh shame put upon them; and King Lothar used their natural embitterment against this race as chief means of resistance to the Wibelungen, who openly impugned his royal right. He increased the power of the Welfs to a degree unknown before by granting them the two dukedoms of Saxony and Bavaria at the same date, and only through the great assistance thus obtained was it possible for him to assert his kingship against the clamour of the Wibelungen, ay, so to humble them that they themselves held it not unadvisable to found a future stronghold among the German stems by intermarriage with the Welfs. Repeatedly did the possession of the major part of Germany devolve on the Welfen, and though his Wibelung predecessors had deemed expedient to withdraw it from them, Friedrich I. appears to have seen in the recognition of such an estate itself the surest means of reconciliation with an invincible National party and lastingly laying the hatred of ages; in a sense, he pacified them by material possession, the less disturbedly to realise his own ideal of the Kaiserdom, which he had grasped as none before.

What part is to be ascribed to the Welfs in the final foundering of the Wibelungen, and with them of the stricter German monarchy, is plainly told in history: the latter half of the thirteenth century shews us the fulfilled reaction of the narrower national spirit of the German stems, in their thirst for independence, against the royal yoke originally imposed upon all by the Franks. That these stems themselves were almost entirely disbanded till then, is to be explained, among other things, by their having lost their royal families as result of their first [271] subjection to the Franks; their other noble houses, the nearest of kin to the former, could therefore more easily make themselves absolute (directly holding from the Reich,—*reichsunmittelbar*) under the shelter and pretext of inherited imperial fiefs, and thus induce the thorough disgregation of the stems in whose broader national-interest the fight against the supremacy of the Wibelungen had first been waged. The ultimately successful reaction was therefore founded less upon an actual triumph of the stems, than on the collapse of the central kingly power undermined from of old by that fight. That it did not take place in

the sense of the Folk, but in the interest of lords who were splitting up the folk-sterns, is thus the ugly feature in this historical occurrence, however much that issue lay appointed by the nature of the existing historic elements themselves. Yet we may call everything related hereto the "Welfic" principle (devoid of any stem-saga), in opposition to that of the Wibelungen, which developed into nothing less than a claim to world-dominion.



## The Nibelungen-hoard in the Frankish Royal race.

Clearly to grasp the inner relation of the Nibelungen-saga to the historical significance of the Frankish Kingship, let us once more turn back, and at somewhat greater length, to a consideration of the historic doings of this ancient princely race.

In what state of inner dissolution of their tribal system the Frankish stems at last arrived at their historic seat, the present Netherlands, cannot be strictly ascertained. We at first distinguish Salic and Ripuarian Franks; and not merely this distinction, but also the fact that larger districts (*Gaue*) had their independent Princes, makes it obvious that the original Stem-kingship had suffered a strongly democratic devolution through the roving and most varied partings, as also the later re-uniting of branch-races. One thing is certain, that only from the [272] members of the whole stem's oldest race were Kings or Commanders chosen: their power over the single components was evidently hereditary, for, though a chief of all the assembled stems was chosen for great enterprises in common, it could only be, as said, from out the branches of the ur-old race of Kings.

In "Nibelgau" we see established the undoubtedly oldest and most genuine section of the race: *Chlojo*, or *Chlodio*, may be regarded as the earliest historic holder of the strictly Royal authority, i.e. the Hoard of the Nibelungen. Victoriously had the Franks invaded the Roman world already, dwelt under the name of Confederates in the former Roman Belgia, and Chlojo ruled a subject province with something like a proconsul's power. Very probably a decisive battle with Roman legions had preceded this final seizure, and in the spoil there may have been found, beyond the war-chest, the full insignia of Roman empire. In these treasures, these insignia, the stem-saga of the Nibelungen-hoard would reap new realistic matter for its freshening, and renew alike its ideal import by the increase to the royal stability of the old stem-ruling race. The previously divided royal authority thus won a sure combining-point, material and ideal at once, against which the licence of the degenerate tribal system broke in vain. To the many collateral branches of the royal house the advantage of this newly-risen power would be equally obvious, and they persistently strove to wrest it to themselves. Such an immediate kinsman was *Merwig*, chieftain of the Merwegau, to whose protection the dying Chlojo gave his three infant sons; instead of parcelling out their birthright to his charges, the faithless cousin seized it for himself and drove the helpless children out: this trait we meet in the full-fledged Nibelungen-saga, where Siegfried von Morungen, i.e. Merwungen has to divide the heirloom Hoard among the sons of Nibelung, but likewise keeps it for himself. The power and right residing in the Hoard had thus passed over to the Nibelungen's blood-relations, the Merwungen: in effect, [273] they stretched its physical significance to ever fuller width by constant conquest and addition to the royal might, and the latter more especially by a systematic rooting-out of all the blood-relations of their house.

One of the sons of Chlojo was saved, however; his descendants fled to Austrasia, regained the Nibelgau, established themselves at Nivella, and finally re-appeared in history as the "Pipingen," a name unquestionably given them by the hearty sympathy of the Folk with the fate of those little sons of Chlojo, and hereditarily accepted in due gratitude for this people's helping and protecting love. For these it was reserved, after recovery of the Nibelungen-hoard, to raise the material value of the worldly power upbuilt thereon to its uttermost pitch: Karl the Great, whose predecessor had entirely set aside at last the puffed-up and degenerate race of the Merwungen, gained and governed the whole German world, together with the former West-Roman Empire so far as German peoples dwelt therein; he accordingly might deem himself de facto successor to the rights of the Roman Cæsars, and claim their confirmation by the Romish Pontiff.

Arrived at this high stand-point, we now must prepare ourselves for a survey of the world's condition at that time, and indeed in the sense of the mighty Nibelung himself; for this is the

point from whence the historic import of that often-mentioned Frankish saga is to be taken more clearly in eye.

When Karl the Great looked down from the height of his West-Roman Kaiser-throne upon the world he knew, the first thing to strike him, must have been that solely in himself and family had the German ur-Kingship survived: all the royal races of the German stems related to him, so far as language proved a common origin, had passed away or been destroyed by subjugation, and he thus might deem himself the only representative and lawful heir of German Ur-Kinghood. This state of affairs would very naturally lead him and his nearest kin, the Franks, to regard themselves as the peculiarly-privileged, the oldest and most imperishable stem-race of all the German nation, and [274] eventually to find an ideal right to that pretension in their primitive stem-saga. In that stem-saga, as in every ur-old saga of like kind, an originally religious core is plainly visible. Though we left that kernel on one side at its earliest mentioning, it now is time to view it closer.



## Origin and evolution of the Nibelungen-myth.

Man receives his first impressions from surrounding Nature, and none of her phenomena will have reacted on him so forcibly from the beginning, as that which seemed to him to form the first condition of the existence, or at least of his knowledge, of everything contained in Creation: and this is *Light, the Day, the Sun*. Thanks, and finally worship, would be paid this element the first; the more so, as its opposite, Darkness, Night, seemed joyless, hence unfriendly and fear-compelling. Now, as man drew all his joy and animation from the light, it soon would come to mean the very fount of Being: it became the begetter, the father, the god; the breaking of day out of night at last appeared to him the victory of Light over Darkness, of Warmth over Cold, and so forth; and this idea may have been the first to breed in man a moral consciousness and lead him to distinction of the useful and the harmful, the friendly and hostile, Good and Bad.

So far, at anyrate, this earliest nature-impression must be regarded as the common basis of all Religions of every people. In the individualising of these general ideas derived from physical observation, however, is to be sought the gradually-conspicuous cleavage of religions according to the character of different nations. Now the stem-saga of the Franks has the high pre-eminence that, in keeping with the stem's peculiarity, it developed more and more from this beginning to historic life, whereas a similar growth of the religious myth into a genealogic saga is nowhere to be found among the other German stems: in exact degree as these lagged behind in active influence on history, did their stem-sagas stop short at the religious myth (superlatively [275] the case with the Scandinavians), or get lost in wholly undeveloped fragments at the first shock with historic nations more alive.

At the farthest point to which we can trace it, the Frank stem-saga shews the individualised Light or Sun-god, who conquers and lays low the monster of ur-Chaotic night:—this is the original meaning of *Siegfried's fight with the Dragon*, a fight like that Apollo fought against the dragon Python. Yet, as Day succumbs to Night again, as Summer in the end must yield to Winter, Siegfried too is slain at last: so the god became man, and as a mortal man he fills our soul with fresh and stronger sympathy; for, a sacrifice to his deed of blessing us, he wakes the moral motive of Revenge, i.e. the longing to avenge his death upon his murderer, and thus renew his deed. The ur-old fight is now continued by ourselves, and its changeful issue is just the same as that eternal alternation of day and night, summer and winter,—and lastly of the human race itself, in ceaseless sway from life to death, from triumph to defeat, from joy to grief, and thus perennially rejuvenating in itself the active consciousness of the immortal fund of Man and Nature. The quintessence of this constant motion, thus of Life, at last in "*Wuotan*" (Zeus) found expression as the chiefest God, the Father and Pervader of the All. Though his nature marked him as the highest god, and as such he needs must take the place of father to the other deities, yet was he nowise an historically older god, but sprang into existence from man's later, higher consciousness of self; consequently he is more abstract than the older Nature-god, whilst the latter is more corporeal and, so to phrase it, more personally inborn in man.

If this may pass as a general statement of the evolutionary path of Saga, and finally of History, from the ur-Myth, our next concern will be that weighty point in the fashioning of the Franks' stem-saga which gave this race its quite specific physiognomy,—to wit, the *Hoard*.

In the religious mythos of the Scandinavians the term [276] *Nifelheim*, i.e. Nibel=Nebelheim [the Home of Haze] comes down to us as designation of the (subterranean) sojourn of the Night-spirits, "Schwarzalben," in opposition to the heavenly dwelling of the

"Asen" and "Lichtalben" ["Light-elves"]. These Black-elves, "Niflûngar," children of Night and Death, burrow the earth, find out its inner treasures, smelt and smith its ore: golden gear and keen-edged weapons are their work. Now we find the name of "Nibelungen," their treasures, arms and trinkets, again in the Frankish stem-saga, but with the distinction that the idea originally shared by all the German stems has here evolved to ethical historic import.

When Light vanquished Darkness, when Siegfried slew the Nibelungen-dragon, he further won as victor's spoil the Nibelungen-hoard it guarded. But the possession of this Hoard—whose properties increase his might beyond all measure, since he thereby rules the Nibelungen—is also reason of his death: for the dragon's heir now plots to win it back. This heir despatches him by stealth, as night the day, and drags him down into the gloomy realm of Death: *Siegfried thus becomes himself a Nibelung*. Though doomed to death by acquisition of the Hoard, each sequent generation strives to seize it: its inmost essence drives it on, as with necessity of Nature, as day has ever to dethrone the night anew. For in the Hoard there lies withal the secret of all earthly might: *it is the Earth itself with all its splendour, which in joyous shining of the Sun at dawn of day we recognise as our possession to enjoy, when Night, that held its ghostly, gloomy dragon's-wings spread fearsomely above the world's rich stores, has finally been routed*.

If we look closer at this Hoard, *the Nibelungen's special work*, in it we recognise at first the metal bowels of the earth, and next what is prepared therefrom: arms, ruler's-ring, and stores of gold. So that Hoard included in itself the means of gaining and insuring mastery, as also the one Talisman of Rule: the hero-god who won it first, and thus became a Nibelung partly through his power and partly through his death, left as heirloom to his race the active [277] right to claim the Hoard: to avenge the slain and keep or win the Hoard afresh, this stress makes out the soul of all the race; by this it may be recognised throughout the saga, and above all in its history, that race of the Nibelungen-Franken.

Now, should it be thought too daring to assume that even in the ur-home of the German tribes that wondrous race once reigned above them all, or, if the other German stems have sprung from it, that at their head it once had ruled all other peoples on that Asiatic mountain-isle, at least a later phase is irrefutable,—that it actually governed all the German stems in Europe, and at their head, as we soon shall see, both claimed and strove for the dominion of every nation in the world. That deeply innate stress, now stronger and now weaker, this race of Kings appears to have referred in every age to its prime origin; and Karl the Great knew perfectly what he was doing, and why, when he had all songs of the stem-saga most carefully collected and transcribed: he knew they would confirm the Folk's belief in the ur-old right of his dynasty.

## The rank of Romish Kaiser and the Roman stem-saga.

The sovereign-instinct of the Nibelungen, till then more brutal in its satisfaction, was led at last by Karl the Great towards an ideal aim: this psychologic moment (*der hierzu anregende Moment*) must be sought in Karl's assumption of the *Roman Cæsardom*.

If we cast a glance upon the extra-German world, so far as it lay bare to Karl the Great, we find the selfsame kingless plight as with the subject German stems. The Romanic nations ruled by Karl had long since lost their royal races through the Romans; the Slavonic nations, little valued in themselves and destined for a more or less thorough Germanising, had never won for their ruling races, now also falling to decay, a recognition equal to the German's. Rome alone retained historic claim to rule, [278] and that to rule the world; that world-dominion had been exerted by the Cæsars in the name of a people, not of an ur-old royal race, but nevertheless in form of Monarchy. These Cæsars, in latter days capriciously selected first from this, then that component of the brew of nations, had never had to prove a racial right to the highest sovereignty in all the world. The deep corruption, impotence, and shameful foundering of this Roman Cæsarate—propped up at last by nothing but the German mercenaries, who had possession of the Roman Empire long years before its actual extinction—had certainly not faded from the memory of its Frankish conquerors. Yet, for all the personal weakness and depravity of the emperors known to the Germans, a deep awe and reverence of that rank under whose authority this highly-cultured Roman world was ruled had been implanted in the minds of the barbaric intruders, and there had stayed until these later times. And in that feeling there might lurk, not only respect for a higher culture, but also an old remembrance of the first brush of the German peoples with the Romans, who under *Julius Cæsar* once had reared a strong and lasting dam against their restless inroads.

Already German warriors had hunted Gauls and Celts, with hardly a stand, over the Alps and across the Rhine; the conquest of the whole of Gallia was easily within their grasp, when suddenly in Julius Cæsar they encountered a force unknown to them before. Beating them back, vanquishing and partly subjugating them, this supernal captain must have made an indelible impression on the Germans; and confirmed was their deep awe of him when they later learnt how all the Roman world had bent to him, how his patronymic "Cæsar" had been hallowed to the title of the highest earthly might, whilst he himself had been translated to the Gods from whom his race had sprung.

This divine descent was grounded on an ur-old Roman saga, according to which the Romans issued from a primordial race that, coming once from Asia, had settled [279] on the banks of the Tiber and Arno. The quick of the religious halidom committed to the offspring of this race indisputably made out for ages the weightiest heritage of the Roman nation: in it reposed the force that bound and knit this active people; the "sacra" in the keeping of the oldest, immemorially-allied patrician families, compelled the heterogeneous masses of plebeians to obedience. Deep awe and veneration of the holy things, whose sense enjoined a vigorous abstemiousness (as practised by the sorely-tried ur-father), make out the oldest, inconceivably effective laws whereby the headstrong folk was governed; and the "*pontifex maximus*"—the unchanging successor of Numa, the moral founder of the Roman State—was the virtual (spiritual) king of the Romans. Actual Kings, i.e. hereditary holders of the highest worldly rulership, are unknown in Roman history: the banished Tarquins were Etruscan conquerors; in their expulsion we have less to recognise a political act of insurrection against the royal power, than the old stem-races' national act of shaking-off a foreign yoke.

Now, when the plebs was no longer to be held in check by these stern and spiritually-armoured ancient races; when through constant warfare and privation it had made its strength so irresistible that, to avoid a destructive discharge thereof against the inmost core of the Roman State-system, it must be loosed upon the outer world in conquest, then, and still

more as result of this world-conquest, the last bond of ancient customs slowly snapped, and religion dropped into its utter opposite through the most material worldlifying: dominion of the world, enslavement of its peoples—no more dominion of the inner man, subdual of his egoistic animal passions—was henceforth Rome's religion. The Pontificate, though it still stood outward token of the ancient Rome, passed over to the worldly Emperor as his weightiest attribute, significantly enough; and the first man to combine both powers was just that Julius Cæsar, whose race was lauded as the very oldest emigrant from Asia. Troja (*Ilion*), so [280] said the old stem-saga now ripened to historic consciousness, was that sacred town of Asia whence the Julian (*Ilian*) race had sprung: during the destruction of his father-town by the united Hellenic stems Æneas, son of a goddess, had rescued the holiest relic (the Palladium) preserved in this ur-people's city, and brought it safe to Italy: from him descend the primal Roman races, and most directly of them all the Julian; from him, through the possession of that ur-folk's halidom, was said to date the core of Romandom, their old religion.

## Trojan descent of the Franks.

How full of meaning is the historically-attested fact that, shortly after the foundation of their rule in Roman Gallia, the Franks gave themselves out as likewise *sprung from Troy*. The chronicle-historian gives a pitying smile to such a stale conceit, which cannot hold a grain of truth. But he whose purpose is to vindicate the deeds of men and races by their inmost views and impulses, will find it of the highest moment to note what they *believed*, or tried to make others believe, about themselves. And no feature can be of more striking historic importance, than this naïve utterance of the Franks' belief in their ur-right to rule, upon their entry on that Roman world whose culture and whose past inspired them with reverence, yet to rule which they were proud enough to base their right directly on the principles of classic Romandom itself. So they, too, sprang from Troy; in fact it was their royal race that governed once in Troy. For one of their ancient stem-kings, *Pharamond*, was none other than *Priamus*, the very head of the Trojan royal family, who after the destruction of the city, so they said, had journeyed into distant parts with a remnant of his people. The first point for us to notice here, is that the naming of towns or transformation of their names by an addendum, as also the poetic adaptations of the Trojan War and incidents allied therewith in [281] vogue until the later Middle Ages, afford sufficient evidence of the wide spread and lasting influence of this new saga. Whether it was in all respects as new as it looks, and does not contain a germ far older than its new disguise in the Græco-Roman dress,—this certainly is worth inquiry.

The legend of an ur-old town or castle, built by the earliest human races and circled with Cyclopean walls to guard their holiest fetish, we find with almost every nation of the world, and especially with those of whom we may assume that they spread westward from those ur-hills of Asia. Did the archetype of these fabled cities not actually once exist in these peoples' earliest home? Surely there was one oldest, first walled city, which held in it the oldest and most venerable race, the well-spring of all patriarchy, i.e. of Kingdom joined with Priesthood. The farther did the stems move westward from their ancient home, the holier would grow their memory of that ur-town; it became to them a city of the Gods, the Asgard of the Scandinavians, the Asciburg of the related Germans. On their Olympos we find again among the Greeks the dwelling of the Gods; before the Romans' Capitol, no less, it may originally have hovered.

Certain it is, that wherever the stems, now grown to nations, made their abiding home, there that ur-town was copied in reality: to it, the new stem-seat of the ruling oldest race of Kings and Priests, the sanctity of the primordial city was gradually transferred; and the farther did the races journey from it in its turn, and build again, the more accountably would wax the glamour of this new stem-city also. Very naturally, however, with the freer evolution of these branch-communities, and their growing sense of self-reliance, the desire for independence would arise; and in exact degree as the ancient ruling-race, that governed from the new stem-city, endeavoured to imprint its sovereignty on the offshoot communes, or cities, and met their stiffening recusance with added tyranny. The first national Wars of Independence were therefore those waged by Colonies against the Mother-cities; and so [282] obstinate must have grown their enmity, that nothing less than the destruction of the old stem-city, with the extirpation or total banishment of the hereditary ruling-race, could still the hate of the epigoni or lay their fears of fresh oppression. All the greater historic nations that followed in each other's footsteps from the Indian Caucasus to the Mediterranean Sea know such a holy city, copied from the ur-old city of the Gods on earth, as also its destruction by new generations: very probably they even nursed the memory of an ur-old war of earliest races against the eldest ruling-race in that Gods'-city of their hoariest home, and of that town's destruction: this may have been, in fact, the first general tussle for the Nibelung's Hoard.

Nothing do we know of great Mother-cities founded by our German stems on that



Ur-town's model in their long North-westward wandering, which was finally arrested by the German Ocean and the sword of Julius Cæsar. On the other hand, the memory of the Gods'-city in their oldest home itself had lingered with them; and, un-perpetuated to the eye by material reproduction, it had settled to the more abstract notion of a Gods'-abode in Asgard. Not till we come to their new and stabler home, our present Germany, do we meet with signs of Asenburgs.

Different had been the evolution of the peoples thrusting South-westwards, among whose Hellenic stems the last distinct remembrance, of their united fight-for-independence against the Priamids and the razing of Troy, as the most signal outset of a new historic life, had almost totally extinguished every other memory. Now, as the Romans, after a closer acquaintance with the historic stem-saga of the Hellenes, had held themselves completely justified in linking on the dim remembrances of their forefathers' descent from Asia to that sharp-cut myth of the better-cultured nation (as if to represent their subjugation of the Greeks as a reprisal for the destruction of Troy), just so did the Franks lay hand on it, perhaps with no less title, when they came to know the legend and its sequel. If the German memories were less distinct, at least they were [283] still older, for they clung directly to the earliest home, the burg (Etsel-, i.e. Asciburg) in which was stored the Nibelungen-hoard once won by their Stem-god and left to them and their strong arm; thus the burg whence they had once already ruled all kindred folks and races. The Grecian Troy became for them that cradle city, and the King of immemorial right, dislodged therefrom, in them revived his ancient privilege.

At last confronted with the history of the South-west wanderers, must not his race regard its wondrous preservation as a token of the gods' eternal preference? All peoples now descended from the races that had waged a patricidal war against the oldest royal race in the cradle-home, and, victorious then, had forced this race to journey toward the raw inhospitable North while they fenced in the fertile South for leisurely expansion,—all these the Franks found *kingless*. Long since extinct and rooted out, were the oldest tribes in which these stems had erst known Kings; a last Greek Stem-King, the Macedonian *Alexander*—offspring of Achilles, that foremost vanquisher of Troy—, had un-kinged the whole southern Orient itself, up to the cradle of mankind in central Asia, as if in last fulfilment of that earliest patricidal war: with him his race expired too, and from that time none had rule except unrightful raiders of the royal power, who all had finally succumbed beneath the weight of *Julian Rome*.

After extinction of the Julian race even the Roman Emperors were arbitrarily elected, in any case not racially legitimate, dictators: their empire, or ever they themselves became aware of it, had long since ceased to be a "Roman" empire as from of old it had only been bound up by force, and a force maintained through wellnigh naught but armies, so, now that the Romanic nations were completely degenerated and effeminate, these armies were formed of almost none but hired troops of German origin. Hence, gradually renouncing all material worldly might, after long estrangement from itself the Roman spirit necessarily turned back upon itself, to its ur-nature; [284] and thus, adopting Christianity, it gave birth to a new development, the Roman Catholic Church: the Emperor again became all Pontifex, Cæsar again Numa, in new peculiarity of import. Now the *Pontifex maximus*, or *Pope*, was approached by the full-blooded representative of Ur-world-Kinghood, *Karl the Great*: the bearers of the oldest Kinghood and the oldest Priesthood, dissevered since the razing of that cradle city (according to the Trojan saga: the *royal Priamos* and the *pious Æneas*) met after centuries of parting, and touched as body and spirit of mankind.

Joyful was their meeting: nothing should ever part them more; the one should give the other troth and shelter: the Pontifex crowned the Cæsar, and to the nations preached obedience toward their lawful King; the Kaiser installed the Priest of God in his supreme pastorate, in whose exercise he undertook to shield him with the arm of worldly strength against all caitiffs.

Now, if this king was de facto master of the West-Roman empire, and might the thought of the ur-kingly title of his race awake in him the claim to perfect sovereignty of the world, in the Kaisership he gained still stronger title to that claim, especially through his entrustment with the shelter of that Christian Church which was to span the world. For the further development of that majestic world-relation, however, it is most important to remark that this spiritual title set up no altogether novel claim of the Frankish royal race, but simply woke to plainer terms a claim ingenerate in the germ of the Frankish stem-saga, though veiled till then in dimmer consciousness.





## Material and Ideal contents of the Nibelungen-Hoard.

With Karl the Great the often-cited ur-old myth attains its most material confirmation in a grand harmonious juncture of world-history. Thenceforward in exact degree [285] as its real embodiment dissolved and fell to pieces, its essential *ideal* content was to mount to such a point that, entirely divested of the Real, the pure Idea steps plainly formulated into History, and finally withdraws therefrom to pass, even as to its outward garment, completely back to Saga.

Whereas in the century after Karl the Great, under his more and more incompetent successors, the actual kingdom and the sovereignty over subject peoples had crumbled up and lost in power, all the atrocities of the Karlings sprang from one root-instinct common to them all, the longing for sole possession of the Nibelungen-hoard, i.e. of rule supreme. Since Karl the Great this seemed to need confirming by the Kaisership, and he who won the Kaiser-throne believed himself the true possessor of the Hoard, whatever the diminution of its worldly wealth (in landed property). The Kaiserhood, with the supreme authority to it alone attaching, was thus invested with a more and more ideal meaning; and during the period of total defeat of the Frankish ruling-stem, when the Saxon Otto seemed to be restoring the real Cæsarate of Karl the Great in fresh conjunction with Rome, its *ideal* aspect would appear to have come to ever clearer consciousness in the mind of that old stem. The Franks and their ducal race of one blood with the Karlingen, thinking of the saga, may have told themselves something like this: "What though the real possession of the land is torn from us, and once more we're thrown upon ourselves,—can we but regain the Imperial rank, for which we'll never cease to strive, with it we win again our ancient title to mastery of the world; and then we'll know to ply it better than these usurpers of the Hoard, who do not even understand its use."

In effect, as soon as the Frankish stem regained the Kaiserdom, the world-question hinging on that dignity advanced to an ever more important stage, and that through its relation with the Church.

In measure as the worldly power had lost in real estate [286] and approached a more ideal development, the originally purely ideal Church had attained to worldly possession. Each party seemed to comprehend that, for its perfect establishment, it must draw into itself what had lain at first without it; and so from both sides the original antithesis was mounting to an open fight for exclusive world-dominion. Through the growing consciousness of both parties to this more and more stubborn fight, of the prize at stake for winning or retaining, the Kaiser at last was forced to the necessity of acquiring the spiritual dominion of the world, if he meant to safeguard his material title;—the Pope, on the other hand, must annihilate these material claims, or rather take them to himself if he meant to remain or become the actual governor and overseer of the World-Church.

The resultant demands of the Pope were insofar grounded upon Christian Reason (*Vernunft*) as he felt bound to adjudge to Spirit the power over Body, consequently to God's Vicar on earth the supremacy over His creatures. The Kaiser, on the contrary, saw that his prime concern was to prove his power and claims quite independent of any hallowing or ratifying, to say nothing of bestowal, by the Pope; and for this he found what he deemed a perfect title in the old belief of his stem-race in their origin.

In its earliest form, the stem-saga of the Nibelungen went back to the memory of a divine Ur-father, not only of the Franks, but perhaps of all the nations issued from the Asiatic home. Very naturally in this Ur-father, as we find with every patriarchal system, the royal and priestly powers had been combined as one and the same authority. The later severance of these powers would rank in any case as consequence of a dissension in the race, or, had the priestly power devolved on all the fathers of the commune, in them at most could it be

recognised, but never in an upstart Priest opponent to the King; for the fulfilment of the priestly office, so far as it was to be assigned to one sole person for them all, could fall to no [287] one but the King, as Father of the racial whole. That there was no need for those ur-old notions to be sacrificed in toto on the conversion to Christianity, not only is proved by facts, but may be deduced with little pains from the essential content of the old traditions. The abstract Highest God of the Germans, Wuotan, did not really need to yield place to the God of the Christians; rather could he be completely identified with him: merely the physical trappings with which the various stems had clothed him in accordance with their idiosyncrasy, their dwelling-place and climate, were to be stripped off; the universal attributes ascribed to him, for the rest, completely answered those allotted to the Christian's God. And Christianity has been unable to our day to extirpate the elementary or local Nature-gods: quite recent legends of the Folk, and a wealth of still-prevailing superstitions, attest this in our nineteenth century.

But that one native Stem-god, from whom the races all immediately derived their earthly being, was certainly the last to be given up: for in him was found the striking likeness to Christ himself, the Son of God, that he too died, was mourned and avenged,—as we still avenge Christ on the Jews of to-day. Fidelity and attachment were transferred to Christus all the easier, as one recognised in him the Stem-god once again; and if Christ, as Son of God, was father (at least the spiritual) of *all* men, that harmonised the better and more conclusively with the divine Stem-father of the Franks, who thought themselves indeed the oldest race and parent of all others. Christianity therefore, with their incomplete and physical understanding of it, would rather strengthen the Franks in their national faith, particularly against the Roman Church, than make them falter; and in rejoinder to this vital obstinacy of the Wibelingian superstition, we see the natural instinct of the Church attacking with almost a mortal dread this last, but sturdiest survival of paganism in the deeply hated race.

[288]

## The "Ghibeline" Kaiserdom and Friedrich I.

Now it is highly noteworthy that the stress toward Ideal vindication of their claims becomes more pronounced in the Wibelingen or Wibelungen (to name them with the historic folk-mouth) in measure as their blood departs from immediate kinship with the ur-old ruling race. If in Karl the Great the drift of blood was still at height of its ancestral strength, in the Hohenstaufian *Friedrich I.* we see almost nothing but the ideal stress: it had become at last the very soul of the Imperial entity, that could find less and less legitimation in its blood and real estate, and therefore sought it in the Idea.

Under the last two Kaisers of the Frankish ducal race of the Salier the great fight with the Church had begun in deadly earnest. Heinrich V., previously supported by the Church against his hapless father, had scarcely reached the rank of Kaiser than he felt the fateful craving to renew his father's wrestle with the Church, and, as if the only means of combating her claims, to extend his title over her as well: he must have divined that the Kaiser were impossible, should his world-dominion not include dominion of the Church herself. It is characteristic, on the other hand, that the interim non-Wibelingian Kaiser Lothar adopted an attitude of peaceful submission to the Church: he did not fathom what the Kaiser-rank implied; *his* claims did not extend to world-dominion,—those were the heirloom of the Wibelingen, the old-legitimist contenders for the Hoard. But clearly and plainly as none before, great *Friedrich I.* took up the heir-idea in its sublimest sense. The whole inner and outer deprivation of the world appeared to him the necessary consequence of the weakness and incompleteness with which the Kaiser's power had been exerted thitherto: the material might, already in sorry case, must be perfectly amended by the Kaiser's ideal dignity; and that could only come to pass when its extreme pretensions were enforced. The ideal lines of the great fabric that rose before Friedrich's energetic soul may be drawn (in the [289] freer mode of speech allowed to-day) somewhat as follows:—

"In the German Folk survives the oldest lawful race of Kings in all the world: it issues from a son of God, called by his nearest kinsmen *Siegfried*, but *Christ* by the remaining nations of the earth; for the welfare of his race, and the peoples of the earth derived therefrom, he wrought a deed most glorious, and for that deed's sake suffered death. The nearest heirs of his great deed, and of the power won thereby, are the 'Nibelungen,' to whom the earth belongs in name and for the happiness of every nation. The Germans are the oldest nation, their blue-blood King is a 'Nibelung,' and at their head he claims world-rulership. There can therefore exist no right to any sort of possession or enjoyment, in all this world, that does not emanate from him and need its hallowing by his feoffment or sanction: all property or usufruct not bestowed or sanctioned by the Kaiser is lawless in itself, and counts as robbery; for the Kaiser enfiends and sanctions for the good, possession or enjoyment, of *all*, whereas the unit's self-seized gain is a theft from all.—In the German Folk the Kaiser grants these feoffments or confirmations himself; for all other nations their Kings and Princes are attorneys of the Kaiser, from whom all earthly sovereignty originally flows, as the planets and their moons receive their radiance from the sun.—Thus too the Kaiser delegates the high-priestly power, originally no less pertaining to him than the earthly might, to the Pope of Rome: the latter has to exercise the Sight-of-God in his name, and to acquaint him with the God's-decree, that he may execute the Heavenly Will in name of God upon the earth. The Pope accordingly is the Kaiser's most important officer, and the weightier his office, the more does it behove the Kaiser to keep strict watch that the Pope exerts it in the meaning of the Kaiser, i.e. for the peace and healing of all nations upon earth."—

No lower must we reckon Friedrich's estimate of his rank supreme, his right divine, if we

are properly to judge the motives brought to clearest daylight in his actions.

[290]

We see him in the first place making firm the base of his material might by composing the territorial strife in Germany through reconciliation with his relatives the Welfen, and compelling the princes of bordering peoples, in particular the Danes, Poles and Hungarians, to accept their lands in fee from him. Thus fortified he fared to Italy, and, as arbiter over the Lombards in the Roncalian Diet, for the first time published to the world a systematic digest of the Kaiser's claims; in which, for all the influence of Imperial Roman principles, we recognise the strictest consequences of the aforesaid view of his authority: his Imperial Right was here extended even to the grant of air and water.

No less determined were his claims against and over the Church herself, after an initial period of reserve. A disputed Papal election gave him the opportunity of exerting his supreme right: with strict observance of what he deemed fit priestly forms, he had the election scrutinised, deposed the Pope who seemed to him at fault, and installed the vindicated rival in his place.

Every trait of Friedrich's, every undertaking, each decree, bears most indisputable witness to the energetic congruence with which he ever strove to realise his high ideal. The unwavering firmness with which he opposed the no less obstinate Pope Alexander III., the almost superhuman rigour—in a Kaiser by no means prone to cruelty by nature—with which he doomed to overthrow the equally undaunted Milan, are incorporate moments of the grand Idea informing him.

Two mighty foes, however, stood up against the heaven-storming World-king; the first at starting-point of his material power, in the German landed system,—the second at the terminus of his ideal endeavour, the Catholic Church established in the conscience of Romanic peoples in particular. Both foes joined forces with a third, on which the Kaiser, in a sense, himself had first bestowed its consciousness: the *instinct of freedom in the Lombard communes*.

[291]

If the earliest resistance of the German stems had had its origin in the thirst for freedom from their Frankish rulers, that bent had gradually passed over from the shattered tribal fellowships to the lords who snatched these fragments to themselves: although the effort of these princes had all the evil attributes of selfish lust-of-mastery, yet their longing for its independent satisfaction might rank in their eyes as a fight for freedom, however less exalted it must seem in ours. The bent-to-freedom of the Church was more ideal by far, more universal: in Christian terminology it might count as struggle of the soul for liberation from the fetters of the sensual world, and undoubtedly it passed for such in the minds of her greatest chiefs; she had been forced to share too deeply in the world's material taste of might, however, and her ultimate victory could therefore be gained through nothing but the ruin of her inmost soul.

But the spirit of freedom shews out the purest in the Lombard townships, and precisely (alas! almost solely) in their decisive fights with Friedrich. These fights are insofar the most remarkable event of a critical historic period, as in them, for the first time in the history of the world, the spirit of ur-human freedom embodied in the Burgher-commune girds up itself to a fight for life and death with an old established, all-embracing sovereignty. Athens' fight against the Persians was patriotic opposition to a huge monarchic piracy: all similar famous deeds of single townships, until the time of the Lombardians, bear the selfsame character of defence of ancient *racial* independence against a foreign conqueror. Now, this ancestral freedom, that cleaves to the root of a nationality till then untroubled, was in nowise present with the Lombard communes: history has seen the population of these cities, compounded of

all nations and bare of any old tradition, fall shameful victim to the greed of every conqueror; through a thousand years of total impotence, in these cities lived no nation, i.e. no race with any consciousness of its earliest origin : in them dwelt merely [292] *men*, men led by the need of mutual insurance of an undisturbed prosperity to an ever plainer evolution of the principle of Society, and its realisation through the Commune (*Gemeinde*).

This novel principle, devoid of racial lore or chronicle arising purely of and for itself; owes its historic origin to the population of the Lombard cities, who, imperfectly as they could understand and turn it to a lasting good, yet evolved themselves thereby from deepest feebleness to agents of the highest force;—and if its entry into history is to count as the spark that leaps from the stone, then Friedrich is the steel that struck it from the stone.

Friedrich, the representative of the last racial Ur-Folk-Kinghood, in mightiest fulfilment of his indeviably destiny, struck from the stone of manhood the spark before whose splendour he himself must pale. The *Pope* launched his ban, the *Welf Heinrich* forsook his king in his direst want,—but the sword of the *Lombard band of brothers* smote the imperial warrior with the terrible rout at Lignano.



## Ascent of the Ideal content of the Hoard into the "Holy Grail."

The World-ruler recognised from whence his deepest wound had come, and who it was that cried his world-plan final halt. *It was the spirit of free Manhood loosed from the nature-soil of race*, that had faced him in this Lombard Bond. He made short work of both the older foes: to the High-priest he gave his hand,—he fell with crushing force upon the selfish Guelphs; and so, once more arrived at summit of his power and undisputed might,—he *spake the Lombards free, and struck with them a lasting peace*.

At Mainz he gathered his whole Reich around him; (5) all his feudatories, from the first to the last, he fain would [293] greet once more: the clergy and the laity surrounded him; from every land Kings sent ambassadors with precious gifts, in homage to his Kaiser-might. But *Palestine* sent forth to him the cry to save the Holy Tomb.—To the land of morning Friedrich turned his gaze: a force resistless drew him on toward Asia, to the cradle of the nations, to the place where God begat the father of all Men. Wondrous legends had he heard of a lordly country deep in Asia, in farthest India,—of an ur-divine Priest-King who governed there a pure and happy people, immortal through the nurture of a wonder-working relic called "*the Holy Grail*."—Might he there regain the lost Sight-of-God, now garbled by ambitious priests in Rome according to their pleasure?—

The old hero girt him up; with splendid retinue of war he marched through Greece: he might have conquered it,—what boot that?—unresting he was drawn to farthest Asia. There on tempestuous field he broke the power of the Saracens; unchallenged lay the promised land before him; he could not wait for the construction of a flying bridge, but urged impatient Eastwards,—on horse he plunged into the stream: none saw him in this life again.

Since then, the legend went that once the *Keeper of the Grail* had really brought the holy relic to the Occident; great wonders had he here performed: in the Netherlands, the Nibelungen's ancient seat, a Knight of the Grail had appeared, but vanished when asked forbidden tidings of his origin;—then was the Grail conducted back by its old guardian to the distant morning-land;—in a castle on a lofty mount in India it now was kept once more.

In truth the legend of the Holy Grail, significantly enough, makes its entry on the world at the very time when the Kaiserhood attained its more ideal direction, and the Nibelung's Hoard accordingly was losing more and more in material worth, to yield to a higher spiritual content. The spiritual ascension of the Hoard into the Grail was accomplished in the German conscience, and [294] the Grail, at least in the meaning lent it by German poets, must rank as the Ideal representative or follower of the Nibelungen-Hoard; it, too, had sprung from Asia, from the ur-home of mankind; God had guided it to men as paragon of holiness.

It is of the first importance that its Keeper was priest and king alike, that is, a Master (*Oberhaupt*) of all Spiritual Knighthood, such as was introduced from the Orient in the twelfth century. So this Master was in truth none other than the Kaiser, from whom all Chivalry proceeded; and thus the real and ideal world-supremacy, the union of the highest kingdom and priesthood, seemed completely attained in the Kaiser.

The quest of the Grail henceforth replaces the struggle for the Nibelungen-Hoard, and as the occidental world, unsatisfied within, reached out past Rome and Pope to find its place of healing in the tomb of the Redeemer at Jerusalem,—as, unsatisfied even there, it cast its yearning gaze, half spiritual half physical, still farther toward the East to find the primal shrine of manhood,—so the Grail was said to have withdrawn from out the ribald West to the pure, chaste, reachless birth-land of all nations.—

To pass the ur-old Nibelungen-saga in review, we see it springing like a spiritual germ from an oldest race's earliest glance at Nature (*Naturanschauung*); we see this germ develop to a mighty plant on ever more material soil, especially in the Historic evolution of the saga, so that in Karl the Great it seems to thrust its knotty fibres deep into the actual earth; till finally in the Wibelingian Kaiserdom of Friedrich I. we see this plant unfold its fairest flower to the light: with him the flower faded; in his grandson Friedrich II., the highest mind of all the Kaisers, the wondrous perfume of the dying bloom spread like a lovely fairy-spell through all the world of West and East; till with the grandson of the last-named Kaiser, the youthful Konrad, the leafless withered stem [295] was torn with all its roots and fibres from the ground, and stamped to dust.



## Historic residue of the Material content of the Hoard, in "Real Property."

A shriek of horror rang through every country when the head of Konrad fell in Naples to the blows of that *Charles d'Anjou* who in every lineament presents the perfect archetype of all post-Wibelungian Kinghood. He sprang from the oldest of the newer royal races: in France the Capets had long succeeded to the last French Carolingian. Hugo Capet's origin was well beknown; everybody knew what his race had been before, and how he arrived at the throne: cunning, policy, and violence at a pinch, were the tools of him and his successors, compounding for the right they lacked in 'the people's eyes. These Capets, mn all their later branches, were the pattern for the modern King- and Prince-hood: in no belief in ur-racial descent could it seek foundation for its claims; of every prince the world, coeval and posterior, knew by what mere grant, at what purchase-price, or through what deed of violence, he had attained to power, and by what art or means he must contrive to keep it.

With the foundering of the Wibelungen, mankind had been torn from the last fibre whereby it still hung, in a sense, to its racial-natural origin. The Hoard of the Nibelungen had evaporated to the realm of Poetry and the Idea; merely an earthly precipitate remained as its dregs: *real property*.

In the Nibelungen-myth we found expressed by all the generations who devised, developed and enacted it, an uncommonly clear idea of the *nature of property, of ownership*. If in the oldest religious view the Hoard appeared to be the splendour of the Earth laid bare to all by day light, we later see it take more compact form as the hero's might-conferring booty, won as guerdon of the bravest, [296] most astounding deed from a vanquished odious adversary. This Hoard, this talisman of might, 'tis true, is henceforth claimed as with hereditary right by the descendants of that godlike hero; yet it has this foremost characteristic, that it is never gained afresh in lazy peace, by simple contract, but only through a deed akin to that of its first winner. Moreover, this constantly-repeated deed of heritage has all the moral meaning of vendetta, of retribution for the murder of a kinsman: so we see blood, passion, love, hate, in short—both physically and spiritually—purely-human springs and motives at work in the winning of the Hoard; man restless and suffering, man doomed to conscious death by his own deed, his victory, and most by his possession, at the head of all ideas of the root-relation of acquirement.—These views, which honoured *Man* as focus of all power, entirely corresponded with the mode of treating property in actual life. If in earliest antiquity there certainly prevailed the simplest and most natural principle of all, namely that the measure of possession or enjoyment must be meted by man's Need, among conquering nations with excess of goods the strength and prowess of the best-famed fighters became as naturally the measure-giving Subject to the Object of more enjoyable and richer spoils. In the historic *Feudal system*, so long as it retained its pristine purity, we see this heroic-human principle still plainly voiced: the grant of a fief was merely to this one particular human being who had earned the right to claim reward for some decisive deed, some weighty service. From the moment when a fief became *hereditary*, the man, his personal excellence, his acts and deeds, lost value,—which passed over to his property: hereditary possession, no longer personal virtue, now gave their standing to his heirs, and the resulting deeper and deeper depreciation of Man, against the higher and higher appreciation of Property, at last took body in the most contra-human institutions, such as those of Primogeniture; from which, in strange perversity, the later Noble drew all conceit and arrogance, without reflecting [297] that by deriving his worth from a stiffened family-possession he was openly disowning any actual *human nobleness*.

So—after the fall of the heroic-human Wibelungen—this hereditary ownership, then

property *in general, de facto possession*, became the title for all rights existing or to be acquired; and Property gave Man that right which man had theretofore conveyed to property. It was this dreg of the vanished Nibelungen-Hoard, then, that the sobered German lords had kept them: though the Kaiser might soar to the highest peak of the Idea, what clung there to the ground below, the Duchies, Palatinates, Marks and Counties, all ranks and offices enfeoffed by the Kaiser, in the hands of his utterly un-idealistic vassals condensed to mere *possession, property*. Possession now was consequently *Right*, and upright was it kept by all Established and Approved being henceforth drawn from that one right on a more and more elaborate system. He who had a share in property, or managed to acquire one, *from that instant* ranked as a natural pillar of the State (*der öffentlichen Macht*). But this also must be hallowed: what the most glorious Kaisers had claimed in good faith as their ideal title to rule the world, these practical gentry now applied to their possessions; the old divine ur-right was arrogated to himself by every former crown-official; the God's-decree was expounded by Justinian's Roman Rights, and, to the bewilderment of property-enslaved mankind, transcribed in Latin law-books. Kaisers were still appointed, though directly after the downfall of the Wibelungen their rank had already been hawked to the highest bidder; no sooner were they chosen, than to work they set to "*acquire*" a goodly family-seat "by grace of God," as one henceforth styled the forcible appropriation or nibbling-off of districts. Grown wiser, one gladly left the World-dominion to dear God, who behaved by far more leniently and humanely to the actually-reigning most selfish and depraved vulgarity of the Sons of the Holy Roman Empire than erewhile the old heathen Nibelung warriors, who for any act of meanness [298] made no bones of packing off a man from court and holding.—

The "*poor Folk*" sang, read, and printed in time, the Nibelungenlieder, its only keepsake from the Hoard belief in it never wavered; only, one knew it was no longer in the world,—for it had been sunk into an old God's-hill again, a cave like that whence Siegfried once had won it from the Nibelungen. The great Kaiser himself had brought it back to that hill, to save it up for better times. There in the Kyffhäuser he sits, the old "Redbeard Friedrich"; all round him the treasures of the Nibelungen, by his side the sharp sword that one-time slew the dreaded Dragon.

## Notes

### Note 1 on page 7

*Die Wibelungen* originally appeared as a pamphlet, issued by Wigand of Leipzig at the end of 1849, evidently with the prefatory note on the opposite page. In Wagner's *Letters to Uhlig* we read under date Sep. 16, 1849, "Up to now I have only been able to scribble in a common-room, and to this circumstance you must attribute my compliance with your wish that I should get my Wibelistic essay ready for publication. In fair-copying it, however, I have made a good many alterations; so that it perhaps may interest you to compare the accompanying manuscript with the older version, when I would direct your particular attention to chapters 3 and 12, dealing with real property, in which you will find an abundant use of the material."—The "material" would seem to be the late events in Dresden, possibly also some work of Feuerbach's that Wagner had recently been reading, for chapter 3 bears strong evidence of the Feuerbachian cast of sentence, and I find that this is the same letter to which I referred in my Preface to Vol. 1.—which see.—Tr.

### Note 2 on page 7

This hypothesis, I have lately been assured, is not quite tenable.—Ed. [i.e. R. Wagner, 1871.]

### Note 3 on page 7

For the use of the prefix "ur" I must refer the reader to my [footnote to Vol. I. p. 169](#). When translating that volume I felt somewhat timid as regards the introduction of a neologism, but now that I find the prefix very widely adopted by learned translators, I am emboldened to employ it more frequently, albeit merely about half as often as it occurs in the original.—Tr.

### Note 4 on page 11

"Das Volk ist somit in seinem Dichten und Schaffen durchaus genial und wahrhaftig, wogegen der gelehrte Geschichtsschreiber, der sich nur an die pragmatische Oberfläche der Vorfällenheiten hält, ohne das Band der wesenhaften Volksallgemeinheit nach dem unmittelbaren Ausdrücke desselben zu erfassen," etc.—

### Note 5 on page 31

It is impossible not to recognise how much of the idea of this Friedrich I. has passed into Wagner's Wotan.—Tr.

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# *Art and Revolution*

By Richard Wagner

Translated by William Ashton Ellis



The Wagner Library

Edition 0.9

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## Contents

About this Title .....	4
Translator's Note .....	5
Introduction to Art and Revolution. ....	7
Art and Revolution. ....	11
Notes .....	29

## About this Title

### Source

*Art and Revolution*

By Richard Wagner

Translated by William Ashton Ellis

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Richard Wagner's Prose Works

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This title contains 15239 words.

Estimated reading time between 44 and 76 minutes.

Notes are indicated using parenthesis, like (1).

Page numbers of the original source are indicated using square-bracketed parentheses, like [62].

[22]

## Translator's Note

The INTRODUCTION translated on the opposite and following pages was written by Richard Wagner as the Preface to Volumes III. and IV. of his "*Gesammelte Schriften*," or Collected Writings, for the Edition of 1872; and applies not only to "*Art and Revolution*," but also to "*The Art-Work of the Future*" and "*Opera and Drama*," &c.





[23]

## Introduction to Art and Revolution.

THOMAS CARLYLE, in his *History of Frederick the Great*, (01) characterises the outbreak of the French Revolution as the First Act of the "Spontaneous Combustion" of a nation "sunk into torpor, abeyance, and dry-rot," and admonishes his readers in the following words:—

"There is the next mile-stone for you, in the History of Mankind! That universal Burning-up, as in hell-fire, of Human Shams. The oath of Twenty-five Million men, which has since become that of all men whatsoever, 'Rather than live longer under lies, we will die!'—that is the New Act in World-History. New Act,—or, we may call it New *Part*; Drama of World-History, Part Third. If Part *Second* was 1800 years ago, this I reckon will be Part *Third*. This is the truly celestial-infernal Event: the strangest we have seen for a thousand years. Celestial in the one part; in the other, infernal. For it is withal the breaking-out of universal mankind into Anarchy, into the faith and practice of *No-Government*,—that is to say (if you will be candid), into unappeasable revolt against Sham-Governors and Sham-Teachers,—which I do charitably define to be a Search, most unconscious, yet in deadly earnest, for true Governors and Teachers. . . . When the Spontaneous Combustion breaks out; and, many-coloured, with loud noises, envelopes the whole world in anarchic flame for long hundreds of years: then has the Event come; there is the thing for all [24] men to mark, and to study and scrutinise as the strangest thing they ever saw. Centuries of it yet lying ahead of us; several sad Centuries, sordidly tumultuous, and good for little! Say Two Centuries yet,—say even Ten of such a process: before the Old is completely burnt out, and the New in any state of sightliness? Millennium of Anarchies;—*abridge it, spend your heart's-blood upon abridging it, ye Heroic Wise that are to come!*"

When, in the feverish excitement of the year 1849, I gave vent to an appeal such as that contained in the immediately succeeding essay: "*Art and Revolution*," I believe that I was in complete accord with the last words of this summons of the grey-headed historian. I believed in the Revolution, and in its unrestrainable necessity, with certainly no greater immoderation than Carlyle: only, I also felt that I was called to point out to it the way of rescue. Far though it was from my intent to define the New, which should grow from the ruins of a sham-filled world, as a fresh *political* ordering: (02) I felt the rather animated to draw the outlines of the *Art-work* which should rise from the ruins of a sham-bred *Art*. To hold this *Art-work* up to Life itself; as the prophetic mirror of its Future, appeared to me a weightiest contribution toward the work of damming the flood of Revolution within the channel of the peaceful-flowing stream of Manhood. I was bold enough to prefix the following motto to the little pamphlet: "When Art erst held her peace, State-wisdom and Philosophy began: when now both Statesman and Philosopher have breathed their last, let the Artist's voice again be heard."

It is needless to recall the scorn which my presumption brought upon me; since in the course of my succeeding literary labours, whose connected products I here append, [25] I had occasion enough to defend myself against the grossest of these attacks. I have also exhaustively treated this whole matter, both with regard to the inception of these works and the characteristic incitement thereto, not only in the "Communication to my Friends," (03) which brings this whole period to a close, but also in a later treatise, entitled: "The Music of the Future" ("*Zukunftsmusik*"). I will only say here that the principal cause which brought down the ridicule of our art-critics upon my seemingly paradoxical ideas, is to be found in the fervid enthusiasm which pervaded my style and gave to my remarks more of a poetic than a scientific character. Moreover, the effect of an indiscriminate intercalation of philosophical maxims was prejudicial to my clearness of expression, especially in the eyes of those who could not or would not follow my line of thought and general principles. Actively aroused by the perusal of some of *Ludwig Feuerbach's* essays, I had borrowed various terms of abstract

nomenclature and applied them to artistic ideas with which they could not always closely harmonise. In thus doing, I gave myself up without critical deliberation to the guidance of a brilliant writer, who approached most nearly to my reigning frame of mind, in that he bade farewell to Philosophy (in which he fancied he detected naught but masked Theology) and took refuge in a conception of man's nature in which I thought I clearly recognised my own ideal of artistic manhood. From this arose a kind of impassioned tangle of ideas, which manifested itself as precipitance and indistinctness in my attempts at philosophical system.

While on this subject, I deem it needful to make special mention of two chief 'terms,' my misunderstanding of which has since been strikingly borne in upon me.

I refer in the first place to the concept *Willkür* and *Unwillkür*, (04) in the use of which a great confusion had [26] long preceded my own offending; for an adjectival term, *unwillkürlich*, had been promoted to the rank of a substantive. Only those who have learnt from *Schopenhauer* the true meaning and significance of the *Will*, can thoroughly appreciate the abuse that had resulted from this mixing up of words; he who has enjoyed this unspeakable benefit, however, knows well that that misused "*Unwillkür*" should really be named "*Der Wille*" (the Will); whilst the term *Willkür* (Choice or Caprice) is here employed to signify the so-called Intellectual or Brain Will, influenced by the guidance of reflection. Since the latter is more concerned with the properties of Knowledge,—which may easily be led astray by the purely individual aim,—it is attainted with the evil qualities with which it is charged in the following pages, under the name of *Willkür* whereas the pure *Will*, as the "*Thing-in-itself*" that comes to consciousness in man, is credited with those true productive qualities which are here—apparently the result of a confusion sprung from the popular misuse of the term—assigned to the negative expression, "*Unwillkür*." Therefore, since a thorough revision in this sense would lead too far and prove a most fatiguing task, the reader is begged, when doubtful of the meaning of any of such passages, to bear graciously in mind the present explanation.

Further, I have to fear that my continual employment of the term "*Sinnlichkeit*," (05) in a sense prompted by the same authority, may give origin, if not to positively harmful misunderstanding, at least to much perplexity. Since the idea conveyed by this term can only have the meaning, [27] in my argument, of the direct antithesis to "*Gedanken*" (Thought), or—which will make my purport clearer—to "*Gedanklichkeit*" (Ideation): its absolute misunderstanding would certainly be difficult, seeing that the two opposite factors, Art and Learning, must readily be recognised herein. But since, in ordinary parlance, this word is employed in the evil sense of "Sensualism," or even of abandonment to Sensual Lust, it would be better to replace it by a term of less ambiguous meaning, in theoretical expositions of so warm a declamatory tone as these of mine, however wide a currency it has obtained in philosophical speech. Obviously, the question here is of the contrast between intuitive and abstract knowledge, both in themselves and their results; but above all, of the subjective predisposition to these diverse modes. The term "*Anschauungsvermögen*" (Perceptive Faculty) would sufficiently denote the former; were it not that for the specific *artistic* perception, a distinctive emphasis seems necessary, for which it might well appear indispensable to retain the expression "*Sinnliches Anschauungsvermögen*" (Physical perceptive faculty), and briefly "*Sinnlichkeit*" (Physicality), alike for the faculty, for the object of its exercise, and for the force which sets the two in rapport with each other.

But the greatest peril of all, is that which the author would incur by his frequent use of the word *Communism*, should he venture into the Paris of to-day with these art-essays in his hand; for he openly proclaims his adherence to this severely scouted category, in contradistinction to *Egoism*. (06) I certainly believe that the friendly German reader, to whom the meaning of this antithesis will be obvious, will have no special trouble in overcoming the doubt as to whether he must rank me among the partisans of the newest Parisian "*Commune*." Still, I

cannot deny that I should not have embarked with the same energy upon the use of this word "Communism" (employing it in [28] a sense borrowed from the said writings of Feuerbach) as the opposite of Egoism: had I not also seen in this idea a socio-political ideal which I conceived as embodied in a "*Volk*" (People) that should represent the incomparable productivity of antique brotherhood, while I looked forward to the perfect evolution of this principle as the very essence of the associate Manhood of the Future.—It is significant of my experiences on the practical side, that in the first of these writings, *Art and Revolution*, which I had originally intended for a certain political journal (07) then appearing in Paris (where I stayed for a few weeks in the summer of 1849), I avoided this word "Communism,"—as it now seems to me, from fear of gross misunderstanding on the part of our French brethren, materialistic ("*sinnlich*") as they are in their interpretation of so many an abstract idea,—whereas I forthwith used it without scruple in my next art-writings, designed expressly for Germany; a fact I now regard as a token of my implicit trust in the attributes of the German mind. In pursuance of this observation, I attach considerable importance also to the experience, that my essay met with absolutely no whit of understanding in Paris, and that no one at the time could understand why I should single out a political journal for my mouthpiece; in consequence whereof; my article did not after all attain to publication there.

But it was not only from the effects of these and similar experiences, that the quick of my ideas drew gradually back from contact with the political excitement of the day, and soon developed more and more exclusively as an *artistic* ideal. Hereof the sequence of the writings collected in these two volumes (08) gives sufficient indication; and this the reader will best recognise from the insertion, in their midst, of a dramatic sketch: *Wieland der Schmied*, executed by me in the same chronological order as that in [29] which it now stands. If that artistic ideal, which I have ever since held fast to as my inmost acquisition, under whatsoever form of its manifestment,—if that ideal remained the only actual outcome of a labour which taxed the whole energy of my nature; and finally, if only as a creative artist could I live up to this ideal without disquietude: then my belief in the German spirit, and the trust in its predestined place amid the Council of the Nations that took an ever mightier hold upon me as time rolled on, could alone inspire me with the hopeful equanimity so indispensable to the artist—even from the outer aspect of the human lot, however much the care for the latter had forced its passionate disturbance upon my views of life. Already I have been enabled to preface the second edition of *Opera and Drama* by a dedication to a friend (09) I had won in the interval,—and to whose instructive suggestions I have had to thank the most comforting solutions of the last named problem,—in order to reach to him the hand of the artist as well as of the man, in token of the hopes that cheer us both.

I have now only to conclude these comments by pointing back once more to their opening sentences, wherein I cited the dictum of Carlyle upon the import of the great world epoch that dawned upon us with the French Revolution. According to the high opinion which this great thinker has proclaimed, of the destiny of the German nation and its spirit of veracity, it must be deemed no vain presumption that we recognise in this German people—whose own completed *Reformation* would seem to have spared it from the need of any share in Revolution—the pre-ordained "Heroic Wise" on whom he calls to abridge the period of horrible World-Anarchy. For myself; I feel assured that just the same relation which my ideal of Art bears to the reality of our general conditions of existence, that relation is allotted to the German race in its destiny amid a whole political world in the throes of "Spontaneous Combustion."



[30]

## Art and Revolution.

ALMOST universal is the outcry raised by artists nowadays against the damage that the Revolution has occasioned them. It is not the battles of the "barricades," not the sudden mighty shattering of the pillars of the State, not the hasty change of Governments,—that is bewailed; for the impression left behind by such capital events as these, is for the most part disproportionately fleeting, and short-lived in its violence. But it is the protracted character of the latest convulsions, that is so mortally affecting the artistic efforts of the day. The hitherto-recognised foundations of industry, of commerce, and of wealth, are now threatened; and though tranquillity has been outwardly restored, and the general physiognomy of social life completely re-established, yet there gnaws at the entrails of this life a carking care, an agonising distress. Reluctance to embark in fresh undertakings, is maiming credit; he who wishes to preserve what he has, declines the prospect of uncertain gain; industry is at a standstill, and—Art has no longer the wherewithal to live.

It were cruel to refuse human sympathy to the thousands who are smarting from this blow. Where, a little while ago, a popular artist was accustomed to receive, at the hands of the care-free portion of our well-to-do society, the reward of his appreciated services in sterling payment, and a like prospect of comfort and contentment in his life,—it is hard for him now to see himself rejected by tight-closed hands, and abandoned to lack of occupation. In this he shares the fate of the mechanic, who must lay the cunning fingers with which he was wont to create a thousand dainty trifles for the rich, in idleness upon his breast above a [31] hungry stomach. He has the right then to bewail his lot; for to him who feels the smart of pain, has Nature given the gift of tears. But whether he has a right to confound his own personality with that of Art, to decry his ills as the ills of Art, to scold the Revolution as the arch-enemy of Art, because it interferes with the easy ministry to his own wants: this were grave matter for question. Before a decision could be arrived at on this point, at least those artists might be interrogated who have shown by word and deed that they loved and laboured for Art for its own pure sake; and from these we should soon learn, that they suffered also in the former times when others were rejoicing.

The question must be therefore put to Art itself and its true essence; nor must we in this matter concern ourselves with mere abstract definitions; for our object will naturally be, to discover the meaning of Art as a factor in the life of the State, and to make ourselves acquainted with it as a social product. A hasty review of the salient points of the history of European art will be of welcome service to us in this, and assist us to a solution of the above-named problem—a problem which is surely not of slight importance.



[32]

IN any serious investigation of the essence of our art of to-day, we cannot make one step forward without being brought face to face with its intimate connection with the *Art of ancient Greece*. For, in point of fact, our modern art is but one link in the artistic development of the whole of Europe; and this development found its starting-point with the Greeks.

After it had overcome the raw religion of its Asiatic birth-place, built upon the nature-forces of the earth, and had set the fair, *strong manhood of freedom* upon the pinnacle of its religious convictions,—the Grecian spirit, at the flowering-time of its art and polity, found its fullest expression in the god Apollo, the head and national deity of the Hellenic race.

It was Apollo,—he who had slain the Python, the dragon of Chaos; who had smitten down

the vain sons of boastful Niobe by his death-dealing darts; who, through his priestess at Delphi, had proclaimed to questioning man the fundamental laws of the Grecian race and nation, thus holding up to those involved in passionate action, the peaceful, undisturbed mirror of their inmost, unchangeable Grecian nature,—it was this Apollo who was the fulfiller of the will of Zeus upon the Grecian earth; who was, in fact, the Grecian people.

Not as the soft companion of the Muses,—as the later and more luxurious art of sculpture has alone preserved his likeness,—must we conceive the Apollo of the spring-time of the Greeks; but it was with all the traits of energetic earnestness, beautiful but strong, that the great tragedian *Æschylus* knew him. Thus, too, the Spartan youths learnt the nature of the god, when by dance and joust they had developed their supple bodies to grace and strength; when the boy was taken from those he loved, and sent on horse to farthest lands in search of perilous adventure; when the young man was led into the circle of fellowship, [33] his only password that of his beauty and his native worth, in which alone lay all his might and all his riches. With such eyes also the Athenian saw the god, when all the impulses of his fair body, and of his restless soul, urged him to the new birth of his own being through the ideal expression of art; when the voices, ringing full, sounded forth the choral song, singing the deeds of the god, the while they gave to the dancers the mastering measure that meted out the rhythm of the dance,—which dance itself; in graceful movements, told the story of those deeds; and when above the harmony of well-ordered columns he wove the noble roof; heaped one upon the other the broad crescents of the amphitheatre, and planned the scenic trappings of the stage. Thus, too, inspired by Dionysus, the tragic poet saw this glorious god: when, to all the rich elements of spontaneous art, the harvest of the fairest and most human life, he joined the bond of speech, and concentrating them all into one focus, brought forth the highest conceivable form of art—the DRAMA.

The deeds of gods and men, their sufferings, their delights, as they,—in all solemnity and glee, as eternal rhythm, as everlasting harmony of every motion and of all creation,—lay disclosed in the nature of Apollo himself; here they became actual and true. For all that in them moved and lived, as it moved and lived in the beholders, here found its perfected expression; where ear and eye, as soul and heart, lifelike and actual, seized and perceived all, and saw all in spirit and in body revealed; so that the imagination need no longer vex itself with the attempt to conjure up the image. Such a tragedy-day was a Feast of the God; for here the god spoke clearly and intelligibly forth, and the poet, as his high-priest, stood real and embodied in his art-work, led the measures of the dance, raised the voices to a choir, and in ringing words proclaimed the utterances of godlike wisdom.

Such was the Grecian work of art; such their god Apollo, incarnated in actual, living art; such was the Grecian people in its highest truth and beauty.

This race, in every branch, in every unit, was rich in individuality, [34] restless in its energy, in the goal of one undertaking seeing but the starting-point of a fresh one; in constant mutual intercourse, in daily-changing alliances, in daily-varying strifes; to-day in luck, to-morrow in mischance; to-day in peril of the utmost danger, to-morrow absolutely exterminating its foes; in all its relations, both internal and external, breathing the life of the freest and most unceasing development. This people, streaming in its thousands from the State-assembly, from the Agora, from land, from sea, from camps, from distant parts,—filled with its thirty thousand heads the amphitheatre. To see the most pregnant of all tragedies, the "Prometheus," came they; in this Titanic masterpiece to see the image of themselves, to read the riddle of their own actions, to fuse their own being and their own communion with that of their god; and thus in noblest, stillest peace to live again the life which a brief space of time before, they had lived in restless activity and accentuated individuality.

Ever jealous of his personal independence, and hunting down the "Tyrannos" who, howsoever wise and lofty, might imperil from any quarter the freedom of his own strong will:



the Greek despised the soft complacency which, under the convenient shelter of another's care, can lay itself down to passive egoistic rest. Constantly on his guard, untiring in warding off all outside influence: he gave not even to the hoariest tradition the right over his own free mundane life, his actions, or his thoughts. Yet, at the summons of the choir his voice was hushed, he yielded himself a willing slave to the deep significance of the scenic show, and hearkened to the great story of Necessity told by the tragic poet through the mouths of his gods. and heroes on the stage. For in the tragedy he found himself again,—nay, found the noblest part of his own nature united with the noblest characteristics of the whole nation; and from his inmost soul, as it there unfolded itself to him, proclaimed the Pythian oracle. At once both God and Priest, glorious godlike man, one with the Universal, the Universal summed up in him: like one of those [35] thousand fibres which form the plant's united life, his slender form sprang from the soil into the upper air; there to bring forth the one lovely flower which shed its fragrant breath upon eternity. This flower was the highest work of Art, its scent the spirit of Greece; and still it intoxicates our senses and forces from us the avowal, that it were better to be for half a day a Greek in presence of this tragic Art-work, than to all eternity an—un-Greek *God!*



Hand-in-hand with the dissolution of the Athenian State, marched the downfall of Tragedy. As the spirit of *Community* split itself along a thousand lines of egoistic cleavage, so was the great united work of Tragedy disintegrated into its individual factors. Above the ruins of tragic art was heard the cry of the mad laughter of Aristophanes, the maker of comedies; and, at the bitter end, every impulse of Art stood still before Philosophy, who read with gloomy mien her homilies upon the fleeting stay of human strength and beauty.

To *Philosophy* and not to Art, belong the two thousand years which, since the decadence of Grecian Tragedy, have passed till our own day. In vain did Art send hither and thither her dazzling beams into the night of discontented thought, of mankind grovelling in its madness; they were but the cries, of pain or joy, of the units who had escaped from the desert of the multitude, and, like fortunate wanderers from distant lands, had reached the hidden, bubbling spring of pure Castalian waters, at which they slaked their thirsty lips but dared not reach the quickening draught unto the world. Or else it was, that Art entered on the service of one or other of those abstract ideas or even conventions which, now lighter and now more heavily, weighed down a suffering humanity and cast in fetters the freedom both of individuals and communities. But never more was she the free expression of a free community. Yet true Art is highest freedom, and only the highest freedom can bring her forth from out itself; no [36] commandment, no ordinance, in short, no aim apart from Art, can call her to arise.

The Romans,—whose national art had early vanished before the influence of an indoctrinated Grecian art,—procured the services of Greek architects, sculptors and painters; and their own *savants* trained themselves to Grecian rhetoric and versification. Their giant theatres, however, they opened not to the gods and heroes of the ancient myths, nor to the free dancers and singers of the sacred choirs! No! Wild beasts, lions, panthers and elephants, must tear themselves to pieces in their amphitheatres, to glut the Roman eye; and gladiators, slaves trained up to the due pitch of strength and agility, must satiate the Roman ear with the hoarse gulp of death.

These brutal conquerors of the world were pleased to wallow in the most absolute realism; their imagination could find its only solace in the most material of presentments. Their philosophers they gladly left to flee shuddering from public life to abstract speculations; but, for themselves, they loved to revel in concrete and open bloodthirstiness, beholding human suffering set before them in absolute physical reality.

These gladiators and fighters with wild beasts, were sprung from every European nation;



and the kings, nobles, and serfs of these nations were all slaves alike of the Roman Emperor, who showed them, in this most practical of ways, that all men were equals; just as, on the other hand, he himself was often shown most palpably by his own Pretorian Guard, that he also was no more than a mere slave.

This mutual and general slavery—so clear, that no one could gainsay it—yearned, as every universal feeling of the world must yearn, for an adequate expression of itself. But the manifest degradation and dishonour of all men; the consciousness of the complete corruption of all manly worth; the inevitably ensuing loathing of the material pleasures that now alone were left; the deep contempt for their own acts and deeds, from which all spirit of Genius [37] and impulse of Art had long since joined with Freedom in her flight; this sorrowful existence, without actual aimful life,—could find but one expression; which, though certainly universal as the condition that called it forth, must yet be the direct antithesis of Art. For Art is pleasure in itself; in existence, in community; but the condition of that period, at the close of the Roman mastery of the world, was self-contempt, disgust with existence, horror of community. Thus *Art* could never be the true expression of this condition: its only possible expression was *Christianity*.

Christianity adjusts the ills of an honourless, useless, and sorrowful existence of mankind on earth, by the miraculous love of God; who had not — as the noble Greek supposed—created man for a happy and self-conscious life upon this earth, but had here imprisoned him in a loathsome dungeon: so as, in reward for the self-contempt that poisoned him therein, to prepare him for a posthumous state of endless comfort and inactive ecstasy. Man was therefore bound to remain in this deepest and unmanliest degradation, and no activity of this present life should he exercise; for this accursed life was, in truth, the world of the devil, *i.e.*, of the senses; and by every action in it, he played into the devil's hands. Therefore the poor wretch who, in the enjoyment of his natural powers, made this life his own possession, must suffer after death the eternal torments of hell! Naught was required of mankind but *Faith*—that is to say, the confession of its miserable plight, and the giving up of all spontaneous attempt to escape from out this misery; for the *undeserved Grace* of God was alone to set it free.

The historian knows not surely that this was the view of the humble son of the Galilean carpenter; who, looking on the misery of his fellow-men, proclaimed that he had not come to bring peace, but a sword into the world; whom we must love for the anger with which he thundered forth against the hypocritical Pharisees who fawned upon the power of Rome, so as the better to bind and heartlessly [38] enslave the people; and finally, who preached the reign of universal human love—a love he could never have enjoined on men whose duty it should be to despise their fellows and themselves. The inquirer more clearly discerns the hand of the miraculously converted Pharisee, Paul, and the zeal with which, in his conversion of the heathen, he followed so successfully the monition: "Be ye wise as serpents . . .;" he may also estimate the deep and universal degradation of civilised mankind, and see in this the historical soil from which the full-grown tree of finally developed Christian dogma drew forth the sap that fed its fruit. But thus much the candid *artist* perceives at the first glance: that neither was Christianity Art, nor could it ever bring forth from itself the true and living Art.

The free Greek, who set himself upon the pinnacle of Nature, could procreate Art from very joy in manhood: the Christian, who impartially cast aside both Nature and himself; could only sacrifice to his God on the altar of renunciation; he durst not bring his actions or his work as offering, but believed that he must seek His favour by abstinence from all self-prompted venture. Art is the highest expression of activity of a race that has developed its physical beauty in unison with itself and Nature; and man must reap the highest joy from the world of sense, before he can mould therefrom the implements of his art; for from the world of sense alone, can he derive so much as the impulse to artistic creation. The Christian, on the

contrary, if he fain would create an art-work that should correspond to his belief; must derive his impulse from the essence of abstract spirit (*Geist*), from the grace of God, and therein find his tools.—What, then, could he take for aim? Surely not physical beauty,—mirrored in his eyes as an incarnation of the devil? And how could pure spirit, at any time, give birth to a something that could be cognised by the senses?

All pondering of this problem is fruitless; the course of history shows too unmistakeably the results of these two opposite methods. Where the Greeks, for their edification, [39] gathered in the amphitheatre for the space of a few short hours full of the deepest meaning: the Christian shut himself away in the life-long imprisonment of a cloister. In the one case, the Popular Assembly was the judge: in the other, the Inquisition; here the State developed to an honourable Democracy: there, to a hypocritical Despotism.

*Hypocrisy* is the salient feature, the peculiar characteristic, of every century of our Christian era, right down to our own day; and indeed this vice has always stalked abroad with more crying shamelessness, in direct proportion as mankind, in spite of Christendom, has refreshed its vigour from its own unquenchable and inner well-spring, and ripened toward the fulfilment of its true purpose. Nature is so strong, so inexhaustible in its regenerative resources, that no conceivable violence could weaken its creative force. Into the ebbing veins of the Roman world, there poured the healthy blood of the fresh Germanic nations. Despite the adoption of Christianity, a ceaseless thirst of doing, delight in bold adventure, and unbounded self-reliance, remained the native element of the new masters of the world. But, as in the whole history of the Middle Ages we always light upon one prominent factor, the warfare between worldly might and the despotism of the Roman Church: so, when this new world sought for a form of utterance, it could only find it in opposition to, and strife against, the spirit of Christendom. The Art of Christian Europe could never proclaim itself; like that of ancient Greece, as the expression of a world attuned to harmony; for reason that its inmost being was incurably and irreconcilably split up between the force of conscience and the instinct of life, between the ideal and the reality. Like the order of Chivalry itself; the chivalric poetry of the Middle Ages, in attempting to heal this severance, could, even amid its loftiest imagery, but bring to light the falsehood of the reconciliation; the higher and the more proudly it soared on high, so the more visibly gaped the abyss between the actual life and the idealised existence, [40] between the raw, passionate bearing of these knights in physical life and their too delicate, etherealised behaviour in romance. For the same reason did actual life, leaving the pristine, noble, and certainly not ungraceful customs of the People, become corrupt and vicious; for it durst not draw the nourishment for its art-impulse from out of its own being, its joy in itself; and its own physical demeanour; but was sent for all its spiritual sustenance to Christianity, which warned it off from the first taste of life's delight, as from a thing accursed.—The poetry of Chivalry was thus the honourable hypocrisy of fanaticism, the parody of heroism: in place of Nature, it offered a convention.

Only when the enthusiasm of belief had smouldered down, when the Church openly proclaimed herself as naught but a worldly despotism appreciable by the senses, in alliance with the no less material worldly absolutism of the temporal rule which she had sanctified: only then, commenced the so-called Renaissance of Art. That wherewith man had racked his brains so long, he would fain now see before him clad in body, like the Church itself in all its worldly pomp. But this was only possible on condition that he opened his eyes once more, and restored his senses to their rights. Yet when man took the objects of belief and the revelations of phantasy and set them before his eyes in physical beauty, and with the artist's delight in that physical beauty,—this was a complete denial of the very essence of the Christian religion; and it was the deepest humiliation to Christendom that the guidance to these art-creations must be sought from the pagan art of Greece. Nevertheless, the Church appropriated to herself this newly-roused art-impulse, and did not blush to deck herself with

the borrowed plumes of paganism; thus trumpeting her own hypocrisy.

Worldly dominion, however, had its share also in the revival of art. After centuries of combat, their power armed against all danger from below, the security of riches awoke in the ruling classes the desire for more refined enjoyment of this wealth: they took into their pay the [41] arts whose lessons Greece had taught. "Free" Art now served as handmaid to these exalted masters, and, looking into the matter more closely, it is difficult to decide who was the greater hypocrite:—Louis XIV., when he sat and heard the Grecian hate of Tyrants, declaimed in polished verses from the boards of his Court-theatre; or Corneille and Racine, when, to win the favour of their lord, they set in the mouths of their stage-heroes the warm words of freedom and political virtue, of ancient Greece and Rome.

Could Art be present there in very deed, where it blossomed not forth as the living utterance of a free, self-conscious community, but was taken into the service of the very powers which hindered the self-development of that community, and was thus capriciously transplanted from foreign climes? No, surely! Yet we shall see that Art, instead of enfranchising herself from eminently respectable masters, such as were the Holy Church and witty Princes, preferred to sell her soul and body to a far worse mistress—*Commerce*.



The Grecian Zeus, the father of all life, sent a messenger from Olympus to the gods upon their wanderings through the world—the fair young *Hermes*. The busy thought of Zeus was he; winged he clove from the heights above to the depths below, to proclaim the omnipresence of the sovereign god. He presided, too, at the death of men, and led their shades into the still realm of Night; for wherever the stern necessity of Nature's ordering showed clearly forth, the god Hermes was visible in action, as the embodied thought of Zeus.

The Romans had a god, *Mercury*, whom they likened to the Grecian Hermes. But with them his winged mission gained a more practical intent. For them it was the restless diligence of their chaffering and usurious merchants, who streamed from all the ends of the earth into the heart of the Roman world; to bring its luxurious masters, in [42] barter for solid gain, all those delights of sense which their own immediately surrounding Nature could not afford them. To the Roman, surveying its essence and its methods, Commerce seemed no more nor less than trickery; and though, by reason of his ever-growing luxury, this world of trade appeared a necessary evil, he cherished a deep contempt for all its doings. Thus Mercury, the god of merchants, became for him the god withal of cheats and sharpers.

This slighted god, however, revenged himself upon the arrogant Romans, and usurped their mastery of the world. For, crown his head with the halo of Christian hypocrisy, decorate his breast with the soulless tokens of dead feudal orders: and ye have in him the god of the modern world, the holy-noble god of 'five per cent,' the ruler and the master of the ceremonies of our modern—'art.' Ye may see him embodied in a strait-laced English banker, whose daughter perchance has been given in marriage to a ruined peer. Ye may see him in this gentleman, when he engages the chief singers of the Italian Opera to sing before him in his own drawing-room rather than in the theatre, because he will have the glory of paying higher for them here than there; but on no account, even here, on the sacred Sunday. Behold *Mercury* and his docile handmaid, *Modern Art*!

This is Art, as it now fills the entire civilised world! Its true essence is Industry; its ethical aim, the gaining of gold; its aesthetic purpose, the entertainment of those whose time hangs heavily on their hands. From the heart of our modern society, from the golden calf of wholesale Speculation, stalled at the meeting of its cross-roads, our art sucks forth its

life-juice, borrows a hollow grace from the lifeless relics of the chivalric conventions of mediaeval times, and—blushing not to fleece the poor, for all its professions of Christianity—descends to the depths of the proletariat, enervating, demoralising, and dehumanising everything on which it sheds its venom.

Its pleasance it has set up in the Theatre, as did the art [43] of Greece in its maturity; and, indeed, it has a claim upon the theatre: for is it not the expression of our current views of present life? Our modern stage materialises the ruling spirit of our social life, and publishes its daily record in a way that no other branch of art can hope to rival; for it prepares its feasts, night in night out, in almost every town of Europe. Thus, as the broad-strewn art of drama, it denotes, to all appearance, the flower of our culture; just as the Grecian tragedy denoted the culminating point of the Grecian spirit; but ours is the efflorescence of corruption, of a hollow, soulless and unnatural condition of human affairs and human relations.

This condition of things we need not further characterise here; we need but honestly search the contents and the workings of our public art, especially that of the stage, in order to see the spirit of the times reflected therein as in a faithful mirror; for such a mirror public Art has ever been. (10)

Thus we can by no means recognise in our theatrical art the genuine Drama; that one, indivisible, supreme creation of the mind of man. Our theatre merely offers the convenient *locale* for the tempting exhibition of the heterogeneous wares of art-manufacture. How incapable is our stage to gather up each branch of Art in its highest and most perfect expression—the Drama—it shows at once in its division into the two opposing classes, Play and Opera; whereby the idealising influence of music is forbidden to the Play, and the Opera is forestalled of the living heart and lofty purpose of actual drama. Thus on the one hand, the spoken Play can never, with but few [44] exceptions, lift itself up to the ideal flight of poetry; but, for very reason of the poverty of its means of utterance,—to say nothing of the demoralising influence of our public life,—must fall from height to depth, from the warm atmosphere of passion into the cold element of intrigue. On the other hand, the Opera becomes a chaos of sensuous impressions jostling one another without rhyme or reason, from which each one may choose at will what pleases best his fancy; here the alluring movements of a dancer, there the *bravura* passage of a singer; here the dazzling effect of a triumph of the scene-painter, there the astounding efforts of a Vulcan of the orchestra. Do we not read from day to day, that this or that new opera is a masterpiece because it contains a goodly number of fine *arias* and duets, the instrumentation is extremely brilliant, &c., &c.? The aim which alone can justify the employment of such complex means,—the great dramatic aim,—folk never give so much as a thought.

Such verdicts as these are shallow, but honest; they show exactly what is the position of the audience. There are even many of our most popular artists who do not in the least conceal the fact, that they have no other ambition than to satisfy this shallow audience. They are wise in their generation; for when the prince leaves a heavy dinner, the banker a fatiguing financial operation, the working man a weary day of toil, and go to the theatre: they ask for rest, distraction, and amusement, and are in no mood for renewed effort and fresh expenditure of force. This argument is so convincing, that we can only reply by saying: it would be more decorous to employ for this purpose any other thing in the wide world, but not the body and soul of Art. We shall then be told, however, that if we do not employ Art in this manner, it must perish from our public life: *i.e.*,—that the artist will lose the means of living.

On this side everything is lamentable, indeed, but candid, genuine, and honest; civilised corruption, and modern Christian dulness!

[45]

But, affairs having undeniably come to such a pass, what shall we say to the hypocritical pretence of many an art-hero of our times, whose fame is now the order of the day? —when

he dons the melancholy counterfeit of true artistic inspiration; when he racks his brains for thoughts of deep intent, and ever seeks fresh food for awe, setting heaven and hell in motion: in short, when he behaves just like those honest journeymen of art who avowed that one must *not* be too particular if one wish to get rid of one's goods. What shall we say, when these heroes not only seek to entertain, but expose themselves to all the peril of fatiguing, in order to be thought profound; when, too, they renounce all hope of substantial profit, and even—though only a rich man, born and bred, can afford that!—spend their own money upon their productions, thus offering up the highest modern sacrifice? To what purpose, this enormous waste? Alas! there yet remains one other thing than gold, a thing that nowadays a man may buy for gold like any other pleasure: that thing is *Fame!*—Yet what sort of fame is there to reach in our public art? Only the fame of the same publicity for which this art is planned, and which the fame-lusting man can never obtain but by submission to its most trivial claims. Thus he deludes both himself and the public, in giving it his piebald art-work; while the public deludes both itself and him, in bestowing on him its applause. But this mutual lie is worthy of the lying nature of modern Fame itself; for we are adepts in the art of decking out our own self-seeking passions with the monstrous lies of such sweet-sounding names as "Patriotism," "Honour," "Law and Order," &c., &c.

Yet, why do we deem it necessary so publicly to cheat each one the other?—Because, mid all the ruling evils, these notions and these virtues are present still within our conscience; though truly in our *guilty* conscience. For it is sure, that where honour and truth are really present, there also is true Art at hand. The greatest and most noble minds—whom Æschylus and Sophocles would have [46] greeted with the kiss of brotherhood—for centuries have raised their voices in the wilderness. We have heard their cry, and it lingers still within our ears; but from our base and frivolous hearts we have washed away its living echo. We tremble at their fame, but mock their art. We admit their rank as artists of lofty aim, but rob them of the realisation of their art-work; for the one great, genuine work of Art they cannot bring to life unaided: we, too, must help them in its birth. The tragedies of Æschylus and Sophocles were the work of Athens!

What boots, then, the fame of these Masters? What serves it us, that *Shakespeare*, like a second Creator, has opened for us the endless realm of human nature? What serves it, that *Beethoven* has lent to Music the manly, independent strength of Poetry? Ask the threadbare caricatures of your theatres, ask the street-minstrel commonplaces of your operas: and ye have your answer! But do ye need to ask? Alas, no! Ye know it right well; indeed, ye would not have it otherwise; ye only give yourselves the air as though ye knew it not!

What then is your Art, and what your Drama?

The Revolution of February deprived the Paris theatres of public support; many of them were on the brink of bankruptcy. After the events of June, Cavaignac, busied with the maintenance of the existing order of society, came to their aid and demanded a subvention for their continuance. Why?—Because the Breadless Classes, the *Prolétariat*, would be augmented by the closing of the theatres.—So; this interest alone has the State in the Stage! It sees in it an industrial workshop, and, to boot, an influence that may calm the passions, absorb the excitement, and divert the threatening agitation of the heated public mind; which broods in deepest discontent, seeking for the way by which dishonoured human nature may return to its true self; even though it be at cost of the continuance of our—so appropriate theatrical institutions!

Well! the avowal is candid; and on all fours with the frankness of this admission, stands the complaint [47] of our modern artists and their hatred for the Revolution. Yet what has *Art* in common with these cares and these complaints?





Let us now compare the chief features of the public art of modern Europe with those of the public art of Greece, in order to set clearly before our eyes their characteristic points of difference.

The public art of the Greeks, which reached its zenith in their Tragedy, was the expression of the deepest and the noblest principles of the people's consciousness: with *us* the deepest and noblest of man's consciousness is the direct opposite of this, namely the denunciation of our public art. To the Greeks the production of a tragedy was a religious festival, where the gods bestirred themselves upon the stage and bestowed on men their wisdom: *our* evil conscience has so lowered the theatre in public estimation, that it is the duty of the police to prevent the stage from meddling in the slightest with religion; (11) a circumstance as characteristic of our religion as of our art. Within the ample boundaries of the Grecian amphitheatre, the whole populace was wont to witness the performances: in our superior theatres, lo! only the affluent classes. The Greeks sought the instruments of their art in the products of the highest associate culture: we seek ours in the deepest social barbarism. The education of the Greek, from his earliest youth, made himself the subject of his own artistic treatment and artistic enjoyment, in body as in spirit: our foolish education, fashioned for the most part to fit us merely for future industrial gain, gives us a ridiculous, and withal arrogant satisfaction with our own unfitness for art, and forces us to seek the subjects of any kind of artistic [48] amusement outside ourselves,—like the rake who goes for the fleeting joys of love to the arms of a prostitute. Thus the Greek was his own actor, singer, and dancer; his share in the performance of a tragedy was to him the highest pleasure in the work of Art itself, and he rightly held it an honour to be entitled by his beauty and his culture to be called to this beloved task: we, on the other hand, permit a certain portion of our proletariat, which is to be found in every social stratum, to be instructed for our entertainment; thus prurient vanity, claptrap, and at times unseemly haste for fortune-making, fill up the ranks of our dramatic companies. Where the Grecian artist found his only reward in his own delight in the masterpiece, in its success, and the public approbation: we have the modern artist boarded, lodged, and—*paid*. And thus we reach the essential distinction between the two: with the Greeks their public art was very *Art*, with us it is artistic—*Handicraft*.

The *true artist* finds delight not only in the aim of his creation, but also in the very process of creation, in the handling and moulding of his material. The very act of production is to him a gladsome, satisfying activity: no toil. The *journeyman* reckons only the goal of his labour, the profit which his toil shall bring him; the energy which he expends, gives him no pleasure; it is but a fatigue, an inevitable task, a burden which he would gladly give over to a machine; his toil is but a fettering chain. For this reason he is never present with his work in spirit, but always looking beyond it to its goal, which he fain would reach as quickly as he may. Yet, if the immediate aim of the journeyman is the satisfaction of an impulse of his own, such as the preparing of his own dwelling, his chattels, his raiment, &c.: then, together with his prospective pleasure in the hasting value of these objects, there also enters by degrees a bent to such a fashioning of the material as shall agree with his individual tastes. After he has fulfilled the demands of bare necessity, the creation of that which answers to less pressing needs will elevate itself to the rank [49] of artistic production. But if he bargains away the product of his toil, all that remains to him is its mere money-worth; and thus his energy can never rise above the character of the busy strokes of a machine; in his eyes it is but weariness, and bitter, sorrowful toil. The latter is the lot of the Slave of Industry; and our modern factories afford us the sad picture of the deepest degradation of man,—constant labour, killing both body and soul, without joy or love, often almost without aim.

It is impossible to mistake the lamentable effects of Christian dogma, in this also. As this dogma set man's goal entirely outside his earthly being, and that goal was centred in an absolute and superhuman God: so only from the aspect of its most inevitable needs, could life

remain an object of man's care; for, having once received the gift of life, it was his bounden duty to maintain it until that day when God alone should please relieve him of its burden. But in no wise should his needs awake a lust to treat with loving hand the matter given him for their satisfaction; only the abstract aim of life's bare maintenance could justify the operation of his senses. And thus we see with horror the spirit of modern Christianity embodied in a cotton-mill: to speed the rich, God has become our Industry, which only holds the wretched Christian labourer to life until the heavenly courses of the stars of commerce bring round the gracious dispensation that sends him to a better world.

The Greek knew no handicraft, rightly so described. The so-called necessities of life,—which, strictly speaking, make up the whole concernment of our private and our public life,—he deemed unworthy to rank as objects of special and engrossing attention. His soul lived only in publicity, in the great fellowship of his nation; the needs of this public life made up the total of his care; whereas these needs were satisfied by the patriot, the statesman, and the artist, but not the craftsman. The Greek went forth to the delights of this publicity from a simple, unassuming home. It would have seemed to him disgraceful [50] and degrading to revel, within the costly walls of a private palace, in the refinements of luxury and extravagance which to-day fill out the life of a hero of the Bourse; for this was the distinction that he drew between himself and the egoistic "Barbarians" of the East. He sought the culture of his body in the general public baths and gymnasia; his simple, noble clothing was for the most part the artistic care of the women; and whenever he fell upon the necessity of manual toil, it was of his very nature that he should find out its artistic side, and straightway raise it to an art. But the drudgery of household labour he thrust away—to *Slaves*.

This Slave thus became the fateful hinge of the whole destiny of the world. The Slave, by sheer reason of the assumed necessity of his slavery, has exposed the null and fleeting nature of all the strength and beauty of exclusive Grecian manhood, and has shown to all time that *Beauty and Strength, as attributes of public life, can then alone prove lasting blessings, when they are the common gifts of all mankind.*

Unhappily, things have not as yet advanced beyond the mere demonstration. In fact, the Revolution of the human race, that has lasted now two thousand years, has been almost exclusively in the spirit of Reaction. It has dragged down the fair, free man to itself, to slavery; the slave has not become a freeman, but the freeman a slave.

To the Greek the fair, strong man alone was free, and this man was none other than *himself*; whatever lay outside the circle of Grecian manhood and Apollonian priesthood, was to him *barbarian*, and if he employed it,—*slave*. True that the man who was not Greek, was actually barbarian and slave; but he was still a *man*, and his barbarianism and his slavery were not his nature but his fate: the sin of history against his nature, just as to-day it is the sin of our social system, that the healthiest nations in the healthiest climates have brought forth cripples and outcasts. This historical sin, however, was destined soon to be avenged upon the free Greek himself. Where there lived among the nations no feeling of *absolute human-love*, [51] the Barbarian needed only to subjugate the Greek: and all was over with Grecian freedom, strength, and beauty. Thus, in deep humiliation, two hundred million men, huddled in helpless confusion in the Roman empire, too soon found out that—when *all men cannot be free alike and happy*—all men must *suffer alike as slaves*.

Thus we are slaves until this very day, with but the sorry consolation of knowing that we are all slaves together. Slaves, to whom once the Christian Apostles and the Emperor Constantine gave counsel, to patiently submit to a suffering life below, for sake of a better world above; slaves, whom bankers and manufacturers teach nowadays to seek the goal of Being in manual toil for daily bread. Free from this slavery, in his time, felt the Emperor Constantine alone; when he enthroned himself a pleasure-seeking heathen despot, above this life which he had taught his believing subjects to deem so useless. And free alone,

to-day,—at least in the sense of freedom from open slavery,—feels he who has money; for he is thus able to employ his life to some other end than that of winning the bare means of subsistence. Thus, as the struggle for freedom from the general slavery proclaimed itself in Roman and Medieval times as the reaching after absolute dominion: so it comes to light to-day as the greed for gold. And we must not be astonished, if even Art grasps after gold; for everything strives to its freedom, towards its goda—and our god is Gold, our religion the Pursuit of Wealth.

Yet Art remains in its essence what it ever was; we have only to say, that it is not present in our modern public system. It lives, however, and has ever lived in the individual conscience, as the one fair, indivisible Art. Thus the only difference is this: with the Greeks it lived in the public conscience, whereas to-day it lives alone in the conscience of private persons, the public *un*-conscience recking nothing of it. Therefore in its flowering time the Grecian Art was *conservative*, because it was a worthy and adequate expression of the public conscience: with us, [52] true Art is *revolutionary*, because its very existence is opposed to the ruling spirit of the community.

With the Greeks the perfect work of art, the Drama, was the abstract and epitome of all that was expressible in the Grecian nature. It was the nation itself—in intimate connection with its own history—that stood mirrored in its art-work, that communed with itself and, within the span of a few hours, feasted its eyes with its own noblest essence. All division of this enjoyment, all scattering of the forces centred on *one* point, all diversion of the elements into separate channels, must needs have been as hurtful to this *unique* and noble Art-work as to the like-formed State itself; and thus it could only mature, but never change its nature. Thus Art was conservative, just as the noblest sons of this epoch of the Grecian State were themselves conservative. *Æschylus* is the very type of this conservatism, and his loftiest work of conservative art is the "*Oresteia*," with which he stands alike opposed as poet to the youthful *Sophocles*, as statesman to the revolutionary *Pericles*. The victory of Sophocles, like that of Pericles, was fully in the spirit of the advancing development of mankind; but the deposition of *Æschylus* was the first downward step from the height of Grecian Tragedy, the first beginning of the dissolution of Athenian Polity.

With the subsequent downfall of Tragedy, Art became less and less the expression of the public conscience. The Drama separated into its component parts; rhetoric, sculpture, painting, music, &c., forsook the ranks in which they had moved in unison before; each one to take its own way, and in lonely self-sufficiency to pursue its own development. And thus it was that at the Renaissance of Art we lit first upon these isolated Grecian arts, which had sprung from the wreck of Tragedy. The great unitarian Art-work of Greece could not at once reveal itself to our bewildered, wandering, piecemeal minds in all its fulness; for how could we have understood it? But we knew how to appropriate those dissevered handiworks of Art; for as [53] goodly handiwork, to which category they had already sunk in the Romo-Greek world, they lay not so far from our own nature and our minds. The guild and handicraft spirit of the new citizenship rose quick and lively in the towns; princes and notabilities were well pleased that their castles should be more becomingly built and decorated, their walls bedecked with more attractive paintings, than had been possible to the raw art of the Middle Ages; the priests laid hands on rhetoric for their pulpits and music for their choirs; and the new world of handicraft worked valiantly among the separate arts of Greece, so far at least as it understood them or thought them fitted to its purpose.

Each one of these dissevered arts, nursed and luxuriously tended for the entertainment of the rich, has filled the world to overflowing with its products; in each, great minds have brought forth marvels; but the one true Art has not been born again, either in or since the Renaissance. The perfect Art-work, the great united utterance of a free and lovely public life, the *Drama*, *Tragedy*,—howsoever great the poets who have here and there indited



tragedies,—is not yet born again: for reason that it cannot be *re-born*, but must be *born anew*.

Only the great *Revolution of Mankind*, whose beginnings erstwhile shattered Grecian Tragedy, can win for us this Art-work. For only this Revolution can bring forth from its hidden depths, in the new beauty of a nobler Universalism, *that* which it once tore from the conservative spirit of a time of beautiful but narrow-meted culture—and tearing it, engulfed.



But only *Revolution*, not slavish *Restoration*, can give us back that highest Art-work. The task we have before us is immeasurably greater than that already accomplished in 'days of old. If the Grecian Art-work embraced the spirit of a fair and noble nation, the Art-work of the Future must embrace the spirit of a free mankind, delivered from every [54] shackle of hampering nationality; its racial imprint must be no more than an embellishment, the individual charm of manifold diversity, and not a cramping barrier. We have thus quite other work to do, than to tinker at the resuscitation of old Greece. Indeed, the foolish restoration of a sham Greek mode of art has been attempted already,—for what will our artists not attempt, to order? But nothing better than an inane patchwork could ever come of it—the offspring of the same juggling endeavour which we find evinced by the whole history of our official civilisation, seized as it is with a constant wish to avoid the only lawful endeavour, the striving after Nature.

No, we do not wish to revert to Greekdom; for what the Greeks knew not, and, knowing not, came by their downfall: that know *we*. It is their very fall, whose cause we now perceive after years of misery and deepest universal suffering, that shows us clearly what we should become; it shows us that we must love all men before we can rightly love ourselves, before we can regain true joy in our own personality. From the dishonouring slave-yoke of universal journeymanhood, with its sickly Money-soul, we wish to soar to the free manhood of Art, with the star-rays of its World-soul; from the weary, overburdened day-labourers of Commerce, we desire to grow to fair strong men, to whom the world belongs as an eternal, inexhaustible source of the highest delights of Art.

To this end we need the mightiest force of Revolution; for only *that* revolutionary force can boot us, which presses forward to the goal—to that goal whose attainment alone can justify its earliest exercise upon the disintegration of Greek Tragedy and the dissolution of the Athenian State.

But whence shall we derive this force, in our present state of utmost weakness? Whence the manly strength against the crushing pressure of a civilisation which disowns all manhood, against the arrogance of a culture which employs the human mind as naught but steam-power for its machinery? Whence the light with which to illumine the gruesome ruling heresy, that this civilisation [55] and this culture are of more value in themselves than the true living Man?—that Man has worth and value only as a tool of these despotic abstract powers, and not by virtue of his manhood?

When the learned physician is at the end of his resources, in despair we turn at last to—*Nature*. Nature, then, and only Nature, can unravel the skein of this great world-fate. If Culture, starting from the Christian dogma of the worthlessness of human nature, disown humanity: she has created for herself a foe who one day must inevitably destroy her, in so far as she no longer has place for manhood; for this foe is the eternal, and only living Nature. Nature, Human Nature, will proclaim this law to the twin sisters Culture and Civilisation: "So far as I am contained in you, shall ye live and flourish; so far as I am not in you, shall ye rot and die!"

In the man-destroying march of Culture, however, there looms before us this happy result: the heavy load with which she presses Nature down, will one day grow so ponderous that it lends at last to down-trod, never-dying Nature the necessary impetus to hurl the whole

cramping burden from her, with one sole thrust; and this heaping up of Culture will thus have *taught* to Nature her own gigantic force. The releasing of this force is—*Revolution*.

In what way, then, does this revolutionary force exhibit itself in the present social crisis? Is it not in the mechanic's pride in the moral consciousness of his labour, as opposed to the criminal passivity or immoral activity of the rich? Does he not wish, as in revenge, to elevate the principle of labour to the rank of the one and orthodox religion of society? To force the rich like him to work,—like him, by the sweat of their brow to gain their daily bread? Must we not fear that the exercise of this compulsion, the recognition of this principle, would raise at last the man-degrading journeymanhood to an absolute and universal might, and—to keep to our chief theme—would straightway make of Art an impossibility for all time?

[56]

In truth, this is the fear of many an honest friend of Art and many an upright friend of men, whose only wish is to preserve the nobler core of our present civilisation. But they mistake the true nature of the great social agitation. They are led astray by the windy theories of our socialistic doctrinaires, who would fain patch up an impossible compact with the present conditions of society. They are deceived by the immediate utterance of the indignation of the most suffering portion of our social system, behind which lies a deeper, nobler, natural instinct : the instinct which demands a worthy taste of the joys of life, whose material sustenance shall no longer absorb man's whole life-forces in weary service, but in which he shall rejoice as Man. Viewed closer, it is thus the straining from journeymanhood to artistic manhood, to the free dignity of Man.

It is for Art therefore, and Art above all else, to teach this social impulse its noblest meaning, and guide it toward its true direction. Only on the shoulders of this great social movement can true Art lift itself from its present state of civilised barbarianism, and take its post of honour. Each has a common goal, and the twain can only reach it when they recognise it jointly. This goal is *the strong fair Man*, to whom *Revolution* shall give his *Strength*, and *Art* his *Beauty*!

Neither is it our present purpose to indicate more closely the march of this social development and the records it will stamp on history, nor could dogmatic calculation foretell the historical demeanour of man's social nature, so little dependent upon preconceived ideas. In the history of man nothing is *made*, but everything evolves by its own inner necessity. Yet it is impossible that the final state which this movement shall attain one day, should be other than the direct opposite of the present; else were the whole history of the world a restless zig-zag of cross purposes, and not the ordered movement of a mighty stream; which with all its bends, its deviations, and its floods, yet flows for ever in one steadfast course.

[57]

Let us glance, then, for a moment at this future state of Man, when he shall have freed himself from his last heresy, the denial of Nature,—that heresy which has taught him hitherto to look upon himself as a mere instrument to an end which lay outside himself. When Mankind knows, at last, that itself is the one and only object of its existence, and that only in the community of all men can this purpose be fulfilled: then will its mutual creed be couched in an actual fulfilment of Christ's injunction, "Take no *care* for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on, for your Heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things." This Heavenly Father will then be no other than the social wisdom of mankind, taking Nature and her fulness for the common weal of all. The crime and the curse of our social intercourse have lain in this: that the mere physical maintenance of life has been till now the one object of our *care*,—a real *care* that has devoured our souls and bodies and well nigh lamed each spiritual impulse. This *Care* has made man weak and slavish, dull and wretched; a creature that can neither love nor hate; a

thrall of commerce, ever ready to give up the last vestige of the freedom of his Will, so only that this *Care* might be a little lightened.

When the Brotherhood of Man has cast this care for ever from it, and, as the Greeks upon their slaves, has lain it on machines,—the artificial slaves of free creative man, whom he has served till now as the Fetish-votary serves the idol his own hands have made,—then will man's whole enfranchised energy proclaim itself as naught but pure *artistic* impulse. Thus shall we regain, in vastly higher measure, the Grecian element of life; what with the Greek was the result of natural development, will be with us the product of ages of endeavour; what was to him a half-unconscious gift a will remain with us a conquered knowledge; for what mankind in its wide communion doth truly *know*, can never more be lost to it.

Only the *Strong* know *Love*; only Love can fathom *Beauty*; only Beauty can fashion *Art*. The love of [58] weaklings for each other can only manifest as the goad of lust; the love of the weak for the strong is abasement and fear; the love of the strong for the weak is pity and forbearance; but the love of the strong for the strong is *Love*, for it is the free surrender to one who cannot compel us. Under every fold of heaven's canopy, in every race, shall men by real freedom grow up to equal strength; by strength to truest love; and by true love to beauty. But Art is Beauty energised.

Whatsoever we deem the goal of life, to that we train our selves and children. The Goth was bred to battle and to chase, the genuine Christian to abstinence and humility: while the liegeman of the modern State is bred to seek industrial gain, be it even in the exercise of art and science. But when life's maintenance is no longer the exclusive aim of life, and the Freemen of the Future—inspired by a new and deed-begetting faith, or better, Knowledge—find the means of life assured by payment of a natural and reasonable energy; in short, when Industry no longer is our mistress but our handmaid: then shall we set the goal of life in joy of life, and strive to rear our children to be fit and worthy partners in this joy. This training, starting from the exercise of strength and nurture of corporeal beauty, will soon take on a pure artistic shape, by reason of our undisturbed affection for our children and our gladness at the ripening of their beauty; and each man will, in one domain or other, become in truth an artist. The diversity of natural inclination will build up arts in manifold variety and countless forms of each variety, in fulness hitherto undreamed. And as the Knowledge of all men will find at last its religious utterance in the one effective Knowledge of free united manhood: so will all these rich developments of Art find their profoundest focus in the Drama, in the glorious Tragedy of Man. The Tragedy will be the feast of all mankind; in it,—set free from each conventional etiquette,—free, strong, and beauteous man will celebrate the dolour and delight of all his love, and consecrate in lofty worth the great Love-offering of his Death.

[59]

This Art will be *conservative* afresh. Yet truly of its own immortal force, will it maintain itself and blossom forth: not merely cry for maintenance, on pretext of some outward-lying aim. For mark ye well, *this* Art seeks not for *Gain*!



"Utopia! Utopia!" I hear the mealy-mouthed wise-acres of our modern State-and-Art-barbarianism cry; the so-called practical men, who in the manipulation of their daily practice can help themselves alone with lies and violence, or—if they be sincere and honest—with ignorance at best.

"Beautiful ideal! but, alas! like all ideals, one that can only float before us, beyond the reach of man condemned to imperfection." Thus sighs the smug adorer of the heavenly kingdom in which—at least as far as himself is concerned—God will make good the

inexplicable shortcomings of this earth and its human brood.

They live and lie, they sin and suffer, in the loathliest of actual conditions, in the filthy dregs of an artificial, and therefore never realised Utopia; they toil and over-bid each other in every hypocritical art, to maintain the cheat of this Utopia; from which they daily tumble headlong down to the dull, prosaic level of nakedest reality,—the mutilated cripples of the meanest and most frivolous of passions. Yet they cry down the only natural release from their bewitchment, as "Chimeras" or "Utopias;" just as the poor sufferers in a madhouse take their insane imaginings for truth, and truth itself for madness.

If history knows an actual Utopia, a truly unattainable ideal, it is that of Christendom; for it has clearly and plainly shown, and shows it still from day to day, that its dogmas are *not* realisable. How could those dogmas become really living, and pass over into actual life: when they were directed against life itself, and denied and cursed the principle of living? Christianity is of purely spiritual, and super-spiritual contents; it preaches humility, [60] renunciation, contempt of every earthly thing; and amid this contempt—Brotherly Love! How does the fulfilment work out in the modern world, which calls itself, forsooth, a Christian world, and clutches to the Christian religion as its inexpugnable basis? As the arrogance of hypocrisy, as usury, as robbery of Nature's goods, and egoistic scorn of suffering fellow-men. Whence comes this shocking contradiction between the ideal and the fulfilment? Even hence: that the ideal was morbid, engendered of the momentary relaxing and enfeeblement of human nature, and sinned against its inbred robust qualities. Yet how strong this nature is, how unquenchable its ever fresh, productive fulness—it has shown all the more plainly under the universal incubus of that ideal; which, if its logical consequences had been fulfilled, would have completely swept the human race from off the earth; since even abstinence from sexual love was included in it as the height of virtue. But still ye see that, in spite of that all-powerful Church, the human race is so abundant that your Christian-economic State-wisdom knows not what to do with this abundance, and ye are looking round for means of social murder, for its uprootal; yea, and would be right glad, were mankind slain by Christianity, so only that the solitary abstract god of your own beloved *Me* might gain sufficient elbow-room upon this earth!

These are the men who cry "Utopia," when the healthy human understanding (*Menschenverstanda*) appeals from their insane experiments to the actuality of visible and tangible Nature; when it demands no more from man's godlike reason (*Vernunft*) than that it should make good to us the instinct of dumb animals, and give us the means of finding for ourselves the sustenance of our life, set free from care though not from labour! And, truly, we ask from it no higher result for the community of mankind, in order that we may build upon this one foundation the noblest, fairest temple of the true Art of the Future!

The true artist who has already grasped the proper standpoint, may labour even now—for this standpoint is ever [61] present with us—upon the Art-work of the Future! Each of the sister Arts, in truth, has ever, and therefore also now, proclaimed in manifold creations the conscience of her own high purpose. Whereby, then, have the inspired creators of these noble works from all time suffered, and above all in our present pass? Was it not by their contact with the outer world, with the very world for whom their works were destined? What has revolted the architect, when he must shatter his creative force on bespoke plans for barracks and lodging-houses? What has aggrieved the painter, when he must immortalise the repugnant visage of a millionaire? What the musician, when he must compose his music for the banquet-table? And what the poet, when he must write romances for the lending-library? What then has been the sting of suffering to each? That he must squander his creative powers for gain, and make his art a handicraft!—And finally, what suffering has the dramatist to bear, who would fain assemble every art within Art's master-work, the Drama? The sufferings of all other artists combined in one!

What *he* creates, becomes an Art-work only when it enters into open life; and a work of dramatic art can only enter life upon the stage. But what are our theatrical institutions of to-day, with their disposal of the ample aid of every branch of art?—Industrial undertakings: yes, even when supported by a special subsidy from Prince or State. Their direction is mostly handed over to the same men who have yesterday conducted a speculation in grain, and to-morrow devote their well-learned knowledge to a 'corner' in sugar; or mayhap, have educated their taste for stage proprieties in the mysteries of back-stairs intrigue, or such like functions. (12) So long as—in accordance with the prevailing character of public life, and the necessity it lays upon the theatrical director to deal with the public in the manner of a clever commercial speculator—so long as we look upon a [62] theatrical institution as a mere means for the circulation of money and the production of interest upon capital, it is only logical that we should hand over its direction, *i.e.*, its exploitation, to those who are well-skilled in such transactions; for a really artistic management, and thus such an one as should fulfil the original purpose of the Theatre, would certainly be but poorly fitted to carry out the modern aim. For this reason it must be clear to all who have the slightest insight, that if the Theatre is at all to answer to its natural lofty mission, it must be completely freed from the necessity of industrial speculation.

How were this possible? Shall this solitary institution be released from a service to which all men, and every associate enterprise of man, are yoked to-day? Yes: it is precisely the Theatre, that should take precedence of every other institution in this emancipation; for the Theatre is the widest-reaching of Art's institutes, and the richest in its influence; and till man can exercise in freedom his noblest, his artistic powers, how shall he hope to become free and self-dependent in lower walks of life? Since already the service of the State, the military service, is at least no longer an industrial pursuit, let us begin with the enfranchisement of public art; for, as I have pointed out above, it is to *it* that we must assign an unspeakably lofty mission, an immeasurably weighty influence on our present social upheaval. More and better than a decrepit religion to which the spirit of public intercourse gives the lie direct more effectually and impressively than an incapable statesmanship which has long since host its compass: shall the ever-youthful Art, renewing its freshness from its own well-springs and the noblest spirit of the times, give to the passionate stream of social tumult—now dashing against rugged precipices, now lost in shallow swamps—a fair and lofty goal, the goal of noble Manhood.

If ye friends of Art are truly concerned to know it saved from the threatening storms: then hear me, when I tell you that it is no mere question of preserving Art, but of first allowing it to reach its own true fill of life!

[63]

Is it your real object, ye *honourable* Statesmen, confronted with a dreaded social overthrow,—against which, mayhap, ye strive because your shattered faith in human nature's purity prevents your understanding how this overthrow can help but make a bad condition infinitely worse,—is it, I say, your object to graft upon this mighty change a strong and living pledge of future nobler customs? Then lend us all your strength, to give back Art unto itself and to its lofty mission!

Ye suffering brethren, in every social grade, who brood in hot displeasure how to flee this slavery to money and become free men: fathom ye our purpose, and help us to lift up Art to its due dignity; that so we may show you how ye raise mechanical toil therewith to Art; and the serf of industry to the fair, self-knowing man who cries, with smiles begotten of intelligence, to sun and stars, to death and to eternity: "Ye, too, are mine, and I your lord!"

Ye to whom I call, were ye at one with us in heart and mind, how easy were it to your Will to set the simple rules to work, whose following must infallibly ensure the flourishing of that mightiest of all art-establishments,—the Theatre! In the first place it would be the business of



the State and the Community to adjust their means to this end: that the Theatre be placed in a position to obey alone its higher and true calling. This end will be attained when the Theatre is so far supported that its management need only be a purely artistic one; and no one will be better situated to carry this out than the general body of the artists themselves, who unite their forces in the art-work and assure the success of their mutual efforts by a fit conception of their task. Only the fullest freedom can bind them to the endeavour to fulfil the object for sake of which they are freed from the fetters of commercial speculation; and this object is Art, which the free man alone can grasp, and not the slave of wages.

The judge of their performance, will be the free public. Yet, to make this public fully free and independent when face to face with Art, one further step must be taken [64] along this road: the public must have *unbought* admission to the theatrical representations. So long as money is indispensable for all the needs of life, so long as without pay there remains naught to man but air, and scarcely water: the measures to be taken can only provide that the actual stage-performances, to witness which the populace assembles, shall not take on the semblance of *work paid by the piece*,—a mode of regarding them which confessedly leads to the most humiliating misconception of the character of art-productions,—but it must be the duty of the State, or rather of the particular Community, to form a common purse from which to recompense the artists for their performance as a whole, and not in parts.

Where means should not suffice for this, it were better, both now and always, to allow a theatre which could only be maintained as a commercial undertaking, to close its doors for ever; or at least, for so long as the community's demand had not proved strong enough to bring about the necessary sacrifice for its supply.

When human fellowship has once developed its manly beauty and nobility,—in such a way as we shall not attain, however, by the influence of our Art alone, but as we must hope and strive for by union with the great and inevitably approaching social revolution,—then will theatrical performances be the first associate undertaking from which the idea of wage or gain shall disappear entirely. For when, under the above conditions, our education more and more becomes an artistic one, then shall we be ourselves all thus far artists: that we can join together in free and common service for the one great cause of Art, in its special manifestment, abandoning each sidelong glance at gain.

Art and its institutes, whose desired organisation could here be only briefly touched on, would thus become the herald and the standard of all future communal institutions. The spirit that urges a body of artists to the attainment of its own true goal, would be found again in every other social union which set before itself a definite and honourable [65] aim; for if we reach the right, then all our future social bearing cannot but be of pure artistic nature, such as alone befits the noble faculties of man.

Thus would *Jesus* have shown us that we all alike are men and brothers; while *Apollo* would have stamped this mighty bond of brotherhood with the seal of strength and beauty, and led mankind from doubt of its own worth to consciousness of its highest godlike might. Let us therefore erect the altar of the future, in Life as in the living Art, to the two sublimest teachers of mankind:—*Jesus, who suffered for all men; and Apollo, who raised them to their joyous dignity!*



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## Notes

### Note 01 on page 7

Book XXI. chap i.—TR.

### Note 02 on page 7

Even Carlyle can only betoken this as the "Death of the Anarchies: or a world once more built wholly on Fact better or worse; and the lying jargonizing professor of Sham-Fact. . . become a species extinct, and well *known* to be gone down to Tophet!"—R. WAGNER.

### Note 03 on page 7

"*Eine Mittheilung an meine Freunde*;"—see [end of the present volume](#).—TR.

### Note 04 on page 8

We have no English equivalents of these words, except in the adjectival form: *voluntary* and *involuntary*, in which there lies the same confusion of ideas as that for which Wagner here upbraids himself; and even now, when Schopenhauer's definition of the "Will" is pretty generally accepted, it would seem better, for clearness' sake, to delimit the term by some such prefix as the "*Inner*," or "*Instinctive*" Will, in order to distinguish it from the "Outer" or "Intellectual" Choice. In this series of translations I shall endeavour to render such expressions in the sense the author here indicates.—W. A. E.

### Note 05 on page 8

*Sinnlichkeit*= Qualities appealing to the senses; or again, the bent to an objective method of viewing things. Hence it may at times be best rendered by *Physicalism* or *Materialism*; at others, by *Physical perception*, *Physical contemplation*, or even—borrowing from Carlyle—*Five-sense-philosophy*.—TR.

### Note 06 on page 8

To use the now more customary antithesis: *Socialism* v. *Individualism*.—TR.

### Note 07 on page 9

"In the *National* you will shortly see an important article of mine: *Art and Revolution*, which I believe will also appear in German at Wigand's in Leipzig."—From Wagner's letter to Uhlig, of 9th August 1849.—TR.

### Note 08 on page 9

Volumes III. and IV. of the *Gesammelte Schriften*, or "Collected Writings."—TR.

### Note 09 on page 9

1868; Constantin Frantz.—TR.

### Note 10 on page 17



In the original text of both the present treatise and *The Art-work of the Future*, the expression "*öffentlich*" is frequently made use of. In English the only available equivalent is that which I have here employed, viz.: "public"; but our word "public" must be stretched a little in its significance, to answer to Richard Wagner's purpose. When he speaks of "public art" or "public life," it must be borne in mind that the idea of officialdom or State-endowment is not necessarily included; but rather the word is employed in the sense in which we use it when talking of a "public appearance"; thus "public art" will mean such an art as is not merely designed for private or home consumption. —TR.

[Note 11 on page 19](#)

R. Wagner to F. Heine, March 18, '41:—"This showed me still more decidedly that the religious-catholic part of my *Rienzi* libretto was a chief stumbling-block. . . . If in my *Rienzi* the word 'Church' is not allowed to stand," &c.—To W. Fischer, Dec. 8, '41:—"Sixteen singers must remain for the Priests, or on account of the censorship, aged Citizens."—TR.

[Note 12 on page 26](#)

It is impossible to realise the full sting of this allusion, without having read in "*Wagner's Letters to Uhlig*" (H. Grevel & Co.) the account of the author's own experience at Dresden of the conduct of these gentry.—TR.

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# *The Art-Work of the Future*

By Richard Wagner

Translated by William Ashton Ellis



The Wagner Library

Edition 1.0

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## Contents

About this Title .....	4
Translator's Note .....	5
Dedication of the Original Edition - (1850, Otto Wigand, Leipzig) .....	7
The Art-Work of the Future .....	9
I. Man and Art, in General. ....	11
1. Nature, Man, and Art. ....	12
2. Life, Science, and Art. ....	14
3. The Folk and Art. ....	15
4. The Folk as the Force conditioning the Art-work. ....	17
5. The Art-antagonistic shape of Present Life, under the sway of Abstract Thought and Fashion. ....	20
6. Standard for the Art-work of the Future. ....	23
II. Artistic Man, and Art as Derived Directly from Him. ....	25
1. Man as his own Artistic Subject and Material. ....	26
2. The Three Varieties of Humanistic Art, in their original Union. ....	28
3. The Art of Dance. ....	31
4. The Art of Tone. ....	36
5. The Poetic Art. ....	47
6. Whilom attempts at re-uniting the three humanistic Arts. ....	55
III. Man Shaping Art from Nature's Stuffs. ....	59
1. Architectural Art. ....	60
2. The Art of Sculpture. ....	64
3. The Painter's Art. ....	70
IV. Outlines of the Artwork of the Future. ....	75
V. The Artist of the Future. ....	81
Notes .....	91
Appendix .....	101

## About this Title

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[68]

## Translator's Note

"For the last fortnight, *i.e.* since I have settled down quietly in my new home, I have been seized with an ungovernable desire to undertake a fresh literary labour, '*The Art-work of the Future*'. . ." (R. Wagner's Letters to Uhlig; Zurich, October 26, 1849.) "I thought you would like to look through my new work before it came with due ceremony before the world. . . This will be my last literary work. If I have been understood, and if I have convinced others—even if few in number—others must and will fulfil that portion of the task which is the work of many, not of one." (Ibidem, Nov. 1849.) "Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft" was originally published by Wigand of Leipzig at the end of the year 1849.



## Dedication of the Original Edition

(1850, Otto Wigand, Leipzig)

To LUDWIG FEUERBACH, with grateful esteem.

To no one but yourself, honoured Sir, can I dedicate this book; for, in offering it you, I restore to you your own property. Only in so far as that property has become not your own, but that of the *artist*, must I be uncertain how I ought to approach you: whether you would be inclined to receive back from the hand of the artistic man that which you, as philosophic man, have bestowed upon him. The strong desire and deep-felt obligation to at least express to you my thanks for the heart-tonic administered by you to me, have overcome that scruple.

No personal conceit, but a need too great for silencing, has made of me—for a brief period—a writer. In my earliest youth I made poetry and plays; to one of these plays I longed to write some music: to learn that art, I became a musician. Later I wrote operas, setting my own dramatic poems to music. Musicians by profession, to whose ranks I belonged in virtue of my outer station, ascribed to me poetic talent; poets by profession allowed currency to my musical faculties. The public I often succeeded in actively arousing: critics by profession always tore me into rags. Thus I derived from myself and my antitheses much food for thought: when I thought aloud, I brought the Philistines upon me, who can only imagine the artist as a dolt, and never as a thinker. By friends I was often begged to publish in type my thoughts on Art and what I wished to see fulfilled therein: I preferred the endeavour to convey my wish by artistic deeds alone. From the circumstance that this my attempt could never quite succeed, I was forced to recognise that it is not the *individual*, but only the *community*, that can bring artistic deeds to actual accomplishment, past any doubting of the senses. The *recognition* of this fact, if *hope* herein is *not* to be entirely abandoned, means as much as: to raise the standard of *revolt* against the whole condition of our present Art and Life. Since the time when I summoned up the necessary courage for this revolt, I also resolved to enter on the field of writing; a course to which I had already once before been driven by outward want. Literarians by profession, who after the calming of the recent storms are now filling their lungs again with balmy breezes, find it shameless of an opera-poetising musician to go so far out of his way as to invade their own preserves. May they permit me, as an artistic man, to make the attempt to address—by no means them, but—merely *thinking artists*, with whom they have naught in common.

May you, however, honoured Sir, not take it ill of me that, by this dedication, I connect your name with a work that in my own eyes most certainly owes its origin to the impression which your writings have made upon me, yet which may perhaps not meet your views as to how that impression should have been developed. Nevertheless I venture to presume that it will not be quite indifferent to you, to gain a certain proof as to how your thoughts have operated upon an *artist*, and how the latter—as an *artist*—endeavours, in all sincerity of ardour for the cause, to interpret them again to artists, and indeed to no one else. May you attribute to this zeal, which you will be the last to treat with blame, not only whatever may please you, but also whatever may displease you in its expression!

RICHARD WAGNER.





[69]

## The Art-Work of the Future



## I. Man and Art, in General.

## 1. Nature, Man, and Art.

AS Man stands to Nature, so stands Art to Man. When Nature had developed in herself those attributes which included the conditions for the existence of Man, then Man spontaneously evolved. In like manner, as soon as human life had engendered from itself the conditions for the manifestation of Art-work, this too stepped self-begotten into life.

Nature engenders her myriad forms without caprice or arbitrary aim ("*absichtlos und unwillkürlich*"), according to her need ("*Bedürfniss*"), and therefore of Necessity ("*Nothwendigkeit*"). This same Necessity is the generative and formative force of human life. Only that which is un-capricious and un-arbitrary can spring from a real need; but on Need alone is based the very principle of Life. (01)

[70]

Man only recognises Nature's *Necessity* by observing the harmonious connection of all her phenomena; so long as he does not grasp the latter, she seems to him Caprice.

From the moment when Man perceived the difference between himself and Nature, and thus commenced his own development as *man*, by breaking loose from the unconsciousness of natural animal life and passing over into conscious life,—when he thus looked Nature in the face and from the first feelings of his dependence on her, thereby aroused, evolved the faculty of Thought,—from that moment did Error begin, as the earliest utterance of consciousness. But Error is the mother of Knowledge; and the history of the birth of Knowledge out of Error is the history of the human race, from the myths of primal ages down to the present day.

Man erred, from the time when he set the cause of Nature's workings outside the bounds of Nature's self, and for the physical phenomena subsumed a super-physical, anthropomorphic, and arbitrary cause; when he took the endless harmony of her unconscious, instinctive energy for the arbitrary demeanour of disconnected finite forces. Knowledge consists in the laying of this error, in fathoming the Necessity of phenomena whose underlying basis had appeared to us Caprice.

Through this knowledge does Nature grow conscious of herself; and verily by Man himself, who only through discriminating between himself and Nature has attained that point where he can apprehend her, by making her his 'object.' But this distinction is merged once more, when Man recognises the essence of Nature as his very own, and perceives the same Necessity in all the elements and lives around him, and therefore in his own existence no less [71] than in Nature's being; thus not only recognising the mutual bond of union between all natural phenomena, but also his own community with Nature.

If Nature then, by her solidarity with Man, attains *in* Man her consciousness, and if Man's life is the very activation of this consciousness—as it were, the portraiture in brief of Nature,—so does man's Life itself gain understanding by means of Science, which makes this human life in turn an object of experience. But the activation of the consciousness attained by Science, the portrayal of the Life that it has learnt to know, the impress of this life's Necessity and Truth, is—*Art*. (02)

Man will never be that which he can and should be, until his Life is a true mirror of Nature, a conscious following of the only real Necessity, the *inner natural necessity*, and is no longer held in subjugation to an *outer* artificial counterfeit,—which is thus no necessary, but an *arbitrary* power. Then first will Man become a living man; whereas till now he carries on a mere existence, dictated by the maxims of this or that Religion, Nationality, or State.—In like manner will Art not be the thing she can and should be, until she is or can be the true, conscious image and exponent of the real Man, and of man's genuine, nature-bidden life; until she therefore need no longer borrow the conditions of her being from the errors, perversities, and unnatural distortions of our modern life.

The real Man will therefore never be forthcoming, until true Human Nature, and not the arbitrary statutes of the State, shall model and ordain his Life; while real Art will never live, until its embodiments need be subject only to the laws of Nature, and not to the despotic whims of Mode. For as Man only then becomes free, when he gains the glad consciousness of his oneness with Nature; so does Art only then gain freedom, when she has no more to blush for her affinity with actual Life. But only in the joyous consciousness [72] of his oneness with Nature does Man subdue his dependence on her; while Art can only overcome her dependence upon Life through her oneness with the life of free and genuine Men.

## 2. Life, Science, and Art.

Whilst Man involuntarily moulds his Life according to the notions he has gathered from his arbitrary views of Nature, and embalms their intuitive expression in Religion: these notions become for him in Science the subject of conscious, intentional review and scrutiny.

The path of Science lies from error to knowledge, from fancy ("*Vorstellung*") to reality, from Religion to Nature. In the beginning of Science, therefore, Man stands toward Life in the same relation as he stood towards the phenomena of Nature when he first commenced to part his life from hers. Science takes over the arbitrary concepts of the human brain, in their totality; while, by her side, Life follows in its totality the instinctive evolution of Necessity. Science thus bears the burden of the sins of Life, and expiates them by her own self-abrogation; she ends in her direct antithesis, in the knowledge of Nature, in the recognition of the unconscious, instinctive, and therefore real, inevitable, and physical. The character of Science is therefore finite: that of Life, unending; just as Error is of time, but Truth eternal. But that alone is true and living which is sentient, and hearkens to the terms of physicality (*Sinnlichkeit*). Error's crowning folly is the arrogance of Science in renouncing and contemning the world of sense (*Sinnlichkeit*); whereas the highest victory of Science is her self-accomplished crushing of this arrogance, in the acknowledgment of the teaching of the senses.

The end of Science is the justifying of the Unconscious, the giving of self-consciousness to Life, the re-instatement of the Senses in their perceptive rights, the sinking of [73] Caprice in the world-Will ("*Wollen*") of Necessity. Science is therefore the vehicle of Knowledge, her procedure mediate, her goal an intermediation; but Life is the great Ultimate, a law unto itself. As Science melts away into the recognition of the ultimate and self-determinate reality, of actual Life itself: so does this avowal win its frankest, most direct expression in Art, or rather in the *Work of Art*.

True that the artist does not at first proceed directly; he certainly sets about his work in an arbitrary, selective, and mediating mood. But while he plays the go-between and picks and chooses, the product of his energy is not as yet the Work of Art; nay, his procedure is the rather that of Science, who seeks and probes, and therefore errs in her caprice. Only when his choice is made, when this choice was born from pure Necessity,—when thus the artist has found himself again in the subject of his choice, as perfected Man finds his true self in Nature,—then steps the Art-work into life, then first is it a real thing, a self-conditioned and immediate entity.

The actual Art-work, i.e. *its immediate physical portrayal, in the moment of its liveliest embodiment*, is therefore the only true redemption of the artist; the uprootal of the final trace of busy, purposed choice; the confident determination of what was hitherto a mere imagining; the enfranchisement of thought in sense; the assuagement of the life-need in Life itself.

The Art-work, thus conceived as an immediate vital act, is therewith the perfect reconciliation of Science with Life, the laurel-wreath which the vanquished, redeemed by her defeat, reaches in joyous homage to her acknowledged victor.

### 3. The Folk and Art.

The redemption of Thought and Science and their transmutation into Art-work would be impossible, could Life [74] itself be made dependent upon scientific speculation. Could conscious autocratic Thought completely govern Life, could it usurp the vital impulse and divert it to some other purpose than the great Necessity of absolute life-needs: then were Life itself dethroned, and swallowed up in Science. And truly Science, in her overweening arrogance, has dreamed of such a triumph; as witness our tight-reined State and modern Art, the sexless, barren children of this dream.

The great instinctive errors of the People—which found their earliest utterance in Religion, and then became the starting-points of arbitrary speculation and system-making, in Theology and Philosophy—have reared themselves, in these Sciences and their coadjutrix and adopted sister, Statecraft, to powers which make no less a claim than to govern and ordain the world and life by virtue of their innate and divine infallibility. Irrevocably, then, would Error reign in destructive triumph throughout eternity: did not the same life-force which blindly bore it, once more effectually annihilate it, by virtue of its innate, natural Necessity; and that so decisively and palpably, that Intellect, with all its arrogant divorce from Life, can see at last no other refuge from actual insanity, than in the unconditional acknowledgment of this only definite and visible force. And this vital force is—The Folk (*das Volk*).—

*Who is then the Folk?*—It is absolutely necessary that, before proceeding further, we should agree upon the answer to this weightiest of questions.

"The Folk," was from of old the inclusive term for *all the units* which made up the total of a *commonality*. In the beginning, it was the family and the tribe; next, the tribes united by like speech into a nation. Practically, by the Roman world-dominion which engulfed the nations, and theoretically, by the Christian religion which admitted of naught but men, *i.e.* no racial, but only *Christian* men—the idea of "the People" has so far broadened out, or even evaporated, that we may either include in it mankind in general, or, upon the arbitrary political hypothesis, a [75] certain, and generally the propertyless portion of the Commonwealth. But beyond a frivolous, this term has also acquired an ineradicable *moral* meaning; and on account of this it is, that in times of stir and trouble all men are eager to number themselves among the People; each one gives out that he is careful for the People's weal, and no one will permit himself to be excluded from it. Therefore in these latter days also has the question frequently been broached, in the most diverse of senses: Who then is the People? In the sum total of the body politic, can a separate party, a particular fraction of the said body claim this name for itself alone? Rather, are we not all alike "the People," from the beggar to the prince?

This question must therefore be answered according to the conclusive and world-historical sense that now lies at its root, as follows:—

The "Folk" is the epitome of all those men *who feel a common and collective Want* ("gemeinschaftliche Noth"). To it belong, then, all of those who recognise their individual want as a collective want, or find it based thereon; ergo, all those who can hope for the stilling of their want in nothing but the stilling of a common want, and therefore spend their whole life's strength upon the stilling of their thus acknowledged common want. For only that want which urges to the uttermost, is genuine Want; but this Want alone is the force of true Need ("*Bedürfniss*"); but a common and collective need is the only true Need; but only he who feels within him a true Need, has a right to its assuagement; but only the assuagement of a genuine Need is Necessity; and it is *the Folk alone that acts according to Necessity's behests*, and therefore irresistibly, victoriously, and right as none besides.

Who now are they who belong *not* to this People, and who are its sworn foes?

All those *who feel no Want*; whose life-spring therefore consists in a need which rises not



to the potence of a Want, and thus is artificial, untrue, and egoistic; and not only is not embraced within a common Need, but as the empty need [76] of preserving superfluity—as which alone can one conceive of need without the force of want—is diametrically opposed to the collective Need.

Where there is no Want, there is no true Need; where no true Need, no necessary action. But where there is no *necessary* action, there reigns Caprice; and where Caprice is king, there blossoms every vice, and every criminal assault on Nature. For only by forcing back, by barring and refusing the assuagement of true Need, can the false and artificial need endeavour to assuage itself.

But the satisfaction of an artificial need is *Luxury*; which can only be bred and supported in opposition to, and at the cost of; the necessities of others.

*Luxury* is as heartless, inhuman, insatiable, and egoistic as the 'need' which called it forth, but which, with all its heaping-up and over-reaching, it never more can still. For this need itself is no natural and therefore satisfiable one; by very reason that, being false, it has no true, essential antithesis in which it may be spent, consumed, and satisfied. Actual physical hunger has its natural antithesis, satiety, in which—by feeding—it is spent: but unwanting need, the need that craves for luxury, is in itself already luxury and superfluity. The error of it, therefore, can never go over into truth; it racks, devours, torments and burns, without an instant's stilling; it leaves brain, heart and sense for ever vainly yearning, and swallows up all gladness, mirth, and joy of life. For sake of one sole, and yet unreachable moment of refreshment, it squanders the toil and life-sweat of a thousand needy wanters; it lives upon the unstilled hunger of a thousand thousand poor, though impotent to satiate its own for but the twinkling of an eye; it holds a whole world within the iron chains of despotism, without the power to momentarily break the golden chains of that arch-tyrant which it is unto itself.

And this fiend, this crack-brained need-without-a-need, this need of Need,—this *need of Luxury*, which is *Luxury itself* withal,—is sovereign of the world. It is the soul of that Industry which deadens men, to turn them to [77] machines; the soul of our State which swears away men's honour, the better then to take them back as lieges of its grace; the soul of our deistic Science, which hurls men down before an immaterial God, the product of the sum of intellectual luxury, for his consumption. It is—alas!—the soul, the stipulation, of our—*Art*!

Who then will bring to pass the rescue from this baleful state?—

*Want*,—which shall teach the world to recognise its own *true need*; that need which *by its very nature admits of satisfaction*.

Want will cut short the hell of *Luxury*; it will teach the tortured, Need-lacking spirits whom this hell embraces in its bounds the simple, homely need of sheer human, physical hunger and thirst; but in fellowship will it point us to the health-giving bread, the clear sweet springs of Nature; in fellowship shall we taste their genuine joys, and grow up in communion to veritable men. In common, too, shall we close the last link in the bond of holy Necessity; and the brother-kiss that seals this bond, will be the *mutual Art-work of the Future*. But in this, also, our great redeemer and well-doer, Necessity's vicegerent in the flesh,—*the Folk*, will no longer be a severed and peculiar class; for in this Art-work we shall all be *one*,—heralds and supporters of Necessity, knowers of the un conscious, willers of the unwilful, betokeners of Nature,—*blissful men*.

#### 4. The Folk as the Force conditioning the Art-work.

All that subsists, depends on the conditions by which it subsists; nothing, either in Nature or Life, stands shut-off and alone. Everything is rooted in one unending and harmonious whole; and therewith likewise the capricious, unnecessary, and harmful. The harmful practises its might *in* hindering the necessary; nay, it owes its being and its [78] force to this hindrance and naught else; and thus, in truth, it is nothing but the powerlessness of the necessary. Were this powerlessness to last forever, then must the natural ordering of the world be other than it really is; Caprice would be Necessity, and the necessary would lack its need. But this weakness is but transient, and therefore only seeming; for the force of Necessity shows its living rule even as the sole and ground condition of the continuance of the arbitrary. Thus the luxury of the rich is built upon the penury of the poor; and it is the very want of the poorer classes that hurls unceasingly fresh fodder to the luxury of the rich; while the poor man, from very need of food for his life-forces, thus offers up his own life-strength unto the rich.

Thus did the life-force, the life-need, of telluric Nature nurture once those baleful forces—or rather the potentiality of those alliances and, offspring of the elements—which blocked her way in giving true and fitting utterance to the fulness of her vital energy. The reason hereof lay in the great abundance, the swelling overflow of generative force and life-stuff, the inexhaustible supply of matter.—The need of Nature was therefore utmost multiple variety, and she reached the satisfaction of this need herewith: that—so to say—she drew off all her life-force from Exclusiveness, from the monumental singleness that she herself had hitherto fed so full, and resolved it into Multiplicity.—The exclusive, sole, and egoistic, can only take and never give: it can only let itself be born, but cannot bear; for bearing there is need of I and Thou, the passing over of Egoism into Communism. The richest procreative force lies therefore in the utmost multiplicity; and when Earth-nature had emanated to the most manifold variety, she attained therewith the state of saturation, of self-contentment, of self-delight, which she manifests amid her present harmony. She works no longer by titanic, total transformations, for her period of revolutions is foreby; she now is all that she can be, and thus that she ever could have been, and ever must become. She no longer has to lavish life-force on [79] barren impotence; throughout her endless-stretching realm she has summoned multiformity, the Manly and the Womanly, the ever self-renewing and engendering, the ever self-completing and assuaging, into life,—and in this eternal harmony of parts, she has become forevermore her stable self.

It is in the reproduction of this great evolutionary process of Nature *in Man himself*, that the human race, from the time of its self-severance from Nature, is thus involved. The same necessity is the mainspring of the great revolution of mankind; the same assuagement will bring this revolution to its close.

But that impelling force, the plain and innate force of Life which vindicates itself in life-needs, is unconscious and instinctive by its very nature; and where it is this—in the Folk—it also is the only true, conclusive might. Great, then, is the error of our folk. instructors when they fancy that the Folk must *know* first what it wills—*i.e.* in *their* eyes *should* will—ere it be justified, or even able, to will at all. From this chief error all the wretched makeshifts, all the impotent devices, and all the shameful weakness of the latest world-commotions take their rise.

The truly known is nothing other than the actual physical phenomenon, become by thought the vivid presentation of an object. Thought is arbitrary so long as it cannot picture to itself the physical present and that which has passed away from sense, with the completest unconditional perception of their necessary coherence ("*Zusammenhang*"); for the consciousness of this conception ("*Vorstellung*") is the essence of all reasonable Knowledge

("vernünftiges Wissen"). Therefore the more truthful is Knowledge, the more frankly must it recognise that its whole existence hangs upon its own coherence with that which has come to actual, finished, and fulfilled manifestation to the senses, and thus admit its own possibility of existence as *a priori* conditioned by actuality. But so soon as Thought abstracts from actuality, and would fain construct the concrete future, it can no longer bring forth *Knowledge*; but utters [80] itself as *Fancy* ("Wähnen"), which forcibly dissevers itself from *the Unconscious*. Only when it can fathom physicality, and unflinchingly plunge its sympathetic gaze into the depths of an actual physical need, can it take its share in the energy of the Unconscious; and only that which is brought to light of day by an instinctive, necessary *Need*, to wit the actual physical Deed, can again become the satisfying object of thought and knowledge. For the march of human evolution is the rational and natural progress from the unconscious to the conscious, from un-knowledge to knowledge, from need to satisfying; and not from satisfaction back to need,—at least not to that selfsame need whose end lay in that satisfying.

Not ye wise men, therefore, are the true inventors, but the Folk; for Want it was, that drove it to invention. All great inventions are the People's deed; whereas the devisings of the intellect are but the exploitations, the derivatives, nay, the splinterings and disfigurements of the great inventions of the Folk. Not ye, invented *Speech*, but the Folk; ye could but spoil its physical beauty, break its force, mislay its inner understanding, and painfully explore the loss. Not ye, were the inventors of *Religion*, but the Folk; ye could but mutilate its inner meaning, turn the heaven that lay within it to a hell, and its out-breathing truth to lies. Not ye are the inventors of the *State*; ye have but made from out the natural alliance of like-needing men a natureless and forced allegiance of unlike-needing; from the beneficent defensive league of all a maleficent bulwark for the privileged few; from the soft and yielding raiment upon man's blithely moving body a stiff, encumbering iron harness, the gaud of some historic armoury. It is not ye that give the Folk the wherewithal to live, but it gives you; not ye who give the Folk to think, but it gives you. Therefore it is not ye that should presume to teach the Folk, but ye should take your lessons from it; and thus it is to you that I address myself; *not to the Folk*,—for to *it* there are but scant words to say, and e'en the exhortation: "Do as thou must!" to it is quite superfluous, [81] for of itself it does that which it must. But to you I turn,—in the same sense as the Folk, albeit of necessity in your own mode of utterance,—to you, ye prudent men and intellectual, to offer you, with all the People's open-heartedness, the redemption from your egoistic incantations in the limpid spring of Nature, in the loving arm-caresses of the Folk—there where I found it; where it became for me my art-instructor; where, after many a battle between the hope within and the blank despair without, I won a dauntless faith in the assurance of the Future.

The *Folk* will thus fulfil its mission of redemption, the while it satisfies itself and at like time rescues its own foes. Its procedure will be governed by the instinctive laws of Nature; with the Necessity of elemental forces, will it destroy the *bad coherence* that alone makes out the conditions of Un-nature's rule. So long as these conditions last, so long as they suck out their life-sap from the squandered powers of the People, so long as they—themselves unable to create—bootlessly consume the productive faculties of the Folk for their own egoistic maintenance,— so long too will all showing, doing, changing, bettering, and reforming, (03) be naught but wilful, aimless, and unfruitful. But the Folk has only to deny by deeds *that* thing which in very deed is *no-thing*—to wit, is needless, superfluous, and null; it requires thus to merely know what thing it wills not,—and this its own instinctive life-bent teaches it; it needs but to turn this *Willed-not* to a *Non-existing*, and by the force of its own Want to annihilate what is fit for nothing but annihilation; and then the *Some-thing* of the fathomed Future will stand before it of itself.

Are the conditions heaved away, which sanction Superfluity to feed upon the marrow of

Necessity: then of themselves arise the conditions which call the necessary, the true, the imperishable, to life. Are the conditions heaved away, which permit the continuance of the need of Luxury: then [82] of themselves are given the conditions which allow the stilling of the *necessary* need of man in the teeming overflow of Nature and of his own productive human faculties, in unimaginably rich but ever fitting measure. And yet once more,—are the conditions of the tyranny of *Fashion* heaved away: then of themselves are the- conditions of *True Art* at hand; and with one waive of the enchanter's wand, will holy, glorious Art, the daughter of the noblest Manhood, blossom in like fulness and perfection with Mother Nature, the conditions of whose now completed harmony of form have issued from the birth-pangs of the elements. Like to this blissful harmony of Nature, will she endure and ever show her fruitfulness, as the purest and most perfect satisfaction of the truest, noblest need of perfected mankind; *i.e.* of men who *are* all that which of their essence they *can* be, and therefore *should* and shall be.

## 5. The Art-antagonistic shape of Present Life, under the sway of Abstract Thought and Fashion.

The first beginning and foundation of all that exists and all that is conceivable, is actual physical being. The inner recognition of his life-need as the *common* life-need of his *Species*, in contradistinction to Nature and all her countless living species that lie apart from Man,—is the beginning and foundation of man's Thinking. Thought is therefore the faculty possessed by Man, not merely to sense the actual and physical from its external aspect, but to distinguish all its parts according to their essence, and finally to grasp and picture to himself their intimate connection. The idea ("*Begriff*") of a thing is the image formed in Thought of its actual substance; the portrayal of the images of all discernible substances in one joint-image, in which the faculty of Thought presents to itself the picture of the essence of all realities in their connected sequence, is the work of the highest energy of the human soul,—the *Spirit* [83] ("*Geist*"). If in this joint-image man must necessarily have included the image, the idea, of his own being also,—nay, if this his own prefigured being must be, before all else, the artistic force that pictures forth the whole conceptual art-work: then does this force, with all its joint portrayal of each reality, proceed alone from the real, physical man; and thus, at bottom, from his life-need, and finally from that which summoned forth this life-need, the physical reality of Nature. But where Thought casts aside this linking cable; where, after doubled and again redoubled presentment of itself, it fain would look upon itself as its original cause; where Mind ("*Geist*") instead of as the last and most conditioned, would conceive itself as the first and least conditioned energy ("*Thätigkeit*"), and therefore as the ground and cause of Nature,—there also is the fly-wheel of Necessity upheaved, and blind Caprice runs headlong—free, boundless, and unfettered, as our metaphysicians fancy—through the workshops of the brain, and hurls herself; a raging stream of madness, upon the world of actuality.

If Mind has manufactured Nature, if Thought has made the Actual, if the Philosopher comes before the Man: then Nature, Actuality and Man are no more necessary, and their existence is not only superfluous but even harmful; for the greatest superfluity of all is the lagging of the Incomplete *when once the Complete has come to being*. In this wise Nature, Actuality and Man would only then have any meaning, or any pretext for their presence, when Mind—the unconditioned Spirit, the only cause and reason, and thus the only law unto itself—employed them for its absolute and sovereign pleasure. If Mind is *in itself* Necessity, then Life is mere caprice, a fantastic masquerade, an idle pastime, a frivolous whim, a "*car tel est notre plaisir*" of the mind; then is all purely human virtue, and Love before all else, a thing to be approved or disallowed according to occasion; then is all purely human Need a luxury, and Luxury the only current need; then is the wealth of Nature a thing to be dispensed with, and the parasitic growth of Culture the only indispensable; then is the happiness of man a secondary matter, and the abstract State the main [84] consideration; the Folk the accidental stuff, and the prince and savant the necessary consumers of this stuff.

If we take the end for the beginning, the assuagement for the need, satiety for hunger; then is all movement, all advance, not even conceivable except in line with a concocted need, a hunger brought about by stimulation; and this, in very truth, is the lifespring of our whole Culture of to-day, and its utterance is—*Fashion*.

*Fashion* is the artificial stimulus that rouses an unnatural' need where the natural is not to hand; but whatsoever does not originate in a real need, is arbitrary, uncalled-for, and tyrannical. Fashion is therefore the maddest, most unheard-of tyranny that has ever issued from man's perversity; it demands from Nature an absolute obedience; it dictates to real need a thorough self-disownment in favour of an artificial; it compels man's natural sense of beauty to worship at the shrine of what is hateful; it kills his health, to bring him to delight in



sickness; it breaks his strength and all his force, to let him find content in weakness. Where the absurdest Fashion reigns, there must Nature be regarded as the height of absurdity; where the most criminal un-Nature reigns, there must the utterance of Nature appear the fellest crime; where craziness usurps the place of truth, there must Truth herself be prisoned under lock and bar, as crazy.

The soul of Fashion is the most absolute uniformity, and its god an egoistic, sexless, barren god. Its motive force is therefore arbitrary alteration, unnecessary change, confused and restless striving after the opposite of its essential uniformity. Its might is the might of habit. But *Habit* is the invincible despot that rules all weaklings, cowards, and those bereft of veritable need. Habit is the communism of egoism, the tough, unyielding swathe of mutual, free-from-want self-interest; its artificial life-pulse is even that of Fashion.

Fashion is therefore no artistic begetting from herself, but a mere artificial deriving from her opposite, Nature; from whom alone she must at bottom draw her nourishment, [85] just as the luxury of the upper classes feeds only on the straining of the lower, labouring classes towards assuagement of their natural life-needs. The caprice of Fashion, therefore, can only draw upon the stores of actual Nature; all her reshapings, flourishes, and gewgaws have at the last their archetype in Nature. Like all our abstract thinking, in its farthest aberrations, she finally can think out and invent naught else than what already is at hand in Nature and in Man, in substance and in form. But her procedure is an arrogant one, capriciously cut loose from Nature; she orders and commands, where everything in truth is bound to hearken and obey. Thus with all her figurings she can but disfigure Nature, and not portray her; she can but *derive*, and not *invent*; for invention, in effect, is naught but *finding out*, the finding and discerning of Nature.

Fashion's invention is therefore mechanical. But the mechanical is herein distinguished from the artistic: that it fares from derivative to derivative, from means to means, to finally bring forth but one more mean, the *Machine*. Whereas the artistic strikes the very opposite path: throws means on means behind it, pierces through derivative after derivative, to arrive at last at the source of every derivation, of every mean, in *Nature's* self, and there to slake its need in understanding.

Thus the *Machine* is the cold and heartless ally of luxury-craving men. Through the machine have they at last made even human reason their liege subject; for, led astray from Art's discovery, dishonoured and disowned, it consumes itself at last in mechanical refinements, in absorption into the Machine, instead of in absorption into Nature in the Art-work.

The need of *Fashion* is thus the diametrical antithesis of the need of *Art*; for the artistic need cannot possibly be present where Fashion is the lawgiver of Life. In truth, the endeavour of many an enthusiastic artist of our times could only be directed to rousing first that necessary Need, from the standpoint and by the means of Art; yet we [86] must look on all such efforts as vain and fruitless. The one impossibility for Mind is, to awaken a real need:—to answer to an actual present need, man always has the speedy means to hand, but never to evoke it where Nature has withheld it, where its conditionments are not contained in her economy. But if the craving for art-work does not exist, then art-work is itself impossible and only the Future can call it forth for us, and that by the natural begetting of its conditionments from out of Life.

Only from *Life*, from which alone can even the need for her grow up, can Art obtain her *matter* and her *form*; but where Life is modelled upon Fashion, Art can never fashion aught from Life. Straying far away from the necessity of Nature, Mind wilfully—and even in the so-called 'common' life, involuntarily—exercises its disfiguring influence upon the matter and the form of Life; in such a manner that Mind, at last unhappy in its separation, and longing for its healthy sustenance by Nature and its complete re-union with her, can no more find the

matter and the form for its assuagement in actual present life. If, in its striving for redemption, it yearns for unreserved acknowledgment of Nature, and if it can only reconcile itself with her in her faithfulest portrayal, in the physical actuality of the Art-work: yet it sees that this reconciliation can nevermore be gained by acknowledgment and portrayal of its actual surroundings, of this Fashion-governed parody of life. Involuntarily, therefore, must it pursue an arbitrary course in its struggle for redemption by Art; it must seek for Nature—which in sound and wholesome life would rush to meet it—amid times and places where it can recognise her in less, and finally in least, distortion. Yet everywhere and everywhen has natural man thrown on the garment, if not of Fashion, still of *Custom* ("Sitte") The simplest and most natural, the fairest and the noblest Custom is certainly the least disfigurement of Nature,—nay, her most fitting human garb. But the copying and reproduction of this Custom,—without which the modern artist can never manage to effect his portraiture of Nature,[87]—is still, in face of modern Life, an irreclaimably arbitrary and purpose-governed dealing; and whatsoever has been thus formed and fashioned by even the honestest striving after Nature, appears, so soon as e'er it steps before our present public life, either a thing incomprehensible, or else another freshly fangled Fashion.

In truth we have nothing for which to thank this mode of striving after nature, within the bounds of modern life and yet in contrast to it, but *Mannerism* and its ceaseless, restless change. The character of Fashion has once more unwittingly betrayed itself in Mannerism; without a shred of consequent coherence with actual life, it trips up to Art with just the same despotic orders as Fashion wields on Life; it bands itself with Fashion, and rules with equal might each separate branch of art. Beneath its serious mien it shows itself—almost as inevitably as does its colleague—in utmost ridicule. Not only the Antique, the Renaissance and Middle Ages, but the customs and the garb of savage races in new-discovered lands, the primal fashions of Japan and China, from time to time usurp as "Mannerisms," in greater or in less degree, each several department of our modern art. Nay, with no other effect than that of an insufficient stimulus, our lightly veering 'manner of the day' sets before the least religiously disposed and most genteel of theatre-goers the fanaticism of religious sects; (04) before the luxurious un-nature of our fashionable world the naïvety of Swabian peasants; before the pampered gods of commerce the want of the hungering rabble.

Here, then, does the artist whose spirit strives to be reknit with Nature see all his hopes thrust forward to the Future, or else his soul thrust back upon the mournful exercise of resignation. He recognises that his thought can only gain redemption in a physically present art-work, thus only in a truly art-demanding, *i.e.* an art-conditioning Present that shall bring forth Art from its own native truth and beauty; he therefore sets his hopes upon the Future, [88] his trust upon the power of Necessity, for which this Work of the Future is reserved. But in face of the actual Present, he renounces all appearing of the Art-work upon the surface of this present, *i.e.* in public show; and consequently he quits publicity itself; so far as it is ruled by fashion. The great United Art-work, which must gather up each branch of art to use it as a mean, and in some sense to undo it for the common aim of *all*, for the unconditioned, absolute portrayal of perfected human nature,—this great United Art-work he cannot picture as depending on the arbitrary purpose of some human unit, but can only conceive it as the instinctive and associate product of the Manhood of the Future. The instinct that recognises itself as one that can only be satisfied in fellowship, abandons modern fellowship—that conglomerate of self-seeking caprice—and turns to find its satisfaction in solitary fellowship with itself and with the manhood of the Future,—so well as the lonely unit can.

## 6. Standard for the Art-work of the Future.

It is not the lonely spirit, striving by Art for redemption into Nature, that can frame the Art-work of the Future; only the spirit of Fellowship, fulfilled by Life, can bring this work to pass. But yet the lonely one can prefigure it to himself; and the thing that saves his preconception from becoming a mere idle fancy, is the very character of his striving,—his striving after *Nature*. The mind that casts back longing eyes to Nature, and therefore goes a-hungering in the modern Present, sees not alone in Nature's great sum-total, but also in the *human nature* that history lays before it, the types by whose observing it may reconcile itself with life in general. It recognises in this nature a type for all the Future, already shown in narrower bounds; to widen out these bounds to broadest compass, rests on the imaginative faculty of its nature-craving instinct.

[89]

Two *cardinal moments* of his development lie clear before us in the history of Man: the *generic national*, and the *unnational universal*. If we still look forward to the Future for the completion of the second evolutionary step, yet in the Past we have the rounded-off conclusion of the first set clear as day before our eyes. To what a pitch man once—so far as, governed by generic ancestry, by community of mother-tongue, by similarity of climate, and the natural surroundings of a common fatherland, he yielded himself unconsciously to the influence of Nature—to what a pitch man once was able to unfold himself beneath these welnigh directly moulding influences, we have certainly full reason to acknowledge with most heartfelt thanks. It is in the natural customs of all peoples, so far as they embrace the normal man, and even of those decried as most uncultured, that we first learn the truth of human nature in its full nobility, and in its real beauty. Not *one* true virtue has any Religion soever taken into itself as its god's command, but it was already self-included in these natural customs; not *one* genuine idea of human right has the later civilised State developed—though, alas, to the point of complete distortion!—but it already found its sure expression in them; not *one* veritable discovery for the common weal has later Culture made her own—with arrogant ingratitude!—but she derived it from the fruits of the homely understanding of the stewards of those customs.

But that *Art* is not an *artificial* product,—that the need of Art is not an arbitrary issue, but an inbred craving of the natural, genuine, and uncorrupted man,—who proves this in more striking manner than just these Peoples? Nay, whence shall our uneasy "spirit" derive its proofs of Art's necessity, if not from the testimony of this artistic instinct and its glorious fruits afforded by these nature-fostered peoples, by the great *Folk* itself? Before what phenomenon do we stand with more humiliating sense of the impotence of our frivolous culture, than before the art of the *Hellenes*? To this, to the art of the darlings of all-loving Nature, of those fairest children whom the great [90] glad Mother holds up to us before the darksome cloud of modern modish culture, as the triumphant tokens of what she can bring forth,—let us look far hence to glorious Grecian Art, and gather from its inner understanding the outlines for the Art-work of the Future! Nature has done all that she could do,—she has given birth to the Hellenic people, has fed it at her breast and formed it by her mother-wisdom; she sets it now before our gaze with all a mother's pride, and cries to wide mankind with mother-love: "This have I done for you; now, of your love for one another, do ye that which ye can!"

Thus have we then to turn *Hellenic* art to *Human* art; to loose from it the stipulations by which it was but an *Hellenic* and not a *Universal* art. The *garment of Religion*, in which alone it was the common Art of Greece, and after whose removal it could only, as an egoistic, isolated art-species, fulfil the needs of Luxury—however fair—but no longer those of Fellowship,—this specific garb of the *Hellenic Religion*, we have to stretch it out until its



folds embrace the Religion of the Future, the Religion of *Universal Manhood*, and thus to gain already a presage of the Art-work of the Future. But this bond of union, this *Religion of the Future*, we wretched ones shall never clasp the while we still are *lonely units*, howe'er so many be our numbers who feel the spur towards the Art-work of the Future. The Art-work is the living presentation of Religion;—but religions spring not from the artist's brain; their only origin is from the *Folk*.—

Let us then—without a spark of egoistic vanity, without attempting to console ourselves with any kind of self-derived illusion, but honestly and lovingly and hopefully devoted to the Art-work of the Future—content ourselves to-day by testing first the nature of the art-*species* which, in their shattered segregation, make up the general substance of our modern art; let us sharpen our gaze for this examination by glancing at Hellenic art; and thereafter let us draw a bold and confident conclusion anent the *great and universal Art-work of the Future!*

[91]

II. Artistic Man, and Art as Derived Directly from Him.

## 1. Man as his own Artistic Subject and Material.

MAN'S nature is twofold, an *outer* and an *inner*. The senses to which he offers himself as a subject for Art, are those of *Vision* and of *Hearing*: to the eye appeals the outer man, the inner to the ear.

The eye apprehends the *bodily form of man*, compares it with surrounding objects, and discriminates between it and them. The corporeal man and the spontaneous expression of his sensations of physical anguish or physical well-being, called up by outward contact, appeal directly to the eye; while indirectly he imparts to it, by means of facial play and gesture, those emotions of the inner man which are not directly cognisable by the eye. Again, through the expression of the eye itself, which directly meets the eye of the beholder, man is able to impart to the latter not only the feelings of the heart, but even the characteristic activity of the brain; and the more distinctly can the outer man express the inner, the higher does he show his rank as an artistic being.

But the inner man can only find *direct* communication through the ear, and that by means of *his voice's* Tone. Tone is the immediate utterance of feeling and has its physical seat within the heart, whence start and whither flow the waves of life-blood. Through the sense of hearing, tone urges forth from the feeling of one heart to the feeling of its fellow: the grief and joy of the emotional-man impart [92] themselves directly to his counterpart through the manifold expression of vocal tone; and where the outer corporeal-man finds his limits of expressing to the eye the qualities of those inner feelings of the heart he fain would utter and convey, there steps in to his aid the sought-for envoy, and takes his message through the voice to hearing, through hearing to the feelings of the heart.

Yet where, again, the direct expression of vocal tone finds its limits of conveying the separate feelings of the heart in clear and sharply outlined definition to the sympathies of the recipient inner man, there enters on the scene, through the vehicle of vocal tone, the determinative utterance of *Speech*. *Speech* is the condensation (05) of the element of Voice, and the Word is the crystallised measure of Tone. In *Speech*, feeling conveys itself by ear to feeling, but to that likewise to be condensed and crystallised feeling to which it seeks to bring itself in sure and unmistakable understanding. It is thus the organ of that special feeling which reasons with itself and yearns for others' understanding,—the Intellect.—For the more vague and general feeling the immediate attributes of Tone sufficed. This general feeling therefore abode by Tone, as its adequate and materially contenting utterance; in the *quantitative* value of its compass it found the means of, so to say, accenting its own peculiar *qualities* in their universal bearings. But the *definite* need which seeks by *Speech* to gain an understanding is more decided and more pressing; it abides not in contentment with its physical expression, for it has to differentiate its own subjective feeling from a general feeling, and therefore to depict and to describe what Tone gave forth directly as the expression of this general feeling. The speaker has therefore to take his images from correlative but diverse objects, and to weld them with each other. In this mediate and complex [93] process he has to take a wider field; and, under pressure of his quest for comprehension, he accelerates this process by the utmost brevity of his lingering over Tone, and by complete abandonment of its general powers of expression. Through this enforced renunciation, through this giving up of all delight in the physical element of his own utterance—at least of that degree of pleasure which the corporeal- and the emotional-man experience in their method of expression,—the intellectual-man attains the faculty of giving by means of his speech-organ that certain utterance in seeking which the former found their bounds, each in his own degree. His capability is unlimited: he collects and sifts the universal, parts and unites according to his need and pleasure the images which all his senses bear him from the outer world; he binds and looses the particular and general even as he judges best, in order to appease his own

desire for a sure and intelligible utterance of his feelings, his reflections, or his will. Yet he finds once more his limit where, in the agitation of his feelings, in the living pulse of joy or the violence of grief,—there, where the particular and arbitrary draw back before the generality and spontaneity of the feeling that usurps his heart; where from out the egoism of his narrowed and conditioned personal sensations he finds himself again amid the wide communion of all-embracing world-emotions, a partaker in the unconditioned truth of universal feeling and emotion; where, finally, he has to subordinate his individual selfwill to the dictates of Necessity, be it of grief or joy, and to hearken in place of commanding,—he craves for the only adequate and direct expression of his endlessly enhanced emotion. Here must he reach back once more to the universal mode of utterance; and, in exact proportion as he has pressed forward to his special standpoint, has he now to retrace his steps and borrow from the emotional man the physical tones of feeling, from the corporeal man the physical gestures of the body. For where it is a question of giving utterance, immediate and yet most certain, to the highest and the truest that man can ever utter, there above all [94] must man display himself in his entirety; and this whole man is the man of understanding united with the man of heart and man of body,—but neither of these parts for self alone.—

The progress of the man of understanding, from the bodily man and through the man of feeling, is that of an ever increasing accommodation, just as his organ of expression, Speech, is the most mediate and dependent; for all the attributes that lie beneath him must be normally developed, before the conditions of *his* normal attributes can be at hand. But the most conditioned faculty is at like time the most exalted; and the joy in his own self, engendered by the knowledge of his higher, unsurpassable attributes, betrays the intellectual-man into the arrogant imagining that he may use those attributes which are really his foundation-props as the handmaids of his own caprice. The sovereign might of physical sensation and heart-emotion, however, breaks down his pride of intellect, as soon as these proclaim their sway as one which all men must obey in common, as that of feelings and emotions of the race. The isolated feeling, the separate emotion, which show themselves in the individual, aroused by this or that particular and personal contact with this or that particular phenomenon, he is able to suppress or subjugate in favour of a richer combination of manifold phenomena conceived by him; but the richest combination of all the phenomena that he can cognise leads him at last to *Man as a species and an integral factor in the totality of Nature*; and, in presence of this great, all-mastering phenomenon, his pride breaks down. He now can only will the universal, true, and unconditional; he yields himself, not to a love for this or that particular object, but to wide *Love* itself. Thus does the egoist become a communist, the unit all, the man God, the art-variety Art.

[95]

## 2. The Three Varieties of Humanistic Art, in their original Union.

(06)

The three chief artistic faculties of the entire man have once, and of their own spontaneous impulse, evolved to a trinitarian utterance of human Art; and this was in the primal, earliest manifested art-work, the *Lyric*, and its later, more conscious, loftiest completion, the *Drama*.

The arts of *Dance*, (07) of *Tone*, and *Poetry*: thus call themselves the three primeval sisters whom we see at once entwine their measures wherever the conditions necessary for artistic manifestation have arisen. By their nature they are inseparable without disbanding the stately minuet of Art; for in this dance, which is the very cadence of Art itself; they are so wondrously closely interlaced with one another, of fairest love and inclination, so mutually bound up in each other's life, of body and of spirit: that each of the three partners, unlinked from the united chain and bereft thus of her own life and motion, can only carry on an artificially inbreathed and borrowed life;—not giving forth her sacred ordinances, as in their trinity, but now receiving despotic rules for mechanical movement.

As we gaze on this entrancing measure of the truest and most high-born Muses of artistic man, we see the three first stepping forward, each with her loving arm entwined around her sister's neck; then, now this one and now that, as though to show the others her beauteous form in full and individual symmetry, loosing herself from their embrace, and merely brushing with her utmost finger-tips the others' hands. Again the one, rapt by the spectacle of the twin-beauty of her close-locked sisters, bending herself before them; next the two, transported by her unique charm, [96] greeting the one with tender homage; until at last, all three, tight-clasped, breast on breast, and limb to limb, melt with the fervour of love-kisses into one only, living shape of beauty.—Such is the love and life, the wooing and the winning of Art; its separate units, ever themselves and ever for each other, severing in richest contrast and re-uniting in most blissful harmony.

This is Art the free. The sweet and forceful impulse in that dance of sisters, is the *impulse of Freedom*; the love-kiss of their enlocked embraces, the *transport of a freedom won*.

*The solitary unit is unfree*, because confined and fettered in un-Love; the *associate is free*, because unfettered and unconfined through Love.—

In every creature that exists the mightiest impulse is that of its *Life*; this is the resistless force of the correlation of those conditions which have first called into being that which here exists,—thus, of those things or life-forces which, in that which has arisen through them, are *that* which they will to be—and, willing, can be—in this their point of common union. Man appeases his Life-need by *taking* from Nature: this is no theft, but a receiving, an adoption, an absorption of that which, as a condition of man's life, wills to be adopted into and absorbed in him. For these conditions of man's Life, *themselves* his Life-needs, are not forsooth upheaved by birth,—rather do they endure and feed themselves within him and by him so long as e'er he lives; and the dissolution of their bond, itself is—Death.

But the Life-need of man's life-needs is the *need of Love*. As the conditions of natural human life are contained in the love-bond of subordinated nature-forces, which craved for their agreement, their redemption, their adoption into the higher principle, Man; so does man find his agreement, his redemption, his appeasement, likewise in something higher; and this higher thing is the *human race, the fellowship of man*, for there is but one thing higher than *man's* self, and that is—*Men*. But man can only gain the stilling [97] of his life-need through *Giving*, through *Giving of himself* to other men, and in its highest climax, to *all the world of human beings*. The monstrous sin of the absolute egoist is that he sees in (fellow) Men also nothing but the natural conditionments of his own existence, and—albeit in a quite particular, barbaric-cultivated manner—*consumes* them like the fruits and beasts of nature; thus will not

*give*, but only *take*.

Now as Man is not free except through Love, neither is anything that proceeds, or is derived, from him. Freedom is the satisfaction of an imperative Need, and the highest freedom is the satisfaction of the highest need: but the highest human need is *Love*.

No living thing can issue from the true and undistorted nature of mankind or be derived from it, unless it fully answers to the characteristic essence of that nature: but the most characteristic token of this essence is the need of Love.

Each separate faculty of man is limited by bounds; but his united, agreed, and reciprocally helping faculties—and thus his faculties in *mutual love* of one another—combine to form the self-completing, unbounded, universal faculty of men. Thus too has every *artistic* faculty of man its natural bounds, since man has not *one only Sense* but separate *Senses*; while every faculty springs from its special sense, and therefore each single faculty must find its bounds in the confines of its correlated sense. But the boundaries of the separate senses are also their joint meeting-points, those points at which they melt in one another and each agrees with each: and exactly so do the faculties that are derived from them touch one another and agree. Their confines, therefore, are removed by this agreement; but only those that love each other can agree, and 'to love' means: to acknowledge the other, and at like time to know one's self. Thus Knowledge through Love is Freedom; and the freedom of man's faculties is—*All-faculty*.

Only the Art which answers to this 'all-faculty' of man is, therefore, *free*; and not the *Art-variety*, which only [98] issues from a single human faculty. The Arts of Dance, of Tone, of Poetry, are each confined within their several bounds; in contact with these bounds each feels herself unfree, be it not that, across their common boundary, she reaches out her hand to her neighbouring art in unrestrained acknowledgment of love. The very grasping of this hand lifts her above the barrier; her full embrace, her full absorption in her sister—*i.e.* her own complete ascension beyond the set-up barrier—casts down the fence itself. And when every barrier has thus fallen, then are there no more *arts* and no more boundaries, but only *Art*, the universal, undivided.

It is a sorry misconception of Freedom—that of the being who would fain be free in loneliness. The impulse to loose one's self from commonalty, to be free and independent for individual self alone, can only lead to the direct antithesis of the state so arbitrarily striven after: namely to utmost lack of self-dependence.—Nothing in Nature is self-dependent excepting that which has the conditionments of its self-standing not merely in itself; but also outside of itself: for the inner are first possible by virtue of the outer. That which would separate (08) itself must, necessarily, first have that from which to separate. He who would fain be nothing but himself; must first know what he is; but this he only learns by distinguishing from what he is not: were he able to lop off entirely that which differs from him, then were he himself no differentiated entity, and thus no longer cognisable by himself. In order to will to be the whole thing which of and in himself he is, the individual must learn to be absolutely not the thing he is not; but the thing that is absolutely what *he* is not, is that thing which lies apart from him; and only in the fullest of communion [99] with that which is apart from him, in the completest absorption into the commonalty of those who differ from him, can he ever be completely *what* he is by nature, what he must be, and as a reasonable being, can but will to be. Thus only in Communism does Egoism find its perfect satisfaction.

*That Egoism*, however, which has brought such immeasurable woe into the world and so lamentable a mutilation and insincerity into Art, is of another breed to the natural and rational egoism which finds its perfect satisfaction in the community of all. In pious indignation it wards off the name of "Egoism" from it, and dubs itself "Brotherly-" and "Christian-" "Art-" and "Artist-Love"; founds temples to God and Art; builds hospitals, to make ailing old-age young and sound,—and schools to make youth old and ailing; establishes "faculties," courts

of justice, governments, states, and what not else?—merely to prove that it is not Egoism. And this is just the most irredeemable feature of it, and that which makes it utterly pernicious both to itself and to the general commonalty. This is the isolation of the single, in which each severed nullity shall rank as somewhat, but the great commonalty as naught; in which each unit struts as something special and "original," while the whole, forsooth, can then be nothing in particular and for ever a mere imitation. This is the self-dependence of the individual, where every unit lives upon the charges of his fellows, in order to be "free by help of God;" pretends to be what others *are*; and, briefly, follows the inversion of the teaching of Jesus Christ: "To *take* is more blessed than to give."

This is the genuine Egoism, in which each *isolated art-variety* would give itself the airs of universal Art; while, in truth, it only thereby loses its own peculiar attributes. Let us pry a little closer into what, under such conditions, has befallen those three most sweet Hellenic sisters!—



[100]

### 3. The Art of Dance.

The most realistic of all arts is that of Dance. Its artistic 'stuff' is the actual living Man; and in troth no single portion of him, but the whole man from heel to crown, such as he shows himself unto the eye. It therefore includes within itself the conditions for the enunciation of all remaining arts: the singing and speaking man must necessarily be a bodily man; through his outer form, through the posture of his limbs, the inner, singing and speaking man comes forth to view. The arts of Tone and Poetry become first understandable in that of Dance, the Mimetic art, by the entire art-receptive man, *i.e.* by him who not only hears but also sees.

The Art-work cannot gain its freedom until it proclaims itself directly to the answering sense, until in addressing this sense the artist is conscious of the certain understanding of his message. The highest subject for Art's message is Man himself; and, for his own complete and conscious calming, man can at bottom only parley through his bodily form with the corresponding sense, the eye. Without addressing the eye, all art remains unsatisfying, and thus itself unsatisfied, unfree. Be its utterance to the Ear, or merely to the combining and mediately compensating faculty of Thought, as perfect as it may—until it makes intelligible appeal likewise unto the Eye, it remains a thing that merely *wills*, yet never completely *can*; but Art must '*can*,' (09) and from "*können*" it is that Art in our tongue has fittingly gotten itself its name "*Die Kunst*."—

The corporeal-man proclaims his sensations of weal and woe directly in and by those members of his body which feel the hurt or pleasure; his whole body's sense of weal or woe he expresses by means of correlated and complementary [101] movements of all, or of the most expression-able of these members. From their relation with each other, then from the play of complementary and accenting motions, and finally from the manifold interchange of these motions—as they are dictated by the progressive change of feelings passing, now by slow degrees and now in violent haste, from soft repose to passionate turmoil—from these arise the very laws of endless-changing motion by the which man rules his artistic presentation of himself. The savage, governed by the rawest passions, knows in his dance almost no other change than that from monotonous tumult to monotonous and apathetic rest. In the wealth and multiform variety of his transitions speaks out the nobler, civilised man; the richer and more manifold are these transitions, the more composed and stable is the ordering of their mutual interchange. But the law of this ordering is *Rhythm*.

Rhythm is in no Wise an arbitrary canon, according to which the artistic-man forsooth *shall* move his body's limbs; but it is the conscious soul of those necessitated (?—"reflex"—TR.) movements by which he strives instinctively to impart to others his own emotions. If the motion and the gestures are themselves the feeling *Tone* of his emotion, then is their Rhythm its articulate *Speech*. The swifter the play of emotion: the more passionately embarrassed and unclear is the man himself, and therefore the less capable is he of imparting his emotion in a clear and intelligible fashion. On the other hand, the more restful the change: so much the plainer will the emotion show its nature. Rest is continuance; but continuance of motion is repetition of motion: that which repeats itself allows of reckoning, and the law of this reckoning is *Rhythm*.

By means of Rhythm does Dance become an art. It is the *Measure* of the movements by which emotion mirrors forth itself,—the measure by which it first attains that perspicuity which renders understanding possible. But the 'stuff' by means of which this Rhythm makes itself outwardly discernible and measure-giving, as the self-dictated [102] Law of motion, is necessarily taken from another element than that of bodily motion;—only through a thing apart from myself, can I first know myself; but this thing which lies apart from bodily motion is that which appeals to a sense that lies apart from the sense to which the body's motion is



addressed; and this fresh sense is *Hearing*. Rhythm—which sprang from the inner Necessity which spurred corporeal motion on to gain an understanding—imparts itself to the dancer, as the outward manifestment of this Necessity, the Law of Measure, chiefly through the medium of that which is perceptible by the ear alone, namely *Sound*;—just as in music the abstract measure of rhythm, the 'Bar,' is imparted by a motion cognisable only by the eye. This equal-meted repetition, springing as it does from Motion's innermost Necessity, invites alike and guides the dancer's movements by its exposition through the rhythmic beat of Sound, such as is at first evoked by simple clapping of the hands, and then from wooden, metal, or other sonorous objects.

However, the mere definition of the points of Time at which a movement shall repeat itself, does not suffice completely for the dancer who submits the ordering of his movements to an outwardly perceptible law. Just as the Motion, beside its swift change from time-point to time-point, is maintained abidingly, and thus becomes a continuous performance: so does the dancer require that the Sound, which had hitherto vanished as suddenly as it had appeared, shall be compelled to an abiding continuance, to an extension in regard of Time. He demands, in short, that the emotion which forms the living Soul of his movements shall be equally expressed in the continuance of the Sound; for only so does the self-dictated rhythmic Measure become one that corresponds completely with the Dance, inasmuch as it embraces not merely *one* of the essential conditions of the latter but, as far as possible, *all*. This *Measure* must therefore be the embodiment of the essence of Dance in a separate, but allied, branch of art.

This other branch of art into which Dance yearns instinctively [103] to pass, therein to find again and know her own true nature, is the art of *Tone*; which, in its turn, receives the solid scaffold of its vertebration from Dance's rhythm.

Rhythm is the natural, unbreakable bond of union between the arts of Dance and Tone; without it, no art of Dance, and none of Tone. If Rhythm, as her regulating and unifying law, is the very *Mind* of Dance—to wit, the abstract summary of corporeal motion,—so is it, on the other hand, the moving, self-progressive *Skeleton* of Tone. The more this skeleton invests itself with tonal flesh, the more does the law of Dance lose its own features in the special attributes of Tone; so much the more, however, does Dance at like time raise herself to the capability of that expression of the deeper feelings of the heart by which alone she can keep abreast of the essential nature of Tone. But Tone's most living flesh is the *human voice*; and *the Word*, again, is as it were the bone-and-muscle rhythm of this human voice. And thus, at last, the movement-urging emotion, which overflowed from art of Dance to art of Tone, finds in the definite decision of the Word the sure, unerring utterance by means of which it can both seize itself as 'object' and clearly speak forth what it is. Thus, through tone become Speech, it wins at once its highest satisfaction and its most satisfying heightening in the tonal art become the art of Poesy; for it mounts aloft from Dance to *Mimicry*, from the broadest delineation of general bodily sensations to the subtlest and most compact (10) utterance of definite mental phases of emotion and of will-force.—

From this frank and mutual permeation, generation, and completion of each several art from out itself and through its fellow—which, as regards Music and Poetry, we have so far merely hinted at—is born the united *Lyric Art-work*. In it each art is what its nature accords to it; that which lies beyond its power of being, it does not egoistically borrow from [104] its fellow, but its fellow *is that* in its place. But in *Drama*, the perfected form of Lyric, each several art unfolds its highest faculty; and notably that of Dance. In Drama, Man is at once his own artistic 'subject' and his 'stuff,' to his very fullest worth. Now as therein the art of Dance has to set directly forth the separate or joint expressive movements which are to tell us of the feelings both of units and of masses; and as the law of Rhythm, begotten from her, is the standard whereby the whole dramatic semblance is brought into agreement

"),— so does Dance withal exalt herself in Drama to her most spiritual expression, that of *Mimicry*. As Mimetic art, she becomes the direct and all-embracing utterance of the inner man; and it is now no longer the raw material rhythm of Sound, but the spiritual rhythm of Speech, that shows itself to her as law,—a law, however, which took its earliest rise from her dictation. What Speech endeavours to convey ("*verständlichen*"), the whole wide range of feelings and emotions, ideas and thoughts, which mount from softest tenderness to indomitable energy, and finally proclaim themselves as naked Will—all this becomes an unconditionally intelligible, unquestioned truth through Mimic art alone; nay, Speech itself cannot become a true and quite convincing physical utterance without the immediate aid of Mimicry. From this, the Drama's pinnacle, Dance broadens gradually down again to her original domain: where Speech now only hints and pictures; where Tone, as Rhythm's soul, restricts herself to homage of her sister; and where the beauty of the Body and its movements alone can give direct and needful utterance to an all-dominating, all-rejoicing feeling.

Thus Dance reaches in Drama her topmost height, entrancing where she orders, affecting where she subordinates herself; ever and throughout—herself: because ever spontaneous and, therefore, of indispensable Necessity. For only where an art is indispensable, is it alike the whole thing *that it is* and can and should be.—

Just as in the building of the Tower of Babel, when [105] their speech was confounded and mutual understanding made impossible, the nations severed from each other, each one to go its several way: so, when all national solidarity had split into a thousand egoistic severalties, did the separate art-branches cut-off themselves from the proud and heaven-soaring tree of Drama, which had lost the inspiring soul of mutual understanding.

Let us consider for a moment what fate befell the art of Dance, when she left the graceful chain of sisters, to seek her fortune in the world's great wilderness.—

Though Dance now ceased to offer to the mawkish and sentimental schoolmaster-poetry of Euripides the hand of fellowship which the latter cast away in sullen arrogance, only to take it later when humbly proffered for an '*occasional*' service ("*Zweckleistung*"); though she parted from her philosophical sister who, with sour-faced frivolity, could only *envy* and no longer love her youthful charms: yet she could not wholly dispense with the help of her bosom-comrade, Tone. By an indisruptible band was she linked to her, for the art of Tone held fast within her hands the *key* to her very soul. But, as after the death of a father in whose love his children have all been knit together, and have held their life-goods as one common store, the heirs in selfish strife compute the several stock of each,—so did Dance contend that this key was wrought by *her*, and claimed it back as the first condition of her now separate life. Willingly did she forego the feeling tones of her sister's Voice; for by this voice, whose marrow was the Word of *Poetry*, she must forsooth have felt herself inextricably chained to that proud leader! But this *instrument*, of wood or metal, the musical *tool* which her sister, in sweet urgency to inspire with her soulful breath even the dead stuff of Nature, had fashioned for the buttress and enhancement of her voice,—this tool, which verily was fit enough to mete for her the needful guiding measure of rhythm and of beat, nay even to wellnigh imitate the tonal beauty of her sister's voice,—the Musical Instrument she took with her. Not caring for aught else, she left her sister Tone to [106] float adown the shoreless stream of Christian harmony, tied to her faith in Words, the while she cast herself in easy-going self-sufficiency upon the pleasure-craving places of the world.

We know too well this tricked-out figure: who is it that has not come across her? Wherever fatuous modern ease girds itself up to seek for entertainment, she sets herself with utmost complaisance upon the scene, and plays, for gold, whatever pranks one wills. Her highest faculty, the use of which she can no longer see, the faculty of ransoming by her mien and gestures the Thought of Poetry in its yearning for actual human birth, she has lost or made away in thoughtless foolishness, and minds her not—to whom. With all the features of her

face, with all the gestures of her limbs, she has nothing now to bring to light but unconfined complaisance. Her solitary care is lest she should seem capable of making a refusal; and of this care she unburdens herself by the only mimetic expression of which she still is mistress, by the most unruffled smile of unconditional surrender to each and all. With her features set in this unchangeable and fixed expression, she answers the demand for change and motion by her lower limbs alone; all her artistic capability has sunk down from her vertex, through her body, to her feet. Head, neck, trunk and thighs are only present as unbidden guests; whereas her feet have undertaken to show alone what she can do, and merely for the sake of needful balance call on her arms and hands for sisterly support. What in private life—when our modern citizens, in accordance with tradition and the time-killing habits of society, indulge themselves in dance, in our so-called 'Balls'—it is only allowable to timidly suggest with all the woodenness of civilised vapidity: *that* is permitted to the kindly *ballerina* to tell aloud upon the public stage with frankest candour; for—her gestures, forsooth, are merely art and not reality, and now that she has been declared *beyond* the law, she stands *above* the law. In effect, we may let ourselves be incited by her, without, for all that, following in our moral life her incitations,—just as, [107] on the other hand, Religion also offers us its incitations, to goodness and to virtue, and yet we are not in the smallest bound to yield to them in everyday existence. Art is *free*,—and the art of Dance draws her profit from this freedom. And she does right in this: else what were Freedom made for?—

How comes it that this noble art has fallen so low that, in our public art-life, she can only find her passport and her lease of life as the hasp of all the banded arts of harlotry? That she must give herself beyond all ransom into the most dishonouring chains of nethermost dependence?—Because everything torn from its connexions, every egoistic unit, must needs become in truth *unfree*, *i.e.* dependent on an alien master. The mere corporeal man, the mere emotional, the mere intellectual man, are each incapable of any self-sufficiency of the genuine Man. The exclusiveness of their nature leads them into every excess of immoderation; for the salutary Measure arises only—and of itself—from the community of natures like and yet unlike. But immoderation is the absolute un-freedom of any being; and this unfreedom must of necessity evince itself as dependence upon sheer externals.—

In her separation from true Music, and especially from Poetry, Dance not only gave up her highest attributes, but she also lost a portion of her *individuality*. Only that is individual, which can beget from out itself: Dance was a completely individual art for just so long as she could bring forth from her inmost nature, and her Need, the laws in accordance with which she came to an intelligible manifestment. To-day the *only* remaining individual dance is the *national* dance of the *Folk*; for, as it steps into the world of show, it proclaims its own peculiar nature in inimitable fashion by gestures, rhythm, and beat, whose laws itself had made instinctively; while these laws only become cognisable and communicable when they have really issued from the art-work of the People as the abstract of its essence. Further evolution of the folk-dance towards the richer capabilities of Art is only [108] possible by union with the arts of Tone and Poetry, no longer tyrannised by Dance, but bearing themselves as free agents; for only amid the correlated faculties, and under the stimulation, of these arts can she unfold and broaden out her individual faculties to their fullest compass.

The Grecian Lyric art-work shows us how the laws of Rhythm, the individual mark of Dance, were developed in the arts of Tone and, above all, of Poetry to endless breadth and manifold richness of characterisation by the individuality of these very arts, and thus gave back to Dance an inexhaustible store of novel stimulus to the finding of fresh movements peculiar to herself; and how, in lively joy of fecund interaction, the individuality of each several art was able thus to lift itself to its most perfect fill. The modern folk-dance could never bring to bearing the fruits of such an interaction: for as all folk-art of the modern nations was nipped in the bud by Christianity and Christian-political civilisation, neither

could *it*, a solitary shrub, bush out in rich and manifold development. Yet the only individual phenomena in the domain of Dance known to our world of today are the sheer products of the Folk, such as they have budded, or even now still bud, from the character of this or that nationality. All our actual civilised Dance is but a compilation from these dances of the Folk: the folk-styles of every nationality are taken up by her, employed, and mutilated,—but not developed farther; because, as an art, she only feeds herself on foreign food. Her procedure, therefore, is ever a mere intentional and artificial copying, patching together, and dovetailing; in no wise a bringing forth and new-creating. Her nature is that of Mode, which, of sheer craving for vicissitude, gives today to this style, tomorrow to that, the preference. She is therefore forced to found her arbitrary systems, to set her purpose down in rules, and to proclaim her will in needless axioms and assumptions, in order to enable her disciples to comprehend and execute it. But these rules and systems wholly *isolate* her as an art, and fence her off from any healthy union with [109] another branch of art for mutual collaboration. Un-nature, held to artificial life by laws and arbitrary formulæ, is from top to bottom egoistic; and as it is incapable of bringing forth from out itself; so also is any wedding of it a thing impossible.

This art has therefore no love-need; she can only *take*, but not *give*. She draws all foreign life-stuff into herself, disintegrates and devours it, assimilating it with her own unfruitful being; but cannot blend herself with any element whose life is based on grounds outside her, because she cannot give herself.

Thus does our modern Dance attempt in *Pantomime* the task of Drama. Like every isolated, egoistic branch of art, she fain would be all things unto herself, and reign in lonely all-sufficiency. She would picture men and human haps, conditions, conflicts, characters and motives, without employing that faculty by which man first attains completion,—*Speech*. She would poetise, without the faintest comradeship with Poetry. And what does she breed, in this demure exclusiveness and "independence"? The most utterly dependent and cripple-like monstrosity: men who cannot talk; and not forsooth since some mischance has robbed them of the gift of speech, but since their stubborn choice forbids their speaking; actors whose release from some unholy spell we look for every moment, if only they could gain the courage to end the painful stammering of their Gestures by a wholesome spoken Word, but whom the rules and prescripts of pantomimic art forbid to dishallow by one natural syllable the unflecked sense of Dance's self-dependence.

And yet so lamentably dependent is this absolute dumb *Spectacle*, that in its happiest moments it only ventures to concern itself with dramatic stuffs that require to enter on no relations with the human reason,—nay, even in the most favourable of such cases, still sees itself compelled to the ignominious expedient of acquainting the spectators with its particular intention by means of an *explanatory programme*!

[110]

Yet herewith is undeniably manifested the remnant of Dance's noblest effort; she would still at least be somewhat, and soars upward to the yearning for the highest work of Art, the Drama; she seeks to withdraw from the wanton gaze of frivolity, and clutches after some artistic veil wherewith to cloak her shameful nakedness. But into what a dishonouring dependence must she cast herself, in the very manifestment of this effort! With what pitiable distortion must she expiate the vain desire for unnatural self-dependence! She, without whose highest and most individual help the highest, noblest Art-work cannot attain to show, must—severed from the union of her sisters—take refuge from prostitution in absurdity, from absurdity in prostitution!—

O glorious Dance! O shameful Dance!—

#### 4. The Art of Tone.

The ocean binds and separates the land: so does Music bind and separate the two opposite poles of human Art, the arts of Dance and Poetry.

She is the *heart* of man; the blood, which takes this heart for starting-point, gives to the outward-facing flesh its warm and lively tint,—while it feeds the inward-coursing brain-nerves with its welling pulse. Without the heart's activity, the action of the brain would be no more than of a mere automaton; the action of the body's outer members, a mechanical and senseless motion. Through the heart the understanding feels itself allied with the whole body, and the man of mere 'five-senses' mounts upwards to the energy of Reason.

But the organ of the heart is *tone*; its conscious speech, the *art of Tone*. She is the full and flowing heart-love, that ennobles the material sense of pleasure, and humanises immaterial thought. Through Tone are Dance and [111] Poetry brought to mutual understanding: in her are intercrossed in loving blend the laws by which they each proclaim their own true nature; in her, the wilfulness of each becomes instinctive 'Will' ("*Unwillkürlichen*"), the Measure of Poetry and the Beat of Dance become the undictated Rhythm of the Heart-throb.

Does she receive from her sisters the conditions under which she manifests herself, so does she give them back to them in infinite embellishment, as the conditions of their own enunciation. If Dance conveys to Tone her own peculiar law of motion, so does Tone bring it back to her with soul and sense embodied in her Rhythm, for the measure of more noble, more intelligible motion. If Tone obtains from Poetry her pregnant coil of sharp-cut Words, entwined by meaning and by measure, and takes it as a solid mesh of thought wherewith to gird her boundless fluid mass of sound: so does she hand her sister back this ideal coil of yearning syllables, that indirectly shadow forth in images, but cannot yet express their thought with all the truth and cogence of necessity,—and hands it as the direct utterance of Feeling, the unerring vindicator and redeemer, *Melody*.

In *Rhythm* and in *Melody*, ensouled by Tone, both Dance and Poetry regain their own true essence, materialised and endlessly enhanced and beautified; and thus they learn to know and love themselves. But melody and rhythm are the *arms* of Tone, with which she locks her sisters in the close embrace of triple growth; they are the *shores* through which *the sea*, herself, unites two continents. If this sea draws backward from the shores, and broadens out the waste of an abyss between itself and each of them, then can no light-winged ship bear aught from either continent unto the other; forever must they rest dissundered,—until some outcome of machinery, perchance a railroad, shall bridge the waste! Then men shall start therefrom, forsooth upon their steamboats, to cross the open sea; the breath of all-enlivening breezes replaced by sickening fumes from the machine. Blow the winds of [112] heaven eastward: what matters it?—the machine shall clatter westward, or wherever else men choose to go. Even as the dance-wright fetches from the continent of Poetry, across the steam-tamed ocean crests of Music, the programme for his novel ballet; while the play-concoctor imports from the far-off continent of Dance just so much leg-gymnastics as he deems expedient for filling up a halting situation.—

Let us see, then, what has come to sister Tone, since the death of all-loving father, *Drama!*—

We cannot yet give up our simile of the *Ocean*, for picturing Tone's nature. If *Melody* and *Rhythm* are the shores through which the art of Tone lays fruitful hands upon twain continents of art, allied to her of yore: so is Sound itself her fluent, native element, and its immeasurable expanse of waters make out the sea of *Harmony*. The eye knows but the surface of this sea; its depth the depth of Heart alone can fathom. Upwards from its lightless bottom it expands into a sun-bright mirror; the ever-widening rings of Rhythm cross over on it from one shore; from the shady valleys of the other arise the yearning zephyrs that rouse this restful surface to the



grace of swelling, sinking waves of Melody.

Man dives into this sea; only to give himself once more, refreshed and radiant, to the light of day. His heart feels widened wondrously, when he peers down into this depth, pregnant with unimaginable possibilities whose bottom his eye shall never plumb, whose seeming bottomlessness thus fills him with the sense of marvel and the presage of Infinity. It is the depth and infinity of Nature herself, who veils from the prying eye of Man the unfathomable womb of her eternal Seed-time, her Begetting, and her Yearning; even because man's eye can only grasp the already manifested, the Blossom, the Begotten, the Fulfilled. This Nature is, however, none other than *the nature of the human heart itself*, which holds within its shrine the feelings of desire and love in their most infinite capacity; which is *itself* Desire and Love, and—as in its insatiable [113] longing it yet wills nothing but itself—can only grasp and comprehend itself.

If this sea stir up its waters of itself, if it beget the ground of its commotion from the depths of its own element: then is this agitation an endless one and never pacified; for ever returning on itself unstilled, and ever roused afresh by its eternal longing. But if the vast reach of this Desire be kindled by an outward object; if this measure-giving object step toward it from the sure and sharply outlined world of manifestment; if sun-girt, slender, blithely-moving Man incend the flame of this desire by the lightning of his glancing eye,—if he ruffle with his swelling breath the elastic crystal of the sea,—then let the fire crackle as it may, let the ocean's bosom heave with ne'er so violent a storm: yet the flame at last, when its wild glow has smouldered down, will shine with mild serenity of light,—the sea-rind, the last foam-wreath of its giant crests dissolved, will crisp itself at last to the soft play of rippling waves; and Man, rejoicing in the sweet harmony of his whole being, will entrust himself to the beloved element in some frail coracle, and steer his steadfast course towards the beacon of that kindly light.—

The *Greek*, when he took ship upon his sea, ne'er let the coast line fade from sight: for him it was the trusty stream that bore him from one haven to the next, the stream on which he passed between the friendly strands amidst the music of his rhythmic oars,—here lending glances to the wood-nymphs' dance, there bending ear to sacred hymns whose melodious string of meaning words was wafted by the breezes from the temple on the mountain-top. On the surface of the water were truly mirrored back to him the jutting coasts, with all their peaks and valleys, trees and flowres and men, deep-set within the æther's blue; and this undulating mirror-picture, softly swayed by the fresh fan of gentle gusts, he deemed was *Harmony*.—

The *Christian* left the shores of Life.—Farther afield, beyond all confines, he sought the sea,—to find himself at last upon the Ocean, twixt sea and heaven, boundlessly [114] alone. The *Word*, the word of *Faith* was his only compass; and it pointed him unswervingly toward Heaven. This heaven brooded far above him, it sank down on every side in the horizon, and fenced his sea around. But the sailor never reached that confine; from century to century he floated on without redemption, towards this ever imminent, but never reached, new home; until he fell a-doubting of the virtue of his compass, and cast it, as the last remaining human bauble, grimly overboard. And now, denuded of all ties, he gave himself without a rudder to the never-ending turmoil of the waves' caprice. In unstilled, ireful love-rage, he stirred the waters of the sea against the unattainable and distant heaven: he urged the insatiate greed of that desire and love which, reft of an external object, must ever only crave and love itself,—that deepest, unredeemable hell of restless Egoism, which stretches out without an end, and wills and wishes, yet ever and forever can only wish and will itself,—he urged it 'gainst the abstract universalism of heaven's blue, that universal longing without the shadow of an 'object'—against the very vault of absolute un-objectivity. (Bliss, unconditioned bliss,—to gain in widest, most unbounded measure the *height of bliss*, and yet to stay completely *wrapt in self*: this was the unallayable desire of Christian passion.) So reared the

sea from out its deepest depth to heaven, so sank it ever back again to its own depths; ever its unmixed self, and therefore ever unappeased,—like the all-usurping, measureless desire of the heart that ne'er will give itself and dare to be consumed in an external object, but damns itself to everlasting *selfish solitude*.

Yet in Nature each immensity strives after Measure; the unconfined draws bounds around itself; the elements condense at last to definite show; and even the boundless sea of Christian yearning found the new shore on which its turbid waves might break. Where on the farthest horizon we thought to find the ever made-for, never happened-on gateway into the realms of Heaven unlimited, there did the boldest of all seafarers discover *land* at last,—man-tenanted, [115] real, and blissful land. Through his discovery the wide ocean is now not only meted out, but made for men an inland sea, round which the coasts are merely broadened out in unimaginably ampler circle. Did Columbus teach us to take ship across the ocean, and thus to bind in one each continent of Earth; did his world-historical discovery convert the narrow-seeing national-man into a universal and all-seeing *Man*: so, by the hero who explored the broad and seeming shoreless sea of absolute Music unto its very bounds, are won the new and never dreamt-of coasts which this sea no longer now divorces from the old and primal continent of man, but *binds together* with it for the new-born, happy art-life of the Manhood of the Future. And this hero is none other than—*Beethoven*.—

When Tone unloosed her from the chain of sisters, she took as her unrelinquishable, her foremost life's-condition—just as light-minded sister Dance had filched from *her* her rhythmic measure—from thoughtful sister Poetry her *Word*; yet not the human-breathing spirit of the musing ("*dichtende*") word, but only its bare corporeal condensation ("*verdichtete*") into tones. As she had abandoned her rhythmic beat to parting Dance's use and pleasure, she thenceforth built upon the Word alone; the word of Christian Creed, that toneless, fluid, scattering word which, un-withstanding and right gladly, soon gave to her complete dominion over it. But the more this word evaporated into the mere stammer of humility, the mere babbling of implicit, childlike love, so much the more imperatively did Tone see herself impelled to shape herself from out the exhaustless depths of her own liquid nature. The struggle for such shaping is the building up of *Harmony*.

Harmony grows from below upwards as a perpendicular pillar, by the joining-together and overlaying of correlated tone-stuffs. Unceasing alternation of such columns, each freshly risen member taking rank beside its fellows, constitutes the only possibility of absolute harmonic movement 'in breadth,' The feeling of needful care for the [116] beauty of this motion 'in breadth' is foreign to the nature of absolute Harmony; she knows but the beauty of her columns' changing play of colour, but not the grace of their marshalling in point of 'time,'—for that is the work of Rhythm. On the other hand, the inexhaustible variety of this play of colours is the ever-fruitful source on which she draws, with immoderate self-satisfaction, to show herself in constant change of garb; while the life-breath which en-souls and sets in motion this restless, capricious, and self-conditioning change, is the essence of elemental tone itself, the outbreathing of an unfathomable, all-dominating heart's-desire. In the kingdom of Harmony there is therefore no beginning and no end; just as the objectless and self-devouring fervour of the soul, all ignorant of its source, is nothing but itself; nothing but longing, yearning, tossing, pining—and *dying out*, *i.e.* dying without having assuaged itself in any 'object'; thus dying without death, (11) and therefore everlasting falling back upon itself.

So long as the Word was in power, it commanded both beginning and ending; but when it was engulfed in the bottomless depths of Harmony, when it became naught but "groanings and sighings of the soul," (12)—as on the ardent summit of the music of the Catholic Church,—then was the word capriciously hoisted to the capitals of those harmonic columns, of that unrhythmic melody, and cast as though from wave to wave; while the measureless

harmonic possibilities must draw from out themselves the laws for their own finite manifestment. There is no other artistic faculty of man that answers to the character of Harmony: it cannot find its mirror in the physical precision of the [117] movements of the body, nor in the logical induction of the thinking brain,—it cannot set up for itself its standard in the recognised necessity of the material world of show, like Thought, nor like corporeal Motion in the periodic calculation of its instinctive, physically governed properties: it is like a nature-force which men perceive but cannot comprehend. Summoned by outer—not by inner—necessity to resolve on surer and more finite manifestment, Harmony must mould from out its own immensurate depths the laws for its own following. These laws of harmonic sequence, based on the nature of Affinity,—just as those harmonic columns, the chords, were formed by the affinity of tone-stuffs,—unite themselves into one standard, which sets up salutary bounds around the giant playground of capricious possibilities. They allow the most varied choice from amid the kingdom of harmonic families, and extend the possibility of union by elective-affinity ("*Wahlverwandschaftliche Verbindungen*") with the members of neighbouring families, almost to free liking; they demand, however, before all a strict observance of the house-laws of affinity of the family once chosen, and a faithful tarrying with it, for sake of a happy end. But this end itself, and thus the measure of the composition's extension *in time*, the countless laws of harmonic decorum can neither give nor govern. As the scientifically teachable or learnable department of the art of Tone, they can cleave the fluid tonal masses of Harmony asunder, and part them into fenced-off bodies; but they cannot assign the periodic measure of these fenced-off masses.

When the limit-setting might of Speech was swallowed up, and yet the art of Tone, now turned to Harmony, could never find her time-assigning law within herself: then was she forced to face towards the remnant of the rhythmic beat that Dance had left for her to garner. Rhythmic figures must now enliven harmony; their change, their recurrence, their parting and uniting, must condense the fluid breadths of Harmony—as Word had earlier done with Tone—and bring their periods to more sure conclusion. [118] But no inner necessity, striving after purely human exposition, lay at the bottom of this rhythmic livening; not the feeling, thinking, will-ing Man, such as proclaims himself by speech and bodily motion, was its motive power; nothing but an *outer* necessity, which Harmony, in struggle for her selfish close, had taken up into herself. This rhythmic interchange and shaping, which moved not of its inner, own necessity, could therefore only borrow life from arbitrary laws and canons. These laws and canons are those of *Counterpoint*.

Counterpoint, with its multiple births and offshoots, is Art's artificial playing-with-itself, the mathematics of Feeling, the mechanical rhythm of egoistic Harmony. In its invention, abstract Tone indulged her whim to pass as the sole and only self-supporting Art;—as that art which owes its being, its absolute and godlike nature, to no human Need soever, but purely to *itself*. The wilful quite naturally believes itself the absolute and right monopolist; and it is certain that to her own caprice alone could Music thank her self-sufficient airs, for that mechanical, contrapuntal artifice was quite incapable of answering any *soul-need*. Music therefore, in her pride, had become her own direct antithesis: from a *heart's* concern, a matter of the *intellect*; from the utterance of unshackled Christian soul's-desire, the cashbook of a modern market-speculation.

The living breath of fair, immortal, nobly-feeling Human Voice, streaming ever fresh and young from the bosom of the Folk, blew this contrapuntal house of cards, too, of a heap. The *Folk-tune*, that had rested faithful to its own untarnished grace; the simple, surely outlined *Song*, close-woven with the poem, soared-up on its elastic pinions to the regions of the beauty-lacking, scientifically-musical artworld, with news of joyous ransom. This world was longing to paint *men* again, to set men to sing—not pipes; so it seized the folk-tune for its purpose, and constructed out of it the *opera-air*. But just as Dance had seized the folk-dance,



to freshen herself therewith when needed, and to convert it to an artificial compost according to the [119] dictates of her modish taste,—so did this genteel Operatic tone-art behave to the folk-tune. She had not grasped the *entire* man, to show him in his whole artistic stature and nature-bidden necessity, but only the *singing* man; and in his song she had not seized the Ballad of the Folk, with all its innate generative force, but merely the melodic Tune, abstracted from the poem, to which she set conventional and purposely insipid sentences, according to her pleasure; it was not the beating heart of the nightingale, but only its warbling throat that men could fathom, and practised themselves to imitate. Just as the art-dancer had set his legs, with their manifold but still monotonous bendings, flingings, and gyrations, to *vary* the natural folk-dance which he could not of himself develop further,—so did the art-singer set his throat to paraphrase with countless ornaments, to alter by a host of flourishes, those tunes which he had stolen from the People's mouth, but whose nature he could never fertilise afresh; and thus another species of mechanical dexterity filled up the place which contrapunctal ingenuity had left forlorn. We need not further characterise the repugnant, ineffably repulsive disfigurement and rending of the folk-tune, such as cries out from the modern operatic *Aria*—for truly it is nothing but a mutilated folk-tune, and in no wise a specific fresh invention—such as, in entire contempt of Nature and all human feeling, and severed from all basis of poetic speech, now tickles the imbecile ears of our opera-frequenterers with its lifeless, soul-less toy of fashion. We must content ourselves with candidly, though mournfully, avowing that our modern public sums up in *it* its whole idea of Music's essence.—

But apart from this public and its subservient fashion-mongers and mode-purveyors, the inmost individual essence of Tone was yet to soar up from its plumbless depths, in all the unlost plenitude of its unmeasured faculties, to redemption in the sunlight of the universal, *one* Art of the Future. And this spring it was to take from off *that* ground which is the ground of all sheer [120] human art: the *plastic motion of the body*, portrayed in musical *Rhythm*.

Though in the Christian lisp of the stereotyped Word, eternally repeated until it lost itself in utter dearth of Thought, the human *voice* had shrunk at last to a mere physical and flexile implement of Tone: yet, by its side, those tone-implements which mechanism had devised for Dance's ample escort had been elaborated to ever more enhanced expressive faculty. As bearers of the dance-tune, the *rhythmic Melody* had been consigned to their exclusive care; and, by reason of the ease with which their blended forces took up the element of Christian Harmony, to them now fell the call for all further evolution of the art of Tone from out itself. *The harmonised dance* is the basis of the richest art-work of the modern *Symphony*.—*Even* this 'harmonised dance' fell as a savoury prey into the hands of counterpoint-concocting mechanism; which loosed it from obedient devotion to its mistress, body-swaying Dance, and made it now to take its turns and capers from *its* rules. Yet it needed but the warm lifebreath of the natural folk-tune to beat upon the leathern harness of this schooled and contrapunctal dance,—and lo! it stretched at once to the elastic flesh of fairest human artwork. This artwork, in its highest culmination, is *the Symphony of Haydn, of Mozart, and Beethoven*.

In the *Symphony of Haydn* the rhythmic dance-melody moves with all the blithesome freshness of youth: its entwinements, disseverings, and re-unitings, though carried out with highest contrapunctal ingenuity, yet hardly show a trace of the results of such ingenious treatment; but rather take the character peculiar to a dance ordained by laws of freest Phantasy,—so redolent are they of the warm and actual breath of joyous human Life. To the more tempered motion of the middle section of the symphony we see assigned by Haydn a broad expansion of the simple song-tune of the Folk; in this it spreads by laws of *melos* peculiar to the character of Song, through soaring graduations and 'repeats' enlivened by most manifold expression. [121] This form of melody became the very element of the *Symphony*

of song-abundant, and song-glad *Mozart*. He breathed into his instruments the passionate breath of *Human Voice*, that voice toward which his genius bent with overmastering love. He led the stanchless stream of teeming Harmony into the very heart of Melody; as though in restless care to give it, only mouthed by Instruments, in recompense -the depth of feeling and of fervour that forms the exhaustless source of human utterance within the inmost chambers of the heart. Whilst, in his Symphonies, Mozart to some extent but made short work of everything that lay apart from this his individual impulse and, with all his remarkable dexterity in counterpoint, departed little from those traditional canons which he himself helped forward to stability: he lifted up the 'singing' power of instrumental music to such a height that it was now enabled, not only to embrace the mirth and inward still content which it had learnt from Haydn, but the whole depth of endless heart's-desire.

It was *Beethoven* who opened up the boundless faculty of Instrumental Music for expressing elemental storm and stress. His power it was, that took the basic essence of the Christian's Harmony, that bottomless sea of unhedged fulness and unceasing motion, and clove in twain the fetters of its freedom. *Harmonic Melody*—for so must we designate this melody divorced from speech, in distinction from the Rhythmic Melody of dance—was capable, though merely borne by instruments, of the most limitless expression together with the most unfettered treatment. In long, connected tracts of sound, as in larger, smaller, or even smallest fragments, it turned beneath the Master's poet hand to vowels, syllables, and words and phrases of a speech in which a message hitherto unheard, and never spoken yet, could promulgate itself. Each letter of this speech was an infinitely soul-full element; and the measure of the joinery of these elements was utmost free commensuration, such as could be exercised by none but a tone-poet who longed for the unmeasured utterance of this unfathomed yearning.

[122]

Glad in this unspeakably expressive language, but suffering beneath the weight of longing of his artist soul—a longing which, in its infinity, could only be an 'object' to itself, not satisfy itself outside—the happy-wretched, sea-glad and sea-weary mariner sought for a surer haven wherein to anchor from the blissful storms of passionate tumult. Was his faculty of speech unending—so also was the yearning which inspired that speech with its eternal breath. How then proclaim the end, the satisfaction, of this yearning, in the selfsame tongue that was naught but its expression? If the utterance of immeasurable heart-yearning be vented in this elemental speech of absolute tone, then the *endlessness* of such utterance, like that of the yearning itself; is its only true Necessity; the yearning cannot find contentment in any finite *shutting-off* of sound,—for that could only be Caprice. Now by the definite expression which it borrows from the rhythmic dance-melody, Instrumental Music may well portray and bring to close a placid and self-bounded mood; for reason that it takes its measure from an originally outward-lying object, namely the motion of the body. If a tone-piece yield itself *ab initio* to this expression, which must always be conceived as that of mirth, in greater or in less degree,—then, even mid the richest, most luxuriant unfolding of the faculty of tonal speech, it holds within itself the necessary grounds of every phase of 'satisfaction'; while equally inevitably must this 'satisfaction' be a matter of caprice, and therefore in truth unsatisfying, when that sure and sharp-cut mode of utterance endeavours merely *thus* to terminate the storms of endless yearning. The transition from the endless agitation of desire to a mood of joyous satisfaction, can necessarily take place no otherwise than by the ascension of desire into an *object*. But, in keeping with the character of infinite yearning, this 'object' can be none other than such an one as shows itself with finite, physical and ethical exactitude. Absolute Music, however, finds well-marked bounds dividing her from such an object; without indulging in the most arbitrary of [123] assumptions, she can now and never, of her own unaided powers, bring the physical and ethical Man to distinct and plainly recognisable

presentment. Even in her most infinite enhancement, she still is but *emotion*; she enters *in the train* of the ethical deed, but not as that *Deed itself*; she can set moods and feelings side by side, but not evolve one mood from out another by any dictate of her own Necessity;—she lacks the *Moral Will*.

What inimitable art did Beethoven employ in his "C-minor Symphony," in order to steer his ship from the ocean of infinite yearning to the haven of fulfilment! He was able to raise the utterance of his music *almost* to a moral resolve, but not to speak aloud that final word; and after every onset of the Will, without a moral handhold, we feel tormented by the equal possibility of falling back again to suffering, as of being led to lasting victory. Nay, this falling-back must almost seem to us more 'necessary' than the morally ungrounded triumph, which therefore—not being a necessary consummation, but a mere arbitrary gift of grace—has not the power to lift us up and yield to us that *ethical* satisfaction which we demand as outcome of the yearning of the heart.

Who felt more discontented with this victory than Beethoven himself? Was he lief to win a second of the sort? 'Twas well enough for the brainless herd of imitators, who from glorious 'major'-jubilation, after vanquished 'minor'-tribulation, prepared themselves unceasing triumphs,—but not for the Master, who was called to write upon his works the *world-history of Music*.

With reverent awe, he shunned to cast himself afresh into that sea of boundless and insatiate yearning. He turned his steps towards the blithesome, life-glad Men he spied encamped on breezy meads, along the outskirt of some fragrant wood beneath the sunny heaven; kissing, dancing, frolicking. There in shadow of the trees, amid the rustling of the leaves, beside the tender gossip of the brook, he made a happy pact with Nature; there he felt that he was Man, felt all his yearning thrust back deep [124] into his breast before the sovereignty of sweet and blissful *manifestment*. So thankful was he toward this manifestment that, faithfully and in frank humility, he superscribed the separate portions of the tone-work, which he built from this idyllic mood, with the names of those life-pictures whose contemplation had aroused it in him:—"Reminiscences of Country Life" he called the whole.

But in very deed they were only "Reminiscences"—pictures, and not the direct and physical actuality. Towards this actuality he was impelled with all the force of the artist's inexpugnable ("*nothwendig*") yearning. To give his tone-shapes that same compactness, that directly cognisable and physically sure stability, which he had witnessed with such blessed solace in Nature's own phenomena,—this was the soul of the joyous impulse which created for us that glorious work the "Symphony in A major." All tumult, all yearning and storming of the heart become here the blissful insolence of joy, which snatches us away with bacchanalian might and bears us through the roomy space of Nature, through all the streams and seas of Life, shouting in glad self-consciousness as we tread throughout the Universe the daring measures of this human sphere-dance. This symphony is the *Apotheosis of Dance* herself: it is Dance in her highest aspect, as it were the loftiest Deed of bodily motion incorporated in an ideal mould of tone. Melody and Harmony unite around the sturdy bones of Rhythm to firm and fleshy human shapes, which now with giant limbs' agility, and now with soft, elastic pliance, *almost before our very eyes*, close up the supple, teeming ranks; the while now gently, now with daring, now serious, (13) now wanton, now pensive, and again [125] exulting, the deathless strain sounds forth and forth; until, in the last whirl of delight, a kiss of triumph seals the last embrace.

And yet these happy dancers were merely shadowed forth in tones, mere sounds that imitated men! Like a second Prometheus who fashioned men of clay ("*Thon*") Beethoven had sought to fashion them of *tone*. Yet not from '*Thon*' or Tone, but from both substances together, must Man, the image of live-giving Zeus, be made. Were Prometheus' mouldings only offered to the *eye*, so were those of Beethoven only offered to the *ear*. But only *where*

*eye and ear confirm each other's sentience of him, is the whole artistic Man at hand.*

But where could Beethoven find *those* men, to whom to stretch out hands across the element of his music? Those men with hearts so broad that he could pour into them the mighty torrent of his harmonic tones? With frames so stoutly fair that his melodic rhythms should *bear* them and not *crush* them?—Alas, from nowhere came to him the brotherly Prometheus who could show to him these men! He needs must gird his loins about, and start *to find out for himself the country of the Manhood of the Future.*

From the shore of Dance he cast himself once more upon that endless sea, from which he had erstwhile found a refuge on this shore; the sea of unallayable heart-yearning. But 'twas in a stoutly-built and giant-bolted ship that he embarked upon the stormy voyage; with firm-clenched fist he grasped the mighty helm: he *knew* the journey's goal, and was determined to attain it. No imaginary triumphs would he prepare himself, nor after boldly overcome privations tack back once more to the lazy haven of his home; for he desired to measure out the ocean's bounds, and find the land which needs must lie beyond the waste of waters.

Thus did the Master urge his course through unheard-of [126] possibilities of absolute tone-speech—not by fleetly slipping past them, but by speaking out their utmost syllable from the deepest chambers of his heart—forward to where the mariner begins to sound the sea-depth with his plumb; where, above the broadly stretched-forth shingles of the new continent, he touches on the heightening crests of solid ground; where he has now to decide him whether he shall face about towards the bottomless ocean, or cast his anchor on the new-found shore. But it was no madcap love of sea-adventure, that had spurred the Master to so far a journey; with might and main he willed to land on this new world, for toward *it* alone had he set sail. Staunchly he threw his anchor out; and this anchor was *the Word*. Yet this Word was not that arbitrary and senseless cud which the modish singer chews from side to side, as the gristle of his vocal tone; but the necessary, all-powerful, and all-uniting word into which the full torrent of the heart's emotions may pour its stream; the steadfast haven for the restless wanderer; the light that lightens up the night of endless yearning: the word that the redeemed world-man cries out aloud from the fulness of the world-heart. This was the word which Beethoven set as crown upon the forehead of his tone-creation; and this word was:—"*Freude!*" ("Rejoice!") With this word he cries to men: "*Breast to breast; ye mortal millions! This one kiss to all the world! And this Word will be the language of the Art-work of the Future.*"—

The Last Symphony of Beethoven is the redemption of Music from out her own peculiar element into the realm of *universal Art*. It is the human Evangel of the art of the Future. Beyond it no forward step is possible; for upon it the perfect Art-work of the Future alone can follow, the *universal Drama* to which Beethoven has forged for us the key.

*Thus has Music of herself fulfilled what neither of the other severed arts had skill to do.* Each of these arts but eked out her own self-centred emptiness by *taking*, and egoistic borrowing; neither, therefore, had the skill to *be herself*, and of herself to weave the girdle wherewith to link the whole. But Tone, in that she *was herself* completely, and moved amid her own unsullied element, attained the force of the most heroic, most lovable self-sacrifice,—of mastering, nay of renouncing 'her own self; to reach out to her sisters the hand of rescue. She thus has kept herself as *heart* that binds both head and limbs in one; and it is not without significance, that it is precisely the art of Tone which has gained so wide extension through all the branches of our modern public life.

To get a clearer insight into the *contradictory* spirit of this public life, however, we must first bear in mind that it was *by no means a mutual coöperation between art-hood and publicity, nay, not even a mutual coöperation of tone-artists themselves*, that carried through the titanic process we have here reviewed: but *simply a richly-gifted individual*, who took up



into his solitary self the spirit of community that was absent from our public life; nay, from the fulness of his being, united with the fulness of musical resource, evolved within himself this spirit of community which his artist soul had been the first to yearn for. We see this wonderful creative process, which breathes the fashioning breath of Life through all the symphonies of Beethoven, not only completed by the Master in the most secluded loneliness, but not so much as *comprehended* by his artistic fellows; the rather, shamefully *misunderstood* by them. The forms in which the Master brought to light his world-historical wrestling after Art, remained but *forms* in the eyes of contemporaneous and succeeding music-makers, and passed through Mannerism across to Mode; and despite the fact that no other instrumental composer could, even within these forms, divulge the smallest shred of original inventiveness, yet none lost courage to write symphonies and suchlike pieces by the ream, without a moment happening on the thought that the *last* symphony had *already been written*. (14) Thus have we lived to see [128] Beethoven's great world-voyage of discovery—that unique and throughly unrepeatable feat whose consummation we have witnessed in his "*Freude*"-symphony, as the last and boldest venture of his genius—once more superfluously attempted in foolishness simplicity, and happily got over without one hardship. A new *genre*, a "Symphony with Choruses"—was all the dullards saw therein! Why should not X or Y be also able to write a "Symphony with Choruses"? Why should not "God the Lord" be praised from swelling throat in the Finale, after three preceding instrumental sections had paved the way as featly as might be? (15) Thus has Columbus only discovered America for the sugary hucksters of our times!

The ground of this repugnant phenomenon, however, lies deep within the very nature of our modern music. The art of Tone, set free from those of Dance and Poetry, is no longer an art instinctively necessary to man. It has been forced to construct itself by laws which, taken from its own peculiar nature, find no affinity and no elucidation in any purely human manifestment. Each of the other arts held fast by the measure of the outer human figure, of the outward human life, or of Nature itself,—howsoever capriciously it might disfigure this unconditional first principle. Tone,—which found alone in timid Hearing, susceptible to every [129] cheat and fancy, her outward, human measure,—must frame herself more abstract laws, perforce, and bind these laws into a compact scientific system. This system has been the basis of all modern music: founded on this system, tower was heaped on tower; and the higher soared the edifice, the more inalienable grew the fixed foundation,—this founding which was nowise that of Nature. To the sculptor, the painter, and the poet, their laws of Art explain the course of *Nature*; without an inner understanding of Nature they can make no thing of beauty. To the musician are explained the laws of Harmony, of Counterpoint; his learning, without which he can build no musical structure, is an abstract, scientific system. By attained dexterity in its application, he becomes a craftsman; and from this craftsmanlike standpoint he looks out upon the outer world, which must needs appear to *him* a different thing from what it does to the unadmitted worldling, the *layman*. The uninitiate layman thus stands abashed before this artificial product of art-music, and very rightly can grasp no whit of it but what appeals directly to the heart; from all the built-up prodigy, however, this only meets him in the unconditioned ear-delight of Melody. All else but leaves him cold, or baffles him with its disquiet; for the simple reason that he does not, and cannot, understand it. Our modern concert-public, which feigns a warmth and satisfaction in presence of the art-symphonya merely lies and plays the hypocrite; and the proof of this hypocrisy is evident enough so soon as, after such a symphony, a modern and melodious operatic 'number' is performed, as often happens even in our most renowned concert-institutes,—when we may hear the genuine musical pulse of the audience beat high at once in unfeigned joy.

A vital coherence between our art-music and our public taste, must be emphatically denied: where it would fain proclaim its existence, it is affected and untrue; or, with a certain section

of our Folk which may from time to time be unaffectedly moved by the drastic power of a Beethovenian symphony, it is—to say the least—unclear, and [130] the impression produced by these tone-works is at bottom but imperfect and fragmentary. But where this coherence is not to hand, the guild-like federation of our art-professors can only be an outward one; while the growth and fashioning of art from within outwards cannot depend upon a fellowship which is nothing but an artificial system,—but only in the separate unit, from the individuality of its specific nature, can a natural formative and evolutionary impulse take operation by its own instinctive inner laws. Only on the fulness of the special gifts of an individual artist-nature, can that art-creative impulse feed itself which nowhere finds its nourishment in outer Nature; for this individuality alone can find in its particularity, in its personal intuition, in its distinctive longing, craving, and willing, the stuff wherewith to give the art-mass form, the stuff for which it looks in vain in outer Nature. In the individuality of this one and separate human being does Music first become a purely human art; she devours up this individuality,—from the dissolution of its elements to gain her own condensation, her own individualisation.

Thus we see in Music as in the other arts, though from totally different causes, mannerisms and so-called 'schools' proceeding for the most part from the individuality of a particular artist. These 'schools' were the guilds that gathered—in imitation, nay in repetition—round some great master in whom the soul of Music had individualised itself. So long as Music had not fulfilled her world-historical task: so long might the widely spreading branches of these schools grow up into fresh stems, under this or that congenial fertiliser. But so soon as that task had been accomplished by the greatest of all musical individualities, so soon as Tone had used the force of that individuality to clothe her deepest secrets with the broadest form in which she still might stay an egoistic, self-sufficient art,—so soon, in one word, as *Beethoven* had written his Last Symphony,—then all the musical guilds might patch and cobble as they would, to bring an absolute music-man to market: only a patched and cobbled harlequin, no sinewy, robust [131] son of Nature, could issue now from out their workshops. After Haydn and Mozart, a Beethoven not only could, but *must* come; the genie of Music claimed him of Necessity, and without a moment's lingering—he was there. Who now will be to Beethoven what *he* was to Mozart and Haydn, in the realm of absolute music? The greatest genius would not here avail, since the genie of Music no longer needs him.

Ye give yourselves a bootless labour, when, as an opiate for your egoistic tingling for 'production', ye fain would deny the cataclysmic significance of Beethoven's Last Symphony; and even your obtuseness will not save you, by which ye make it possible not once to understand this work! Do what ye will; look right away from Beethoven, fumble after Mozart, gird you round with Sebastian Bach; write Symphonies with or without choruses, write Masses, Oratorios,—the sexless embryos of Opera!—make songs without words, and operas without texts—:ye still bring naught to light that has a breath of true life in it. For look ye,—ye lack *Belief!* the great belief in the necessity of what ye do! Ye have but the belief of simpletons, the false belief in the possible necessity of your own selfish caprice!—

In gazing across the busy wilderness of our musical art-world; in witnessing the hopeless sterility of this art-chaos, for all its everlasting ogling; in presence of this formless brew, whose lees are mouldering pedantic shamelessness, and from which, with all its solemn arrogance of musical 'old-master '-hood, at last but dissolute Italian opera-airs or wanton French *cancan-tunes* can rise as artificial distillate to the glare of modern public life;—in short, in pondering on this utter creative incapacity, we look, without an instant's blenching, towards the great catastrophe which shall make an end of the whole unwieldy musical monstrosity, to clear free space for the Art-work of the Future; in which true Music will truly have no minor rôle to play, but to which both breath and breathing space are utterly forbidden on such a musical soil as ours. (16)



[132]

## 5. The Poetic Art.

If wont or fashion permitted us to take up again the old and genuine style of speech, and write instead of "*Dichten*" "*Tichten*"; then should we gain in the group of names for the three primeval human arts, "*Tanz-, Ton- und Ticht-kunst*" (Dance, Tone, and Poetry), a beautiful word-picture of the nature of this trinity of sisters, namely a perfect *Stabreim*, (17) such as is native to the spirit of our language. [133] This *Stabreim*, moreover, would be especially appropriate by reason of the position which it gives to "*Tichtkunst*" (Poetry): as the last member of the 'rhyme,' this word would first decide that rhyme; since two alliterative words are only raised to a perfect *Stabreim* by the advent or begetting of the third; so that without this third member the earlier pair are merely accidental, being first shown as necessary factors by the presence of the third,—as man and wife are first shown in their true and necessary interdependence by the child which they beget. (18)

But just as the effective operation of this rhyme works backward from the close to the commencement, so does it also press onward with no less necessity in the reverse direction: the beginning members, truly, gain their first significance as rhyme by the advent of the closing member, [134] but the closing member is not so much as conceivable without the earlier pair. Thus the Poetic art can absolutely not create the genuine art-work—and this is only such an one as is brought to direct physical manifestation—without those arts to which the physical show belongs directly. Thought, that mere phantom of reality, is formless by itself; and only when it retraces the road on which it rose to birth, can it attain artistic perceptibility. In the Poetic art, the purpose of all Art comes first to consciousness: but the other arts contain within themselves the unconscious Necessity that forms this purpose. The art of Poetry is the creative process by which the Art-work steps into life: but out of Nothing, only the god of the Israelites can make some-thing,—the Poet must have that Something; and that something is the whole artistic man, who proclaims in the arts of Dance and Tone the physical longing become a longing of the soul, which through its force first generates the poetic purpose and finds in that its absolution, in its attainment its own appeasing.

Wheresoever *the Folk* made poetry,—and only by the Folk, or in the footsteps of the Folk, can poetry be really made,—there did the Poetic purpose rise to life alone upon the shoulders of the arts of Dance and Tone, as the head of the full-fledged human being. The Lyrics of Orpheus would never have been able to turn the savage beasts to silent, placid adoration, if the singer had but given them forsooth some dumb and printed verse to read: their ears must be enthralled by the sonorous notes that came straight from the heart, their carrion-spying eyes be tamed by the proud and graceful movements of the body,—in *such a way* that they should recognise instinctively in this whole man no longer a mere object for their maw, no mere objective for their feeding-, but for their hearing- and their seeing-powers,—before they could be attuned to duly listen to his moral sentences.

Neither was the true *Folk-epic* by any means a mere recited poem: the songs of Homer, such as we now possess them, have issued from the critical siftings and compilings [135] of a time in which the genuine Epos had long since ceased to live. When Solon made his laws and Pisistratus introduced his political regime, men searched among the ruins of the already fallen Epos of the Folk and pieced the gathered heap together for reading service,—much as in the Hohenstaufen times they did with the fragments of the lost *Nibelungen-lieder*. But before these epic songs became the object of such literary care, they had flourished mid the Folk, eked out by voice and gesture, as a bodily enacted Art-work; as it were, a fixed and crystallised blend of lyric song and dance, with predominant lingering on portrayal of the action and reproduction of the heroic dialogue. These epic-lyrical performances form the unmistakable middle stage between the genuine older Lyric and Tragedy, the normal point of



transition from the one to the other.

Tragedy was therefore the entry of the Art-work of the Folk upon the public arena of political life; and we may take its appearance as an excellent touchstone for the difference in procedure between the *Art-creating* of the Folk and the mere literary-historical *Making* of the so-called cultured art-world. At the very time when live-born Epos became the object of the critical dilettantism of the court of Pisistratus, it had already shed its blossoms in the People's life—yet not because the Folk had lost its true afflatus, but since it was already able to surpass the old, and from unshakable artistic sources to build the less perfect art-work up, until it became the more perfect. For while those pedants and professors in the Prince's castle were labouring at the construction of a *literary Homer*, pampering their own unproductivity with their marvel at their wisdom, by aid of which they yet could only understand the thing that long had passed from life,—*Thespis* had already slid his car to Athens, had set it up beside the palace walls, dressed out his *stage* and, stepping from the chorus of the Folk, had *trodden* its planks; *no longer did he shadow forth* the deeds of heroes, as in the Epos, but *in these heroes' guise enacted them*.

With the Folk, all is reality and deed; it *does*, and then [136] rejoices in the thought of its own doing. Thus the blithe Folk of Athens, enflamed by persecution, hunted out from court and city the melancholy sons of Pisistratus; and then bethought it how, by this its deed, it had become a free and independent people. Thus it raised the platform of its stage, and decked itself with tragic masks and raiment of some god or hero, in order itself to be a god or hero: and *Tragedy* was born; whose fruits it tasted with the blissful sense of its own creative force, but whose metaphysical basis it handed, all regardless, to the brain-racking speculation of the dramaturgists of our modern court-theatres.

Tragedy flourished for just so long as it was inspired by the spirit of the Folk, and as this spirit was a veritably popular, *i.e.* a *communal* one. When the national brotherhood of the Folk was shivered into fragments, when the common bond of its Religion and primeval Customs was pierced and severed by the sophist needles of the egoistic spirit of Athenian self-dissection,—then the Folk's art-work also ceased: then did the professors and the doctors of the literary guilds take heritage of the ruins of the fallen edifice, and delved among its beams and stones; to pry, to ponder, and to re-arrange its members. With Aristophanian laughter, the Folk relinquished to these learned insects the refuse of its meal, threw Art upon one side for two millennia, and fashioned of its innermost necessity the history of the world; the while those scholars cobbled up their tiresome history of Literature, by order of the supreme court of Alexander.

The career of Poetry, since the breaking-up of Tragedy, and since her own departure from community with mimetic Dance and Tone, can be easily enough surveyed,—despite the monstrous claims which she has raised. The lonely art of Poetry—prophesied no more (19); she no longer [137] showed, but only *described*; she merely played the go-between, but gave naught from herself; she pieced together what true seers had uttered, but without the living bond of unity; she suggested, without satisfying her own suggestions; she urged to life, without herself attaining life; she gave the catalogue of a picture-gallery, but not the paintings. The wintry stem of Speech, stripped of its summer wreath of sounding leaves, shrank to the withered, toneless signs of *Writing*: instead of to the Ear, it dumbly now addressed the *Eye*; the poet's strain became a *written dialect*;— the poet's breath the *penman's scrawl*.

There sate she then, the lonely, sullen sister, behind her reeking lamp in the gloom of her silent chamber,—a female *Faust*, who, across the dust and mildew of her books, from out the uncontenting warp and woof of Thought, from off the everlasting rack of fancies and of theories, yearned to step forth into actual life; with flesh and bone, and spick and span, to stand and go mid real men, a genuine human being. Alas! the poor sister had cast away her flesh and bone in over-pensive thoughtlessness; a disembodied soul, she could only now

*describe* that which she lacked, as she watched it from her gloomy chamber, through the shut lattice of her thought, living and stirring its limbs amid the dear but distant world of Sense; she could only picture, ever picture, the beloved of her youth: "so looked his face, so swayed his limbs, so glanced his eye, so rang the music of his voice." But all this picturing and describing, however deftly she attempted to raise it to a special art, how ingeniously soever she laboured to fashion it by forms of speech and writing, for Art's consoling recompense,—it still was but a vain, superfluous labour, the stilling of a need which only sprang from a failing that her own caprice had bred; it was nothing but the indigent wealth of alphabetical signs, distasteful in themselves, of some poor mute.

The sound and sturdy man, who stands before us clad in panoply of actual body, describes not what he wills and whom he loves; but *wills* and *loves*, and imparts to us by [138] his artistic organs the joy of his own willing and his loving. This he does with highest measure of directness in the enacted Drama. But it is only to the straining for a shadowy substitute, an artificially objective method of description,—on which the art of Poetry, now loosed from all substantiality, must exercise her utmost powers of detail,—that we have to thank this million-membered mass of ponderous tomes, by which she still, at bottom, can only trumpet forth her utter helplessness. This whole impassable waste of stored-up literature—despite its million phrases and centuries of verse and prose, without once coming to the living Word—is nothing but the toilsome stammering of aphasia-smitten Thought, in its struggle for transmutation into natural articulate utterance.

This Thought, the highest and most conditioned faculty of artistic man, had cut itself adrift from fair warm Life, whose yearning had begotten and sustained it, as from a hemming, fettering bond that clogged its own unbounded freedom:—so deemed the Christian yearning, and believed that it must break away from physical man, to spread in heaven's boundless æther to freest waywardness. But this very severance was to teach that thought and this desire how inseparable they were from human nature's being: how high soever they might soar into the air, they still could do this in the form of bodily man alone. In sooth, they could not take the carcase with them, bound as it was, by laws of gravitation; but they managed to abstract a vapoury emanation, which instinctively took on again the form and bearing of the human body. Thus hovered in the air the poet's Thought, like a human-outlined cloud that spread its shadow over actual, bodily earth-life, to which it evermore looked down; and into which it needs must long to shed itself; just as from earth alone it sucked its steaming vapours. The natural cloud dissolves itself, in giving back to earth the conditions of its being: as fruitful rain it sinks upon the meadows, thrusts deep into the thirsty soil, and steeps the panting seeds of plants, which open then their rich luxuriance to the sunlight,—to [139] that light which had erstwhile drawn the lowering cloud from out the fields. So should the Poet's thought once more impregnate Life; no longer spread its idle canopy of cloud twixt Life and Light.

What Poetry perceived from that high seat, was after all but Life: the higher did she raise herself; the more panoramic became her view; but the wider the connection in which she was now enabled to grasp the parts, the livelier arose in her the longing to fathom the depths of this great whole. Thus Poetry turned to *Science*, to *Philosophy*. To the struggle for a deeper knowledge of Nature and of Man, we stand indebted for that copious store of literature whose kernel is the poetic musing (*gedankenhaftes Dichten*) which speaks to us in Human- and in Natural- History, and in Philosophy. The livelier do these sciences evince the longing for a genuine portrayal of the known, so much the nearer do they approach once more the artist's poetry; and the highest skill in picturing to the senses the phenomena of the universe, must be ascribed to the noble works of this department of literature. But the deepest and most universal science can, at the last, know nothing else but Life itself; and the substance and the sense of Life are naught but Man and Nature. Science, therefore, can only gain her perfect confirmation in the work of Art; in *that work* which takes both Man and Nature—in so far as

the latter attains her consciousness in Man—and shows them forth directly. Thus the consummation of Knowledge is its redemption into Poetry; into that poetic art, however, which marches hand in hand with her sister arts towards the perfect Artwork;—and this artwork is none other than the *Drama*.

Drama is only conceivable as the fullest expression of a joint artistic longing to impart; while this longing, again, can only parley with a common receptivity. Where either of these factors lacks, the drama is no necessary, but merely an arbitrary art-product. Without these factors being at hand in actual Life, the poet, in his striving for immediate presentation of the life that he had apprehended, [140] sought to create the drama for himself alone; his creation therefore fell, perforce, a victim to all the faults of arbitrary dealing. Only in exact measure as his own proceeded from a common impulse, and could address itself to a common interest, do we find the necessary conditions of Drama fulfilled—since the time of its recall to life—and the desire to answer those conditions rewarded with success.

A common impulse toward dramatic art-work can only be at hand in those who actually enact the work of art in common; these, as we take it, are the *fellowships of players*. At the end of the Middle Ages, we see such fellowships arising directly from the Folk; while those who later overmastered them and laid down their laws from the standpoint of absolute poetic art, have earned themselves the fame of destroying root-and-branch *that* which the man who sprang directly from such a fellowship, and made his poems for and with it, had created for the wonder of all time. From out the inmost, truest nature of the Folk, *Shakespeare* created (*dichtete*) for his fellow-players that Drama which seems to us the more astounding as we see it rise by might of naked speech alone, without all help of kindred arts. *One* only help it had, the *Phantasy* of his audience, which turned with active sympathy to greet the *inspiration* of the poet's comrades. A genius the like of which was never heard, and a group of favouring chances ne'er repeated, in common made amends for what they lacked in common. Their joint creative force, however, was—*Need*; and where this shows its nature-bidden might, there man can compass even the impossible to satisfy it: from poverty grows plenty, from want an overflow; the boorish figure of the homely Folk's-comedian takes on the bearing of a hero, the raucous clang of daily speech becomes the sounding music of the soul, the rude scaffolding of carpet-hung boards becomes a world-stage with all its wealth of scene. But if we take away this art-work from its frame of fortunate conditions, if we set it down outside the realm of fertile force which bore it from the need of [141] this one definite epoch, then do we see with sorrow that the poverty was still but poverty, the want but want; that Shakespeare was indeed the mightiest. Poet of all time, but his Artwork was not yet the work for every age; that not his genius, but the incomplete and merely will-ing, not yet can-ning, spirit of his age's art had made him but the *Thespis of the Tragedy of the Future*. In the same relation as stood the car of Thespis, in the brief time-span of the flowering of Athenian art, to the stage of Æschylus and Sophocles: so stands the stage of Shakespeare, in the unmeasured spaces of the flowering time of universal human art, to the Theatre of the Future. The deed of the one and only Shakespeare, which made of him a universal Man, a very god, is yet but the kindred deed of the solitary Beethoven, who found the language of the Artist-manhood of the Future: only where these twain Prometheus'—Shakespeare and Beethoven—shall reach out hands to one another; where the marble creations of Phidias shall bestir themselves in flesh and blood; where the painted counterfeit of Nature shall quit its cribbing frame on the chamberwalls of the egoist, and stretch its ample breadths on the warm-life-blown framework of the Future Stage,—there first, in the communion of all his fellow-artists, will the *Poet* also find redemption.

It was on the long journey from Shakespeare's stage to the art-work of the future, that the poet was first to gain full consciousness of his unhappy loneliness. Out of the fellowship of actors, had the *Dramatic poet* evolved by natural law; but, in his foolish arrogance, he fain

would now exalt himself above his comrades, and *without* their love, without their impulse, dictate the drama from behind his pedant desk to *those* from whose free gift of personation it could gain alone a natural growth, and to whose joint will he had only power to point the informing aim. Thus the organs of dramatic art, reduced to slavish drudgery, grew dumb before the poet, who desired not merely now to *utter*, but to *dominate* the artistic impulse. As the virtuoso presses or releases at his will the pianoforte's [142] keys, so would the poet play upon the automaton troupe of actors; as on an instrument of wood and steel erected to display his own particular dexterity, and from which men should expect to hear no other thing but *him* the playing marvel. But the keys of the instrument made *their own* rejoinder to the ambitious egoist: the harder he hammered, in his gymnastic frenzy, the more they stuck and clattered.

Goethe once reckoned up but four weeks of pure happiness in all his well-filled life: his most unhappy years he made no special count of; but we know them:—they were those in which he sought to tune that jangling instrument for his use. This man of might was longing to take refuge from the soundless desert of art-literature in the living, sonorous art-work. Whose eye was surer, and wider-ranging in its knowledge of life than his? What he had seen, described, and pictured, he now would bring to ear upon that instrument. Great heavens! how deformed and past all recognition did his views of life confront him, when forced into this metric music! (20) How must he wrench his tuning-key, how tug and stretch the strings, until at last they snapped with one great whine!—He was forced to see that everything is possible in this world, excepting that abstract spirit should govern men: where this spirit is not [143] seeded in the whole sound man and blossomed out of him, it can never be poured into him from above. The egoistic poet can make mechanical puppets move according to his wish, but never turn machines to actual living men. From the stage where Goethe wished to make his *men*, he was chased at last by a performing *poodle*:—as an exemplary warning to all unnatural government from on high!

Where Goethe shipwrecked, it could but become "good tone" to look upon oneself as shipwrecked in advance: the poets still wrote plays, but not for the unpolished stage; simply for their cream-laid paper. Only the second- or third- rate poetasters, who here and there adapted their conceits to local exigence, still busied their brains with the players; but not the eminent poet, who wrote "out of his own head" and, of all the many hues of life, found only abstract, Prussian-territorial, black-on-white respectable. Thus happened the unheard-of: *Dramas written for dumb reading!*

Did Shakespeare, in his stress for unadulterated Life, take shelter in the uncouth scaffold of his People's-stage: so did the egoistic resignation of the modern dramatist content itself with the bookseller's counter; on which he laid him out for market half-dead and half-alive. Had the physically embodied drama cast itself upon the bosom of the Folk: so did the "published" incarnation of the play lie down beneath the feet of the art-critic's good pleasure. Accommodating herself to one servile yoke after the other, Dramatic Poetry swung herself aloft—in her own idle fancy—to unbound freedom. Those burdensome conditions under which alone a drama can step into life, she might now forsooth cast overboard without ado; for only that which wills to *live*, must hearken to necessity,—but that which wills to do much *more* than live, namely to lead a *dead* existence, can make of itself what it pleases: the most arbitrary is to it the most necessary; and the more her independence of the terms of physical show, the more freely could Poetry abandon herself to her own self-will and absolute self-admiration.

[144]

Thus by the taking up of Drama into literature, a mere new form was found in which the art of Poetry might indite herself afresh; only borrowing from Life the accidental stuff which she might twist and turn to suit her solitary need, her own self-glorification. All matter and each form were only there to help her introduce to the best graces of the reader one abstract



thought, the poet's idealised, beloved 'I.' How faithlessly she forgot, the while, that she had first to thank them all—even the most complex of her forms—to just this haughtily-despised material Life! From the Lyric through all the forms of poetry down to this literary Drama, there is not one which has not blossomed in *far purer and more noble* shape from the bodily directness of the People's life. What are all the products of the seeming spontaneous action of abstract poetic art, exhibited in language, verse, and expression, compared with the ever fresh-born beauty, variety, and perfection of the *Folk's-lyric*, whose teeming riches the *spirit of research* is toiling now at last to drag from under the rubbish-heap of ages?

But these Folk-ballads are not so much as thinkable without their twin-bred melodies: and what was not only said but also *sung*, was part and parcel of Life's immediate utterance. Who speaks and sings, at the same time expresses his feelings by *gestures* and by *motion*—at least whoever does this from sheer instinct, like the *Folk*,—though not the tutored foundling of our song-professors.—Where such an art still flourishes, it finds of itself a constant train of fresh turns of expression, fresh forms of composition ("*Dichtung*"); and the Athenians teach us unmistakably, how, in the progress of this self-unfolding, the highest artwork, Tragedy, could come to birth.—Opposed to this, the art of Poetry must ever stay unfruitful when she turns her back on Life; all her shaping then can never be aught else but that of Fashion, that of wilful combination,—not invention. Unfortunate in her every rub with Matter, she therefore turns for ever back to *thought*: that restless mill-wheel of the Wish, the ever craving, ever unstilled [145] Wish which—thrusting off its only possible assuagement, in the *world of sense*—must only wish *itself* eternally, eternally consume *itself*.

The Literary Drama can only redeem itself from this state of misery by becoming the actual *living* Drama. The path of that redemption has been repeatedly entered, and even in our latter days,—by many an one from honest yearning, but alas I by the majority for no other reason than that the Theatre had imperceptibly become a more remunerative market than the counter of the Publisher.

The judgment (21) of the *public*, in howsoever great a social disfigurement it may show itself; holds ever by the direct and physical reality; nay, the mutual give-and-take of the world of sense (*die Wechselwirkung des Sinnlichen*) makes up, at bottom, what we call "publicity." (21) Had the impotent conceit of Poetry withdrawn her from this immediate interaction: so, as regards the Drama, had the *players* seized it for their own advantage. Most rightly does the public aspect (21) of the stage belong *de facto* to the performing fellowship alone; but where everything was selfishly dissundering,—like the poet from this fellowship, to which in the natural order of affairs he immediately belonged,—there did the fellowship itself cut through the common band which alone had made it an *artistic* one. Would the poet unconditionally see *himself* alone upon the stage,—did he thus dispute in advance the artistic value of the fellowship,—so, with far more natural excuse, did the individual actor break his bonds in order to unconditionally stamp *himself* as the only current coin; and herein he was supported by the encouraging plaudits of the Public, which ever holds by instinct to the sheer and absolute show.

The art of Comedy became through this the art of *the Comedian*, a personal virtuosity: *i.e.* that egoistic form of [146] art which exists for its exclusive *self* and wills but the glory of the absolute personality. The common aim, through which alone the Drama becomes a work of Art, lay quite beyond the ken of the individual virtuoso; and that which should generate the art of comedy from out itself; as a common outcome of the spirit of communion,—to wit the dramatic Art-work,—that is entirely neglected by this virtuoso or this guild of virtuosi, who only seek the special thing that answers to their personal dexterity, the thing that alone can pay its tribute to their vanity. Yet hundreds of the *best-skilled* egoists, though all collected on

one spot of earth, cannot fulfil *that* task which can only be the work of communism (*Gemeinsamkeit*); at least until they cease to be mere egoists. But so long as they are this, their ground of common action—only attainable under *external* pressure—is that of mutual hate and envy; and our theatre, therefore, often resembles the battlefield of the two lions, on which we can discover nothing but their tails, the sole remainder of their mutual meal off one another.

Nevertheless, where this very *virtuosity of the performer* makes up the total of the public's notion of theatric art, as in the generality of the French theatres and even in the opera-world of Italy, we have at hand a more natural expression of the bent to artistic exhibition, than where the 'abstract' poet would fain usurp this bent for his own self-glorification. Experience has often proved that from out that world of virtuosi, given a true *heart* to beat in unison with the *artistic* talent, there may come forth a dramatic performer who by one solitary impersonation (24) shall disclose to us the inmost essence of dramatic art far more distinctly than a hundred art-dramas *per se*. Where, on the other hand, dramatic art-poetry would experiment with living actors, she can only manage in the end to quite confuse both virtuosi and public; or else, for all her self-inflation, [147] to betake herself to shamefullest subservience. She either brings but stillborn children into the world,—and that is the best result of her activity, for then she does no harm,—or else she inoculates her constitutional disease, of *willing* without can-ning, like a devastating plague into the still half-healthy members of the art of comedy. In any case she needs must follow the coercive laws of the most dependent lack of self-dependence: in order to attain some semblance of a form, she must look around for any form that may have sometime emanated from the life of genuine comedy. This then she almost always borrows, in our latest times, from the disciples of *Molière* alone.

With the lively, abstraction-hating people of France, the art of Comedy—in so far as it was not governed by the influence of the Court—lived for the most part its own indigenous life: amid the overpowering hostility to Art of our general social condition, whatever healthy thing has been able to evolve from Comedy, since the dying out of the Shakespearian drama, we owe to the French alone. But even among them—under pressure of the ruling world-*geist* that kills all common weal, whose soul is Luxury and Fashion—the true, complete, Dramatic Art-work could not so much as distantly appear: the only universal factor of our modern world, the spirit of *usury and speculation*, has with them also held each germ of true dramatic art in egoistic severance from its fellow. Art-forms to answer to this sordid spirit, however, the French dramatic school has found, without a doubt: with all the unseemliness of their contents, they evince uncommon skill in making these contents as palatable as may be; and these forms have this distinctive merit, that they have actually emanated from the inborn spirit of the *French* comedian's art, and thus from life itself.

Our German dramatists, in their longing for some seeming-necessary form wherewith to clothe the arbitrary contents of their poetic thought, and since they lacked the inborn plastic gift, set up this needful form in pure caprice; for they seized upon the Frenchman's 'scheme,' [148] without reflecting that this scheme had sprung from quite another, and a *genuine* Need. But he who does not act from sheer necessity, may choose where'er he pleases. Thus our dramatists were not quite satisfied with their adoption of French forms: the stew still lacked of this or that,—a pinch of Shakespearian audacity, a spice of Spanish pathos, and, for a sauce, a remanet of Schiller's ideality or Iffland's burgher bonhomie. All this is now dished up with unheard archness, according to the French recipe, and served with journalistic reminiscences of the latest scandal; the favourite actor—since the real poet had not learnt how to play his comedies—provided with the rôle of some fictitious poet, wherever possible;—with a further slice from here or there thrown in to suit the special circumstance—: and so we have the modernest dramatic art-work, the poet who in sooth *writes down himself, i.e., his palpable poetic incapacity*.

Enough! of the unexampled squalor of our *theatric* poetry I with which indeed we here have alone to do; since we need not draw the special subdivision of *literary poesy* within our closer ken. For, with our eyes directed toward the Artwork of the Future, we are seeking out Poetic art where she is struggling to become a living and immediate art, and this is in the *Drama*; not where she renounces every claim to this life-issue, and yet—for all her fill of thought—but takes the terms of her peculiar manufacture from the hopeless artistic unfitness of our modern public life. This Literature-poesy (*die litteraturpoesie*) supplies the only solace—however sad and impotent!—of the lonely human being of the Present who longs to taste poetic food. Yet the solace that she gives is truly but an access of the *longing after Life*, the longing for the living Artwork; for the urgency of this longing is her very soul,—where *this* does not speak out, does not proclaim itself with might and main, there has the last trace of verity departed from this poesy too. The more honestly and tumultuously, however, does it throb within her, so much the more veraciously does she admit her own unsolaceable plight, and confess the only [149] possible assuagement of her longing, to be *her own self-abrogation, her dissolution into Life, into the living Art-work of the Future*.

Let us ponder how this fervent, noble longing of Literary Poesy must one day be responded to; and meanwhile let us leave our modern Dramatic Poetry to the pompous triumphs of her own ridiculous vanity!

## 6. Whilom attempts at re-uniting the three humanistic Arts.

In our general survey of the demeanour of each of the three humanistic (*rein menschlich*) arts after its severance from their initial communion, we could not but plainly see that exactly where the one variety touched on the province of the next, where the faculty of the second stepped-in to replace the faculty of the first, there did the first one also find its natural bounds. Beyond these bounds, it might stretch over from the second art-variety to the third; and through this third, again, back to itself, back to its own especial individuality,—but only in accordance with the natural laws of *Love*, of *self-offering* for the common good impelled by Love. As Man by love sinks his whole nature in that of Woman, in order to pass over through her into a third being, the Child,—and yet finds but himself again in all the loving trinity, though in this self a widened, filled, and finished whole: so may each of these individual arts find its own self again in the perfect, thoroughly liberated Artwork—nay, look upon itself as broadened to this Art-work—so soon as, on the path of genuine love and by sinking of itself within the kindred arts, it returns upon itself and finds the guerdon of its love in the perfect work of Art to which it knows itself expanded. Only that art-variety, however, which wills the common art-work, reaches therewith the highest fill of its own particular nature; whereas that art which merely wills *itself*, its own exclusive fill of [150] self; stays empty and unfree—for all the luxury that it may heap upon its solitary semblance. But the *Will* to form the common artwork arises in each branch of art by instinct and unconsciously, so soon as e'er it touches on its own confines *and gives* itself to the answering art, not merely strives to take from it. It only stays *throughout itself*, when it *thoroughly gives itself away*: whereas it must fall to its very opposite, if it at last must only feed upon the other:—"whose bread I eat, his song I'll sing." But when it gives itself *entirely* to the second, and stays *entirely* enwrapt therein, it then may pass from that *entirely* into the third; and thus become once more *entirely itself* in highest fulness, in the associate Art-work.

(Of all these arts not one so sorely needed an espousal with another, as that of *Tone*; for her peculiar character is that of a fluid nature-element poured out betwixt the more defined and individualised substances of the two other arts.) Only through the Rhythm of Dance, or as bearer of the Word, could she brace her deliquescent being to definite and characteristic corporeality. But neither of the other arts could bring herself to plunge, in love without reserve, into the element of Tone: each drew from it so many bucketsful as seemed expedient for her own precise and egoistic aims; each took from Tone, but gave not in return; so that poor Tone, who of her life-need stretched out her hands in all directions, was forced at last herself to *take* for very means of maintenance. Thus she engulfed the Word at first, to make of it what suited best her pleasure: but while she disposed of this word as her wilful feeling listed, in Catholic music, she lost its bony framework—so to say—of which, in her desire to become a human being, she stood in need to bear the liquid volume of her' blood, and round which she might have crystallised a sinewy flesh. A new and energetic handling of the Word, in order to gain shape therefrom, was shown by *Protestant* church-music; which, in the "*Passion-music*," pressed on towards an ecclesiastical drama, wherein the word was no longer a mere shifting vehicle for the expression of feeling, but girt [151] itself to thoughts depicting Action. In this church-drama, Music, while still retaining her predominance and building everything else into her own pedestal, almost compelled Poetry to behave in earnest and like a man towards her. But coward Poetry appeared to dread this challenge; she deemed it as well to cast a few neglected morsels to - swell the meal of this mightily waxing monster, Music, and thus to pacify it; only, however, to regain the liberty of staying undisturbed within her own peculiar province, the egoistic sphere of Literature. It is to this selfish, cowardly bearing of Poetry toward Tone that we stand indebted for that unnatural abortion the *Oratorio*, which finally transplanted itself from the church into the concert-hall. The Oratorio would give itself



the airs of Drama; but only precisely in so far as it might still preserve to *Music* the unquestioned right of being the chief concern, the only leader of the drama's 'tone.'

Where Poetry fain would reign in solitude, as in the spoken Play, she took Music into her menial service, for her own convenience; as, for instance, for the entertainment of the audience between the acts, or even for the enhancement of the effect of certain dumb transactions, such as the irruption of a cautious burglar, and matters of that sort I Dance did the selfsame thing, when she leapt proudly on to saddle, and graciously condescended to allow Music to hold the stirrup. Exactly so did Tone behave to Poetry in the Oratorio: she merely let her pile the heap of stones, from which she might erect her building as she fancied.

But Music at last capped all this ever-swelling arrogance, by her shameless insolence in the *Opera*. Here she claimed tribute of the art of Poetry down to its utmost farthing: it was no longer to merely make her verses, no longer to merely suggest dramatic characters and sequences, as in the Oratorio, in order to give her a handle for her own distention,—but it was to lay down its whole being and all its powers at her feet, to offer up complete dramatic characters and complex situations, in short the entire ingredients [152] of Drama; in order that she might take this gift of homage and make of it whatever her fancy listed.

The *Opera*, as the seeming point of reunion of all the three related arts, has become the meeting-place of these sisters' most self-seeking efforts. Undoubtedly Tone claims for herself the supreme right of legislation therein; nay, it is solely to her struggle—though led by egoism—towards the genuine artwork of the Drama, that we owe the *Opera* at all. But in degree as Poetry and Dance were bid to be her simple slaves, there rose amid *their* egoistic ranks a growing spirit of rebellion against their domineering sister. The arts of Dance and Poetry had taken a personal lease of Drama *in their own way*: the spectacular Play and the pantomimic Ballet were the two territories between which *Opera* now deployed her troops, taking from each whatever she deemed indispensable for the self-glorification of Music. Play and Ballet, however, were well aware of her aggressive self-sufficiency: they only lent themselves to their sister against their will, and in any case with the mental reservation that on the first favourable opportunity they each would clear themselves an exclusive field. So Poetry leaves behind her feeling and her pathos, the only fitting wear for *Opera*, and throws her net of modern Intrigue around her sister Music; who, without being able to get a proper hold of it, must willy-nilly twist and turn the empty cobweb, which none but the nimble play- sempstress herself can plait into a tissue: and there she chirps and twitters, as in the French confectionary-operas, until at last her peevish breath gives out, and sister Prose steps in to fill the stage. Dance, on the other hand, has only to espy some breach in the breath-taking of the tyrannising songstress, some chilling of the lava-stream of musical emotion,—and in an instant she flings her legs astride the boards; trounces sister Music off the scene, down to the solitary confinement of the orchestra; and spins, and whirls, and runs around, until the public can no longer see the wood for wealth of leaves, *i.e.* the opera for the crowd of legs.

[153]

Thus *Opera* becomes the mutual compact of the egoism of the three related arts. To rescue her supremacy, Tone contracts with Dance for so many quarters-of-an-hour which shall belong to the latter *alone*: during this period the chalk upon the shoe-soles shall trace the regulations of the stage, and music shall be made according to the system of the *leg-*, and not the *tone-*, vibrations; item, that the singers shall be expressly forbidden to indulge in any sort of graceful bodily motion,—this is to be the exclusive property of the dancer, whereas the singer is to be pledged to complete abstention from any fancy for mimetic gestures, a restriction which will have the additional advantage of conserving his voice. With Poetry Tone settles, to the former's highest satisfaction, that she will not employ her in the slightest on the stage; nay, will as far as possible not even articulate her words and verses, and will

relegate her instead to the printed text-book, necessarily to be read *after* the performance, in Literature's decorous garb of black and white. Thus, then, is the noble bond concluded, each art again itself; and between the dancing legs and written book, Music once more floats gaily on through all the length and breadth of her desire.—*This is modern Freedom in the faithful counterfeit of Art!*

Yet after such a shameful compact the art of Tone, however brilliantly she seem to reign in Opera, must needs be deeply conscious of her humiliating *dependence*. Her life-breath is the heart's affection; and if this also be centred on itself and its own contentment, then not only is it as much in need of the wherewithal of this contentment as are the yearnings of the senses and the understanding, but it feels its need of that object far more piercingly and vividly than they. The keenness of this need gives to the heart its courage of self-sacrifice; and just as Beethoven has spoken out this courage in a valiant deed, so have tone-poets like *Gluck* and *Mozart* expressed by glorious deeds of love the joy with which the lover sinks himself within his object; ceasing to be himself, but becoming in reward an infinitely greater thing. Wherever the edifice [154] of Opera—though originally erected for the egoistic manifestoes of segregated arts—betrayed within itself the trace of a condition for the full absorption of Music into Poetry, these masters have accomplished the redemption of their art into the conjoint artwork. But the baleful influence of the ruling evil plight explains to us the utter isolation of such radiant deeds, together with the isolation of the very tone-poets who fulfilled them. That which was possible to the unit under certain fortunate, but almost purely accidental circumstances, is very far indeed from forming a law for the great mass of phenomena; and in the latter we can only recognise the distracted, egoistic oscillations of Caprice; whose methods indeed are those of all mere copying, since it cannot originate anything of itself. Gluck and Mozart, together with the scanty handful of kindred tone-poets, (25) serve us only as load-stars on the midnight sea of operatic music, to point the way to the pure artistic possibility of the ascension of the richest music into a still richer dramatic poetry, namely into *that* Poetic art which by this free surrender of Music to her shall first become an all-effectual Dramatic art. How impossible is the perfect artwork amid the ruling state of things, is proved by the very fact that, after Gluck and Mozart had disclosed the highest capabilities of Music, these deeds have yet remained without the smallest influence on our actual modern art's demeanour,—that the sparks which flew from their genius have only hovered before our art-world like sputtering fireworks, but have been absolutely unable to incend the fire which must have caught its flame from them, had the fuel for it been to hand.

But even the deeds of Gluck and Mozart were but one-sided deeds, *i.e.* they revealed the capability and the instinctive will of Music without their being understood by her sister arts, without the latter contributing towards those deeds from a like-felt genuine impulse to be absorbed [155] in one another, and in fact without any response from their side. Only, however, from a like and common impulse of all three sister arts, can their redemption into the true Art-work, and thus this artwork itself; become a possibility. When at last the pride of all three arts in their own self-sufficiency shall break to pieces, and pass over into love for one another; when at last each art can only love itself when mirrored in the others; when at last they cease to be dissevered arts,—then will they all have power to create the perfect artwork; aye, and their own desistence, in this sense, is already of itself this Art-work, their death immediately its life.

Thus will the Drama of the Future rise up of itself; when nor Comedy, nor Opera, nor Pantomime, can any longer live; when the conditions which allowed their origin and sustained their unnatural life, shall have been entirely upheaved. These conditions can only be upheaved by the advent of those fresh conditions which breed from out themselves the Art-work of the Future. The latter, however, cannot arise alone, but only in the fullest harmony with the conditions of our whole Life. Only when the ruling religion of Egoism, which has split the

entire domain of Art into crippled, self-seeking art-tendencies and art-varieties, shall have been mercilessly dislodged and torn up root and branch from every moment of the life of man, can the *new religion* step forth of itself to life; the religion which includes within itself the conditions of the Artwork of the Future.

Before we turn with straining eyes to the prefigurement of this Artwork—such as we have to win for ourselves from the utter disowning of our present art-surroundings—it is necessary, however, to cast a glance upon the nature of the so-called *plastic arts*.

[156]

### III. Man Shaping Art from Nature's Stuffs.

## 1. Architectural Art.

AS Man becomes the subject and the matter of his own artistic treatment, in the first and highest reference, so does he extend his longing for artistic portrayal to the objects of surrounding, allied, ministering *Nature*. Exactly in proportion as Man knows how to grasp the reference of Nature to *himself* in his portrayal of her, and to set himself in the centre of his survey of the world as the conscience-woken and the conscience-wakener, (27) is he able to picture Nature to himself *artistically*; and thereafter to *impart* her to the only beings for whom this portrait can be destined—to wit, to Men. In this he proceeds from a like, though not an equally imperative, impulse to that which urged the art-work whose subject and whose stuff he was himself. But only the man who has already brought forth from and in himself the directly human artwork, and can thus both comprehend and impart himself artistically, is also able to represent *Nature* to [157] himself artistically; not the unawakened thrall of Nature. The *Asiatic* peoples, and even the *Egyptians*—to whom Nature only showed herself as a self-willed, elementary, or brutish force, to which Man stood in the relation either of unconditioned suffering or of grovelling self-debasement—set Nature up *above* them as the object of their adoration, the graven symbol of their worship; without, for that very reason, being able to exalt themselves to free, artistic consciousness. Here, then, Man could never form the subject of his own artistic exposition; but seeing that, whether he willed or no, he could only conceive all personality—such as the personal nature-force—according to a human standard, he made over his own image, in sooth in horrible distortion, to those objects of Nature which he fain would portray.

It was reserved for the *Hellenes* to first evolve the humanistic (*rein menschliche*) art-work in their own person, and from that to expand it to the exposition of Nature. But they could not be ripe for this human art-work itself until they had conquered Nature, in the sense in which she presented herself to the Asiatic peoples, and had so far set Man on Nature's pinnacle that they conceived those personal nature-forces as clothed with the perfect shape of human beauty, as Gods that bore themselves as men. First when Zeus breathed life throughout the world from his Olympian height, when Aphrodite rose from out the sea-foam, and Apollo proclaimed the spirit and the form of his own being as the law of beauteous human life, did the uncouth nature-deities of Asia vanish with their idols, and fair artistic Man, awakening to self-consciousness, apply the laws of human beauty to his conception and his portraiture of Nature.

Before the *God's-oak* at Dodona the Pelasgian ("*Ur-hellene*") bowed himself in waiting for the oracle; beneath the shady thatch of leaves, and circled by the verdant pillars of the *God's-grove*, the *Orpheist* raised his voice; but under the fair-ceiled roof, and amid the symmetry of marble columns of the *God's-temple*, the art-glad *Lyrist* led the mazes of his dance, to strains of sounding hymns,—and [158] in the *Theatre*, which reared itself around the *God's-altar*—as its central point—on the one hand to the message-giving stage, on the other to the ample rows where sat the message-craving audience, the *Tragedian* brought to birth the living work of consummated Art.

Thus did *artistic* Man, of his longing for *artistic commune with himself* rule Nature to his own *artistic* needs and bid her serve his highest purpose. Thus did the *Lyrist* and *Tragedian* command the *Architect* to build the artistic edifice which should answer to their art in worthy manner.

The foremost, natural need urged men to build them homes and strongholds: but in that land and mid that folk from which our whole Art originates, it was not this purely physical need, but the need of men engaged in artistic presentation of themselves, that was destined to convert the Handicraft of building into a genuine Art. Not the royal dwellings of Theseus and Agamemnon, not the rude rock-built walls of Pelasgian citadels, have reached our physical or

even our mental field of vision,—but the *Temples* of the Gods, the *Tragic theatres* of the Folk. Every relic that has come to us of architectural art applied to objects outside *these*, dates after the decline of Tragedy, *i.e.* of the completed Grecian Art, and is essentially of Asiatic origin.

As the Asiatic, that perpetual thrall of Nature, could only show the majesty of man in the *one* and absolute ruling despot, so did he heap all pomp of circumstance around this "God on earth" alone: and all this heaping-up was merely reckoned for the satisfaction of that egoistic sensuous longing which, even to the pitch of brutish fury, but wills *itself* but loves *itself* to madness, and in such never-sated appetite piles object upon object, mass on mass, in order to attain a final satisfaction of its prodigiously developed physicality. *Luxury*, therefore, is the root of all the Asiatic architecture: its monstrous, soulless sense-confounding outcrop we witness in the city-seeming palaces of Asiatic despots.

Sweet repose and noble charm breathe on us, on the [159] other hand, from the radiant aspect of Hellenic temples; in which we recognise the form of Nature, but spiritualised by human Art. The broadening of the temple of the Gods to the assembled People's show-place of the highest human art, was *the Theatre*. Herein Art, and verily that common-nurtured art which communed with a commonwealth, was a law and standard to herself; proceeding by her own Necessity and answering that necessity to the fullest,—nay, bringing forth *therefrom* the boldest and most marvellous creations.

Meanwhile the dwellings of the individual units but answered to the need from which they sprang. Originally carpentered of wooden logs, and fitted—like the pavilion of Achilles—in accordance with the simplest laws of usefulness: in the heyday of Hellenic culture they were indeed adorned with walls of polished stone, and duly broadened out to give free space for hospitality; but they never stretched themselves beyond the natural needs of private persons, and neither in nor by them did the individual seek to satisfy a longing, which he found appeased in noblest fashion in the common polity; from which alone, at bottom, it can spring.

The attitude of Architecture was entirely reversed, when the common bonds of public life dissolved, and the self-indulgence of the unit laid down her laws. When the private person no longer sacrificed to gods in common, to *Zeus* and to *Apollo*, but solely to the lonely bliss-purveyor *Plutus*, the God of Riches,—when each would be for his particular self what he had erstwhile only been amid the general community,—then did he take the architect also into his pay, and bade him build a temple for his idol, Egoism. But the slender temple of chaste Athene sufficed not the rich egoist for his private pleasures: his household goddess was Voluptuousness, with her all-devouring, never sated maw. To her must Asiatic piles be reared, for her consumption; and only bizarre curves and flourishes could seek to stanch her whim. Thus we see the despotism of Asia stretching out its beauty-crushing arms into the very [160] heart of Europe—as though in vengeance for Alexander's conquest—and exercising its might to such effect beneath the imperial rule of Rome, that Beauty, having fled completely from the living conscience of mankind, could now be only conned from memory of the past.

The most prosperous centuries of the Roman era present us, therefore, with the repugnant spectacle of pomp swelled up to a monstrosity in the palaces of the Emperors and richer classes, and *Utilitarianism*—however colossal in its proportions—stalking naked through the public buildings.

*Public life*, having sunk to a mere general expression of the universal egoism, had no longer any care for the beautiful; it now knew naught but *practical utility*. The beautiful had withdrawn in favour of the absolutely useful; for the delight in *man* had contracted to the exclusive lust of the belly. To speak plainly, it is to the satisfaction of the belly that all this public utilitarianism (28) leads back, especially in our modern time with its boasted practical inventions, this time which—characteristically enough!—the more it invents, in this sense, the less is able to really fill the stomachs of the hungering classes. But where men had forgotten



that the truly beautiful is likewise the highest expression of the useful, in so much as it can only manifest itself in life when the needs of life are secured a natural satisfaction, and not made harder, or interdicted, by useless prescripts of utility,—where the public care was concentrated on the catering for food and drink, and the utmost stilling of this care proclaimed itself as the vital condition of the rule of Cæsars and of plutocrats alike; and that in such gigantic measure as during the Roman mastery of the world:—there arose those astounding causeways and aqueducts [161] which we seek to-day to rival by our railway-tracks; there did Nature become a *milch-cow*, and Architecture a *milking-pail*; the wanton splendour of the rich lived on the skilful skimming of the cream from off the gathered milk, which then was taken, blue and watery, along those aqueducts to the beloved rabble.

Yet with the Romans this utilitarian toil and moil, this ostentation, put on imposing forms: the radiant world of Greece lay not so far from them but that, for all their practical stolidity and all their Asiatic gaudiness, they still could cast an ogling glance towards her; so that our eyes discern, and rightly, outspread o'er all the buildings of the Roman world a majestic charm which almost seems to us a beauty. But whatever has accrued to *us* from that same world, across the steeples of the Middle Ages, lacks both the charm of beauty and of majesty; for where we still may trace a gloomy shade of undelighting *majesty*, as in the colossal domes of our cathedrals, we see alas! no longer any drop of *beauty*. The genuine temples of our modern religion, the buildings of the Bourse, are certainly most ingenuously propped by *Grecian columns*; Greek tympana invite us to our railroad journeys; and from under the Athenian Parthenon the military guard is marched towards us, on its 'relief,'—but however elevating these exceptions may be, they are still but mere exceptions, and the rule of our utilitarian architecture is desperately vile and trivial. Let the modern Art of Building bring forth the gracefullest and most imposing edifice she can, she still can never keep from sight her shameful want of independence: for our public, as our private, needs are of such a kind that, in order to supply them, Architecture can never produce, but forever merely copy, merely piece together. Only a real *need* makes man inventive: whilst the real need of our present era asserts itself in the language of the rankest utilitarianism; therefore it can only get its answer from mechanical contrivances, and not from Art's creations. That which lies beyond this actual need, however, is with us the need of *Luxury*, of the [162] un-needful; and it is only by the superfluous and un-needful that Architecture can serve it—*i.e.* she *reproduces* the buildings which earlier epochs had produced from their felt need of beauty; she pieces together the individual details of these works, according to her wanton fancy; out of a restless longing for alteration, she stitches every national style of building throughout the world into her motley, disconnected botches; in short—she follows the caprice of Fashion, whose frivolous laws she needs must make her own because she nowhere hears the call of inner, beautiful Necessity.

Architecture has thus to share in all the humbling destiny of the divided humanistic arts; insomuch as she can only be incited to a true formative process by the need of men who manifest, or long to manifest, their inborn beauty. In step with the withering of Grecian Tragedy, *her* fall began; that is, her own peculiar productive power commenced to weaken. The most lavish of the monuments which she was forced to rear to the glory of the colossal egoism of later times—aye, even of that of the Christian faith—seem, when set beside the lofty simplicity and pregnant meaning of Grecian buildings at the flowering-time of Tragedy, like the rank, luxuriant parasites of some midnight dream, against the radiant progeny of the cleansing, all-enlivening light of day.

Only together with the redemption of the egoistically severed humanistic arts into the collective Art-work of the Future, with the redemption of *utilitarian man* himself into the *artistic manhood* of the Future, will Architecture also be redeemed from the bond of serfdom, from the curse of barrenness, into the freest, inexhaustible fertility of art-resource.





## 2. The Art of Sculpture.

Asiatics and Egyptians, in their representation of the nature-forces that governed them, had passed from the [163] delineation of the forms of beasts to that of the *human* figure itself; under which, although in immoderate proportions and disfigured by repugnant symbolism, they now sought to picture to themselves those forces. They had no wish to copy *man*; but since man, at bottom, can only conceive the highest in his own generic form, they involuntarily transferred the human stature—distorted for this very reason—to the objects of their nature-worship.

In this sense, and from a similar impulse, we also see the oldest Hellenic races portraying their gods, *i.e.*, their deified embodiments of nature-forces, under the human shapes they hewed from wood or stone for objects of their worship. The religious need for objectification of invisible, adored or dreaded godlike powers, was answered by the oldest Sculptural art through the shaping of natural substances to imitate the *human form*; just as Architecture answered an immediate human need by the fitting and framing of natural 'stuffs' into what we may call a condensation of *Nature's* features to suit the special aim: as, for instance, we may recognise in the *God's-temple* the condensed presentment of the *God's-grove*. Now we have seen that if the man whose purpose informed the builder's art had no thought for aught but the immediate practical use, then this art could only stay a handiwork, or return thereto; while if, on the contrary, he were an *artist* and set himself in the forefront of this purpose, as the man who had already become the subject and the matter of his own artistic treatment, he also raised the building-handicraft to Art. In like manner, so long as Man felt bound in brutish slavery to Nature, he might indeed conceive the objects of his nature-worship under the guise of a human form, but could only shape their plastic images according to the standard by which he measured *himself* namely in the garb and with the attributes of that Nature on whom he felt so brutishly dependent. But in measure as he raised *himself* his own uncrippled body, and his inborn human faculties, to the stuff and purport of his artistic handling, he gained the power to also show his [164] *Gods* in the image of a free, uncrippled human form; until at last he frankly set before himself:, in highest glee, this beauteous human shape itself as nothing but the likeness of a man.

Here we touch the fatal ridge on which the living Human Artwork splintered, and left its fragments to linger through an artificial life of petrefaction in the monumental fixity of Plastic art. The discussion of this vital question we have been forced to reserve for our present exposition of the art of Sculpture.—

The first and earliest association of men was the work of Nature. The purely tribal fellowship, *i.e.*, the circle of all those who claimed descent from a common ancestor and the lineal seed of his loins, is the original bond of union of every race of people that we meet in history. This tribal stem preserves in its traditional Sagas, as in an ever lively memory, the instinctive knowledge of its common ancestry: while the impressions derived from the particular natural features of its surroundings exalt these legendary recollections to the rank of religious ideas. Now, in however manifold accretion these ideas and reminiscences may have heaped themselves together and crowded into novel forms, among the quickest-witted historical nations, owing to racial admixture on the one hand, and on the other to change of natural surroundings as the result of tribal migration,—however broadly, in their Sagas and religions, these peoples may have stretched the narrowing bands of nationality, so that the idea of their own particular origin was expanded to the theory of a universal descent and derivation of men in general from their Gods, as from the Gods in general,—yet in every epoch and every land where Myth and Religion have flourished in the lively faith of any racial stem, the peculiar bond of union of this particular stem has always lain in its specific myth and its particular religion. The Hellenic races solemnised the joint memorial celebration

of their common descent in their religious feasts, *i.e.*, in the glorification and adoration of the God or Hero in whose being they felt themselves included as one [165] common whole. Finally and with the greatest truth to life—as though from a felt need to fix with utmost definition their recollection of what was ever dropping farther back into the past—they materialised their national traditions in their Art, and most directly in that full-fledged work of art, the Tragedy. The lyric and the dramatic art-works were each a *religious act*: but there was already evinced in this act, when compared with the simple primitive religious rite, a taint of artificial effort; the effort, namely, to bring forward of set purpose that common memory which had already lost its immediate living impress on the life of every day. Thus Tragedy was the religious rite become a *work of Art*, by side of which the traditional observance of the genuine religious temple-rite was necessarily docked of so much of its inwardness and truth that it became indeed a mere conventional and soulless ceremony, whereas its kernel lived on in the Art-work.

In the highly important matter of the *externals* of the religious act, the tribal fellowship shows its communal character by certain ancestral usages, by certain forms and garments. The *garb* of Religion is, so to speak, the *costume* of the Race by which it mutually recognises itself, and that at the first glance. This garment, hallowed by the use of ages, this—in a manner—religio-social convention, had shifted from the religious to the artistic rite, the Tragedy; in it and by it the Tragic actor embodied the familiar, revered figure of the People's fellowship. It was by no means the mere vastness of the theatre and the distance of the audience, that prescribed the heightening of the human stature by the *cothurnus*, or, precisely, that admitted the employment of the immobile tragic mask;—but the cothurnus and the mask were necessary, religiously significant attributes which, accompanied by other symbolical tokens, first gave to the performer his weighty character of Priest. Now where a religion, commencing to fade from daily life and wholly withdrawing from its political aspect, is discernible by its outer garb alone, but this garment, as with the Athenians, can only now take on the folds of actual Life when it forms the investiture [166] of Art: there must this actual life at last confess itself the core of that religion, by frankly throwing off its last disguise. But the core of the Hellenic religion, the centre round which its whole system revolved, and which instinctively asserted its exclusive rule in actual life, was: *Man*. It was for Art to formulate aloud this plain confession: she did it, when she cast aside the last concealing garment of Religion, and showed its core in simple nakedness, the *actual* bodily man.

Yet this unveiling was alike the final annihilation of the collective Artwork: for its bond of union had been that very garment of Religion. While the contents of the common mythical religion, the traditional subject of Dramatic art, were employed to point the poet's moral, developed to fit his purpose, and finally disfigured by his selfwilled fancy, the religious belief had already disappeared completely from the life of the Folk-fellowship, now only linked by political interests. This belief however, the honour paid to national Gods, the sure assumption of the truth of primal race-traditions, had formed the bond of all community. Was this now rent and hooted as a heresy, at least the core of that religion had come to light as unconditioned, actual, naked *Man*; but this Man was no longer the associate man, united by the bond of racial fellowship: only the *absolute, egoistic, solitary unit*—man beautiful and naked, but loosed from the beautiful bond of brotherhood.

From here on, from the shattering of the Greek religion, from the wreck of the Grecian Nature-State, and its resolution into the Political State,—from the splintering of the common Tragic Artwork,—the manhood of world-history begins with measured tread its new gigantic march of evolution, from the fallen *natural kinsmanship of national community* to the *universal fellowship of all mankind*. The band which the full-fledged Man, coming to consciousness in the national Hellenian, disrupted as a cramping fetter—*with* this awakened

consciousness—must now expand into a universal girdle embracing *all* mankind. The period from [167] that point of time down to our own to-day is, therefore, the history of *absolute Egoism*; and the end of this period will be its redemption into *Communism*. (29)

The art which has taken this solitary, egoistic, naked Man, the point of departure of the said world-historical period, and set him up before us as a beauteous monument of admonition—is the *art of Sculpture*, which reached its height exactly at the time when the conjoint human art-work of Tragedy declined from its meridian.—

*The beauty of the human body* was the foundation of all Hellenic Art, nay even of the natural State. We know that with the noblest of Hellenic stems, the Doric Spartans, the healthiness and unmarred beauty of the newborn child made out the terms on which alone it was allowed to live, while puling deformity was denied the right of life. This beauteous naked man is the kernel of all Spartanhood: from genuine delight in the beauty of the most perfect human body, that of the male, arose that spirit of comradeship which pervades and shapes the whole economy of the Spartan State. This love of man to man, in its primitive purity, proclaims itself as the noblest and least selfish utterance of man's sense of beauty, for it teaches man to sink and merge his entire self in the object of his affection. And exactly in degree as woman, in perfected womanhood, through love to man and sinking of herself within his being, has developed the manly element of that womanhood and brought it to a thorough balance with the purely womanly, and thus in measure as she is no longer merely man's *beloved* but his *friend*—can man find fullest satisfaction in the love of woman. (30)

[168]

The higher element of that love of man to man consisted even in this: that it excluded the motive of egoistic physicalism. Nevertheless it not only included a purely spiritual bond of friendship, but this spiritual friendship was the blossom and the crown of the physical friendship. The latter sprang directly from delight in the beauty, aye, in the material, bodily beauty of the beloved comrade; yet this delight was no egoistic yearning, but a thorough stepping out of self into unreserved sympathy with the comrade's joy in himself involuntarily betrayed by his life-glad, beauty-prompted bearing. This love, which had its basis in the noblest pleasures of both eye and soul—not like our modern postal correspondence of sober friendship, half businesslike, half sentimental—was the Spartan's only tutress of youth, the never aging instructress alike of boy and man, the ordainer of the common feasts and valiant enterprises; nay, the inspiring helpmeet on the battlefield. For this it was that knit the fellowships of love into battalions of war and forewrote the tactics of death-daring, in rescue of the imperilled or vengeance for the slaughtered comrade, by the infrangible laws of the soul's most natural necessity.—

The Spartan who thus directly carried out in Life his purely human, communistic artwork, instinctively portrayed it also in his *Lyric*; that most direct expression of joy in self and life, which hardly reached in its impulsive (*nothwendig*) utterance to Art's self-consciousness. In the prime of the Doric State, the Spartan Lyric bent so irresistibly towards the original basis of all Art, the living *Dance*, that—characteristically enough!—it has scarcely handed down to us one single literary memento of itself; precisely because it was a pure, physical expression of lovely life, and warded off all separation of the art of Poetry from those of Dance and Tone. Even the transitional stage from the Lyric to the Drama, such as we may recognise in the Epic songs, remained a stranger to the Spartans; and it is sufficiently significant, that the Homeric songs were collected [169] in the Ionic, not the Doric dialect. Whereas the Ionic peoples, and notably in the event, the Athenians, developed themselves into political States under influence of the liveliest mutual intercourse, and preserved in Tragedy the artistic representation of the religion which was melting out of Life: the Spartans, as a shut-off inland people, kept faithful to their old-hellenic character, and held their unmixed Nature-state, as a living monument of art, against the changeful fashionings of the newer life of politics.

Whatever in the hurry and confusion of the destructive restlessness of these new times sought rescue or support, now turned its gaze toward Sparta. The Statesman sought to scrutinise the forms of this primeval State, to convey them artificially to the political State of his day; while the *Artist*, who saw the common artwork of the Tragedy sloughing and crumbling before his very eyes, looked forth to where he might descry the kernel of this artwork, the beauteous old-hellenic (31) man, and preserve it for his art. As Sparta towered up, a living monument of older times: so did the art of Sculpture crystallise in stone the old-hellenic human being which she had recognised within this living monument, and garner up the lifeless monument of bygone beauty for coming times of quickening barbarism.

But when Athens turned its eyes to Sparta, the worm of general egoism was already gnawing its destructive path into this fair State too. The Peloponnesian War had dragged it, all unwilling, into the whirlpool of the newer times; and Sparta had only been able to vanquish Athens by the very weapons which the Athenians had erewhile made so terrible and unassailable to *it*. Instead of their simple iron-bars—those tokens of contempt for money, as compared with human worth—the minted gold of Asia was heaped within the Spartan's coffers; leaving behind the [170] ancient, frugal "public mess," he retired to his sumptuous banquet between his own four walls; and the noble love of man to man—whose motive had been an even higher one than that of love to woman—degenerated, as it had already done in the other Hellenic states, into its unnatural counterpart.

This is the Man, lovely in his person but unlovely in his selfish isolation, that the Sculptor's art has handed down to us in marble and in bronze,—motionless and cold, like a petrified remembrance, like the *mummy of the Grecian world*.

This art, the hireling of the rich for the adornment of their palaces, the easier won a troop of practisers as its creative process lent itself to speedy degradation to a mere mechanical labour. Certainly, the subject of the Sculptor's art is Man, that protean host of countless hues of character and myriad passions: but this art depicts alone his outer physical stature, in which there only lies the husk and not the kernel of the human being. True, that the inner man shows out most palpably through all his outward semblance; but this he only does *completely* in, and by means of; *motion*. The Sculptor can only seize and reproduce *one single* moment from all this manifold play of movements, and must leave the real motion itself to be unriddled from the physical relief of the work of art, by a process of mathematical computation. When once the most direct and surest mode of reaching from this poverty of means to a speaking likeness of actual life had been found,—when once the perfect measure of outward human show had been thought into the bronze and marble, and the power to persuade us of the truth of its reflection had been wrested from them,—this method, once *discovered*, could easily be *learned*; and Sculpture could live on from imitation to copy *ad infinitum*, bringing forth her store of products, graceful, beautiful, and true, without receiving any sustenance from real creative force. Thus we find that in the era of the Roman world-empire, when all artistic instinct had long since died away, the art of [171] Sculpture brought a multitude of works to mart in which there seemed to dwell an artist soul, despite their really owing all their being to a mere mechanical gift of imitation. She could become a lovely handicraft when she had ceased to be an art—and the latter she was for only just so long as she had aught to discover, aught to invent. But the repetition of a discovery is nothing more nor less than imitation.

Through the chinks of the iron-mailed, or monk-cowled, Middle Ages there shone at last the glimmer of the marble flesh of Grecian bodily beauty, and greeted hungry humankind with its first new taste of life. It was in this lovely *stone*, and not in the actual Life of the ancient world, that the modern was to learn fair Man again. Our modern art of Sculpture sprang from no lively impulse to portray the actual extant man, whom it could scarcely see beneath his modish covering, but from a longing to copy the counterfeit presentment of a physically extinct race of men. It is the expression of an honourable wish to reach back from



an unlovely present to the past, and therefrom to reconstruct lost beauty. As the gradual vanishing of human beauty from actual existence was the first cause of the artistic development of Sculpture, which, as though in a last effort to fix the fading image of a common good, would fain preserve it in a monumental token,—so the *modern* impulse to reproduce those monuments could only find its motive in the total absence of this beauteous man from modern life. Wherefore, since this impulse could never spring *from* life and find *in* life its satisfaction, but for ever swayed from monument to monument, from image to image, stone to stone: our Modern Sculpture, a mere plagiarism of the genuine art, was forced to take the character of a craftsman's trade, in which the wealth of rules and canons by which her hand was guided but bared her poverty as *art*, her utter inability to *invent*. But while she busily set forth her self and products, in place of vanished beauteous Man,—while, in a sense, her art was only fostered by this lack,—she fell at last into her present [172] selfish isolation, in which she, so to say, but plays the barometer to the ugliness that still prevails in life; and, indeed, with a certain complacent feeling of her—*relative*—necessity amid such atmospheric conditions.

Modern Sculpture can only answer to any vestige of a need, for precisely so long as the loveliness of man is not at hand in actual life: the resurrection of this beauty, its immediate influence on the fashioning of life, must inevitably throw down our present "plastics." For the need to which alone this art can answer—*nay*, the need which she herself concocts—is that which yearns to flee the unloveliness of life; not that which, springing from an actual lovely life, strives toward the exhibition of this life in living artwork. The true, creative, artistic craving proceeds from fulness, not from void: while the fulness of the modern art of Sculpture is merely the wealth of the monuments bequeathed to us by Grecian plastic artists. Now, from this fulness she cannot *create*, but is merely driven back to it from lack of beauty in surrounding life; she plunges herself within this fulness, in order to escape from lack.

Thus bare of all inventive power, she coquets at last with the forms to hand in present life, in her despairing attempt to invent—cost what it may. She casts around her the garment of Fashion, and so as to be recognised and rewarded by this life, she models the unbeautiful; in order to be true—that is to say, true according to *our* notions—she gives up all her hopes of *beauty*. So, during the continuance of those same conditions which maintain her in her artificial life, Sculpture falls into that wretched, sterile, or ugliness - begetting state in which she must inevitably yearn for nothing but redemption. The life-conditions, however, into which she desires to be released are, rightly measured, the conditions of that very life in presence of which the art of Sculpture must straightway cease to be an independent art. To gain the power of creating, she yearns for the reign of loveliness in actual life; from which she merely hopes to win the living matter [173] for her invention. But the fulfilment of this desire could only lay bare the egoism of its indwelling self-delusion; inasmuch as the conditions for the *necessary* operation of the art of Sculpture must, in any case, be utterly annulled when *actual life shall itself be fair of body*.

In present life the independent art of Sculpture but answers to a relative need: although to this she stands indebted for her existence of to-day, *nay*, for her very prime. But that other state of things, the antithesis of the modern state, is that in which an imperative *need* for the works of sculptural art cannot be so much as reasonably imagined. If man's whole life pay homage to the principle of beauty, if he make his living body fair to see, rejoicing in the beauty that he himself displays: then is the subject and the matter of the artistic exhibition of this beauty, and of the delight therein, without a doubt the whole warm, living man himself. His art-work is the *Drama*; and the redemption of Sculpture is just this: *the disenchantment of the stone into the flesh and blood of man; out of immobility into motion, out of the monumental into the temporal*. Only when the artistic impulse of the Sculptor shall have passed into the soul of the *Dancer*—the *mimetic expositor* who sings alike and speaks—can

this impulse be conceived as truly satisfied. Only when the statuary's art no longer exists, or rather, has passed along another direction than that of the human body, namely as "sculpture" into "*architecture*"; (32) when the frozen loneliness of this *solitary* stone-hewn man shall have been resolved into the endless-streaming multitude of actual living men; when we recall the memory of the beloved dead in ever newborn, soul-filled [174] flesh and blood, and no more in lifeless brass or marble; when we take the stones to build the living Art-work's shrine, and require them no longer for our imaging of living Man,—then first will the *true Plastique* be at our hand.

### 3. The Painter's Art.

Just as, when we are denied the pleasure of hearing the symphonic playing of an orchestra, we seek to recall our enjoyment by a pianoforte rendering; just as, when we are no longer permitted to gaze upon the colours of an oil-painting in a picture-gallery, we strive by aid of an engraving to refresh the impression which they have left, (33) so had *Painting*, if not in her origination, yet in her *artistic* evolution, to answer to the yearning need of calling back to memory the lost features of the living Human Artwork.

We must pass by her raw beginnings, when, like Sculpture, she sprang from the as yet unartistic impulse toward the symbolising of religious ideas; for she first attained artistic significance at the epoch when the living artwork of Tragedy was paling, and the brilliant tints of Painting sought to fix the vision of those wondrous, pregnant scenes which no longer offered their immediate warmth of life to the beholder.

Thus the Grecian artwork solemnised its after-math in Painting. This harvest was not that which sprang by natural necessity from the wealth of Life; its necessity was the rather that of *Culture*; it issued from a conscious, arbitrary motive, to wit the *knowledge* of the loveliness of Art, united with the *wilful purpose* to force, as it were, this loveliness to linger in a life to which it no longer belonged [175] instinctively as the unconscious, necessary expression of that life's inmost soul. That Art which, unbidden and of her own accord, had blossomed from the communion of the People's life, had likewise by her active presence, and through the regardal of her demeanour, called up the *mental concept* (*Begriff*) of her essence; for it was not the *idea* of Art that had summoned her to life, but herself; the actual breathing Art, had evolved the "Idea" from out herself.

The artistic power of the Folk, thrusting forward with all the necessity of a nature-force, was dead and buried; what it had done, lived only now in memory, or in the artificial reproduction. Whereas the Folk, in all its actions and especially in its self-wrought destruction of national, pent-up insularity, has through all time proceeded by the law of inner necessity, and thus in thorough harmony with the majestic evolution of the human race: the lonely spirit of the Artist—to whose yearning for the beautiful the unbeauteous manifestments of the People's life-stress must ever stay a dark enigma—could only console itself by looking backward to the artwork of a bygone era, and, recognising the impossibility of arbitrarily relivening that artwork, could only make this solace as lasting as might be, by freshening up with lifelike details the harvest of its recollections,—just as through a portrait we preserve to our memory the features of a loved lost friend. Hereby Art herself became an object of art; the "idea" derived from her became her law; and *cultured art*—the art that can be learnt, and always points back to itself—began its life-career. The latter, as we may see to-day, can be pursued without a halt in the least artistic times and amid the most sordid circumstances,—yet only for the selfish pleasure of isolated, life-divorced, and art-repining Culture.—

The senseless attempt to reconstruct the Tragic Artwork by purely imitative reproduction—such as was engaged in, for instance, by the poets of the Alexandrian court—was most advantageously avoided by Painting; for she gave up the lost as lost, and answered the impulse to restore it by [176] the cultivation of a special, and peculiar, artistic faculty of man. Though this faculty required a greater variety of media for its operation, yet Painting soon won a marked advantage over Sculpture. The sculptor's work displayed the material likeness of the *whole* man in lifelike form, and, thus far, stood nearer to the living artwork of self-portraying man than did the painter's work, which was only able to render, so to speak, his tinted shadow. As in both counterfeits, however, the breath of Life was unattainable, and motion could only be indicated to the thought of the spectator, to whose phantasy its conceivable extension must be left to be worked out by certain natural laws of inductive reasoning,—so Painting, in that she looked still farther aside from the reality, and

depended still more on artistic illusion than did Sculpture, was able to take a more ideal poetic flight than she. Finally, Painting was not obliged to content herself with the representation of *this one* man, or of *that particular* group or combination to which the art of Statuary was restricted; rather, the artistic illusion became so preponderant a necessity to her, that she had not only to draw into the sphere of her portrayal a wealth of correlated human groups extended both in length and breadth, but also the circle of their extrahuman surroundings, the *scenes of Nature* herself. Hereon is based an entirely novel step in the evolution of man's artistic faculties, both perceptive and executive: namely, that of the inner comprehension and reproduction of *Nature*, by means of *Landscape-painting*.

This moment is of the highest importance for the whole range of plastic art: it brings this art—which began, in Architecture, with the observation and artistic exploitation of Nature for the benefit of Man,—which in Sculpture, as though for the deification of Man, exalted *him* as its only subject—to its complete conclusion, by turning it at last, with ever growing understanding, entirely back from Man to *Nature*; and this inasmuch as it enabled plastic art to take her by the hand of intimate friendship, and thus, as it were, to broaden Architecture out to a full and lifelike portraiture [177] of Nature. Human Egoism, which in naked Architecture was forever referring Nature to its own exclusive self; to some extent broke up in Landscape-painting, which vindicated Nature's individual rights and prompted artistic Man to loving absorption into her, in order there to find himself again, immeasurably amplified.

When Grecian painters sought to fix the memory of the scenes which had erstwhile been presented to their actual sight and hearing in the Lyric, in the lyrical Epos, and in the Tragedy, and to picture them again in outline and in colour—without a doubt they considered men alone as worthy objects of their exhibition; and it is to the so-called *historical* tendency that we owe the raising of Painting to her first artistic height. As she thus preserved the *united* artwork green in memory, so when the conditions that summoned forth the passionate preservation of these memories vanished quite away, there yet remained two byways open, along which the art of Painting could carry on her further independent self-development: the Portrait and—the Landscape. True, that Landscape had already been appropriated for the necessary background of the scenes from Homer and the Tragic poets: but at the time of their painting's prime the Greeks looked on landscape with no other eye than that with which the peculiar bent of the Grecian character had caused them to regard the whole of Nature. With the Greeks, *Nature* was merely the distant background of the human being: well in the foreground stood *Man* himself; and the Gods to whom he assigned the force controlling Nature were anthropomorphic gods. He sought to endue everything he saw in Nature with human shape and human being; as humanised, she had for him that endless charm in whose enjoyment it was impossible for his sense of beauty to look on her from such a standpoint as that of our modern Judaistic utilism, and make of her a mere inanimate object of his sensuous pleasure. However, he but cherished this beautiful relationship between himself and Nature from an involuntary error: in his anthropomorphosis of Nature he credited her with [178] human motives which, necessarily contrasted with the true character of Nature, could be only arbitrarily assumed as operating within her.

As Man, in all his life and all his relations to Nature, acts from a necessity peculiar to his own being, he unwittingly distorts her character when he conceives Nature as behaving not according to her own necessity but to that of Man. Although this error took a beautiful form among the Greeks, while among other races, especially those of Asia, its utterances were for the most part hideous, it was none the less destructive in its influence on Hellenic life. When the Hellenian broke adrift from his ancestral bond of national communion, when he lost the standard of life's beauty that he had drawn from it instinctively, he was unable to replace this needful standard by one derived from a correct survey of surrounding Nature. He had unconsciously perceived in Nature a coherent, encompassing Necessity for just so long as this



same Necessity came before his consciousness as a ground condition of his communal life. But when the latter crumbled into its egoistic atoms, when the Greek was ruled by naught but the caprice of his own selfwill, no longer harmonised by brotherhood, or eventually submitted to an arbitrary outer force that gained its leverage from this general selfwill,—then with his faulty knowledge of Nature, whom he deemed as capricious as himself and the worldly might that governed him, he lacked the certain standard by which he could have learnt to measure out himself again; that standard which Nature offers as their highest boon to *those* men who recognise her innermost necessity and learn to know the eternal harmony of her creative forces, working in widest compass through every separate unit.

It is from this error alone, that arose those vast excesses of the Grecian mind which we see attaining under the Byzantine empire a pitch that quite obscures the old Hellenic character, yet which were but, at bottom, the normal blemishes of its good qualities. Philosophy might put forth its honestest endeavour to grasp the harmony of [179] Nature: it only showed how impotent is the might of abstract Intellect. In defiance of all the saws of Aristotle, the Folk, in its desire to win itself an absolute bliss from the midst of this million-headed Egoism, formed itself a religion in which Nature was made the pitiful plaything of the quibbling search for human blessedness. It only needed the Grecian view of Nature's government by selfwilled, human-borrowed motives to be wedded to the Judao-oriental theory of her subservience to human Use,—for the disputations and decrees of Councils anent the essence of the Trinity, and the interminable strifes, nay national wars therefrom arising, to face astounded history with the irrefutable fruits of this intermarriage.

Towards the close of the Middle Ages, the Roman Church raised its assumption of the immobility of the earth to the rank of an article of belief: but it could not prevent America from being discovered, the conformation of the globe mapped out, and Nature's self at last laid so far bare to knowledge that the inner harmony of all her manifold phenomena has now been proved to demonstration. The impulse that led toward these discoveries sought, at like time, to find an utterance in that branch of art which was of all best fitted for its artistic satisfaction. With the Renaissance of Art, *Painting* also, in eager struggle for ennoblement, linked on her own new birth to the revival of the antique; beneath the shelter of the prosperous Church she waxed to the portrayal of its chronicles, and passed from these to scenes of veritable history and actual life, still profiting by the advantage that she yet could take her form and colour from this actual life. But the more the physical Present was crushed by the marring influence of Fashion, and the more the newer school of Historical painting, in order to be beautiful, saw itself compelled by the unloveliness of Life to construct from its own fancy and to combine from styles and manners twice borrowed from arthistory—not from life,—the farther did Painting, departing from the portraiture of modish man, strike out that path to which we owe the loving understanding of Nature in the *Landscape*.

[180]

Man, around whom the landscape had erstwhile grouped itself as round its egoistic centre, shrank ever smaller mid the fulness of his surroundings, in direct proportion as he bowed beneath the unworthy yoke of disfiguring Fashion in his daily life; so that at last he played the role in Landscape which before had been assigned to landscape as a foil to him. *Under the given circumstances*, we can only celebrate this advance of landscape as a victory of *Nature* over base and man-degrading *Culture*. For therein undisfigured Nature asserted herself; in the only possible mode, against her foe; inasmuch as, seeking for a sanctuary the while, she laid bare herself; as though from very Want, to the inner understanding of artistic Man.

Modern *Natural Science* and *Landscape-Painting* are the only outcomes of the Present which, either from an artistic or a scientific point of view, offer us the smallest consolation in our impotence, or refuge from our madness. Amid the hopeless splintering of all our art-endeavours, the solitary genius who for a moment binds them into almost violent union,

may accomplish feats the more astounding as neither the need nor the conditions for his art-work are now to hand: the general concensus of the Painter's art, however, takes almost solely the direction of the Landscape. For here it finds exhaustless subjects, and thereby an inexhaustible capacity; whereas in every other attempt to shadow Nature forth, it can only proceed by arbitrary sifting, sorting, and selecting, to garner from our absolutely inartistic life an object worthy of artistic treatment.

The more the so-called Historical school of painting is busied with its efforts to build up and explain to us the genuine beauteous Man and genuine beauteous Life, by reminiscences from the farthest past; the more, with all its prodigious outlay of expedients, it confesses the heaviness of the burden imposed upon it, to seek to be *more* and *other* than behoves the nature of one single branch of art,—so much the more must it long for a redemption which, like that destined for Sculpture, can only consist in its ascension into *that* from which it drew the original force [181] that gave to it artistic life; and this is even the living human Art-work, whose very birth from Life must heave away the conditions that made possible the being and the prospering of Painting as an independent branch of art. The *man-portraying* art of Painting will never find it possible to lead a healthy, necessary life—when, without a pencil or a canvas, in liveliest artistic setting, the beauteous Man portrays *himself* in full perfection. What she now toils to reach by *honest* effort, she then will reach in perfect measure, when she bequeaths her colour and her skill of composition to the living "plastic" of the real dramatic representant; when she steps down from her canvas and her plaster, and stands upon the *Tragic stage*; when she bids the artist carry out in his own person what she toiled in vain to consummate by heaping up of richest means without the breath of actual Life.

But *Landscape-painting*, as last and perfected conclusion of all the plastic arts, will become the very soul of Architecture; she will teach us so to rear the *stage* for the dramatic Artwork of the Future that on it, herself imbued with life, she may picture forth the warm *background of Nature* for *living*, no longer counterfeited, *Man*.—

If we may thus regard the *scene* of the united Artwork of the Future as won by the highest power of Plastic-Art, and therewith as attained the inmost *knowledge of familiar Nature*: we may now proceed to take a closer view of the nature of this Artwork itself.



[182]

#### IV. Outlines of the Artwork of the Future.

IF we consider the relation of modern art—so far as it is truly *Art*—to public life, we shall recognise at once its complete inability to affect this public life in the sense of its own noblest endeavour. The reason hereof is, that our modern art is a mere product of Culture and has not sprung from Life itself; therefore, being nothing but a hot-house plant, it cannot strike root in the natural soil, or flourish in the natural climate of the present. Art has become the private property of an artist-caste; its taste it offers to those alone who *understand* it; and for its understanding it demands a special study, aloof from actual life, the study of *art-learning*. This study, and the understanding to be attained thereby, each individual who has acquired the gold wherewith to pay the proffered delicacies of art conceives to-day that he has made his own: if, however, we were to ask the Artist whether the great majority of art's amateurs are able to understand him in his best endeavours, he could only answer with a deep-drawn sigh. But if he ponder on the infinitely greater mass of those who are perforce shut out on every side by the evils of our present social system from both the understanding and the tasting of the sweets of modern art, then must the artist of to-day grow conscious that his whole art-doings are, at bottom, but an egoistic, self-concerning business; that his art, in the light of public life, is nothing else than luxury and superfluity, a self-amusing pastime. The daily emphasised, and bitterly deplored abyss between so-called [183] culture and un-culture is so enormous; a bridge between the two so inconceivable; a reconciliation so impossible; that, had it any candour, our modern art, which grounds itself on this unnatural culture, would be forced to admit, to its deepest shame, that it owes its existence to a life-element which in turn can only base *its own* existence on the utter dearth of culture among the real masses of mankind.

The only thing which, in the position thus assigned to her, our Modern Art should be able to effect—and among honest folk, indeed, endeavours—namely, the *spreading abroad of culture*, she cannot do; and simply for the reason that, for Art to operate on Life, she must be herself the blossom of a *natural* culture, *i.e.*, such an one as has grown up from below, for she can never hope to rain down culture from *above*. Therefore, taken at its best, our "cultured" art resembles an orator who should seek to address himself in a foreign tongue to a people which does not understand it: his highest flights of rhetoric can only lead to the most absurd misunderstandings and confusion.—

Let us first attempt to trace the *theoretic* path upon which Modern Art must march forward to redemption from her present lonely, misprised station, and toward the widest understanding of general public Life. That this redemption can only become possible by the *practical* intermediation of public Life, will then appear self-evident



We have seen that *Plastic Art* can only attain creative strength by going to her work in unison with *artistic Man*, and not with men who purpose mere *utility*.

Artistic Man can only fully content himself by uniting every branch of Art into the *common* Artwork: in every *segregation* of his artistic faculties he is *unfree*, not fully that which he has power to be; whereas in the *common* Artwork he is *free*, and fully that which he has power to be.

The *true* endeavour of Art is therefore all-embracing: each unit who is inspired with a true *art-instinct* develops [184] to the highest his own particular faculties, not for the glory of these special faculties, but for the glory of *general Manhood in Art*.

The highest conjoint work of art is the *Drama*: it can only be at hand in all its *possible*

fulness, when in it each *separate branch of art* is at hand in *its own utmost fulness*.

The true Drama is only conceivable as proceeding from a *common urgency of every art* towards the most direct appeal to a *common public*. In this Drama, each separate art can only bare its utmost secret to their common public through a mutual parleying with the other arts; for the purpose of each separate branch of art can only be fully attained by the reciprocal agreement and co-operation of all the branches in their common message.

*Architecture* can set before herself no higher task than to frame for a fellowship of artists, who in their own persons portray the life of Man, the special surroundings necessary for the display of the Human Artwork. Only that edifice is built according to Necessity, which answers most befittingly an aim of man: the highest aim of man is the artistic aim; the highest artistic aim—the Drama. In buildings reared for daily use, the builder has only to answer to the lowest aim of men: beauty is therein a luxury. In buildings reared for luxury, he has to satisfy an unnecessary and unnatural need: his fashioning therefore is capricious, unproductive, and unlovely. On the other hand, in the construction of that edifice whose every part shall answer to a common and artistic aim alone,—thus in the building of the *Theatre*, the master-builder needs only to comport himself as *artist*, to keep a single eye upon the *art-work*. In a perfect theatrical edifice, Art's need alone gives law and measure, down even to the smallest detail. This need is twofold, that of *giving* and that of *receiving*, which reciprocally pervade and condition one another. The *Scene* has firstly to comply with all the conditions of "space" imposed by the joint (*gemeinsam*) dramatic action to be displayed thereon: but secondly, [185] it has to fulfil those conditions in the sense of bringing this dramatic action to the eye and ear of the spectator in intelligible fashion. In the arrangement of the *space for the spectators*, the need for optic and acoustic understanding of the artwork will give the necessary law, which can only be observed by a union of beauty and fitness in the proportions; for the demand of the collective (*gemeinsam*) audience is the demand for the *artwork*, to whose comprehension it must be distinctly led by everything that meets the eye. (34) Thus the spectator transplants himself upon the stage, by means of all his visual and aural faculties; while the performer becomes an artist only by complete absorption into the public. Everything, that breathes and moves upon the stage, thus breathes and moves alone from eloquent desire to impart, to be seen and heard within those walls which, however circumscribed their space, seem to the actor from his scenic standpoint to embrace the whole of humankind; whereas the public, that representative of daily life, forgets the confines of the auditorium, and lives and breathes now only in the artwork which seems to it as Life itself, and on the stage which seems the wide expanse of the whole World.

Such marvels blossom from the fabric of the Architect, to such enchantments can he give a solid base, when he takes the purpose of the highest human artwork for his own, when he summons forth the terms of its enlivening from the individual resources of his art. On the other hand, how rigid, cold, and dead does his handiwork appear when, without a higher helpmeet than the aim of luxury, [186] without the artistic necessity which leads him, in the Theatre, to invent and range each detail with the greatest sense of fitness, he is forced to follow every speculative whim of his self-glorifying caprice; to heap his masses and trick out his ornament, in order to stereotype to-day the vanity of some boastful plutocrat, to-morrow the honours of a modernised Jehovah!

But not the fairest form, the richest masonry, can alone suffice the Dramatic Artwork for the perfectly befitting spacial terms of its appearance. The Scene which is to mount the picture of Human Life must, for a thorough understanding of this life, have power to also show the lively counterfeit of Nature, in which alone artistic Man can render up a speaking likeness of himself. The casings of this Scene, which look down chill and vacantly upon the

artist and the public, must deck themselves with the fresh tints of Nature, with the warm light of heaven's æther, to be worthy to take their share in the human artwork. Plastic *Architecture* here feels her bounds, her own unfreedom, and casts herself, athirst for love, into the arms of Painting, who shall work out her redemption into fairest Nature.

Here *Landscape-painting* enters, summoned by a common need which she alone can satisfy. What the painter's expert eye has seen in Nature, what he now, as artist, would fain display for the artistic pleasure of the full community, he dovetails into the united work of all the arts, as his own abundant share. Through him the scene takes on complete artistic truth: his drawing, his colour, his glowing breadths of light, compel Dame Nature to serve the highest claims of Art. That which the landscape-painter, in his struggle to impart what he had seen and fathomed, had erstwhile forced into the narrow frames of panel-pictures,—what he had hung up on the egoist's secluded chamber-walls, or had made away to the inconsequent, distracting medley of a picture-barn,—*therewith* will he henceforth fill the ample framework of the Tragic stage, calling the whole expanse of scene as witness to his power of recreating Nature. The [187] illusion which his brush and finest blend of colours could only hint at, could only distantly approach, he will here bring to its consummation by artistic practice of every known device of optics, by use of all the art of 'lighting. The apparent roughness of his tools, the seeming grotesqueness of the method of so-called 'scene-painting,' will not offend him; for he will reflect that even 'the finest camel's-hair brush is but a humiliating instrument, when compared with the perfect Artwork; and the artist has no right to *pride* until he is *free*, *i.e.*, until his artwork is completed and alive, and *he*, with all his helping tools, has been absorbed into it. But the finished artwork that greets him from the *stage* will, set within this frame and held before the common gaze of full publicity, immeasurably more content him than did his earlier work, accomplished with more delicate tools. He will not, forsooth, repent the right to use this scenic space to the benefit of such an artwork, for sake of his earlier disposition of a flat-laid scrap of canvas! For as, at the very worst, his work remains the same no matter what the frame from which it looks, provided only it bring its subject to intelligible show: so will his artwork, in *this* framing, at any rate effect a livelier impression, a greater and more universal understanding, than the whilom landscape picture.

The organ for all understanding of Nature, is Man: the landscape-painter had not only to impart to men this understanding, but to make it for the first time plain to them by depicting Man in the midst of Nature. Now by setting his artwork in the frame of the Tragic stage, he will expand the individual man, to whom he would address himself, to the associate manhood of full publicity, and reap the satisfaction of having spread his understanding out to that, and made it partner in his joy. But he cannot fully bring about this public understanding until he allies his work to a joint and all-intelligible aim of loftiest Art; while this aim itself will be disclosed to the common understanding, past all mistaking, by the actual bodily man with all his warmth of life. Of all artistic things, the most directly [188] understandable is the Dramatic-Action (*Handlung*), for reason that its art is not complete until every helping artifice be cast behind it, as it were, and genuine life attain the faithfullest and most intelligible show. And thus each branch of art can only address itself to the *understanding* in proportion as its core—whose relation to Man, or derivation from him, alone can animate and justify the artwork—is ripening toward the *Drama*. In proportion as it passes over into Drama, as it pulses with the Drama's light, will each domain of Art grow all-intelligible, completely understood and justified. (35)

On to the stage, prepared by architect and painter, now steps *Artistic Man*, as Natural Man steps on the stage of Nature. What the statuary and the historical painter endeavoured to limn on *stone* or *canvas*, they now limn upon *themselves*, their form, their body's limbs, the features of their visage, and raise it to the consciousness of full artistic life. The same sense that led the sculptor in his grasp and rendering of the human figure, now leads the *Mime* in the



handling and demeanour of his actual body. The same eye which taught the historical painter, in drawing and in colour, in arrangement of his drapery and composition of his groups, to find the beautiful, the graceful and the characteristic, now orders the whole breadth of *actual human show*. Sculptor and painter once freed the [189] Greek Tragedian from his cothurnus and his mask, upon and under which the real man could only move according to a certain religious convention. With justice, did this pair of plastic artists annihilate the last disfigurement of pure artistic man, and thus prefigure in their stone and canvas the tragic Actor of the Future. As they once descried him in his undistorted truth, they now shall let him pass into reality and bring his form, in a measure sketched by them, to bodily portrayal with all its wealth of movement.

Thus the illusion of plastic art will turn to truth in Drama: the plastic artist will reach out hands to the *dancer*, to the *mime*, will lose himself in them, and thus become himself both mime and dancer.—So far as lies within his power, he will have to impart the inner man his feeling and his will-ing, to the eye. The breadth and depth of scenic space belong to him for the plastic message of his stature and his motion, as a single unit or in union with his fellows. But where his power ends, where the fulness of his will and feeling impels him to the *uttering* of the inner man by means of *Speech*, there will the Word proclaim his plain and conscious purpose: he becomes a *Poet* and, to be poet, a *tone-artist* (*Tonkünstler*). But as dancer, tone-artist, and poet, he still is one and the same thing: nothing other than *executant, artistic Man, who, in the fullest measure of his faculties, imparts himself to the highest expression of receptive power*,

It is in him, the immediate executant, that the three sister-arts unite their forces in one collective operation, in which the highest faculty of each comes to its highest unfolding. By working in common, each one of them attains the power to be and do the very thing which, of her own and inmost essence, she longs to do and be. Hereby: that each, where her own power ends, can be absorbed within the other, whose power commences where her's ends,—she maintains her own purity and freedom, her independence as *that* which she is. The *mimetic dancer* is stripped of his impotence, so soon as he can sing and speak; the creations [190] of *Tone* win all-explaining meaning through the mime, as well as through the poet's word, and that exactly in degree as *Tone* itself is able to transcend into the motion of the mime and the word of the poet; while the *Poet* first becomes a Man through his translation to the flesh and blood of the *Performer*: for though he metes to each artistic factor the guiding purpose which binds them all into a common whole, yet this purpose is first changed from "will" to "can" by *the poet's Will descending to the actor's Can*.

Not one rich faculty of the separate arts will remain unused in the United Artwork of the Future; in *it* will each attain its first complete appraisalment. Thus, especially, will the manifold developments of *Tone*, so peculiar to our instrumental music, unfold their utmost wealth within this Artwork; nay, *Tone* will incite the mimetic art of *Dance* to entirely new discoveries, and no less swell the breath of *Poetry* to unimagined fill. For *Music*, in her solitude, has fashioned for herself an organ which is capable of the highest reaches of expression. This organ is the *Orchestra*. The tone-speech of Beethoven, introduced into Drama by the orchestra, marks an entirely fresh departure for the dramatic artwork. While *Architecture* and, more especially, scenic *Landscape-painting* have power to set the executant dramatic Artist in the surroundings of physical Nature, and to dower him from the exhaustless stores of natural phenomena with an ample and significant background,—so in the *Orchestra*, that pulsing body of many-coloured harmony, the personating individual Man is given, for his support, a stanchless elemental spring, at once artistic, natural, and human.

The *Orchestra* is, so to speak, the loam of endless, universal Feeling, from which the individual feeling of the separate actor draws power to shoot aloft to fullest height of growth: it, in a sense, dissolves (36) the hard immobile [191] ground of the actual scene into a fluent,

elastic, impressionable æther, whose unmeasured bottom is the great sea of Feeling itself. Thus the Orchestra is like the *Earth* from which Antæus, so soon as ever his foot had grazed it, drew new immortal life-force. By its essence diametrically opposed to the scenic landscape which surrounds the actor, and therefore, as to locality, most rightly placed in the deepened foreground outside the scenic frame, it at like time forms the perfect complement of these surroundings; inasmuch as it broadens out the exhaustless *physical* element of Nature to the equally exhaustless *emotional* element of artistic Man. These elements, thus knit together, enclose the performer as with an atmospheric ring of Art and Nature, in which, hike to the heavenly bodies, he moves secure in fullest orbit, and whence, withal, he is free to radiate on every side his feelings and his views of life,—broadened to infinity, and showered, as it were, on distances as measureless as those on which the stars of heaven cast their rays of light.

Thus supplementing one another in their changeful dance, the united sister-arts will show themselves and make good their claim; now all together, now in pairs, and again in solitary splendour, according to the momentary need of the only rule- and purpose-giver, the Dramatic Action. Now plastic Mimicry will listen to the passionate plaint of Thought; now resolute Thought will pour itself into the expressive mould of Gesture; now Tone must vent alone the stream of Feeling, the shudder of alarm; and now, in mutual embrace, all three will raise the Will of Drama to immediate and potent Deed. For One thing there is that all the three united arts must will, in order to be free: and that one thing is the Drama: the reaching of the Drama's aim must be their common goal. Are they conscious of this aim, do they put forth all their will to work out that alone: [192] so will they also gain the power to lop off from their several stems the egoistic offshoots of their own peculiar being; that therewith the tree may not spread out in formless mass to every wind of heaven, but proudly lift its wreath of branches, boughs and leaves, into its lofty crown.

The nature of Man, like that of every branch of Art, is manifold and over-fruitful: but *one thing* alone is the *Soul* of every unit, its most imperious bent (*Nothwendigster Trieb*), its strongest need-urged impulse. When this One Thing is recognised by man as his fundamental essence, then, to reach this One and indispensable, he has power to ward off every weaker, subordinated appetite, each feeble wish, whose satisfaction might stand between him and Its attainment. Only the weak and impotent knows no imperious, no mightiest longing of the soul: for him each instant is ruled by accidental, externally incited appetites which, for reason that they are but appetites, he never can allay; and therefore, hurled capriciously from one upon another, to and fro, he never can attain a real enjoyment. But should this need-reft one have strength to obstinately follow the appeasement of his accidental appetite, there then crop up in Life and Art those hideous, unnatural apparitions, the parasites of headlong egoistic frenzy, which fill us with such untold loathing in the murderous lust of despots, or in the wantonness of—modern operatic music. If the individual, however, feel in himself a mighty longing, an impulse that forces back all other desires, and forms the necessary inner urgency which constitutes his soul and being; and if he put forth all his force to satisfy it: he thus will also lift aloft his own peculiar force, and all his special faculties, to the fullest strength and height that e'er can lie within his reach.

But the individual man, in full possession of health of body, heart, and mind, can experience no higher need than that which is common to all his kind; for, to be a *true* Need, it can only be such an one as he can satisfy in Community alone. The most imperious and strongest need of full-fledged artist-man, however, is to impart [193] himself in highest compass of his being to the fullest expression of Community; and .this he only reaches with the necessary breadth of general understanding in the *Drama*. In Drama he broadens out his own particular being, by the portrayal of an individual personality not his own, to a universally human being. He must completely step outside himself, to grasp the inner nature of an alien personality with that completeness which is needful before he can portray it. This



he will only Attain when he so exhaustively analyses this individual in his contact with and penetration and completion by other individualities,—and therefore also the nature of these other individualities themselves,—when he forms thereof so lively a conception, that he gains a sympathetic feeling of this complementary influence on his own interior being. The perfectly artistic Performer is, therefore, the unit Man expanded to the *essence of the Human Species* by the utmost evolution of his own particular nature.

The place in which this wondrous process comes to pass, is the *Theatric stage*; the collective art-work which it brings to light of day, the *Drama*. But to force his own specific nature to the highest blossoming of its contents in this *one* and highest art-work, the separate artist, like each several art, must quell each selfish, arbitrary bent toward untimely bushing into outgrowths unfurthersome to the whole; the better then to put forth all his strength for reaching of the highest common purpose, which cannot indeed be realised without the unit, nor, on the other hand, without the unit's recurrent limitation.

This purpose of the Drama, is withal the only true artistic purpose that ever can be fully *realised*; whatsoever lies aloof from that, must necessarily lose itself in the sea of things indefinite, obscure, unfree. This purpose, however, the separate art-branch will never reach *alone*, (37) but only *all* [194] *together*; and therefore the most *universal* is at like time the only real, free, the only universally *intelligible* Art-work.

[195]

## V. The Artist of the Future.

HAVING sketched in general outline the nature of the Art-work into which the whole art-family must be absorbed, to be there redeemed by universal understanding, it remains to ask: What are the life-conditions which shall summon forth the Necessity of this Art-work and this redemption? Will this be brought about by Modern Art, in impatient need of understanding, from out her own pre-meditated plan, by arbitrary choice of means, and with fixed prescription of the 'modus' of the union that she has recognised as necessary? Will she be able to draw up a constitutional chart, a tariff of agreement with the so-called un-culture of the Folk? And if she brought herself to stoop to this, would such an agreement be actually effected by that 'constitution'? Can Cultured Art press forward from her abstract standpoint *into Life*; or rather, must not *Life press forward into Art*,—*Life bear* from out itself its only fitting Art, and mount up into that,—instead of art (well understood: the *Cultured Art*, which sprang from regions outside Life) *engendering Life* from out herself and mounting thereinto?

Let us therefore first agree as to *whom* we must consider the creator of the Art-work of the Future; so that we may argue back from him to the life-conditions which alone can permit his art-work and himself to take their rise.

*Who*, then, will be the *Artist of the Future*? Without a doubt, the Poet. (38)

[196] But *who* will be the Poet?

Indisputably the *Performer* (39) (*Darsteller*).

Yet *who*, again, will be the Performer?

Necessarily the *Fellowship of all the Artists*.—

In order to see the Performer and the Poet take natural rise, we must first imagine to ourselves the artistic Fellowship of the future; and that according to no arbitrary canon, but following the logical course which we are bound to take in drawing from the Art-work itself our conclusions as to those artistic organs which alone can call it into natural life.—

The Art-work of the Future is an associate work, and only an associate demand can call it forth. This demand, which we have hitherto merely treated theoretically, as a necessary essential of the being of each separate branch of art, is practically conceivable only in the *fellowship of every artist*; and the union of every artist, according to the exigencies of time and place, and for *one definite aim*, is that which forms this fellowship. This definite aim is the *Drama*, for which they all unite in order by their participation therein to unfold their own peculiar art to the acme of its being; in this unfoldment to permeate each other's essence, and as fruit thereof to generate the living, breathing, moving drama. But the thing that makes this sharing possible to all—nay that renders it necessary, and which without their coöperation can never come to manifestation—is the very kernel of the Drama, the *dramatic Action* (*dramatische Handlung*).

The dramatic Action, as the first postulate of Drama, is withal that moment in the entire art-work which ensures its widest *understanding*. Directly borrowed from *Life*, past or present, it forms the intelligible bond that links [197] this work therewith; exactly in degree as it mirrors back the face of Life, and fitly satisfies its claim for understanding. The dramatic Action is thus *the bough from the Tree of Life* which, sprung therefrom by an unconscious instinct, has blossomed and shed its fruit obediently to vital laws, and now, dissevered from the stem, is *planted in the soil of Art*; there, in new, more beautiful, eternal life, to grow into

the spreading tree which resembles fully in its inner, necessary force and truth the parent tree of actual Life. But now, become its 'objectivation,' it upholds to Life the picture of its own existence, and lifts unconscious Life to conscious knowledge of itself.

In the dramatic Action, therefore, the Necessity of the art-work displays itself; without *it*, or some degree of reference thereto, all art-fashioning is arbitrary, unneedful, accidental, unintelligible. The first and truest fount of Art reveals itself in the impulse that urges from *Life* into the work of art; for it is the impulse to bring the unconscious, instinctive principle of Life to understanding (*verständniss*) and acknowledgment as Necessity. (40) But the impulse toward agreement (*verständigung*) presupposes *commonality*: the Egoist has need of no one with whom to agree. Therefore, only from a life in common, can proceed the impulse toward intelligible objectification of this life by Art-work; the Community of artists alone can give it vent; and only in communion, can they content it. This impulse, however, can only find its full contentment in the faithful representation of an episode (*Handlung*) taken from Life: whilst only such an episode can be a fitting subject for artistic Treatment as has already come in Life to definite conclusion; as to which, as a series of causes and effects, (41) [198] there can no longer be any doubt; and as to whose possible issue there is no longer room for arbitrary assumption. Only when a thing has been consummated in Life, can we grasp the necessity of its occurrence, the harmony of its separate movements. But an episode is not completed, until the *Man* who brought it about—who stood in the focus of a series of events which, as a feeling, thinking, will-ing person, he guided by the force of his own innate character,—until this man is likewise no longer subject to our arbitrary assumptions as to his possible doings. Now, every man is subject to these so long as he lives: by Death is he first freed from this subjection, for then we know All that he did, and that he was. That action, therefore, must be the best fitted for dramatic art—and the worthiest object of its rendering—which is rounded off together with the life of the chief person that evolved it, and whose denouement is none other than the conclusion of the life of this one man himself.

Only that action is completely truthful—and can thoroughly convince us of its plain necessity—on whose fulfilment a man had set the whole strength of his being, and which was to him so imperative a necessity that he needs must pass over into it with the whole force of his character. But hereof he conclusively persuades us by this alone: that, in the effectuation of his personal force, he literally *went under*, he veritably threw overboard his personal existence, for sake of bringing to the outer world the inner Necessity which ruled his being. (42) He proves to us the verity of his nature, not only in his actions—which might still appear capricious so long as he yet were doing [199] —but by the consummated sacrifice of his personality to this necessary course of action. The last, completest renunciation (*Entäusserung*) of his personal egoism, the demonstration of his full ascension into universalism, a man can only show us by his *Death*; and that not by his accidental, but by his *necessary* death, the logical sequel to his actions, the last fulfilment of his being.

*The celebration of such a Death is the noblest thing that men can enter on.* It reveals to us in the nature of this one man, laid bare by death, the whole content of universal human nature. But we fix this revelation in surest hold of memory by the conscious *representation* of that Death itself and, in order to make its purport clear to us, by the representation of those actions which found their necessary conclusion in that death. (43) Not in the repulsive funeral rites which, in our neo-christian mode of life, we solemnise by meaningless hymns and churchyard platitudes; but by the artistic re-animation of the lost one, by life-glad reproduction and portrayal of his actions and his death, in the dramatic Art-work, shall we celebrate that festival which lifts us living to the highest bliss of love for the departed, and turns his nature to our own.

Though the longing for this dramatic rite is present in the whole brotherhood of artists, and though *that* object alone can be a worthy one, and one that justifies the impulse toward its

representation, which awakes in us this impulse *in common*: yet that *Love* which alone can be conceived as the active and effectual power hereto, has its unfathomable seat within the heart of each separate unit; in whom it exercises its specific motive force in accordance with his individual characteristics. This specific energy of Love will therefore show itself most strenuously in that unit who, by reason of his general character, or in this particular period of his life, feels drawn by the closest bond of affinity toward this particular Hero; who by his [200] sympathy makes the nature of this hero the most especially his own, and trains his artistic faculties the fittest to requicken by his impersonation this hero, of all others, for the living memory of himself, his fellows, and the whole community. The *might of individuality* will never assert itself more positively than in the free artistic fellowship; since the incitation to resolves in common can only issue from precisely that unit in whom the individuality speaks out so strongly that it determines the *free* voices of the rest. The might of Individuality, however, will only be able to operate thus upon the fellowship in those specific cases where it has the wit to bring itself to real, and not to merely artificial, currency. Should an art-comrade proclaim his purpose to represent this one particular Hero, and thereto crave that mutual co-operation of the fellowship which alone can bring this to effect: he will not see his wish fulfilled until he has succeeded in arousing for his project the same love and enthusiasm which inspire himself, and which he can only impart to others when his individuality stands possessed of a force in complete accord with the specific object.

When once the artist has raised his project to a *common* one, by the energy of his own enthusiasm, the artistic undertaking becomes thenceforth *itself an enterprise in common*. But as the dramatic action to be represented has its focus in the Hero of that action, so does the common art-work group itself around the *Representant* of this hero. His fellow-actors, and all his other colleagues, bear to him the same relation in the art-work as that which the co-enacting persons—those, that is to say, who formed the foils of the hero's character and the 'objects' of his action,—and, withal, the general human and natural entourage,—bore in *Life* to the Hero; only with this difference, that the hero's impersonator shapes and arranges *consciously* that which came *instinctively* to the actual hero. In his stress for artistic reproduction of the Action, the performer thus becomes a poet; he arranges his own action, and all its living outward issues, in accordance with an artistic [201] standard. But he only attains his special purpose in measure as he has raised it to a general aim, as every unit is clamorous to lend himself to the furtherance of this general aim,—therefore in exact measure as he himself, above all others, is able to surrender his own specific personal purpose to the general aim; and thus, in a sense, not merely *represents* in the art-work the action of the fêted hero, but *repeats* its moral lesson; insomuch as he proves by this surrender of his personality that he also, in his artistic action, is obeying a dictate of Necessity which consumes the whole individuality of his being. (44)

The *free Artistic Fellowship* is therefore the foundation, and the first condition, of the Art-work itself. From it proceeds the *Performer*, who, in his enthusiasm for this one particular hero whose nature harmonises with his own, now raises himself to the rank of *Poet*, of artistic *Lawgiver* to the fellowship; from this height, again, to descend to complete absorption in the fellowship. The function of this lawgiver is therefore never more than *periodic*, and is confined to the one particular occasion which has been prompted by his individuality and thereby raised to a common 'objective' for the art of all; wherefore his rule can by no means be extended to *all* occasions. The dictatorship [202] of the poet-actor comes to its natural close together with the attainment of his specific purpose: that purpose which he had raised into a common one, and in which his personality was dissolved so soon as ever his message had been shared with the community. Each separate member may lift himself to the exercise of this dictatorship, when he bears a definite message which so far answers to his individuality that in its proclamation he has power to raise it to a common purpose. For in that

artistic fellowship which combines for no other aim than the satisfaction of a joint artistic impulse, it is impossible that any other thing should come to definite prescription and resolve, than that which compasses the mutual satisfaction of this impulse: namely, Art herself, and the laws which summon forth her perfect manifestment by the union of the individual with the universal.—

In all the mutual federations of the Manhood of the Future, these selfsame laws of *inner* necessity will assert their sole determinative might. A natural and unforced association of men in larger or in smaller numbers, can only be called forth by a need they feel in common. The satisfaction of this need is the exclusive aim of the mutual undertaking: toward this aim are directed the actions of each unit, so long as the common need is alike his strongest personal need; this aim will then, and of itself, prescribe the laws for the associate action. For these laws are nothing but the fittest means for reaching the common goal. The knowledge of the fittest means is denied to him who is urged towards this goal by no sincere, imperative need: but where the latter is at hand, the certain knowledge of these means springs self-taught from the cogence of the need, and above all, from its communal character.

Natural unions have, therefore, only so long a natural continuance as the need on which they are grounded is a common one, and as its satisfaction is still to be accomplished: has the goal been reached, then this specific union is dissolved *together* with the need that called it [203] forth; and first from fresh-arising needs will there likewise rise fresh unions of those who share these novel needs in common. Our modern *States* are thus far the most unnatural unions of fellow men, that—called into existence by mere external caprice, *e.g.* dynastic interests—they yoke together a certain number of men *for once and all*, in furtherance of an aim which either never answered to a need they shared in common, or, from the change of time and circumstance, is certainly no longer common to them *now*.—All men have but *one* lasting need in common; a need, however, which only in its most general purport abides in them in equal measure: this is the need *to live and to be happy*. Herein lies the natural bond of all mankind; a need to which our mother Earth may give us perfect answer.

In the reasonable state of Future Manhood, the special needs which take their rise, and mount aloft, in time and place and individuality, can alone lay down the bases of those special unions whose sum-total will make out the great association of *all* Mankind. These Unions will alternate, shape themselves afresh, unloose and knit themselves again, precisely as the Needs shall change and come back on their course. They will be lasting where they are of material sort, where they are rooted in the common ground and soil, and in general affect the intercourse of men in so far as this is necessarily founded on certain like-remaining, local limitations. But they will ever shape themselves anew, proclaim more complex and vivacious change, the more do they proceed from higher, universal, spiritual needs. Against the stiff political union of our time, upheld alone by outward force, the *free* communions of the Future in their pliant change—now spread out to bounds unheard-of, now linked in finest meshes—will display the future Human Life itself, whose inexhaustible charm will be preserved by ceaseless alternation of the richest individualities; whereas our present life, (45) with its fashion and red-tape uniformity, affords alas! the but too [204] faithful likeness of the modern *State*, with its *stations*, its *posts*, its *vested* interests, (46) its *standing* armies—and whatever else it has of *standing*.

Yet no alliances of men will enjoy a richer, more eventful change than those inspired by *Art* For in these each individuality, so soon as ever it has wit to utter itself in consonance with the spirit of community, will, by the exposition of its passing purpose, call forth a fresh alliance to realise that *one specific* purpose; inasmuch as it will widen out its own particular need to the Need of a brotherhood which this very need will have summoned into being. Each



dramatic art-work, as it enters upon life, will therefore be the work of a new and never-hitherto-existing, and thus a never-to-be-repeated fellowship of artists: its communion will take its rise from the moment when the poet-actor of the hero's rôle exalts his purpose to the common aim of the comrades whom he needed for its exposition, and will be dissolved the very instant that this purpose is attained.

In this wise naught can pass into a standstill, in this artistic union: it is formed for the one sole aim, attained today, of celebrating this one particular hero; to be tomorrow, under entirely fresh conditions, and through the inspiring purpose of an entirely different individual, resolved into a fresh association. While this fresh association will be as distinct from that preceding it, as it will bring its work to light of day according to *specific laws* which, constituting the fittest means for the realisation of the new-adopted scheme, will evince themselves as likewise new and never matched quite *thus* before. (47)

Thus, and thus only, must the future Artist-guild be constituted, so soon as ever it is banded by no other aim than that of the *Art-work*. Who, then, will be the *Artist of [205] the Future?* The poet? The performer? The musician? The plastician?—Let us say it in one word: the *Folk. That selfsame Folk to whom we owe the only genuine Art-work, still living even in our modern memory, however much distorted by our restorations; to whom alone we owe all Art itself.*



When we repiece the past and consummated, in order to conjure up the picture of a particular object in the light of its general bearings on the history of mankind, we can depict its singlest traits with surest touch,—nay, from the minute regardal of such single traits there often springs for us the surest understanding of the whole, which we are forced to rescue from its hazy generalism by holding to this one particular feature. Thus in our present inquiry into the phenomena of Art, the wealth of details that confront us is so excessive that, in order to present our object in its general bearings, we can only venture to select a limited portion, and that which seems the best to illustrate our line of thought; lest otherwise we lose ourselves in branching by-ways, and our eyes be turned aside from the higher general goal. Now the case is exactly opposite, when we desire to portray a future state of things; we have only one scale for such a picture, and that lies, decidedly not in the spaces of the Future, on which the combination is to shape itself, but in the Past and in the Present; even there where all those conditions are still in lusty life which make the longed-for future state impossible to-day, and allow its sheer antithesis to seem an unavoidable necessity. The force of Need impels us to a general preconception; yet we can only grasp it, not simply by an ardent aspiration of the heart, but rather by a logical induction which tells us that this state will be the very opposite of the evil which we recognise in our system of to-day. All individual features (48) [206] must stay, perforce, outside this preconception; since such could only figure as arbitrary assumptions of our phantasy, and must constantly bewray their nature as borrowed from the bad conditions of the present day. Only the consummated and fulfilled, can be matter of our knowledge; the lifelike shaping of the Future must be the work of Life itself alone! When this is brought to pass, we shall conceive at the first glance what to-day we could only palm off upon ourselves by the exercise of whim and fancy, submitted as we are to the insuperable influence of our present plight.

Nothing has been more destructive of human happiness, than this frenzied haste to regulate the Life of the Future by given present laws. This loathly care about the Future, which indeed is the sole heritage of moody, absolute Egoism, at bottom seeks but to *preserve*, to *ensure* what we possess to-day, for all our lifetime. It holds fast to Property—the to-all-eternity to be clinched and riveted, *property*—as the only worthy object of busy human forethought, and therefore seeks to do its best to swathe the Future's self-moved limbs, to pluck out by the roots

its self-shaping quick of Life, as a poisonous and maddening sting; in order to protect from every careless jog this undying fund of Property, that it may ever re-engender and swell out the fodder for its comfortable chewing and devouring, by the natural law of five per cent. Just as in this chief anxiety of the modern State, Man is looked-on, to all future time, as an utterly feeble or eternally to-be-mistrusted being, which can only be maintained by Property, or restrained within the proper path by Law: so, in respect of Art and Artists, we view the *Art-institute* as the only safeguard of their common welfare. Without Academies, Statutes, and Institutions, Art seems to us to run the constant danger of—so to phrase it—giving up the ghost; for we cannot reconcile a free, [207] a self-determining activity with our modern notions of an Artist. The reason of this, however, is that in sooth we are no genuine Artists, no more than we are genuine Men. And thus the feeling of our pitiful incapacity, entirely brought upon ourselves by cowardice and weakness, casts us back upon the everlasting care to frame fixed canons for the Future; by whose forcible upholding we, at bottom, but ensure that we shall *never* be true Artists, and *never* truthful Men.

So is it! We always look towards the Future with the eye of the Present, with the eye that can only measure all future generations by the standard it has borrowed from the Men of the Present, and sets up as the universal standard of mankind. If we have finally proved that *the Folk* must of necessity be the Artist of the future, we must be prepared to see the intellectual egoism of the artists of the Present break forth in contemptuous amazement at the discovery. They forget completely that in the days of national blood-brotherhood, which preceded the epoch when the absolute Egoism of the individual was elevated to a religion,—the days which our historians betoken as those of prehistoric myth and fable,—the Folk, in truth, was already the only poet, the only artist; that all their matter, and all their form—if it is to have any sound vitality—they can derive alone from the fancy of these art-inventive Peoples. On the contrary, they regard the Folk exclusively under the aspect lent it nowadays by their culture-spectacled eyes. From their lofty pedestal, they deem that only their direct antithesis, the raw uncultured masses, can mean for them "the Folk." As they look down upon the people, there rise but fumes of beer and spirits to their nostrils; they fumble for their perfumed handkerchiefs, and ask with civilised exasperation: "What! The *rabble* is in future to replace us in Art-making? The rabble, which does not so much as understand us, when *we* provide its art? Out of the reeking gin-shop, out of the smoking dung-heap, are we to see arise the mould of Beauty and of Art?"—

Quite so! Not from the filthy dregs of your Culture of [208] to-day, not from the loathsome subsoil of your modern 'polite education,' not from the conditions which give your modern civilisation the sole conceivable base of its existence, shall arise the Art-work of the Future. Yet reflect! that this rabble is in no wise a normal product of real human nature, but rather the artificial outcome of your denaturalised culture; that all the crimes and abominations with which ye now upbraid this rabble, are only the despairing gestures of the battle which the true nature of Man wages against its hideous oppressor, modern Civilisation; and that these revolting features are nowise the real face of Nature, but rather the reflection of the hypocritical mask of your State-, and Criminal-Culture. Further reflect: that, where one portion of the social system busies itself alone with *superfluous* art and literature, another portion must necessarily redress the balance by scavenging the dirt of your useless lives; that, where fashion and dilettantism fill up one whole unneedful life, there coarseness and grossness must make out the substance of another life,—a life ye cannot do without; that, where need-less luxury seeks violently to still its all-devouring appetite, the natural Need can only balance its side of the account with Luxury by drudgery and want, amidst the most deforming cares.

So long as ye intellectual egoists and egoistic purists shall blossom in your artificial atmosphere, there must needs be somewhere a "stuff" from whose vital juices ye may distil

your own sweet perfumes; and this stuff from which ye have sucked out all its inbred scent, is but that foul-breathed rabble whose approach inspires you with disgust, and from whom ye only ward yourselves by that very perfume ye have squeezed from out its native comeliness. So long as a great portion of any nation, installed in State, Judiciary, and University-posts, squanders its precious vital forces on the most useless of employments: so long must an equally great, or even greater portion replace those squandered forces by its own employment in the harshest tasks of bare Utility. And—saddest tale of all!—when in this disproportionately burdened section of the Folk the [209] sheerest utilitarianism has thus become the moving spirit of all its energy, then must the revolting spectacle be exhibited of absolute Egoism enforcing its laws of life on every hand and, from the visage of the town and country rabble, reflecting back its hatefullest grimaces upon yourselves. (49)

However, neither you nor this rabble do we understand by the term, *the Folk*: only when neither Ye nor It shall exist any longer, can we conceive the presence of the Folk. Yet even now the Folk is living, wherever ye and the rabble are not; or rather, it is living in your twin midst, but ye wist not of it. Did ye *know* it, then were ye yourselves the Folk; for no man can know the fulness of the Folk, without possessing a share therein. The highest educated alike with the most uneducated, the learned with the most unlearned, the high-placed with the lowly, the nestling of the amplest lap of luxury with the starveling of the filthiest den of Hunger, the ward of heartless Science with the wastrel of the rawest vice,—so soon as e'er he feels and nurtures in himself a stress which thrusts him out from cowardly indifference to the criminal assemblage of our social and political affairs, or heavy-witted submission thereunder,—which inspires him with loathing for the shallow joys of our inhuman Culture, or hatred for a Utilitarianism that brings its uses only to the need-less and never to the needy,—which fills him with contempt for those self-sufficient thralls, the despicable Egoists! or wrath against the arrogant outragers of human nature,—he, therefore, who *not* from this conglomerate of pride and baseness, of shamelessness and cringing, thus not from the *statutory rights* which hold this composite together, but from the fulness and the depth of naked *human nature* and the irrefutable right of its absolute Need, draws force for resistance, for revolt, for assault upon the oppressor of this nature,—he then who *must* withstand, revolt, and deal [210] assault, and openly avows this plain necessity in that he gladly suffers every other sorrow for its sake, and, if need should be, will even offer up his life,—he, *and he alone belongs to the Folk*; for he and all his fellows feel a common *Want*.

This *Want* will give the Folk the mastery of Life, will raise it to the only living might. *This Want* once drove the *Israelites*, already turned to dull and sordid beasts of burden, through the waters of the salt Red Sea; and through the Red Sea also must *Want* drive *us*, if we are ever, cleansed from shame, to reach the promised land. We shall not drown beneath its waves; it is fatal only to the Pharaohs of this world, who once with host and captains, with horse and rider, were swallowed up therein,—those haughty, overweening Pharaohs who had forgotten that once a poor herdsman's son had through his prudent counsels saved their land and them from death by hunger! But the *Folk*, the *chosen people*, passed scathless through that sea towards the Land of Promise: and reached it when the desert sand had washed its body of the last remaining stain of slavery.—

Since the poor *Israelites* have led me thus into the region of the fairest of all poetry, the ever fresh and ever truthful *poems of the Folk*, I will take my leave—by way of moral—with the outline of a glorious Saga which long ago the raw, uncultured Folk of oldtime Germany indited for no other reason than that of inner, free Necessity.



*Wieland the Smith*, out of very joy in his handiwork, forged cunning trinkets for himself, and weapons keen and fair to see. One day as he was bathing on the shore, he saw a



Swan-maiden (*Schwänenjungfrau*) come flying with her sisters through the air and, putting off her swan-apparel, plunge down into the sea. Aflame with sudden love, he rushed into the deeper waters; he wrestled with, and won the wondrous woman. Love, too, broke down [211] her pride; in tender care for one another, they lived in blissful union.

A ring the Swan-maid gave to Wieland: this must he never let her win back from him; for greatly as she loved him, she had not lost her yearning for her ancient Freedom, for wind-borne passage to her happy island home; and this ring it was, that gave her strength to wing her flight. So Wieland wrought a goodly store of rings alike to that his Swan-wife gave him, and strung them on a hempen cord against his wall: amongst them all she should not recognise her own.

He came home once from journeying. Alack! There lay his house in ruins; his wife had flown away to farthest distance!

There was a King, *Neiding* (Envy) by name, who had heard much talk of Wieland's skill; he burned to trap the Smith, that thenceforth he might work for him alone. He found at last a valid pretext for such a deed of violence: the vein of gold which Wieland wrought into his smitheries belonged to Neiding's ground and soil; thus Wieland's art was a robbery of the royal possessions.—It was he who burst into the smithy; and now he fell upon the Smith himself; bound him with chains, and bore him off

Set down in Neiding's court, Wieland must hammer for the King all kinds of objects, useful, strong, and durable: harness, tools, and armour, by aid of which the King might broaden-out his realm. But since, for such a labour, Neiding must loose the captive's bonds, his care was how to leave his body free to move, yet hinder him from flight: and so he craftily bethought him of severing the sinews of poor Wieland's feet. For he rightly guessed that the Smith had only need of hands, and not of feet, to do his work.

Thus sate he then, in all his misery, the art-rich Wieland, the one-time blithesome wonder-smith: crippled, behind his anvil, at which he now must slave to swell his master's wealth; limping, lamed, and loathly, whene'er he strove to [212] stand erect! Who might measure all his suffering, when he thought back to his Freedom, to his Art,—to his beloved wife! Who fathom all his grudge against this King, who had wrought him such an untold shame!

From his forge he gazed above to Heaven's blue, through which the Swan-maid once had flown to him; this air was her thrice-happy realm, through which she soared in blissful 'freedom, the while he breathed the smithy's stench and fume—all for the service of King Neiding's use! The shamed and self-bound man, should he never find his wife again!

Ha! since he was doomed to wretchedness for ever, since nevermore should joy or solace bloom for him,—if he yet might gain at least one only thing: Revenge, revenge upon this Neiding, who had brought him to this endless sorrow for his own base use! If it were only possible to sweep this wretch and all his brood from off the earth!—

Fearsome schemes of vengeance planned he; day by day increased his misery; and day by day grew ranker the desperate longing for revenge.—But how should he, the halting cripple, make ready for the battle that should lay his torturer low? One ventures forward step; and he must fall dishonoured to the ground, the plaything for his foeman's scorn!

"Thou dearest, distant wife! Had I thy wings! Had I thy wings, to wreak my vengeance, and swing myself aloft from out this shame!"—

Then *Want itself* bent down its mighty pinions above the tortured Wieland's breast, and fanned its inspiration about his thoughtful brow. From *Want*, from terrible, all-powerful *Want*, the fettered artist learnt to mould what no man's mind had yet conceived. *Wieland found it: found how to forge him WINGS. Wings* whereon to mount aloft to wreak revenge on his tormentor,—*Wings*, to soar through Heaven's distance to the blessed island of his Wife!—

He did it: he fulfilled *the task that utmost Want had set* [213] *within him*. Borne on the

*work of his own Art*, he flew aloft; he rained his deadly shafts into King Neiding's heart ;—he swung himself in blissful, daring flight athwart the winds, to where he found the loved one of his youth.—

*O sole and glorious Folk! This is it, that thou thyself hast sung. Thou art thyself this Wieland! Weld thou thy wings, and soar on high!*



## Notes

### Note 01 on page 12

The above sentences, whose peculiar epigrammatic force it is well-nigh impossible to convey in a translation, are of the highest significance as bearing upon the much debated question whether Wagner's philosophy was self-originated or derived from that of Schopenhauer. In our opinion, they and the following sections of this chapter give most positive answer in the former sense. Except that Wagner does not employ the term "Will," but rather "Necessity," the whole scheme is Schopenhauerian from beginning to end, and the gradual evolution of the "Will's" manifestation, from elementary force to Intellect and Spirit, might have been written by that greatest philosopher of the century. It is unnecessary to draw special attention to individual sentences; but an attentive perusal of this pregnant chapter cannot fail to bring home to those conversant with Schopenhauer's "*Wille und Vorstellung*" the remarkable fact that two cognate minds have developed an almost identical system of philosophy. For it must not be forgotten that R. Wagner was at the period of writing this essay, and long after, completely ignorant—as indeed was almost the whole world—of even the existence of the sage of Frankfort (*vide* Wagner's letters to Liszt). Another curious reflection aroused by this chapter is, that it should have been written when the Darwinian theory of the influence of environment upon evolution was as yet unpublished, if even formed.—TR.

### Note 02 on page 12

I.e. Art in general, or the Art of the Future in particular.—R. WAGNER.—The word 'Science' (*Wissenschaft*), also, must be understood in the broad sense in which it is employed in the next section (2).—TR.

### Note 03 on page 18

For who can nurse less hopes of the success of his reforming efforts, than he who acts therein with greatest *honesty*?—R. WAGNER.

### Note 04 on page 22

The slap at Meyerbeer's *Huguenots*, *Prophète*, etc, is obvious.—TR.

### Note 05 on page 26

"*Verdichtete*" = "condensed"; but the mere English equivalent will not convey the hidden allusion—worked out later on—to "*Dichtkunst*" (Poetry), which is thus shown to be the condensation into spoken words of the nebulous ideas of fancy.—TR.

### Note 06 on page 28

"*Reinmenschliche*," lit. "purely human."—TR.

### Note 07 on page 28

It must be distinctly understood that by "Dance" Wagner does not refer to the Ballet, or anything approaching it; it is the grace of gesture and of motion which he sums up in this terse and comprehensive term.—TR.

Note 08 on page 29

The verb "*unterscheiden*" is here used in so many different shades of its meaning that it is impossible to do justice in a translation to the philosophical play of words. Literally it means: "to cleave asunder," and hence, "to separate, to distinguish, to discern, to discriminate, to differentiate." There being no one English word that will embrace the varying sense in which the term is here employed, I have been forced to replace it by varying expressions.—TR.

Note 09 on page 31

Compare Carlyle *On Heroes* :—"King, *Könning*, which means *Can-ning*, Able-man. . . . Find me the true *Könning*, King, or Able-man, and he *has* a divine right over me."—TR

Note 10 on page 32

The German equivalent for "compact" is "*dicht*"; the term seems to have been purposely chosen by the author, in order to bring out the true meaning of "*Dichtkunst*," "The art of Poetry," as a crystallisation—so to say—of ideas and emotions only vaguely felt before.—TR.

Note 11 on page 38

Compare *Tristan u. Isolde*, Act 3, "Sehnen! Sehnen—im Sterben mich zu sehnen, vor Sehnsucht nicht zu sterben!"—a passage which has more than any other been ascribed to Schopenhauer's influence, but which is almost a literal reproduction of the words used in the present instance.—TR.

Note 12 on page 38

See Wagner's *Letters to Uhlig* (Letter 67,—July, 1852). "E. D. *defends music against me*. Is not that delicious? He appeals to 'harmonies of the spheres,' and 'groanings and sighings of the soul!' Well, I have got a pretty millstone hung about my neck!"—TR.

Note 13 on page 42

Amid the solemn-striding rhythm of the second section, a secondary theme uplifts its wailing, yearning song; to that rhythm, which shows its firm-set tread throughout the entire piece, without a pause, this longing melody clings like the ivy to the oak, which without its clasping of the mighty bole would trail its crumpled, straggling wreaths upon the soil, in forlorn rankness; but now, while weaving a rich trapping for the rough oak-rind, it gains for itself a sure and undishevelled outline from the stalwart figure of the tree. How brainlessly has this deeply significant device of Beethoven been exploited by our modern instrumental-composers, with their eternal "subsidiary themes"—R. WAGNER.

Note 14 on page 44

Whosoever may undertake to write the special history of instrumental music since Beethoven, will undoubtedly have to take account of isolated phenomena which are of such a nature as to merit a particular and close attention. He who regards the history of Art, however, from so wide-reaching a point of view as here was necessary, can only keep to its decisive moments; he must leave unconsidered whatever lies aside from these 'moments,' or is merely their derivative. But the more undeniably is great ability evinced by such detached phenomena, so much the more strikingly do *they themselves* prove, by the barrenness of all their art-endeavour, that in their peculiar art-province somewhat may have yet been left to

discover in respect of technical treatment, but nothing in respect of the living spirit, now that *that* has once been spoken which Beethoven spoke through Music. In the great universal Art-work of the Future there will ever be fresh regions to discover; but not in the separate branch of art, when once the latter—as Music, by Beethoven. has already been led to universalism but yet would linger in her solitary round.—R. WAGNER.

#### Note 15 on page 44

The original sentence is somewhat too forcible for English notions "nachdem er geholfen hat, drei vorangehende Instrumentalsätze so geschickt wie möglich zu Stande zu bringen." The reference is, of course, to Mendelssohn's "*Lobgesang*."—TR.

#### Note 16 on page 45

However lengthily I have here expressed myself upon the nature of Music, in comparison with what I have said upon the other branches of Art (my reasons lying in both the highly individual character of Music and its special and eventful evolutionary course, proceeding from this individuality), yet I am well aware of the countless gaps in my recital. But it would need not one book but an entire library, to lay bare the whole unseemliness, the flabbiness and ignominy of the bonds uniting our modern music with our modern life; to penetrate the piteous, over-sentimental idiosyncrasy of our art of Tone, which makes her the object of the speculation of our educational "Folk-improvers," who would trickle drops of Music's honey upon the acid sweat of ill-used factory-hands as the only possible alleviation of their sufferings (very much as our sages of the State and Bourse are all agog to stuff their pliant patches of religion between the gaping rents of the police-officials' tender care of men); and finally to explain the mournful psychological phenomenon, that a man may be not only base and bad, but also dull—without these qualities hindering him from being a quite respectable musician.—R. WAGNER.

#### Note 17 on page 47

*Stabreim* and Alliteration.—A fuller explanation of this form of 'rhyme' will be found in "*Opera and Drama*" (Part II., chap. vi. and Part III., chap. ii.), which work will form the second volume of this series of translations. Meanwhile a few words of elucidation may not be found amiss,—The English equivalent, "Alliteration," does not convey the full force of this method of versification, as may be seen at once by the oft-quoted specimen from Churchill, "with apt alliteration's artful aid," for therein one of the fundamental rules is violated in such a manner as to show how little the true principle of this 'rhyme' is now understood in England; the rule in question being, that if vowels are employed for this artifice, they must be of different sound; as in Wagner's own lines "*Unheilig / acht' ich den Eid*" (the *stabreim* being here reduplicated in the immediately following line: "*der Unliebende eint*"). The simple rule, as given in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, is that this rhyme is "indifferent as to the number of syllables in a couplet; but imperative as to the number of accented syllables, of which there must be four (two in each half), the first three beginning with the same letter" (in the case of consonants), the writer adducing the lines from *Piers the Ploughman*: "I was weary of wandering I and went me to rest" &c. In Brockhaus' *Conversations-lexikon*, however, it is stated that the original rule was: that in a couplet the first half should contain one or two rhyming initials, the second only one—in each case the rhyme being borne by the strongly accented syllable; but that this rule was extended to allow of the use of two rhymes also in the second half, but never more. This authority cites a couplet from the 9th Century Saxon poem "*Hêliand*," which runs thus: "so *lerda* he tho thea *Liudi / liot* hon wordon"; and adds that the word "*Stabreim*" is an abbreviation from "*Buchstabenreim*" (lit. = "spelling-rhyme"); that the

first verse-half of the couplet ("*Langzeile*" or "*Liedstäbe*") was called "Stollen," the second: "Hauptstab," or principal rhyme. —a circumstance emphasised by Wagner above. In his great tetralogy, the *Ring des Nibelungen*, the poet-composer has made almost exclusive use of this form of versification, amplifying its rules much in the same way as he amplified those of Music, from that plastic power of genius which melts all rules into new moulds. But the great characteristic of the *Stabreim* proper, he has almost invariably preserved, viz.:—the marking thereby of the accented, *i.e.* the *root* word, and the commencing of the line by a strong (or 'long') syllable. As a perfect specimen may be instanced: "*Lachend muss ich dich lieben; / lachend will ich erblinden*" (*Siegfried*,— last Scene); while a rich example of doubled and re-doubled *Stabreim* is found at the end of the *Götterdämmerung*: "*Nicht Gut, nicht Gold, | noch Göttliche Pracht; | nicht Haus, nicht Hof, | noch herrischer Prunk:*"—These specimens, taken at random from the *Ring*, must suffice for the present purpose.—TR.

#### Note 18 on page 47

Compare *Die Meistersinger*, Act 3.—"*Ob euch gelang ein rechtes Paar zu finden, das zeigt sich jetzt an den Kinden,*" "If you've had wit to match your pair, *that* we shall see in their son and heir,"—where Hans Sachs is instructing Walther in the mysteries of the old Meistersingers' 'After-song.'—It is curious also that Wagner should have again hit upon the same thought as Schopenhauer, who explains the love of man to woman as governed by the 'Will-to-live' of their future progeny.—TR.

#### Note 19 on page 48

"Die einsame Dichtkunst—*dichtete* nicht mehr."—Again it is impossible to translate "*dichten*," for lack of an English *verb*; our "poetise" has a derogatory strain in it; 'compose' and 'indite' will neither of them here take the place of the German original; and we are forced upon a paraphrase, which may perhaps find justification from the analogous term for him who 'prophesies,' namely, 'Seer,'—which Carlyle has so often applied to the true Poet.—TR.

#### Note 20 on page 51

"O himmel! wie entstellt, wie unkenubar klangen ihm seine, in dichterische Musik gebrachten, Anschauungen entgegen!" Probably Wagner here refers to the opera-texts, such as *Proserpina*, written by Goethe for the Weimar Court-theatre, the direction of which was entrusted to him by the Duke; for in his article, "Zukunftsmusik" (The "Music of the Future," vol. vii. of the *Ges. Schriften*) our author writes as follows: "Goethe himself indited several opera-texts (libretti), and, in order to place himself on the level of that *genre*, he thought right to keep both his invention and his working-out as trivial as possible; so that it is only with regret, that we can see these extremely mawkish pieces numbered in the ranks of his poems."—As to the allusion to the "poodle" at the end of the present paragraph, it is an absolute statement of fact. In 1817 Goethe, who had long felt the growing impossibility of maintaining the high standard of the Weimar theatrical performances, in face of the favour shown to Kotzebue and his claptrap, finally laid down the reins of direction in consequence of the production, against his express desire, of a piece called the "*Hund des Aubry*." We cannot discover whether Kotzebue had a hand in this piece or not, for it is merely described in Schaefer's "Life of Goethe" as imported from France; the biographer adds, that in it a *rôle* was assigned to a trained Poodle!—TR.

#### Note 21 on page

—The same word, "Öffentlichkeit," is used in these three instances; it has seemed,



however, impossible to translate this half abstract, half concrete term, excepting by the use of three different expressions, in order to keep touch with the meaning.—TR.

#### Note 24 on page 53

From all that Wagner has written about Wilhelmine Schröder-Devrient, it cannot be doubted that it is to her that he here refers. Compare page 9 of the "*Autobiographic Sketch*," also "*A Pilgrimage to Beethoven*," the "*Communication to my Friends*," and "*On Actors and Singers*."—TR.

#### Note 25 on page 57

Among these, the masters of the French-school of the beginning of this century should be specially noted.—R. Wagner.—See also p. 16, "*Autobiographic Sketch*."—TR.

#### Note 26 on page 59

The title of this chapter, "*Der Mensch als künstlerischer Bildner aus natürlichen Stoffen*," presents many difficulties to the translator. If we possessed a good equivalent for "Bildner" (from "*bilden*," to fashion, shape or form, *e.g.* a picture) that would cover the three different varieties of 'plastic' artist, we should still be short of a generally accepted substitute for "*Stoff*." The idea of the original is to include in the term "stuff" not only the *raw material*, as in Architecture or Sculpture, but also the *subject-matter*, as in Landscape-painting. This being thus, perhaps we may be permitted to employ the word in the sense in which Shakespeare uses it, in the line "We are such stuff as dreams are made on."—TR.

#### Note 27 on page 60

Compare *Götterdämmerung*, Act 3, "Der Wecker kam; er küsst dich wach. . . . da lacht ihm Brünnhilde's Lust!"—TR.

#### Note 28 on page 61

Certainly the provision of the useful, is the first and greatest necessity: but an epoch which can never soar beyond this care nor cast it behind it in order to attain the beautiful, but makes this care the sole prescriptor of every branch of public life and drags it even into Art,—that epoch is in truth *barbarian*. Yet it is only the most unnatural *civilisation*, that can produce such absolute barbarism: it is for ever heaping up obstructions to the useful, to give itself the air of for ever taking thought for utility alone.—R. WAGNER.

#### Note 29 on page 66

It is a political crime to use this word: however, there is none which will better describe the direct antithesis of *Egoism*. Whosoever is ashamed to-day to pass current as an Egoist—and indeed no one will openly confess himself as such—must allow us to take the liberty of calling him a Communist.—R. WAGNER.

#### Note 30 on page 66

The redemption of woman into participation in the nature of man is the outcome of christian-Germanic evolution. The Greek remained in ignorance of the psychic process of the ennobling of woman to the rank of man, To him everything appeared under its direct, unmediated aspect,—woman to him was woman, and man was man; and thus at the point where his love to woman was satisfied in accordance with nature, arose the spiritual demand



for man.—R. WAGNER.

[Note 31 on page 67](#)

One feels almost tempted to concoct a hybrid equivalent for this expressive "*ur-hellenisch*," and boldly write it down as "ur-hellenic;" but the fear of a literary Mrs Grundy is too powerful for the rash desire. We cannot, however, help envying the Germans their pregnant prefix "*ur*," a shadow of which we fancy we may still detect in our English "early," "*ere*-while" or "*erst*"; again perhaps in our "hoary"; and almost certainly in "yore."—TR.

[Note 32 on page 69](#)

The words "*Skulptur*" and "*Architektur*" here appear for the first time, in the original. Hitherto these arts have been spoken of under the terms "*Baukunst*" (the building art) and "*Bildhauerkunst*" (the image- or likeness-hewer's art); but I have found it more convenient to employ, in general, the equivalents "Sculpture" and "Architecture." Here, however, I have deemed it necessary to use the more exact, though more cumbersome expression "the statuary's art," in the opening of the sentence, in order to reserve the term "Sculpture" to render the more general idea of "carving," in which sense it is evident that Wagner has here employed the Latin noun.—W.A.E.

[Note 33 on page 70](#)

The personality of the Zurich exile here peeps out from beneath the robes of the art-philosopher. No one could feel more keenly than Wagner himself, at the time of writing this essay, the insufficiency of the suggested substitute, cut off as he then was from enjoyment of all the higher walks of art.—TR.

[Note 34 on page 76](#)

The problem of the Theatrical edifice of the Future can in no wise be considered as solved by our modern stage buildings: for they are laid out in accord with traditional laws and canons which have nothing in common with the requirements of pure Art. Where speculation for gain, on the one side, joins forces with luxurious ostentation on the other, the absolute interests of Art must be cryingly affected; and thus no architect in the world will be able to raise our stratified and fenced-off auditoria—dictated by the parcelling of our public into the most diverse categories of class and civil station—to conformity with any law of beauty. If one imagine oneself, for a moment, within the walls of the common Theatre of the Future, one will recognise with little trouble, that an undreamt width of field lies therein open for invention.—R. WAGNER.

[Note 35 on page 77](#)

It can scarcely be indifferent to the modern landscape-painter to observe by how few his work is really understood to-day, and with what blear-eyed stupidity his nature-paintings are devoured by the Philistine world that pays for them; how the so-called "charming prospect" is purchased to assuage the idle, unintelligent, visual gluttony of those same need-less men whose sense of hearing is tickled by our modern, empty music-manufacture to that idiotic joy which is as repugnant a reward of his performance to the artist as it fully answers the intention of the *artisan*. Between the "charming prospect" and the "pretty tune" of our modern times there subsists a doleful affinity, whose bond of union is certainly not the musing calm of Thought, but that vulgar slipshod *sentimentality* which draws back in selfish horror from the

sight of human suffering in its surroundings, to hire for itself a private heavenlet in the blue mists of Nature's generality. These sentimentals are willing enough to see and hear everything: only *not* the *actual, undistorted Man*, who lifts his warning finger on the threshold of their dreams. *But this is the very man whom we must set up in the forefront of our show!*—R. WAGNER.

#### Note 36 on page 78

It is a little difficult to quite unravel this part of the metaphor, for the same word "*Boden*" is used twice over. I have thought it best to translate it in the first place as "loam," and in the second as "ground"; for it appears as though the idea were, in the former case, that of what agriculturists call a "top-dressing," and thus a substance which could break up the lower soil and make it fruitful. The "it" which occurs after the colon may refer either to the "feeling" or to the "orchestra," for both are neuter nouns.—TR.

#### Note 37 on page 80

The modern *Playwright* will feel little tempted to concede that Drama ought not to belong exclusively to *his* branch of art, the art of *Poesy*; above all will he not be able to constrain himself to share it with the Tone-poet,—to wit, as he understands us, allow the Play to be swallowed up by the Opera. Perfectly correct!—so long as Opera subsists, the Play must also stand, and, for the matter of that, the Pantomime too; so long as any dispute hereon is thinkable, the Drama of the Future must itself remain un-thinkable. If, however, the Poet's doubt lie deeper, and consist in this, that he cannot conceive how *Song* should be entitled to usurp entirely the place of spoken dialogue: then he must take for rejoinder, that in two several regards he has not as yet a clear idea of the character of the Art-work of the Future. Firstly, he does not reflect that Music has to occupy a very different position in this Art-work to what she takes in modern Opera: that only where her power is the fittest, has she to open out her full expanse; while, on the contrary, wherever another power, for instance that of dramatic Speech, is the most *necessary*, she has to subordinate herself to that; still, that Music possesses the peculiar faculty of, without entirely keeping silence, so imperceptibly linking herself to the thought-full element of Speech that she lets the latter seem to walk abroad alone, the while she still supports it. Should the poet acknowledge this, then he has to recognise in the second place, that thoughts and situations to which the lightest and most restrained accompaniment of Music should seem importunate and burdensome, can only be such as are borrowed from the spirit of our modern Play; which, from beginning to end, will find no inch of breathing-space within the Art-work of the Future. The Man who will portray himself in the Drama of the Future has done for ever with all the prosaic hurly-burly of fashionable manners or polite intrigue, which our modern "poets" have to tangle and to disentangle in their plays, with greatest circumstantiality. His nature-bidden action and his speech are: Yea, yea! and Nay, nay !—and all beyond is evil, *i.e.* modern and superfluous.—R. WAGNER.

#### Note 38 on page 81

We must beg to be allowed to regard the Tone-poet as included in the Word-poet,—whether personally or by fellowship, is here a matter of indifference.—R. WAGNER.

#### Note 39 on page 81

The terms derived from the root "*dar-stellen*"—to set, or show, forth—have been used

throughout this essay so frequently and so variously, that I deem it necessary to call attention to the fact that in English we have no thoroughly satisfactory equivalent. I have, therefore, been obliged to render this concept by distinct expressions: sometimes as "performer," again as "executant," "actor," "representant," &c. while in the *verbal* sense I have taken refuge in "portray," "display," "perform," "impersonate," &c.—TR.

#### Note 40 on page 82

If we substitute "Will" for "Necessity" in this sentence (see [footnote on page 69](#)) we shall here obtain a complete summary of Schopenhauer's system of æsthetics; while, even as it stands, it significantly foreshadows E. von Hartmann's "*Philosophy of the Unconscious*."—TR.

#### Note 41 on page 82

"Über die als reine Thatsache kein zweifel mehr vorhanden ist"—to translate this sentence literally, "as a matter of fact," could only be misleading. Taken apart from the context, it might then be read as a confession of faith in the realistic school; whereas the whole passage shows that Wagner went strongly for a search below the incidental surface for the broad principles of life that govern human action. Witness, that, of the two schemes with which he was at this time busied, *Barbarossa* and *Siegfried*, he abandoned the historical in favour of the mythical.—TR.

#### Note 42 on page 82

In the original, the passage runs: "um der entausserten Nothwendigkeit seines Wesens willen"; it is impossible, however, to convey the idea of 'renunciation' connoted by the term "entausserung" (as employed in the next sentence) at like time with that of the—so to speak—'turning inside out' of a man's character.—TR.

#### Note 43 on page 82

We must not forget that, only a few months before writing this essay, Wagner had prepared a sketch for a tragedy on the subject of *Jesus of Nazareth*.—TR,

#### Note 44 on page 83

Whilst we here have only touched upon the *Tragic* element of the Artwork of the Future, in its evolution out of Life, and by artistic fellowship, we may infer its *Comic* element by reversing the conditions which bring the Tragic to a natural birth. The hero of the Comedy will be the obverse of the hero of the Tragedy. Just as the one instinctively directed all his actions to his surroundings and his foils—as a Communist, *i.e.* as a unit who of his inner, free Necessity, and by his force of character, ascends into the Generality—so the other in his rôle of Egoist, of foe to the principle of Generality, will strive to withdraw himself therefrom, or else to arbitrarily direct it to his sole self-interest; hut he will be withstood by this principle of generality in its most multifarious forms, hard pressed by it, and finally subdued. The Egoist will be *compelled* to ascend into *Community*; and *this* will therefore be the virtual enacting, many-headed personality which will ever appear to the action-wishing, but never canning, egoist as a capriciously changing Chance; until it fences him around within its closest circle and, without further breathing-space for his self-seeking, he sees at last his only rescue in the unconditional acknowledgment of its necessity. The artistic Fellowship, as the representative of Generality, will therefore have in Comedy an even directer share in the framing of the poem itself, than in Tragedy.—R. WAGNER.

[Note 45 on page 84](#)

And especially our modern Theatrical institutions.—R. WAGNER.

[Note 46 on page 84](#)

"*Stand-rechten*," generally employed to signify a 'court-martial.' The whole group of derivatives from the root-idea of 'standing' reads thus—"das getreue Abbild des modernen Staates, mit semen *Ständen, Anstellungen, Standrechten, stehenden* Heeren—und was sonst noch Alles in ihm *stehen* möge"; the italics being reproduced from the original.—TR.

[Note 47 on page 85](#)

See *Meistersinger*, Act 3.—*Walther*: "Wie fang ich nach der Regel an?"—*Hans Sachs*: "Ihr stellt sie selbst, und folgt ihr dann."—TR.

[Note 48 on page 85](#)

Whosoever is unable to lift himself above his thralldom to the trivial, unnatural system of our Modern Art, will be sure to pose the vapidest of questions anent these details; to throw out doubts; to decline to understand. That he should answer in advance the myriad possible doubts and questions of this sort, no one, surely, will demand of an author who addresses himself above all to the *thinking artist*, and not to the thick-headed modern art-industrial—no matter whether the latter's literary calling be critical or creative.—R. WAGNER.

[Note 49 on page 87](#)

It would almost seem that the author had caught a slight foreboding of the character of the latest Parisian "Commune."—The Editor. (TR.—*i.e.* of the edition of 1872; in other words—Richard Wagner.)



[393]

## Appendix

Author's variants, in the original editions of the works included in this volume; omitting such as either are altogether insignificant, and would have called for no difference in translation, or have already been reproduced in the Footnotes to the text.

[395]

Page 77, line 3, "abstract" (1850 edition) for "deistic."

Page 97 in connection with the top paragraph there stood a footnote:

"This cultivated man-consumer is only distinguished from the savage cannibal by a greater daintiness; inasmuch as he consumes alone the life-sap of his fellow-man, whereas the savage gulps down all the gross accessories. The first, therefore, is able to feast off a goodly number of human victims at one sitting; while the second, with the best appetite in the world, can hardly get through one."

Page 101, line 2 of second paragraph, "wills to" for "shall."

Page 103, line 8, after "corporeal motion", appeared "the movement of motion" (die Bewegung der Bewegung).

Page 106, line 11 from bottom, "in public private life", for "in private life".

Page 183, line 16 after "from above." there appeared: "Our art, like our whole culture, bears the same relation to the life of modern Europe, as does their civilisation, imported from outside, to the national character of the Russians. Not only is it, that, beneath the thin veneer of this civilisation, the real Russian remains a barbarian, and for the matter of that, a hideously. enslaved barbarian; but that any member of the Folk who shares in it, thereby becomes at once the most abandoned rascal, since he only sees therein a school of over-reaching and hypocrisy, in which he also learns his part. But, taken at its best . .

Page 186, line 7, "abstract God", for "modernised Jehova!"—A similar substitution of "Jehova" for "God" has been made in that page of the Ges. Schr. which corresponds to 255 of *Art and Climate*.

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# *Opera and Drama*

By Richard Wagner

Translated by William Ashton Ellis



The Wagner Library

Edition 1.0

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## Contents

About this Title .....	4
Translator's Preface .....	5
Opera and Drama .....	15
Translator's Note .....	16
Dedication of the second edition .....	17
Preface to the first edition .....	19
Introduction .....	21
First Part - Opera and the Nature of Music .....	27
I. ....	27
II. ....	32
III. ....	39
IV. ....	44
V. ....	48
VI. ....	54
VII. ....	64
Second Part - The Play and the Nature of Dramatic Poetry .....	71
Translator's Notes .....	71
[0.] .....	71
I. ....	73
II. ....	85
III. ....	97
IV. ....	103
V. ....	111
VI. ....	116
Third Part - The Arts of Poetry and Tone in the Drama of the Future .....	123
Translator's Notes .....	123
I. ....	123
II. ....	130
III. ....	141
IV. ....	149
V. ....	158
VI. ....	167
VII. ....	174
Notes .....	189

## About this Title

### Source

*Opera and Drama*  
By Richard Wagner  
Translated by William Ashton Ellis

*Opera and Drama*  
Richard Wagner's Prose Works  
Volume 2  
Pages 1-376  
Published in 1893

### Original Title Information

*Oper und Drama.*  
Published in 1852  
Sämtliche Schriften und Dichtungen : Volume III/IV  
Pages 222-320/1-229

### Reading Information

This title contains 135167 words.  
Estimated reading time between 386 and 676 minutes.

Notes are indicated using parenthesis, like (1).  
Page numbers of the original source are indicated  
using square-bracketed parentheses, like [62].

[v]

## Translator's Preface

BEFORE plunging into the thick of the accompanying treatise, I believe it will interest the reader to gather a few details about its history. Fortunately these are obtainable at first hand; therefore I can take no credit for supplying them, further than that they have not hitherto been set forth in any connected form.

The very first we hear of *Oper und Drama* is in a letter from Wagner to Theodor Uhlig dated December 27, 1849: "I have still very much to say to those before whom I am placing my *Art-work of the Future* [then in the printer's hands]; I therefore made inquiries respecting a newspaper in which—if only in outline—I might be able to utter my thoughts about certain matters." A fortnight later (Jan. 12, '50) we find our author again referring to his *Art-work of the Future*, and adding: "I quite understand that you take chief interest in music; perhaps I shall return to it at greater length on some future occasion." Again, on February 8, 1850, and even before receiving a printed copy of the work just named, he writes: "I am resolved to publish *Papers on Art and Life* entirely on my own account; perhaps fortnightly.<sup>a</sup> Nothing definite comes of this proposal, except the article on *Art and Climate*—already translated in Vol. i of the present series—and in August the article on *Judaism in Music*, published in the *Neue Zeitschrift* September '50. We next read in Letter 14 that Liszt is pressing for the composition of *Siegfried*—i.e. the *Siegfried's Tod*—and significantly enough Wagner says: "the choice as to what I should take next in hand has tortured me: was it to be a poem, a book, or an essay?" and later on in the same letter (undated, but apparently written in August '50) he adds, "I had intended to set to work at another book—*The Redemption of Genius*—which should cover the whole ground. Feeling the uselessness of this book, I determined to content myself with two little essays: first, *The Monumental*; then, *The Unbeauty of Civilisation*, deducing the conditions of the beautiful from the life of the future. But what should I effect by that? Fresh confusion—and nothing else!" Leaving aside the easy handle that the [vi] last remark affords to those who are pleased to call Wagner "an imperfectly equipped thinker"—as was done in a recent English criticism—this extract is interesting, as affording a clue to his method of literary composition at that period; for the essays, or sketches for essays, on *Genius* and *The Monumental* have been incorporated in the *Communication to my Friends*, written about a year later, whilst that on *Civilisation* and the life of the future has evidently found its way into Chapter IV of Part II. of *Oper und Drama*.

By this time the literary longing was approaching a tangible shape, for on Sept. 20, 1850, Wagner writes again to Uhlig, and again after a reference to *Siegfried*: "I am thinking of doing some literary work this autumn and winter. All generalities in art are, for the moment, repugnant to me; no one understands them until his nose is driven into particulars. Now my particular work would be music, and, above all, opera. . . In any case, I will shortly send you rather a long article on modern opera,—about Rossini and Meyerbeer." This we may take to be the first unmistakable shadowing forth of *Oper und Drama*, although the title and magnitude of the eventual book are not yet within clear range of vision. Another point in this letter is the allusion in the very next sentence, already quoted in my preface to Volume i, to the receipt of a letter from Feuerbach, apparently accompanied by *all* that author's philosophical treatises.

At last on October 9, 1850, we find that the book is really begun, though with no definite idea of the size to which it will later swell, and under a title which points merely to the first Part of the work as we now have it. This reference, in Letter 17 to Uhlig, runs as follows: "My would-be article on opera is becoming rather a voluminous piece of writing, and will perhaps be not much less in size than the *Art-work of the Future*. I have decided to offer it to J. J.

Weber [publisher] under the title, '*Das Wesen der Oper.*' . . . I have only finished the first half; unfortunately I am at present quite hindered from continuing the work. Every day I must hold rehearsals" &c. On the 22nd of the same month Uhlig is informed: "I say nothing here about all æsthetic scruples roused in you and others by my artistic tenets and writings, since I propose to treat the whole matter thoroughly and exhaustively in my *Wesen der Oper*—which I hope to be able to send you in a month. I shall even be compelled to speak my mind about my [vii] former operas. The essay is becoming somewhat bulky."—In passing, I may note that this discussion of his own operas came to be reserved, and very properly, for the *Communication*.—

In Letter 19 to Uhlig, written early in December, 1850, we get the final title of the book, and a brief synopsis of its contents. This letter is peculiarly interesting, as it shews how the work grew under Wagner's hands and became a real assistance to him, through clearing up his theretofore half-conscious artistic procedure. He says: "You can have no idea of the trouble I am giving myself, to call forth a whole understanding in those who now understand but half; yes, even my foes, who either do not or will not understand at all as yet, even them I fain would bring to understanding;—and lastly I rejoice for the mere reason that I am always coming to a better understanding myself. My book, which is now to be called '*Oper und Drama,*' is not yet ready: it will be at least twice as big as the *Art-work of the Future*. I still shall require at least the whole of December before I come to the end, and then the whole of January, for certain, for the copying and revising. I can tell you nothing about it in advance, except the general outline: I. Exposition of the essence of Opera, down to our own day; with the conclusion, 'Music is a bearing organism (Beethoven, as it were, practised it in the bearing of Melody)—therefore a womanly.'—II. Exposition of the essence of Drama, from Shakespeare down to our own day; conclusion, 'the poetic Understanding is a begetting organism, the poetic Aim the fertilising seed which takes its rise in nothing but the emotion of Love, and is the impulse to the fecundation of a female organism, which must bear the seed—received in Love.' III. (Here, first, do I really begin) 'Exposition of the act of bearing the poetic Aim, achieved through perfected Tone-speech.'—Alas! I would I had told you nothing—for I see that I have told you nothing really.—Only this, as well: I have spared no pains, to be exact and circumstantial; therefore I resolved, from the start, not to let myself be pressed for time, so as not to scamp any part." He then adds the diagram which I have reproduced on page 2, and about which I ought to remark that the arrow-heads are somewhat misleading, as it is evident, from page 224, that the evolutionary line is meant to proceed from the left base-angle to the apex of the triangle, and thence to the right base-angle.

By January 20, 1851—i.e. exactly four months from the first [viii] definite thought of it!—the whole book appears to have been finished, and a portion of it fair-copied, for on that day Wagner writes his next letter to Uhlig, informing him: "At last I was seized with a fury to finish my book, and not to write you until I could send you one part of it fair-copied: this resolution I took in hand and have carried out. To-day I send you the first of the three Parts, and propose to send you the second so soon as ever it is tidy, and afterwards the third in the same manner. . . . The first Part is the shortest and easiest, perhaps also the most entertaining; the second goes deeper, and the third is a piece of work which goes right to the bottom. The whole will be a book of 400 to 500 pages." In the next letter, "beginning of February," he says, in addition to the words I have quoted on [page 118](#): "I confess that I cherish the daring thought of not selling my book for less than 60 louis d'or. It has cost me four months of intense exertion."—Poor man, he only got 20 louis d'or for it, with the promise of a like amount when the first edition, of 500 copies, should be exhausted!—Finally we read in Letter 22, dated middle of February '51, "Here you have my testament: I may as well die now—anything further that I could do, seems to me a useless piece of luxury!—The last pages of this copy I have written in a state of mind which I cannot intelligibly describe to

anyone." Then follows that touching anecdote of the death of his little parrot, which seems destined for an immortality like that of Newton's dog. This little household event acquires an additional importance from another pair of sentences in the letter: "Three days have passed, and nothing can comfort me. . . . I only wish sincerely to get the hateful manuscript out of the house. . . . There will still be many faults in the manuscript—I have only been able to just glance very inattentively through it once." These lines should be remembered, in reading Part III of *Opera and Drama*, as they account for many a knotty passage.

The manuscript being now finished and despatched to Uhlig, let us briefly trace its history as a completed work. Letter 23, of March 10, '51, says: "Strike out a whole passage on the first page of the Introduction [*not* the "Preface," as appears in the English version of these Letters]—I wrote this Introduction when I still thought that the whole thing would become a series of musical newspaper articles: now, as the opening of a larger book, such a tone would give the reader an impression of snappiness, if not of [ix] pettiness. It would be too terrible, if the book came to be looked on as a mere attack on Meyerbeer. I wish I still could withdraw much of this kind. When I read it myself, the taunts do not sound venomous—when others read it, I perhaps shall often seem to them a passionate and embittered person; which is about the last thing I should care to appear, even to my enemies." Later on in the letter one finds proof of the astounding energy of the man. Most people would have thought that a book of these dimensions would have exhausted, at least for a time, its author's fund of literary matter; but no, he writes "How do *I* feel now? —Well, if only I could describe it I The one thing that I now could set to work at, with any appearance of use, would be art-literature: and that is just what no one asks for. . . . Would it perhaps be better to compose another opera, for myself alone?—It's enough to make one die of laughing!" He *did* write again and at once, to wit the pamphlet on *A Theatre for Zurich*, reprinted in Vol. v of the *Ges. Schr.*

I may pass over the difficulties in finding a publisher, and merely glancing at the facts recorded on [page 118](#), to which I shall presently return, I come to Letter 27, of June 3, '51: "You already know that Weber, after all, will print my book. Recently I received four sheets of proof; to my astonishment I see that he is going to publish it in three volumes, small octavo and very wide-spaced—in fact quite noble—type. Thus he will put up the selling price. O, you book-dealers!" Again, Letter 28, of June 18, '51, where Wagner writes: "My book at Weber's progresses at a very slow pace. My "readings" here consisted of a selection from '*Oper und Drama*,' given quite privately before a group of acquaintances and friends." Letter 31, September 8, '51, is more important; Wagner is ill, and writes: "I have a fresh prayer to make to you. There are still about twelve sheets of '*Oper und Drama*' to be corrected. To-day I am writing to Weber, asking him to send them to *you*, together with the manuscript. You really must see to them for me. . . . Don't be angry with me for thus disposing of your time." This 'proof,' handed over to Uhlig for 'correction,' would wellnigh cover the whole Third Part, since in the original edition that Part occupied 247 pages, and to the 192 for the "twelve sheets" we must add a certain number for the "about." We thus see that it was almost a decree of Fate, that Part III should not be properly revised, firstly in the manuscript [x] stage, and secondly in that of 'proof.' Uhlig's labours would necessarily be confined to the correction of printer's errors, nor—even had there been time for any extensive alterations—was he quite the best adviser that could be found, on the point of clearness of meaning; his own articles in the *Neue Zeitschrift* are often admirable in matter, but whenever he attempts to follow his master into the depths of aesthetic speculation he loses his way in intricate sentences, unrelieved by any of those flashes of intuition which light up even the hardest page of Wagner's prose and make his darkest sayings all the more worth unravelling. To this consideration, also, I shall have to return; but I wished to emphasise *in situ* the lack of revision of Part III.

To resume the historical course—on Oct. 20 a couple of lines give Uhlig instructions, for Weber, as to the precise title for the book; merely "OPER UND DRAMA, von Richard

Wagner." On Nov. 20th a significant message to the faithful friend: "Why three articles on Part I. of '*Oper und Drama*,' which contains little else but criticisms, and only two on Part III? Yet this Third Part is really the most important—to bring to people's thorough understanding—since it goes to the very bottom of the thing. Don't forget to lay stress on 'Stuff'—Part II.—as centre and axis of the whole; for *here* is the crucial point, that I set forth Form solely in the light of Substance, whilst it has hitherto been treated quite regardless of all substance." Finally on Nov. 28th comes the announcement: "Well, I have received '*Oper und Drama*.' . . . I shall have one copy interleaved, so as to use it for the preparation of a—possible—second edition."

To complete the history of the manuscript, however, there is still one document to cite; and this, unlike the previous references, has the merit of novelty for the English public. When *Oper und Drama* had passed through its last stage, namely its issue to the press and public, Wagner made Uhlig a present of the manuscript, with a little private Dedication. Uhlig died in 1853, and the manuscript was returned by his family to the author, at Wagner's own request, apparently in 1879. A copy of the private Dedication found its way into an Austrian newspaper of the latter year, and thence into the treasure-house of Herr Nicolaus Oesterlein—the founder, and up to the present the owner, of the invaluable Richard-Wagner-Museum in Vienna—by whose kindness I am enabled to give it in an English dress. It runs thus: [xi] 'Dear Uhlig ! You once let slip that you still were guilty of a conservative weakness for collecting autographs. As Christmas is just upon us, it gives me pleasure to supply that weakness with a friendly sop. In the name of God, then, conserve this manuscript as pertaining to your household goods. But above all take cheer from the binding, in which I have endeavoured to reverse Goethe's saying: 'Grey, my friend, is every theory,' so that I may call to you with a good conscience: 'Red, o friend, is this my theory !' Zurich, December 21, 1851. Yours, Richard Wagner.'—It is perhaps scarcely necessary to point out the semi-political allusion to the revolutionary tendency of the art-theories embodied in this book.

Having watched *Oper und Drama* proceed through all the stages of its first edition, I may add that its second edition did not appear until 1868-9, practically unaltered. If that "interleaving" was ever effected, there appears to have been no use made of the blank pages—unlike Schopenhauer and his continued additions to *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*—so that a revision would be quite out of the question; a man's views will generally alter, or develop, so much in seventeen years, that it is quite impossible to tinker at the original work without destroying its spontaneity. Moreover, when a book has already become the subject of considerable controversy, it is almost an act of literary disingenuousness, to subject it to an entire recasting; Wagner felt this, and thus has left us a record of the most important stage in his intellectual career, for the loss of which no smoothing down of spurs and angles could possibly have compensated.—The third edition of *Oper und Drama* forms one-third of Volume iii and two-thirds of Volume iv of the *Gesammelte Schriften* issued in 1872. The fourth, and as yet the last, edition is that contained in the "Volksausgabe," issued in 1888.

I must now turn back to an incident in the early career of the book, the discussion of which in its proper order would have broken the historical thread, as it calls for rather more detailed treatment. If the reader will refer to my note on [page 118](#) he will find an extract from a letter to Uhlig, in which Wagner alludes to certain "articles," taken from Part II, for the *Deutsche Monatschrift*. Beside that extract I must now place another, this time from a letter to Liszt dated July 11, 1851, and the only important allusion to this book in any of Wagner's published [xii] correspondence apart from those I have cited above. In this letter we read: "'*Oper und Drama* is passing through the press very slowly, and will scarcely be ready before two months. Out of this book I have, by special desire, contributed to the *Deutsche Monatschrift*



one or two articles upon modern dramatic poetry; but I now regret it,—for, torn from their context, they do not sound particularly clear. I send them to you all the same, although I am half inclined to ask you to ignore them now. . . . How delighted I am about my *Junge Siegfried* [i.e. about the Weimar proposals, through Liszt, for a performance of the work so soon as completed]; he will deliver me once for all from all article- and essay-writing. I shall spend all this month in gaining back my health, so as next month to throw myself into the music." Now, if we compare those articles in the *Monatsschrift* with the parallel passages of *Oper und Drama*, we find a large number of minor alterations and one very important addition. Wherever these minor alterations constitute a substantial divergence between the two texts, I have noted them in the accompanying translation; but there is scarcely a sentence, of these "articles," which has not been retouched in some trifling detail, such as the punctuation or the order of the words. In this particular section of Part II., therefore, Wagner indisputably took advantage of the opportunity for reflection, as afforded by its having already made an appearance in print; and in almost every instance these retouches add clearness to the original matter. This point I wish to emphasise, in connection with the letter of September '51 in which he declares himself too unwell to go on correcting his proofs of Part III, nor was it at all against his custom, to make amendments to a work while passing through the press, for we find him saying in a letter to Uhlig, of September '50: "It is *most essential* that I should be able to look once more through the whole [a pamphlet on Theatre Reform] before it comes out, so as to be able to make, perhaps some small alterations, perhaps some mere omissions.

But the most interesting fact about these *Monatsschrift* articles is this—that they do not contain a word about the Œdipus-Antigone myth. I notice that Mons. Noufflard, on page 20 of Volume ii of his excellent *Wagner d'après lui-même*, considers this passage an "intercalation," i.e. an addition to the original text of *Oper und Drama*, and assigns it to the period mentioned on [page 358 \[xiii\]](#) of the *Communication* (Vol. i of this series) when Wagner was balancing in his mind the respective merits of History and Myth as subjects for Drama, namely the years 1848 to 1849 when *Barbarossa* and *Siegfried* were dividing his attention. This really involves two questions: the one as to *whether* the passage existed in the original M.S., the other as to *when* it was written. The first question, I think, may be easily decided, although there is no documentary evidence to assist one—at least, none accessible at present. If the reader will take page 180 of the accompanying book, and pass straight from the asterisk to the passage quoted in the footnote, and then skip the intervening pages until he arrives at the asterisk on page 192, he will have before him a translation of the text exactly as it stood in the *Monatsschrift*; he will find that there is absolutely *no* break of continuity in the chain of thought, and that certain words such as "Fate," "sinfulness," and "erroneous views of Society" are brought quite close together, in a manner evidently intended by Wagner at the first writing of the chapter. True, that this would reduce Chapter III to little more than three pages; but it is quite intelligible that those three pages should originally have formed the opening of what is now Chapter IV, for there was no break in the magazine "article," beyond the commencing of a fresh paragraph. When I further find that there is no other allusion to Œdipus throughout the book, except a foot-note evidently *added* to the close of Part II, to me it seems quite clear that Wagner—dissatisfied with portions of what he had already written, now that he had seen it in print—decided on relieving a somewhat stiff chapter by the introduction of these superb pages. Had there been any letter to Uhlig of about the same date as that to Liszt above-cited, we should doubtless have heard all about the change; but there was none, for the very good reason that in this letter Wagner tells Liszt that Uhlig is now *with him* at Zurich.

The second question as to *when* this Œdipus-episode was written, is not quite so easy to settle, and it really lies quite apart from the question of its being an afterthought; for in either

case it might well date from an earlier period, and have been an instance of working up old material that was lying by, just as we are told that a theme from the *Liebesverbot* found its way into *Tannhäuser*, that the 'Charfreitagszauber' of *Parsifal* dates from these Zurich years, &c. &c. This, in fact, is what I believe to have actually [xiv] occurred, judging by internal evidence. The style of much of this episode is quite different from the style of the rest of the book—however composite that may be—and closely resembles the *manner* of the "Vaterlandsverein speech" and the *matter* of "*Jesus of Nazareth*." Those strings of rhetorical questions on pages 184 and 189 are so much like the "speech," that I cannot but think that the major part of the episode was originally intended for a contribution to August Roeckel's "*Volksblätter*" of 1848-9. One or two other considerations confirm me in this belief :—namely the occurrence (a) of the expression "public opinion" three times in this episode (pages 180, 186, and 191), an expression which I do not remember to have come across in Wagner's writings, until those of many years later, but which would be the word most likely to come to the pen of anyone writing for a political newspaper; (b) of the allusion to "oaths," which we find dwelt-on in both the speech and the dramatic sketch, and I fancy nowhere else; (c) of a line which ushers in the episode, with the words "significant in so many *other* respects." I am aware that there are many sentences here which are not at all likely to have been written in the Dresden period, and are in perfect harmony with the rest of the book; but no author, with the slightest feeling for literary workmanship, would dream of pitchforking an earlier sketch into a later work without retouching it in many a particular. It would be quite a simple matter to point out the lines where the old matter is embroidered with the new—upon the hypothesis shared by Mons. Noufflard and myself;—but it would serve no other present purpose than to strengthen our position. At any rate, if it *is* an addition, there is a sentence in the upper part of page 180 that not only would make possible its introduction, but would most probably have suggested it.

To criticise the book as a whole, is scarcely the province of its translator; for the mere work of carefully inspecting each sentence, to ensure its correct rendering, gives one far too much of a microscopic habit to be able to take a general survey; moreover the continual revision of parts, both in the manuscript and the 'proof' stage, leaves one with a most confused impression as to how those parts are arranged—for example, one may be writing the manuscript of Chapter VII while correcting the 'proof' of [xv] Chapter I and going over the 'revise' of Chapter IV. Some months hence, I hope to be able to take up the whole matter in a series of articles for "*The Meister*," when I shall have had time to get the sections back into their proper order in my brain. Meanwhile, before saying a word about the separate Parts, I may add that my own study has convinced me of the general truth of what Mr H. S. Chamberlain once said in the "*Revue Wagnérienne*" (1888): "These two works [i.e. the present and *The Art-work*] may, and in fact ought to be considered as intimately connected with the *Ring des Nibelungen*. . . . If it was his dramatic projects, that inspired him in the first place with the idea of writing these studies, it was those also that he had before his eyes when—in *Opera and Drama*—he entered into details upon alliteration, &c. I even think that this preoccupation with the particular poem that he had in view, is a fault in this fine work, and that the *Art-work of the Future*, written at a moment when the *Ring* was less in the forefront of his thought, is in many respects its superior." But, to admit that there are faults in any great work, is only to say that it is human, especially when one remembers the enormous range of subjects treated in it; whilst, to claim superiority for its predecessor "in many respects," is not to place the present work on a really lower level. The superiority of *The Art-work* I consider to lie in its more methodical arrangement and its greater balance of diction; it is far more readable in the German, and in fact there are only about a couple of



sentences in the whole of that work which present any real ambiguity of meaning. *Opera and Drama*, on the other hand, is a work which combines all the advantages and disadvantages of having been written at a terrific pace—for it is almost incredible that a book of this magnitude, in every sense of the term, should have been dashed off *in four months*; the advantages might have been retained, and the disadvantages removed, by laying aside the completed manuscript for a few months, and then taking it up, for purposes of revision, with the impartial eye of practically a stranger. This, however, was not to be: the *Communication* was waiting to be written, and even that was contending for pride of place, in Wagner's mind, with the rapidly approaching project of the *Ring*; all these theories—beyond all value, as they are, to a student of Wagner's dramas—were yet but the antechamber to "Walhall" Thus the very work which was to enlighten the uninitiate as to the great artistic reforms the [xvi] poet-composer had in his brain, was here and there obscured by the critic-philosopher taking for granted that everyone would be able to follow the many intercrossing lines of his association of ideas. It was as though a musician should set his full 'score' before persons who had only just learnt to read two 'staves.' Nor do I mean this merely as a metaphor, for even his music does not afford a stronger proof of the 'polyphonic' nature of Wagner's mind, than many pages of this *Opera and Drama*. It is not that a sentence is discursive, wandering off into mere byways like those of Jean Paul Richter: no, even the most complex sentence in this work loses a considerable amount of its force and import by the omission of a single subsidiary clause, or even of an adjective which at first sight seems unimportant. To reduce this 'score' to two 'staves' would be an infinitely more difficult task than that which Hans von Bülow accomplished with *Tristan und Isolde*; some of the 'motives' would be bound to drop out, and, upon their recurrence later on, one would have lost their *raison d'être*. But I see that I am beginning to touch on the translator's fate; and *that* I must reserve to the close of my Preface.

I proposed, just now, to glance at the separate Parts. Well, the First presents one with next to no difficulties at all; merely an occasional sprinkling of Feuerbachian tricks of phrase, such as "will and can," "essence" and "is and should be"; the chief thing that strikes one in it, is the remarkable manner in which all its criticisms have become prophecies fulfilled, and the studious care with which Wagner has avoided any reference to his own operas, even where it must have been on the tip of his tongue to say "*Rienzi*" when attacking Meyerbeer's *Prophète*.—The Second presents us with considerable difficulties in Chapter IV—mainly political—and in the latter part of Chapter V; but it is of far wider-reaching import than anything else its author wrote, either before or after, and this he himself appears to have recognised later: nay even at the time, for he writes to Uhlig, in February '51, "I feel inclined to dedicate my book 'To thinking musicians and—poets.' What's your opinion? Would not the poets cry out that I am madly arrogant?" Here it is obvious that Aristotle's "*Poetics*" was consulted by Wagner (naturally, in a German version), and possibly Lessing's "*Dramaturgy*," though reference is made solely to the "*Laocöon*"; and I firmly believe that in times to come this Second Part will rank as the third—and [xvii] most important—link in the chain commenced by the two earlier writers: at any rate any obscurities here will wellnigh vanish upon consulting Aristotle and Lessing, especially the latter as rendered into such fluent English by Mr Edward Bell.

The Third Part is undeniably a difficult piece of work, and I am not ashamed to confess misgivings as to my rendering of certain passages, for I know that even at "Wahnfried" a few of the pages are considered doubtful of interpretation. The causes I have already hinted at, namely over-haste in production coupled with want of careful revision; but to these I must add two others, an almost entire oblivion, on the part of the author, that he was writing for anyone but himself, and a method which combines synthesis and analysis almost in one breath. I have already protested against the accusations that Wagner was an "ill-equipped

thinker," and that his style was "involved and discursive"; the truth is that he was too *well* equipped a thinker and forgot, at times, to make concessions to the weaker vessels, whilst there are very few of his sentences which are really long-winded, as distinct from being packed with positively *necessary* clauses: no, the difficulty of many passages in this Third Part consists in their intense condensation of thought, their saying in two or three words what it would take a page to set before any reader who requires to be told that "four" is virtually "two multiplied by two."

I think that my readers must be nearly tired of the name of Feuerbach, and I promise them that there will be no occasion to refer to him in future volumes. Personally I should like to strangle his ghost, if that were a possible feat; but I suppose he had his uses in the development of Wagner's thought, for I cannot believe that it is mere Chance that brings one mind to influence another. Anyhow the Feuerbachian terminology is writ large upon much of this Part III, and that unlucky present of treatises must account for the recrudescence of a phase of thought which seemed to be passing away in *Judaism in Music* and the early chapters of *Opera and Drama*. Here again, however, I cannot insist too strongly upon the fact that it was mere *terminology*, and only portions of *that*, which Wagner borrowed from Feuerbach; thus we shall find "necessary" occurring so often in the Feuerbachian sense, that I think needful to caution readers against taking it in the everyday meaning. Moreover Wagner was just then in the stage of philological study which makes one see [xviii] in every "root" the stem, the branches, and the leaves that have, may, or may have sprung from it; in every sense this was the period, with him, of deification of the Word.

Thus I come at last to my own labours in this book; for the literal translator's task is almost confined to dealings with the *word*.

Unlike *Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft* (Art-work of the Future), *Oper und Drama* had been translated before, and that so long ago as 1855-6, in the columns of the departed "*Musical World*" (London). Before starting on my translation I glanced at the older version in that journal; but the reading of two or three pages, at random here and there throughout the work, soon convinced me that there was no assistance to be derived therefrom. At a meeting of the Musical Association, held December 13 of last year, I read a paper on "Richard Wagner's Prose," and as it has since been published in their "Proceedings of Session 1892-3" I need not here go into the matter, except to confess a feeling of greater lenience—not towards the editor of that old journal—but towards the earlier translator of this book; when that paper of mine was written I had only just commenced the present version,—its conclusion has convinced me that it is better to be humble. For a work of this kind is enough to knock the vanity out of any man, the conditions being so entirely unique. No other of Richard Wagner's literary writings presents one half the difficulties of Part III, and portions of Part II of *Oper und Drama*; one is presented with a theory absolutely *in the making*; and to step from the path of literal exactness—either to the right, by narrowing, or to the left by widening the meaning—would rob the work of all historic value. It is of no use to flatter oneself with the thought that *later* works of Wagner, either literary or musico-dramatic, justify such and such an interpretation; for the point here, the grand instructiveness, is *what* particular stage a certain line of thought, a certain characteristic proposal, had arrived-at in the author's mind. Then, again, there are certain words employed over and over again, and acting as a kind of *leitmotiven* through the work: to find satisfactory English equivalents has scarcely ever been an easy, often an impossible task. "Moments," for instance—for that word one might rest content with drawing attention to its specific use; but "bedingen" and "bestimmen,"—one had to take refuge in such [xix] cumbrous and disfiguring terms as "condition" (used as a verb) and "determine"; whilst "Zusammenhang" could only very rarely be allowed to appear as "hang-together" (its best and

strictly etymological equivalent) or even "continuity," but had to ring the changes on "cohesion, conjunction, connection" &c., &c. Then there were combinations, such as "the poetic aim," which must be stereotyped at once, to avoid confusion; and lastly one had passages where the tantalising epithets seemed to group themselves into a coruscation baffling all description. Such passages I may expect to see selected as choice specimens of either the author's or the translator's style; but to the general reader—not reading for the mere sake of finding things to carp at—I may safely leave these passages in trust, knowing that if he reads the book from beginning to end, and not a mere sentence here and there, he will find the thoughts explain each other. To others I would offer the following quotation: "As for the third Unity which is that of Action, the ancients meant no other by it than what the Logicians do by their *Finis*, the end or scope of any action: that which is the first in Intention, and last in Execution: now the Poet is to aim at one great and compleat action, to the carrying on of which all things in his Play, even the very obstacles, are to be subservient; and the reason of this is as evident as any of the former. For two Actions equally labour'd and driven on by the Writer, would destroy the unity of the Poem; it would be no longer one Play, but two: not but that there may be many actions in a play . . . but they must be all subservient to the great one" &c. This is *not* from Richard Wagner's writings—though it well might be—but from "*An Essay of Dramatick Poesie*" by John Dryden (1684), whose claims as prose-writer are by many considered to rank higher than his claims as poet. I have quoted it for a double purpose: in the first place, to illustrate Wagner's use of "aim" and "great action"; in the second to justify my own frequent employment of 'capitals.' I am perfectly aware that the use of a capital A for "Art" is jeered at by those whose own art had better be printed upside down; yet I have felt that it was not only allowable, but helpful, to *capitalise* such words as "Understanding and Feeling" and several others, rather than run a greater risk of misunderstanding. I ought to say, however, that all nouns are decorated with capitals, in the German; therefore, that my [xx] selection of any particular word for this mark of distinction is purely arbitrary, though guided by a definite purpose.

I may add a word about the Summary and Index. These I have tried to make supplementary to one another, so that the one shall shew the horizontal, the other the vertical, lines of cleavage. Moreover, an index is generally called a "subject-index": in this instance, I have endeavoured to make it also an index to the 'predicates.' Such an attempt is most difficult to carry out, and I am not thoroughly satisfied with the result; but at least something approaching a 'concordance' was necessary for a work of this unique character,—something that should afford a faint clue to the marvellous meshwork of thought that binds this treatise into one organic whole, whatever apparent defects there may be in its arrangement of minor parts.

In conclusion I must thank the general body of my critics for a reception, accorded to Volume i, by far more cordial than my most sanguine expectations could ever have prefigured. It has encouraged the Wagner Society (London Branch), for whom this work is undertaken in the first place, to enable me to double the speed of publication; so that the present volume makes its appearance a year earlier than I had promised, and the remaining four or five will, it is hoped, follow year by year. I may add that Volume iii will contain, *inter alia*, "A Theatre for Zurich," "Judaism in Music," "On the Performance of Tannhäuser" &c., &c.; also that, the style of the originals being simpler, my readers may reasonably anticipate an improvement in my own.

WM. ASHTON ELLIS.

LONDON, Christmas 1893.

[1]

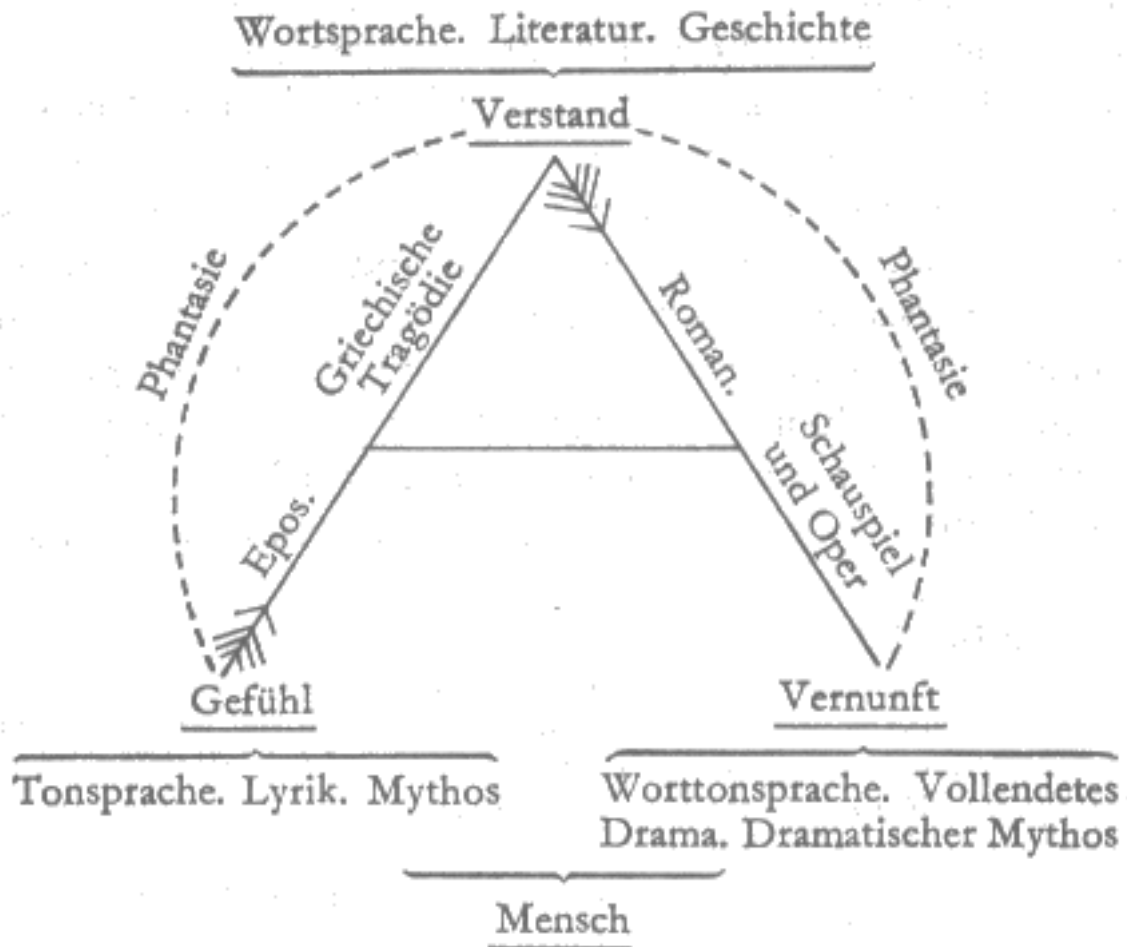
## Opera and Drama

[2]

## Translator's Note

In a letter to Theodor Uhlig, dated December 1850, Wagner says: "My book on *Opera and Drama* will be at least twice as big as *The Art-work of the Future*. . . . I add a diagram, as to which I am not sure whether I shall put it into my book or not."

The diagram in question did not find its way into *Opera and Drama*, but has been published, since the author's death, in his *Letters to Uhlig*, Fischer & Heine, from which, with permission of Messrs. H. Grevel & Co., it is here reproduced:—



In English this would read: "Word-speech, Literature, History," bracketed by "Understanding"; on either side, "Fancy"; the left-hand slanting line, "Epic—Greek Tragedy," the right-hand, "Romance (or Fiction)—Play and Opera"; below these, on the left, "Tone-speech, Lyric, Myth," bracketed by "Feeling"—on the right, "Word-Tone-speech, Completed Drama, Dramatic Myth," bracketed by "Reason" (or "Intuition"?); and the whole figure governed by the last word, "Man."

[3]

## Dedication of the second edition

To Constantin Frantz.

ABOUT the same time last year as I received from you a letter, in which you so delighted me by the account of your impressions on reading this book of mine, I learnt that its first edition had been exhausted some little while back. As I had been advised not long before, that a tolerably ample stock of copies was still on hand, I asked myself, in wonder: What could be the reasons for an evidently greater interest, shewn of recent years, in a literary work whose very nature precluded it from being destined for any Public? My previous experiences had taught me that its First Part, containing a criticism of Opera as an art-genre, had been skimmed by music-reviewers for the newspapers, and its incidental jocular remarks had met with some notice; while a few real musicians had earnestly discussed the contents of this first portion, and even gone so far as to read the constructive Third Part. Of an actual consideration of the Second Part, devoted to the Drama and dramatic Stuff (*Stoff*), no sign had reached me: obviously my book had fallen only into the hands of professional Musicians; to our Literary-poets it had remained completely unknown. From the superscription of the Third Part: "The Arts of Poetry and Tone in the Drama of the Future," a title "*Zukunftsmusik*" ("Music of the Future") was derived, to characterise a latest musical "departure," as whose originator I unexpectedly was brought into full-blown world-celebrity.

[4]

Now, however, I have to thank that earlier, quite neglected second portion for an otherwise inexplicably increased demand for my book, occasioning its second edition. There seems to have arisen, among certain folk to whom I was utterly indifferent as poet or musician, an interest in the task of searching my writings, of which one had heard all kinds of curious things, for dangerous remarks on politics and religion. How far these gentry have succeeded in fastening on me any dangerous tendencies, to their own thorough satisfaction, I have as yet to learn: at any rate, they were able to induce me to attempt an explanation (001) of what I meant by demanding the "Sinking of the State" ("*Untergang des Staates*"). I must confess that this placed me in some perplexity; and, in order tolerably to extricate myself, I readily consented to the admission that I had not meant the thing so very badly, and that, upon mature reflection, I really had no serious objection to the continuance of the State.

The upshot of my various experiences with this extraordinary book was this: that its publication had been altogether useless, had only brought annoyances upon myself, and had provided no one else with any comforting instruction. I felt inclined to consign it to oblivion, and shirked the worry of a new edition for the simple reason that I should have to read it through once more; a thing which, ever since its first appearance, I had had a great repugnance against doing. Your so expressive letter, however, has all at once reversed my purpose. It was no mere chance, that you were attracted by my musical dramas whilst I was filling my brain with the contents of your political writings. Who can measure the depth of my astonished joy, when you cried to me, in recognition, from that so misconstrued middle portion of my refractory book: "Your Foundering of the State is the Founding of my German Empire!" Seldom can there have been so [5] complete a mutual supplementing, as here had been prepared upon the broadest basis betwixt the politician and the artist. And in this *German spirit* which has brought us two, while starting from the utmost opposites of customary vision, to the deeply-felt perception of the grand fore-calling of our Folk, we well may now believe with strengthened courage.

But it needed our encounter, to strengthen our belief. The eccentricity of my old opinions,



as still apparent in the accompanying book, was certainly occasioned by the despair there lay in any opposite views. And even now, the antidote for this despair would prove of little virtue, had we to solely seek it in the aspect of our public life: each contact with that public life can only bring men, filled with our belief, into associations promptly to be rued; whereas a thorough isolation, with all its sacrifices, affords the only rescue. The sacrifice you laid upon yourself, in this sense, consisted in the renouncement of any general recognition of your noble political writings, in which, with most persuasive clearness, you point the Germans to the weal that lies so near their door. Smaller seemed to be the sacrifice the artist had to bring, the dramatic poet and musician whose works spoke loud from all our public theatres to you, and kindled so your hope that you saw already a strengthening food supplied to that belief. It came hard to you, not to misunderstand me, not to see a morbid overstraining in my denial of your confident assumptions, when I tried to teach you the little inward worth of my successes with the theatre-public. Yet at last you taught yourself that fundamental lesson by an exact acquaintance with the contents of this book, now dedicated to you, on Opera and Drama. For sure, it opened up to you the wounds concealed from all the world, the wounds of which, before my own unshaken conscience, my successes as a German "opera-composer" are bleeding still. In truth, and even to this day, can nothing reassure me that these successes, in their weightiest factor, are not still grounded on a misconception [6] which downright baffles all the real, the only aimed success.

The explanations of this seeming paradox I laid before the public, now wellnigh eighteen years ago, in the form of a detailed handling of the problem—Opera and Drama. What I must wonder at above all else, in those who grant this work a searching scrutiny, is this: that they should not allow themselves to be tired out by the difficulties of the exposition, which were thrust upon me by the very nature of that detailed handling. My desire to get to the bottom of the matter and to shirk no detail that, in my opinion, might make the difficult subject of æsthetic analysis intelligible to the simple Feeling, betrayed me into a stubbornness of style, which to the reader who looks merely for entertainment, and is not directly interested in the subject itself, is extremely likely to seem a bewildering diffuseness. As regards the present revision of the text, however, I have decided to change nothing therein of importance, (002) since just in that aforesaid difficulty of my book have I, on the other hand, perceived its special recommendation to the earnest thinker. For this I almost feel that an apology would be both superfluous and misleading. The problems, to whose handling I was impelled, have never before been investigated in that connexion wherein I recognised them, and not at all by artists, to whose Feeling they most immediately address themselves, but merely by theorising æstheticians, who, with the best will in the world, could not avoid the evil of employing a dialectic form of exposition for subjects whose fundamental essence has lain hitherto as far from the cognition of Philosophy as has Music itself. Shallowness and ignorance find it easy, by drawing on the garnered stores of Dialectics, to prattle about things they do not understand, [7] and in a manner to make a brave show in the eyes of the equally uninitiate: but he who does not merely wish to juggle with philosophic notions before a public which has none itself,—he who, the rather, in facing difficult problems desires to turn from erring notions to the right Feeling of the thing itself, may learn perchance from the following pages how much trouble it costs a man to fulfil his task to his own inward satisfaction.

In this sense, then, do I venture to commend afresh my book to earnest notice. Where it meets with this, as was the case with you, my honoured Friend, it will serve towards the filling of that yawning gulf which lies between the mistaken spirit of the success of my musico-dramatic works, and the only effect that hovers in the air before me as their right one. (The original of the above was written at Lucerne, April 28, 1868.—TR.)



[8]

## Preface to the first edition

A FRIEND has told me that, with my earlier utterances on Art, I angered many persons far less by the pains I took to unmask the grounds of the barrenness of our nowadays art-making, than by my endeavours to forecast the conditions of its future fruitfulness. Nothing could more aptly characterise our situation, than this verdict of experience. We all feel that we are not doing right, and do not even attempt to deny the fact when roundly told it; only, when shewn *how* we might do right, and that this right is nothing humanly impossible, but something very possible indeed, nay an absolute Necessity of the Future, then we feel hurt because, once forced to admit that possibility, we are robbed of our only excuse for abiding in unfruitfulness. For we have been indoctrinated with so much sense-of-honour, as to wish not to appear cowardly and slothful; but we lack true Honour's natural spur to courage and activity.—This selfsame wrath I shall be obliged to call down again upon my head, by the pages that now lie before me; and that the more, as I have been at some pains therein to show, not merely in general terms—as in my *Art-work of the Future*—but by a minute entry into particulars, the possibility and necessity of a more salutary tillage of the soil of Poetry and Music.

I must almost fear, however, that another grudge will this time gain the upper hand: a grudge occasioned by my exposition of the worthlessness of our modern opera-affairs. Many, even who mean well by me, will not be able to comprehend how I can presume to attack, in such unsparing fashion, a personage famous in the daily roll of [9] opera-composers; and this, too, in that capacity, of Opera-composer, in which I also am involved and thus exposed so lightly to the charge of most unbridled envy.

I will not deny that I battled long with myself before I decided upon doing, and doing thus, what I have done. After writing, I quietly read over all that was contained in this attack, every turn of phrase and each expression, and carefully pondered whether I should hand it in this garment to publicity; until at last I have convinced myself that—with my sharply-outlined views on the weighty topic of discussion—I should only be a coward and unworthily concerned for self, did I not utter my opinions of that most dazzling phenomenon in the world of modern operatic composition exactly as I have done. What I say thereon, is only what has long ceased to be a matter of doubt among the generality of honest artists. Not a smothered growl, however, but alone an openly-proclaimed and categorical defiance, can bear good fruit; for it brings about the needful shock that cleans the air, divides the murky from the clear, and winnows what there is to winnow. Yet it has not been my object to sound this challenge for its own dear sake, but I *needs must* sound it, since after delivering myself of more general opinions, as heretofore, I now felt the necessity of a definite excursion into the particular; for it was my concern, not merely to arouse, but also to make my meaning unmistakable. To make myself intelligible, I was forced to point my finger at our art's most salient features; nor could I withdraw this finger and thrust it back, clenched in my fist, into my pocket, while faced with that phenomenon which shows the plainest an artistic error crying to us for solution. For this error, the more brilliant its appearance, the more it blinds the captive eye: and that eye must see completely clearly, if it is not to be completely robbed of sight. Wherefore, if I had held my hand from sheer regard for this one personage, I either must have given up all thought of writing the accompanying work—to which, on the other hand, I felt engaged by my convictions—or else I must [10] have purposely lamed its effect; for I should wittingly have had to put out of sight the most obvious facts, and those the most necessary to a careful survey.

Whatever, then, may be the verdict on my book, one thing at least must be admitted by

even the most hostilely disposed: and that is the *earnestness* of my intention. To whomsoever I am able to convey this earnestness, by the comprehensive nature of my argument, he will surely not only forgive me that attack, but also understand that I have not engaged in it from flippancy, still less from envy; and further, he will justify me in that, while exposing the repugnant features of our modern art, I have from time to time exchanged this earnestness for the quiet mirth of irony,—the only mood that can help us tolerate a painful sight, while, on the other hand, it always gives the least offence.

But, even of that artistic personality, I had only to attack *that* side which is turned towards our public art-affairs. Only after I had set this side alone before my eyes, was I able to conceal from my sight, as here was needful, that other side on which it fronts considerations amid which I myself was once brought into contact with it; but which lie so completely aloof from art's publicity, that they ought not to be dragged before it,—even though I almost feel compelled thereto, in order to admit how much I, also, once went astray,—an admission I candidly and gladly make, now that I have grown conscious of my former error.

If I thus was able to purge my conscience, I had the less call to regard the dictates of prudence as I should be blind if I did not clearly see that, from the moment when I struck in my artistic works that path which in the following pages I advocate as Writer, I fell into the exile from our public artist-world in which I find myself to-day, alike politically and as an artist, and from which it is quite certain that I cannot be redeemed apart from others.—

But quite another reproach might be made me, by those who hold that the worthlessness of that which I assail is already so made out, that it will not repay the pains of so [11] circumstantial an attack. Such persons are altogether in the wrong. What they know, is only known to few; whilst what is known to these few, the most of them do not *choose* to know. Of all things the most dangerous is the half-heartedness so much in vogue, which hampers each artistic effort and every judgment. I, however, have been forced to speak out sharply, and enter definitely into details on this side too, since I was not so much preoccupied with that attack, as with the demonstration of artistic possibilities which cannot plainly show themselves until we step upon a soil from which half-heartedness is hunted clean away. But he who holds *for accidental or overlookable* the artistic feature that rules to-day the public taste, is involved, at bottom, in the selfsame error from which that feature is itself derived: and to show precisely this, was the foremost object of my present work, whose *ulterior* object cannot be so much as conceived by those who have not completely cleared their minds as to the nature of that error.

The hope to be understood as I desire, I can put alone in those who have the courage to break with every prejudice May it be fulfilled me by many!

Zurich, January, 1851.

[12]

## Introduction

NO phenomenon can be completely grasped, in all its essence, until it has itself come to fullest actuality; an error is never done with, until all the possibilities of its maintenance have been exhausted, all the ways of satisfying a necessary need within its bounds been tried and measured out.

The essence of *Opera* could only become plain to us as an unnatural and flimsy one, when its un-nature and its flimsiness first came to openest and noisomest of show; the error that lay behind the evolution of this musical art-form could only be brought home to us, after the noblest geniuses had spent their whole artistic life-force in exploring all the windings of its maze without finding any outlet, but on every hand the mere way back to the error's starting-point,—until at last this maze became the sheltering asylum for all the madness in the world.

The doings (*Wirksamkeit*) of Modern Opera, in their bearings on the public, have long become an object of deepest and heartiest aversion to all honour-loving *artists*; but they have only complained of the corruption of taste and the frivolity of those artists who turned it to their purpose, without its ever occurring to them that that corruption was an altogether natural one, and therefore this frivolity a quite necessary result. If *Criticism* were really what it mostly pretends to be, it must have long-since solved the riddle of this error, and have radically justified the aversion of the honest artist. Instead thereof, even it has only felt the promptings of aversion, but the riddle's solution it has merely fumbled-at as confusedly as the artist, caught within the error, bestirred himself to find an exit.

[13]

In this matter, Criticism's greatest ill lies rooted in its very nature. The Critic does not feel within himself the imperious Necessity that drives the Artist to that fanatical stubbornness wherewith he cries at last: *So is it, and not otherwise!* The Critic, if he fain would herein imitate the Artist, can only fall into the repulsive fault of arrogance, i.e. of the confident assertion of some view, no matter what, upon a thing which he does not perceive with the instinct of an artist, but as to which he merely utters, with bald æsthetical caprice, opinions that he seeks to uphold from the standpoint of abstract learning. If, on the other hand, the Critic recognises his *proper* position toward the world of art-phenomena, then he feels himself constrained to that timidity and prudence which bid him merely range his objects side by side, and hand over the collection to some new inquirer, but never dare speak out with enthusiastic certainty the final word. Thus Criticism lives on "gradual" progress, i.e. upon the everlasting *maintenance* of Error; it feels that, Error broken with for good, then steps upon the scene the naked actual Truth, the Truth wherewith men only can rejoice, but nevermore may criticise,—just as the lover, in the exaltation of the love-emotion, can surely never fall a-pondering on the essence and the object of his love. Of this full saturation with the essence of Art, must Criticism, so long as it subsists and *can* subsist, fall ever short. It can never be *completely* with its object; its one full half must it ever turn away; and that the half which is its own sheer essence. This Criticism lives by "Though" and "But." Were it to plunge right down into the depth of a phenomenon, it then must manfully speak out this one and only thing, the depth that it had seen,—provided always that the critic had at all the needful faculty, i.e. a Love for the object of his criticism. But this One-thing is generally of such a kind that, once spoken squarely out, it must make all further criticism clean impossible. So Criticism prudently, for dear life's sake, holds ever by the merest surface of the matter; weighs out its ounces of effect; waxes wary; and—look ye!—the unmanly, coward [14] "Ne'ertheless" uplifts its head, the possibility of endless criticism and indecision is won

afresh!

And yet we all have now to set our hands to criticism; for through it alone can the error of an art-tendency, as unveiled by its products, come fully to the consciousness of each of us; and only through the knowledge of an error, shall we be rid thereof. Have Artists unawares propped up this error, and finally raised it to the height of its further impossibility: so must they, to completely overcome it, make one last manly effort, themselves to practise criticism. Thus will they alike crush Error and root-up Criticism; thenceforth to be again, and then first truly Artists who may yield themselves uncaring to the stream of inspiration, untroubled by æsthetic definitions of their task. The hour that calls aloud for this upgirding has struck already: we *must* do what we dare not leave undone, if we would not prove a laughing-stock forever.

What, then, is the *Error* boded by us all, but not yet fathomed?

There lies before me, in Brockhaus' "*Gegenwart*," a lengthy article entitled "Modern Opera," the work of an able and experienced art-critic. The author ranges side by side all the notable phenomena of modern Opera, in most instructive fashion, and quite plainly teaches by them the whole history of the error and its unveiling: he almost lays his finger on this error, almost unveils it before our eyes; but then he feels himself so unable to speak boldly out its ground, that, arrived at the point when such utterance becomes imperative, he prefers to lose his way among the most mistaken expositions of the thing itself; so that he in a measure fouls again the mirror which, up to then, had begun to reflect upon us a brighter and yet brighter light. He *knows* that Opera has no historical— or more correctly: natural—origin, that it has not arisen from the Folk, but from an art-caprice; he correctly *divines* the noxious character of this caprice, when he calls it an arrant blunder of most now-living French and German opera-composers "that they strive on the path of *musical* [15] *characteristique* for effects that one can reach alone by the *sharp-cut, intellectual Word of dramatic Poetry*"; he gets as far as the well-grounded doubt, whether Opera is not after all a quite self-contradictory, unnatural genre of art; he shows in the works of *Meyerbeer*—here, to be sure, almost unconsciously—this Un-nature driven to its most vicious pitch; and—instead of speaking roundly out the needful thing, already almost on the tongue of every one—he suddenly veers round, to keep for Criticism an everlasting life, and heaves a sigh that *Mendelssohn's* too early death should have hindered, i.e. staved off, the *solution* of the riddle!

What does this critic signify by his regret? Is it merely the assumption that Mendelssohn, with his fine intelligence and unusual musical gifts, either would have been in the position to write an opera in which the evident contradictions of this art-form should be brilliantly set right and reconciled, or else, supposing that despite those gifts and that intelligence he were unable to effect this, he would thereby have certified these contradictions for good and all, and proved the genre unnatural and null?—Did the critic, then, imagine he could make this proof dependent on the pleasure of one peculiarly gifted—musical—personality? Was *Mozart* a lesser musician? Is it possible to find anything more perfect than every piece of his *Don Juan*? But what could Mendelssohn, in the happiest event, have done beyond the delivering, number for number, of pieces that should equal Mozart's in their perfectness? Or does our critic wish for something other, something more, than Mozart ever made?—There we have it: *he demands the great one-centred fabric of the Drama's whole; he demands—between his lines—the Drama in its highest fill and potence.*

But to whom does he address this claim?—*To the Musician!*—The harvest of his exhaustive survey of Opera's accomplished facts, the solid knot into which he had bound each thread of knowledge in his skilful hand,— he lets it slip at last, and casts the whole thing back again [16] into its ancient chaos! He wants a house built for him, and turns to the carver or

upholsterer; the *architect*, who includes within himself the carver, the upholsterer and all the other needful aids for decking-out the house, since he gives their joint endeavours aim and order,—he never thinks of *him!*—He had solved the riddle; yet its solution brought him, not the light of day, but only a lightning-flash in pitch-dark night, after whose vanishing the pathway suddenly becomes but still more indiscernible. So now at last he gropes around in utter darkness, and where the error rears itself in nakedest abomination and baldest prostitution, plain enough for any hand to grasp, as in the Meyerbeerian opera, there the wholly-blinded of a sudden deems he spies the lighted exit: he staggers and stumbles every moment over stock and stone; at every finger-touch he shudders; his breath forsakes him, stifled by the unnatural fumes he cannot but suck in;—and yet he believes himself upon the sound sure way to saving; wherefore he puts his best foot foremost, and dupes himself as to the very things that block that pathway with their evil bodings.—Nevertheless, did he only know it, he is travelling on the pathway of salvation. This is, in very truth, the road that leads from Error. Nay, it is more, it is the end of that road; for it is Error's crown of errors, blazoning forth its fall. That fall means here: *the open death of Opera*,—the death that Mendelssohn's good angel sealed, when it closed its charge's eyes in pitying season!—

That the solution of the riddle lies before our eyes, that it speaks aloud from the very surface of the show, but that Critics and Artists alike can still turn their heads from its acknowledgment—this is the veritable woe of our art-epoch. Let us be ever so honestly concerned to occupy ourselves alone with Art's true substance, let us be ever so righteously wroth in our campaign against the Lie: yet we deceive ourselves about that substance, and with all the powerlessness of such deception we fight against that lie the while, anent the essence of the most puissant art-form in which Music greets the public ear, we persistently [17] abide in the selfsame error from which that art-form sprang all unawares, and to which alone is to be ascribed its open shattering, the exposure of its nullity.

It almost seems to me as though ye required a mighty courage, an uncommonly bold resolve, to acknowledge and proclaim aloud that error. It is to me as though ye felt the ground would slip away from all your present musical producings, if once ye made that necessary avowal, and that it therefore needs an unparalleled self-sacrifice to bring yourselves to do it. But yet, meseems, it calls for no excess of strength or trouble, and least of all, of pluck or daring: when it is nothing but a question of simply, and without any outlay upon wonder and amazement, acknowledging a patent fact, long felt but now grown past denial. I almost blush to speak with *lifted* voice the brief formula that bares the error, for I well might be ashamed to give the air of a weighty novelty to something so clear, so simple, and in itself so certain, that I should fancy all the world must long ago have got the thing by heart. If nevertheless I pronounce this formula with stronger accent, if I declare aloud that *the error in the art-genre of Opera consists herein*:

**that a Means of expression (Music) has been made the end, while the End of expression (the Drama) has been made a means,**

I do it nowise in the idle dream of having discovered something new, but with the object of posting the Error so plain that every one may see it, and of thus taking the field against that miserable half-heartedness which has spread its pall above our Art and Criticism. If we take the torch of truth provided by the enucleation of this error, and light therewith the features of our operatic art and criticism, we shall see amazed in what a labyrinth of fancies we have hitherto been wandering, with our makings and our judgings; it will show us clearly why, not only in our Making must every high endeavour founder on the breakers [18] of impossibility, but also in our Judging have the evenest of heads reeled to and fro in dotage and delirium.

Is it, by any chance, first necessary to prove the justice of that proclamation of the Error innate in the art-genre of Opera? Can it possibly be doubted, that in Opera music has actually been taken as the end, the drama merely as the means? Surely not. The briefest survey of the



historic evolution of Opera teaches us this, quite past disputing; every one who has busied himself with the account of that development has—simply by his historical research—unwillingly laid bare the truth. Not from the medieval Folk-plays, in which we find the traces of a natural coöperation of the art of Tone with that of Drama, did Opera arise; but at the luxurious courts of Italy—notably enough, the only great land of European culture in which the Drama never developed to any significance—it occurred to certain distinguished persons, who found Palestrina's church-music no longer to their liking, to employ the singers, engaged to entertain them at their festivals, on singing *Arias*, i.e. Folk-tunes stripped of their naïvety and truth, to which 'texts' thrown together into a semblance of dramatic cohesion were added waywardly as underlay. (003) This *Dramatic Cantata*, whose contents aimed at anything but Drama, is the mother of our Opera; nay more, it is that Opera itself. The more it developed from this its point of origin, the more consistently the purely musical Aria, the only vestige of remaining Form, became the platform for the dexterity of the Singer's throat: the more [19] plainly did it become the office of the *Poet*, called-in to give a helping hand to their musical diversions, to carpenter a poetic form which should serve for nothing further than to supply the needs both of the Singer and of the musical Aria-form with their verse-requirements. *Metastasio's* great fame consisted in this, that he never gave the musician the slightest harass, never advanced an unwonted claim from the purely dramatic standpoint, and was thus the most obedient and obliging servant of this Musician.

Has this relation of the Poet to the Musician altered by one hair's-breadth, to our present day? To be sure, in respect of that which, according to purely musical canons, is now held as dramatic, and which certainly differs widely from the old-Italian opera; but by no means in respect of what concerns the chief characteristic of the situation. This holds as good to-day as 150 years ago: that the Poet shall take his inspiration from the Musician, that he shall listen for the whims of music, accommodate himself to the musician's bent, choose his stuff by the latter's taste, mould his characters by the timbres expedient for the purely musical combinations, provide dramatic bases for certain forms of vocal numbers in which the musician may wander at his ease,—in short, that, in his subordination to the musician, he shall construct his drama with a single eye to the specifically musical intentions of the Composer,—or else, if he will not or cannot do all this, that he shall be content to be looked on as unserviceable for the post of opera-librettist.—Is this true, or not? I doubt that any can advance one jot of argument against it.

The aim of Opera has thus ever been, and still is to-day, confined to Music. Merely so as to afford Music with a colourable pretext for her own *excursions* (*Ausbreitung*), is the purpose of Drama *dragged on*,—naturally, not to curtail the ends of Music, but rather to serve her simply as a *means*. Unhesitatingly is this admitted on every hand; no one so much as attempts to deny this statement of the position of Drama toward Music, of the Poet toward the [20] Tone-artist; only, in view of the uncommon spread and effectiveness (*Wirkungsfähigkeit*) of Opera, have folk believed that they must make friends with a monstrosity, nay, must even credit its unnatural agency with the possibility of doing something altogether new, unheard, and hitherto undreamt: namely, of *erecting the genuine Drama on the basis of Absolute Music*.

Since, then, I have made it the goal of this book to prove that by the collaboration of precisely *our* Music with dramatic Poetry a heretofore undreamt significance not only can, but *must* be given to Drama: so have I, for the reaching of that goal, to begin with a complete exposure of the incredible error in which those are involved who believe they may await that higher fashioning of Drama from the essence of our *modern Opera*, i.e. from the placing of Poetry in a contra-natural position toward Music.

Let us, therefore, first turn our attention exclusively to the nature of Opera!





[21]

## First Part

### Opera and the Nature of Music

[22]

[23]

#### I.

EVERYTHING lives and lasts by the inner Necessity of its being, by its own nature's Need. It lay in the nature of the art of Tone, to evolve herself to a capability of the most definite and manifold expression; which capability, albeit the need thereof lay hid within her soul, she would never have attained, had she not been thrust into a position toward the art of Poetry in which she saw herself compelled to will to answer claims upon her utmost powers, even though those claims should ask from her a thing impossible.

Only in its Form, can a being utter itself: the art of Tone owed all her forms to Dance and Song. To the Word-poet, who merely wished to make use of Music for the heightening of his own vehicle of expression, in Drama, she appeared solely in that narrowed form of song-and-dance; in which she could not possibly betray to him the wealth of utterance whereof, in truth, she still was capable. Had the art of Tone remained once for all in a position toward the Word-poet such as the latter now occupies towards herself in Opera, then she could only have been employed by him in her meanest powers, nor would she ever have reached the capability of becoming that supremely mighty organ of expression that she is to-day. Music was therefore destined to credit herself with possibilities which, in very truth, were doomed to stay for her impossibilities; herself a sheer organ of expression, she must rush into the error of desiring to plainly outline the thing to be expressed; she must venture on the boastful attempt to issue orders and speak out aims *there*, where in truth she can only have to subordinate herself to an aim *her* essence cannot ever formulate (*fassen*) but to whose realising she gives, by this her subordination, its only true enablement.—

[24]

Along two lines has Music developed in that art-genre which she dominates, the Opera: along an *earnest*—with all the Tone-poets who felt lying on their shoulders the burthen of responsibility that fell to Music when she took upon herself alone the aim of Drama; along a *frivolous*—with all the Musicians who, as though driven by an instinctive feeling of the impossibility of achieving an unnatural task, have turned their backs upon it and, heedful only of the profit which Opera had won from an uncommonly widespread popularity, have given themselves over to an unmixed musical empiricism. It is necessary that we should commence by fixing our gaze upon the first, the *earnest* line.



The musical basis of Opera was—as we know—nothing other than the *Aria*; this *Aria*, again, was merely the Folk-song as rendered by the art-singer before the world of rank and quality, but with its Word-poem left out and replaced by the product of the art-poet to that end commissioned. The conversion of the Folk-tune into the Operatic-aria was primarily the work of that art-Singer; whose concern was no longer for the right delivery of the tune, but for the exhibition of his throat-dexterity. It was he, who parcelled out the resting-points he needed, the alternation of more lively with more placid phrasing, the passages where, free from any

rhythmic or melodic curb, he might bring his skill to bearing as it pleased him best. The Composer merely furnished the singer, the Poet in his turn the composer, with the material for their virtuosity.

The natural relation of the artistic factors of Drama was thus, at bottom, as yet not quite upheaved: it was merely distorted, inasmuch as the Performer, the most necessary condition for Drama's possibility, represented but one solitary talent—that of absolute song-dexterity—and nowise [25] all the conjoint faculties of artist Man. This one distortion of the character of the Performer, however, sufficed to bring about the ultimate perversion of the natural relation of those factors: to wit, the absolute preferment of the Musician before the Poet. Had that Singer been a true, sound and whole Dramatic-performer, then had the Composer come necessarily into his proper position toward the Poet; since the latter would then have firmly spoken out the dramatic aim, the measure for all else, and ruled its realising. But the poet who stood nighest that Singer was the Composer,—the composer who merely helped the singer to attain his aim; while this aim, cut loose from every vestige of dramatic, nay even poetic bearing, was nothing other, through and through, than to show-off his own specific song-dexterity.

This original relation of the artistic factors of Opera to one another we have to stamp sharply on our minds, in order to clearly recognise, in the sequel, how this distorted relation became only all the more entangled through every attempt to set it straight.—

Into the Dramatic Cantata, to satisfy the luxurious craving of these eminent sirs for change in their amusements, there was dovetailed next the Ballet. Dance and Dance-tune, borrowed just as waywardly from the Folk-dance and its tune as was the operatic Aria from the Folk-song, joined forces with the Singer, in all the sterile immiscibility of un-natural things; while it naturally became the Poet's task, midst such a heaping-up of inwardly incongruous matter, to bind the samples of the diverse art-dexterities, now laid before him, into some kind of patchwork harmony. Thus, with the Poet's aid, an ever more obviously imperative dramatic cohesion was thrust on *That* which, in its actual self, was crying for no cohesion whatever; so that the aim of Drama—forced on by outward Want—was merely lodged (*angegeben*), by no means housed (*aufgenommen*). Song-tune and Dance-tune stood side by side in fullest, chilliest loneliness, for exhibition of the agility of singer or of dancer; and only in that [26] which was to make shift to bind them, to wit the musically-recited dialogue, did the Poet ply his lowly calling, did the Drama peep out here and there.

Neither was Recitative itself, by any means, some new invention proceeding from a genuine urgency of Opera towards the Drama. Long before this mode of intoning was introduced into Opera, the Christian Church had used it in her services, for the recitation of biblical passages. The banal singsong of these recitals, with its more listlessly melodic than rhetorically expressive incidence of tone, had been early fixed by ritualistic prescript into an arid semblance, without the reality, of speech; and this it was that, merely moulded and varied by musical caprice, passed over into the Opera. So that, what with Aria, Dance-tune and Recitative, the whole apparatus of musical drama—unchanged in essence down to our very latest opera—was settled once for all. Further, the dramatic groundplans laid beneath this apparatus soon won a kindred stereotyped persistence. Mostly taken from an entirely misconstrued Greek mythology, they formed a theatric scaffolding from which all capability of rousing warmth of human interest was altogether absent, but which, on the other hand, possessed the merit of lending itself to the good pleasure of every composer in his turn; in effect, the majority of these texts were composed over and over again by the most diverse of musicians.—

The so famous revolution of *Gluck*, which has come to the ears of many ignoramuses as a complete reversal of the views previously current as to Opera's essence, in truth consisted merely in this: that the musical composer revolted against the wilfulness of the singer. The

Composer, who, next to the Singer, had drawn the special notice of the public to himself—since it was *he* who provided the singer with fresh supplies of stuff for his dexterity—felt his province encroached upon by the operations of the latter, in exact measure as he himself was busied to shape that stuff according to his own inventive fancy, and thus secure that *his* work also, and perchance at last *only* his [27] work, might catch the ear of the audience. For the reaching of his ambitious goal there stood *two* ways open to the Composer: either, by use of all the musical aids already at his disposal, or yet to be discovered, to unfold the purely sensuous contents of the Aria to their highest, rankest pitch; or—and this is the more earnest path, with which we are concerned at present—to put shackles on Caprice's execution of that Aria, by himself endeavouring to give the tune, before its executions an expression answering to the underlying Word-text. As, by the nature of these texts, they were to figure as the feeling discourse of the dramatis personae, so had it already occurred, quite of itself to feeling singers and composers to furnish forth their virtuosity with an impress of the needful warmth; and Gluck was surely not the first who indited feeling airs, nor his singers the first who delivered them with fit expression. But that he *spoke out with consciousness and firm conviction* the fitness and necessity of an expression answering to the text-substratum, in Aria and Recitative, this it is that makes him the departure-point of an at any rate thorough change in the quondam situation of the artistic factors of Opera toward one another. Henceforth the sceptre of Opera passes definitely over to the Composer: the Singer becomes the *organ of the Composer's aim*, and this aim is consciously declared to be the matching of the dramatic contents of the text-substratum with a true and suitable expression. Thus, at bottom, a halt was only cried to the unbecoming and heartless vanity of the singing Virtuoso; but with all the rest of Opera's unnatural organism things remained on their old footing. Aria, Recitative and Dance-piece, fenced-off each from each, stand side by side as unaccommodated in the operas of Gluck as they did before him, and as, with scarcely an exception, they still stand to-day.

In the situation of the *Poet* toward the Composer not one jot was altered; rather had the Composer grown more dictatorial, since, with his declared consciousness of a higher mission—made good against the virtuoso Singer—he set [28] to work with more deliberate zeal at the arrangement of the opera's framework. To the Poet it never occurred to meddle with these arrangements; he could not so much as dream of Music, to which the Opera had owed its origin, in any other form than those narrow, close-ruled forms he found set down before him—as binding even upon the Musician himself. To tamper with these forms by advancing claims of dramatic necessity, to such an extent that they should cease to be intrinsic shackles on the free development of dramatic truth, would have seemed to him unthinkable; since it was precisely in these forms alone—inviolable even by the musician—that he could conceive of Music's essence. Wherefore, once engaged in the penning of an opera-text, he must needs pay even more painful heed than the musician himself to the observance of those forms; at utmost leave it to that musician, in his own familiar field, to carry out enlargements and developments, in which he could lend a helping hand but never take the initiative. Thus the Poet, who looked up to the Composer with a certain holy awe, rather confirmed the latter's dictatorship in Opera, than set up rival claims thereto; for he was witness to the earnest zeal the musician brought to his task.

It was Gluck's successors, who first bethought them to draw profit from this their situation for the actual widening of the forms to hand. These followers, among whom we must class the composers of Italian and French descent who wrote for the Paris opera-stage at quite the close of the past and beginning of the present century, gave to their vocal pieces not only a more and more thorough warmth and straightforwardness of expression, but a more and more extended formal basis. The traditional divisions of the Aria, though still substantially preserved, were given a wider play of motive; modulations and connecting phrases

*Übergänge und Verbindungsglieder*) were themselves drawn into the sphere of expression; the Recitative joined on to the Aria more smoothly and less waywardly, and, as a necessary mode of expression, it stepped into [29] that Aria itself. Another notable expansion was given to the Aria, in that—obediently to the dramatic need— more than *one* person now shared in its delivery, and thus the essential Monody of earlier opera was beneficially lost. Pieces such as Duets and Terzets were indeed known long before; but the fact of two or three people singing in one piece had not made the slightest essential difference in the character of the Aria: this had remained exactly the same in melodic plan and insistence on the tonality once started (*Behauptung des einmal angeschlagenen thematischen Tones*)—which bore no reference to any individual expression, but solely to a general, specifically-musical mood—and not a jot of it was really altered, no matter whether delivered as a monologue or duet, excepting at the utmost quite materialistic details, namely in that its musical phrases were either sung alternately by different voices, or in concert through the sheer harmonic device of combining two, three, or more voices at once. To apply that specifically-musical factor in such a way that it should be susceptible of a lively change of individual expression, was the object and the work of these composers, as shown in their handling of the so-called *dramatic-musical Ensemble*. The essential musical substance of this Ensemble was still, indeed, composed of Aria, Recitative and Dance-tune: only, when once a vocal expression in accord with the text-substratum had been recognised as a becoming claim to make on Aria and Recitative, the truthfulness of such expression must logically be extended to everything else in the text that betrayed a particle of dramatic coherence. From the honest endeavour to observe this logical consistency arose that broadening of the older musical forms, in Opera, which we meet in the serious operas of *Cherubini*, *Méhul* and *Spontini*. We may say that in these works there is fulfilled all that *Gluck* desired, or could desire; nay, in them is once for all attained the acme of all natural, i.e. in the *best* sense consequential, evolution on the original lines of Opera.

[30]

The most recent of these three masters, *Spontini*, was moreover so fully convinced that he had actually reached the highest point attainable in the genre of Opera; he had so firm a faith in the impossibility of ever seeing his exertions capped, that, in all the later art-productions wherewith he followed up the works of his great Paris period, he never made even the slightest attempt, as to form and import, to overstep the standpoint taken in those works. He obstinately refused to look upon the later, so-called "romantic" development of Opera as anything but its manifest decadence; so that he gave to people, with whom he afterwards discussed this matter, the impression of a man who was positively eaten up with himself and his works; whereas he was really only uttering a conviction based, in truth, upon a thoroughly sound view of the essence of Opera.. Surveying the demeanour of our Modern Opera, *Spontini* could say, with perfect justice: "Have you in any way developed the essential Form of the musical constituents of Opera, beyond what you find with me? Or have you, perchance, been able to bring forth any intelligible or healthy thing by actually quitting that form? Is not all the, unpalatable in your works the mere result of your stepping outside that form, and all the palatable a simple outcome of your adherence to it? Where will you find this Form more majestic, broader, or more capacious, than in my three grand Paris operas? And who will tell me that he has filled this Form with more glowing, more feeling, or more energetic Contents, than I?"—

It would be hard to give *Spontini's* question any answer that should bewilder him; still harder, to prove to him that *he* is mad for taking *us* for madmen. Out of *Spontini* speaks the honest, confident voice of the absolute-musician, who there proclaims: "If the Musician *per se*, as ordainer of the Opera, desires to bring to pass the Drama, he cannot go a step farther than *I* have gone, without betraying his total incapacity for the task." But in this there

unwittingly lies the corollary: "If you desire [31] *more*, you must address yourselves, not to the Musician, but—to the Poet."



Now how did this Poet bear himself towards Spontini and his colleagues? With all the maturing of Opera's musical Form, with all the development of its innate powers of Expression, the position of the Poet had not altered in the slightest. He still remained the platform-dresser (004) for the altogether independent experiments of the Composer. When the latter, by attained success, felt growing his power of freer motion within those forms of his, he simply bade the poet serve him his material with less fear and trembling; he, as it were, shouted to him: "See what I can do! Don't incommode yourself; trust me to dissolve even your daringest dramatic combinations, gristle, bone and all, into my music!"—So the Poet was merely hurried along with the Musician; he would have been ashamed to bring his master wooden hobby-horses, now that master was able to mount a real live horse, for he knew the rider had bravely learnt to ply the reins— those musical reins which were to school the horse's prancings in the well-strewn opera-circus, and without which neither Poet nor Musician would have dared to mount, for fear the steed should clear the ring and gallop home to its own wild wind-blown pastures.

Thus, in the wake of the Composer, the Poet certainly won an access of importance; but only in exact degree as the musician mounted upwards in advance, and bade him merely follow. The strictly musical possibilities, as pointed out by the composer, the poet had to keep in eye as the only measure for all his orderings and shapings, nay even for his choice of Stuff; and thus, for all the fame that *he* began to reap also, he remained ever but [32] the skilful servant who was so handy at waiting on the "dramatic" composer. Seeing that the composer had gained no other view of the relative position of the poet than the one he found laid down already by the very nature of Opera, he could only regard himself as the *de facto* responsible agent, and thus in all good conscience stay rooted to the standpoint of Spontini as the fittest; for thereon he might flatter himself that he was doing all that lay within the powers of a musician who fain would see the Opera, as a Musical Drama, maintain its claim to rank as an artistic form.

That in the Drama itself however, there lay possibilities which could not be so much as approached within that art-form—if it were not to fall to pieces,—this, perhaps, is *now* quite clear to us, but could by no chance occur to the poet or composer of that epoch. Of all dramatic possibilities, they could only light on such as were realisable in that altogether settled and, of its very essence, hampered Opera-music form. The broad expansion, the lingering on a motive, which the Musician required in order to speak intelligibly in his form,—the purely musical accessories he needed as a preliminary to setting his bell a-swinging, so that it might sound out roundly, and especially might sound in a fashion to give fitting expression to a definite character,—made it from the first the Poet's duty to confine himself to dramatic sketches of one settled pattern, devoid of colour and affording ample elbow-room to the musician for his experiments. Mere stereotyped rhetoric phrases were the prime requirement from the poet, for on this soil alone could the musician gain room for the expansion that he needed, but which was yet in truth entirely undramatic. To have allowed his heroes to speak in brief and definite terms, surcharged with meaning, would have only drawn upon the poet the charge of turning out wares impracticable for the composer. Since, then, the poet felt himself constrained to put trite and meaningless phrases in the mouth of his heroes, even the best will in the world could not have enabled him either to infuse a [33] real character into persons who talked like that, or to stamp the sum-total of their actions with the seal of full dramatic truth. His drama was forever a mere *make-believe* of Drama; to pursue a *real dramatic aim* to its legitimate conclusions could not so much as occur to him.



Wherefore, strictly speaking, he only translated Drama into the language of Opera, and, as a matter of fact, mostly adapted long-familiar dramas already played to death upon the acting stage, as was notably the case in Paris with the tragedies of the Théâtre Français. The dramatic aim, thus bare within and hollow, passed manifestly over into the mere intentions of the Composer; from him was That awaited which the Poet gave up from the first. To him alone—to the Composer—must it therefore fall, to clothe this inner void and nullity of the whole, so soon as ever he perceived it; and thus he found himself saddled with the unnatural task of, from his standpoint—from the standpoint of the man whose only duty it should have been to help to realise by the *expression* at his command an already fully-fledged dramatic aim—imagining and calling into life that aim itself. The Musician thus had virtually to pen the drama, to make his music not merely its expression but its *content*; and yet this content, by the very nature of affairs, was to be none other than the Drama's self!

It is here that the predicate "dramatic" most palpably begins to work a strange confusion in men's notions of the nature of Music. Music, which, as an art of *expression*, can in its utmost wealth of such expression be nothing more than *true*, has conformably therewith to concern itself alone with *what* it should express: in Opera this is unmistakably the Feeling of the characters conversing on the stage, and a music which fulfils this task with the most convincing effect is all that it ever can be. A music, however, which would fain be more than this, which should not connect itself with any object to be expressed, but desire to fill its place, i.e. to be alike that object: such a music is no longer any kind of music, but a fantastic, hybrid emanation from Poetry and Music, which in truth can only materialise itself as [34] caricature. With all its perverse efforts, Music, the in any way effective music, has actually remained naught other than Expression. But from those efforts to make it in itself a Content—and that, forsooth, the Content of a Drama—has issued That which we have to recognise as the consequential downfall of Opera, and therewith as an open demonstration of the radical un-nature of that genre of art.

If the foundation and intrinsic Content of Spontinian opera were void and hollow, and its musical investiture of Form both threadbare and pedantic, yet with all its narrowness it was a plain, sincere avowal of the limits that must bound this genre, without one is to drive its un-nature into raving madness. *Modern opera*, on the contrary, is the open proclamation of the actual advent of that madness. In order to approach its essence closer, let us now turn to that other line of Opera's evolution which we have denoted above as the *frivolous*, and by whose intercrossing with the *serious* line just dealt-with there has been brought to light that indescribable medley which we hear spoken of, and not seldom even by seemingly reasonable beings, as "modern Dramatic Opera."

[35]

## II.

LONG before the time of Gluck—as we have already mentioned—it had occurred quite of itself to nobly-gifted, nobly-feeling singers and composers to equip the phrasing, (*Vortrag*) of the operatic Aria with a more sincere (*innig*) expression; amid all their song-dexterity, and despite their virtuose *bravura*, to work upon their hearers by conveying genuine feeling and true passion wherever the text permitted, and even where it brought nothing to meet such expression half-way. This step was due entirely to the individual disposition of the *musical* factors of Opera; and therein the true essence of Music was so far victorious over formalism, as she proclaimed herself that art whose very nature it is to be the immediate language of the heart.

If, in the evolution of Opera, we may call the line (*Richtung*) on which this noblest attribute of Music was raised *on principle* by Gluck and his followers into the ordainer of the

drama, that of *reflective* Opera: on the other hand, we must call that other line, on which this attribute—especially on the Italian opera-stage—was unconsciously evinced by naturally-gifted musicians, the *naïve* line. It is characteristic of the first, that, coming to Paris as a foreign product, it matured under the eyes of a public which, in itself entirely unmusical, gives a far more cordial welcome to well-balanced, dazzling turns of speech than to any feeling Content of that speech; whereas the second, the naïve line, remained preeminently the property of the sons of Italy, the home of modern music.

Admitted that it was again a German, who displayed the utmost splendour of this line: yet was he called alone to this high office because his artist nature was as clear, as spotless, as unruffled as a shining sheet of water, to which the rare, the brightest flower of Italian music bent down its [36] head; to see therein, to know, to love the mirrored likeness of itself. This mirror, however, was but the surface of a deep, unending sea of yearning, which from the measureless fill of its being reached upwards to that surface, as for the utterance of its meaning; from the gentle greeting of that fair vision, bending down to it as though in thirst for knowledge of itself, to win a form, a fashioning, a beauty.

Whosoever insists on seeing in Mozart an experimenting musician who turns, forsooth, from one attempt to solve the operatic problem to the next, can only counterpoise this error by placing alongside of it another, and, for instance, ascribing naïvety to Mendelssohn when, mistrustful of his own powers, he took his cautious, hesitating steps along that endless stretch of road which lay between himself and Opera. (005) The naïve, truly inspired artist casts himself with reckless enthusiasm into his artwork; and only when this is finished, when it shows itself in all its actuality, does he win from practical experience that genuine force of Reflection which preserves him in general from illusions (*die ihn allgemeinlich vor Täuschungen bewahrt*), yet in the specific case of his feeling driven again to art-work by his inspiration, loses once more its power over him completely. There is nothing more characteristic of Mozart, in his career of opera-composer, than the unconcernedness wherewith he went to work: it was so far from occurring to him to weigh the pros and cons of the æsthetic problem involved in Opera, that he the rather engaged with utmost unconstraint in setting any and every operatic textbook offered him, almost heedless whether it were a thankful or a thankless task for him as pure musician. If we piece together all his æsthetic hints and sayings, culled from here and there, we shall find that the sum of his Reflection mounts no higher than his famous definition of his "nose." He was so utterly and entirely a musician, and nothing but musician, that through him we may also gain the clearest and most convincing view of the true and proper [37] position of the Musician toward the Poet Indisputably his weightiest and most decisive stroke for Music he dealt precisely in Opera,—in Opera, over whose conformation it never for a moment struck him to usurp the poet's right, and where he attempted nothing but what he could achieve by purely musical means. In return, however, through the very faithfulness and singleness of his adoption of the poet's aim—wherever and howsoever present—he stretched these purely musical means of his to such a compass that in none of his absolute-musical compositions, and particularly his instrumental works, do we see the art of Music so broadly and so richly furthered as in his operas. The noble, straightforward simplicity of his purely musical instinct, i.e. his intuitive penetration (*unwillkürlichen Innehabens*) into the arcana of his art, made it wellnigh impossible to him *there* to bring forth magical effects, as Composer, where the Poem was flat and meaningless. How little did this richest-gifted of all musicians understand our modern music-makers' trick of building gaudy towers of music upon a hollow, valueless foundation, and playing the rapt and the inspired where all the poetaster's botch is void and flimsy, the better to show that the Musician is the jack in office and can go any length he pleases, even to making something out of nothing—the same as the good God! O how doubly dear and above all honour is Mozart to me, that it was *not* possible to him to invent music for *Tito* like that of

*Don Giovanni*, for *Così fan tutte* like that of *Figaro*! How shamefully would it have desecrated Music!

Music Mozart always made, but *beautiful* music he could never write excepting when inspired. Though this Inspiration must ever come from within, from his own possessions, yet it could only leap forth bright and radiant when kindled from without, when to the spirit of divinest Love within him was shewn the object worthy love, the object that in ardent heedlessness of self it could embrace. And thus would it have been precisely the most absolute of all Musicians, Mozart himself who would have long-since solved the [38] operatic problem past all doubt, who would have helped to pen the truest, fairest and completest *Drama*, if only he had met the *Poet* whom he only would have had to *help*. But he never met that *Poet*: at times it was a pedantically wearisome, at times a frivolously sprightly maker of opera-texts, that reached him Arias, Duets, and Ensemble-pieces to compose; and these he took and so turned them into music, according to the warmth they each were able to awake in him, that in every instance they received the most answering expression of which their last particle of sense was capable.

Thus did Mozart only prove the exhaustless power of Music to answer with undreamt fulness each demand of the *Poet* upon her faculty of Expression; for all his un-reflective method, the glorious musician revealed this power, even in the truthfulness of dramatic expression, the endless multiplicity of its motivation, in far richer measure than Gluck and all his followers. But so little was a fundamental principle laid down in his creations, that the pinions of his genius left the *formal* skeleton of Opera quite unstirred: he had merely poured his music's lava-stream into the moulds of Opera. Themselves, however, they were too frail to hold this stream within them; and forth it flowed to where, in ever freer and less cramping channels, it might spread itself according to its natural bent, until in the Symphonies of Beethoven we find it swollen to a mighty sea. Whereas in Instrumental music the innate capabilities of Music developed into boundless power, those Operatic-forms, like burnt-out bricks and mortar, stayed chill and naked in their pristine shape, a carcase waiting for the coming guest to pitch his fleeting tent within.

Only for the history of Music in general, is Mozart of so strikingly weighty moment; in no wise for the history of Opera in particular, as a specific genre of art. Opera, whose unnatural being was bound to life by no laws of genuine Necessity, was free to fall a ready booty to the first musical adventurer who came its way.

[39]

The unedifying spectacle presented by the art-doings of so-called followers of Mozart, we here may reasonably pass by. A tolerably long string of composers figured to themselves that Mozart's Opera was a something whose form might be imitated; wherewith they naturally overlooked the fact that this form was Nothing in itself, and Mozart's musical spirit Everything. But to reconstruct the creations of Spirit by a pedantic setting of two and two together, has not as yet succeeded in the hands of any one.

One thing alone remained to utter in those forms. Albeit Mozart, in unclouded naïvety, had evolved their purely musical-artistic content to its highest pitch, yet the real secret of the whole opera-embroglio, in keeping with its source of origin, was still to be laid bare to nakedest publicity in those same forms. The world was yet to be plainly told, and without reserve, what longing and what claim on Art it was, that Opera owed its origin and existence to: that this longing was by no means for the genuine Drama, but had gone forth towards a pleasure merely seasoned with the sauces of the stage; in no sense moving or inwardly arousing, but merely intoxicating and outwardly diverting. In *Italy*, where this—as yet



unconscious—longing had given birth to Opera, it was at last to be fulfilled with open eyes.

This brings us back to a closer dealing with the essence of the *Aria*.

So long as Arias shall be composed, the root-character of that art-form will always betray itself as an absolute-musical one. The Folk-song issued from an immediate double-growth, a consentaneous action of the arts of Poetry and Tone. This art—as opposed to that almost only one we can now conceive, the deliberate art of Culture—we ought perhaps to scarcely style as Art; but rather to call it an instinctive manifestment of the Spirit of the Folk through the organ of artistic faculty. Here the Word-poem and the Tone-poem are one. It never happens to the Folk, to sing its songs without a 'text'; without the Words (*Wortvers*) the Folk would brook no Tune (*Tonweise*). [40] If the Tune varies in the course of time, and with the divers offshoots of the Folk-stem, so vary too the Words. No severing of these twain can the Folk imagine; for *it* they make as firmly knit a whole as man and wife.

The man of Luxury heard this Folk-song merely from afar; in his lordly palace he listened to the reapers passing by; what staves surged up into his sumptuous chambers were but the staves of Tone, whereas the staves of Poetry died out before they reached him. Now, if this Tone-stave may be likened to the delicate *fragrance* of the flower, and the Word-stave to its very *chalice*, with all its tender stamens: the man of luxury, solely bent on tasting with his nerves of smell, and not alike with those of sight, squeezed out this fragrance from the flower and distilled therefrom an extract, which he decanted into phials to bear about him at his lief, to sprinkle on his splendid chattels and himself whene'er he listed. To gladden his *eyes* with the flower itself, he must necessarily have sought it closer, have stepped down from his palace to the woodland glades, have forced his way through branches, trunks and bracken; whereto the eminent and leisured sir had not one spark of longing. With this sweet-smelling residue he drenched the weary desert of his life, the aching void of his emotions; and the artificial growth that sprang from this unnatural fertilising was nothing other, than the *Operatic Aria*. Into whatsoever wayward intermarriages it might be forced, it stayed still ever-fruitless, forever but itself, but what it was and could not else be: a sheer musical Substratum.

The whole cloud-body of the Aria evaporated into Melody; and this was sung, was fiddled, and at last was whistled, without its ever recollecting that it ought by rights to have a word-stave, or at the least a word-sense under it. Yet the more this extract, to give it some manner of stuff for physically clinging to, must yield itself to every kind of experiment—among which the most pompous was the serious pretext of the Drama,—the more folk felt that it was suffering by mixture with the threadbare [41] foreign matter, nay, was actually losing its own pungency and pleasantness.

Now the man from whom this perfume, unnatural as it was, acquired again a corpus, which, concocted though it was, at least imitated as cleverly as possible that natural body which had once breathed forth its very soul in fragrance; the uncommonly handy modeller of *artificial* flowers, which he shaped from silk and satin and drenched their arid cups with that distilled substratum, till they began to smell like veritable blooms;—this great artist was *Joachimo Rossini*.

In the glorious, healthy, single-hearted artist-nature of Mozart that melodic scent had found so fostering a soil, that it eke put forth again the bloom of noble Art which holds our inmost souls as captives still Yet even with Mozart it only found this food when the akin, the sound, the purely-human offered itself as Poetry, for wedding with his wholly musical nature; and it was wellnigh a stroke of Luck, that this repeatedly occurred for him. Where Mozart was left unheeded by this fecund god, there, too, the artificial essence of that scent could only toilsomely uphold its false, unnecessary life by artificial measures. Melody, however costly were its nurture, fell sick of chill and lifeless Formalism, the only heritage the early sped could leave his heirs; for in his death he took away with him—his Life.

What *Rossini* saw around him, in the first flower of his teeming youth, was but the

harvesting of Death. When he looked upon the serious, so-called Dramatic Opera of France, he saw with the keen insight of young Joy-in-life a garish corpse; which even Spontini, as he stalked along in gorgeous loneliness, could no longer stir to life, since—as though for some solemn sacrament of Self—he had already embalmed himself alive. Driven by his prickling sense of Life, Rossini tore the pompous cerecloths from this corpse, as one intent on spying out the secret of its former being. Beneath the jewelled and embroidered trappings he disclosed the true life-giver of even this majestic mummy: [42] and that was—*Melody*.—When he looked upon the native Opera of Italy and the work of Mozart's heirs, he saw nothing but Death again; death in empty forms whose only life shewed out to him as *Melody*,—Melody downright, when stripped of that pretence of Character which must seem to him a hollow sham if he turned to what of scamped, of forced and incomplete had sprung therefrom.

*To live*, however, was what Rossini meant; to do this, he saw well enough that he must live with those who had ears to hear him. The only living thing he had come upon in Opera, was absolute Melody; so he merely needed to pay heed to the *kind* of melody he must strike in order to be heard. He turned his back on the pedantic lumber of heavy scores, and listened where the people sang without a written note. What he there heard was what, out of all the operatic box of tricks, had stayed the most unbidden in the ear: the *naked, ear-delighting, absolute-melodic Melody*; i.e. melody that was just *Melody* and nothing else; that glides into the ear—one knows not why; that one picks up—one knows not why; that one exchanges to-day with that of yesterday, and forgets again to-morrow—also, one knows not why; that sounds sad when we are merry, and merry when we are out of sorts; and that still we hum to ourselves—we haven't a ghost of knowledge why.

This Melody Rossini struck; and behold!—the mystery of Opera was laid bare. What reflection and æsthetic speculation had built up, Rossini's opera-melodies pulled down and blew it into nothing, like a baseless dream. The "dramatic" Opera met the fate of Learning with her problems: those problems whose foundation had really been mistaken insight, and which the deepest pondering could only make but more mistaken and insoluble; until at last the sword of Alexander sets to work, and hews the leathern knot asunder, strewing its thousand thongs on every side. This Alexander-sword is just the naked Deed; and such a deed Rossini did, when he made the opera-public of the world a witness to the very definite truth, that people were [43] merely wanting to hear "delicious melodies" where mistaken artists had earlier fancied to make Musical Expression do duty for the aim and contents of a Drama.

The whole world hurrahed Rossini for his melodies: Rossini, who so admirably knew how to make the employment of these melodies a special art. All organising of Form he left upon one side; the simplest, barrenest and most transparent that came to hand, he filled with all, the logical contents it had ever needed,—with narcotising Melody. Entirely unconcerned for Form, just because he left it altogether undisturbed, he turned his whole genius to the invention of the most amusing hocus-pocus for execution within those forms. To the singers, erstwhile forced to study the dramatic expression of a wearisome and nothing-saying 'text,' he said: "Do whatever you please with the words; only, before all don't forget to get yourselves liberally applauded for risky runs and melodic *entrechats*." Who so glad to take him at his word, as the singers?— To the instrumentists, erstwhile trained to accompany pathetic snatches of song as intelligently as possible in a smooth ensemble, he said: "Take it easy; only, before all don't forget to get yourselves sufficiently clapped for your individual skill, wherever I give you each his opportunity." Who more lavish of their thanks, than the instrumentists?—To the opera-librettist, who had erstwhile sweated blood beneath the self-willed orderings of the dramatic composer, he said: "Friend, you may put your nightcap

on; I have really no more use for you." Who so obliged for such release from sour, thankless toil, as the opera-poet?

But who more idolised Rossini, for all these deeds of good, than the whole civilised world—so far as the Opera-house could hold it? And who had better reason, than it had? Who, with so much talent, had shewn it such profound consideration as Rossini?—Did he learn that the public of one city had a particular fancy for prima donna's runs, while another preferred a sentimental song: straightway he gave [44] his prima donnas nothing but runs, for the first city; for the second, only sentimental songs. Did he discover that *here* folk liked to hear the drum in the band: at once he made the overture to a rustic opera begin with a rolling of the drum. Was he told that people *there* were passionately fond of a crescendo, in ensemble-pieces: he sat down and wrote an opera in the form of a continuously recurring crescendo.—Only *once* had he cause to rue his complaisance. For Naples he was advised to be more careful with his construction: his more solidly built-up opera did not take; and Rossini resolved never in his life again to think of carefulness, even if advised to.—

Not the smallest charge of vanity or overweening selfconceit can we bring against Rossini, if, hooking at the vast success of his treatment of Opera, he laughed people in the face and told them he had found the true secret for which his predecessors had groped in vain. When he maintained that it would be easy for him to consign to oblivion the operas of his greatest forerunners, not excepting Mozart's *Don Juan*, by the simple expedient of composing the same subject over again in *his own* fashion, it was by no means arrogance that spoke out here, but the certain instinct of *what* the public really asked from Opera. In very deed, our musical pietists would have only had to see their own complete confusion, in the appearance of a Rossinian "Don Juan"; for it may be taken for granted that, with the genuine, verdict-giving theatrical public, Mozart's *Don Juan* must have had to yield—if not for ever, still for long enough—to that of Rossini. For this is the real turn that Rossini gave the opera-question: down to their last rag, his operas appealed *to the Public*; he made this Public, with all its whims and wishes, the determinative factor in the Opera.

If the opera-Public had at all possessed the character and significance of the *Folk*, in the proper sense of the word, Rossini must have seemed to us the most thorough-paced *revolutionary* in the whole domain of Art. In face of one section of our society, however, a section only to be regarded as an unnatural outgrowth from the Folk, and [45] which in its social superfluity, nay harmfulness, can only be looked on as the knot of caterpillars that erodes the healthy, nourishing leaves of the natural Folk-tree, and thence at most derives the vital force to flutter through a day's luxurious existence as a giddy swarm of butterflies; in face of such a Folk's-scum, which, gathering above a sediment of sordid filth, can rise to vicious elegance but never into sterling human culture; in short,—to give the thing its fittest name,—in face of our *Opera-Public*, Rossini was no more than a *reactionary*: whereas we have to view Gluck and his followers as methodic *revolutionaries* on principle, though powerless for radical results. Under the banner of the luxurious but only genuine Content of the Opera and its logical development, *Joachimo Rossini* reacted just as successfully against the doctrinaire maxims of the revolutionary Gluck as Prince *Metternich*, his great protector, under the banner of the inhuman but only veritable Content of European Statecraft and its logical enforcement, reacted against the doctrinaire maxims of the Liberal revolutionaries who, *within* this system of the State and with out a total upheaval of its unnatural Content, desired to instal the Human and the Reasonable in the selfsame forms which breathed that Content out of every pore. As Metternich, (006) with perfect logic on his side, could not conceive the *State* under any form but that of *Absolute Monarchy*: so Rossini, with no less force of argument, could conceive the *Opera* under no other form than that of *Absolute Melody*. Both men said: "Do you ask for Opera and State? Here you have them;—there are no others!"

With Rossini the real *life-history of Opera* comes to end. It was at end, when the unconscious seedling of its being had evolved to nakedest and conscious bloom; when the Musician had been avowed the absolute factor of this art work, invested with despotic power; when the taste of the theatre-Public had been recognised as the only standard [46] for his demeanour. It was at end, when all pretence of Drama had been scrupulously swept away; when the Performers had been allotted the showiest virtuosity of Song as their only task, and their hence-sprung claims on the Composer had been acknowledged as their most inalienable of rights. It was at end, when the great musical public had come to take quite characterless Melody for music's only Content, a bandbox of operatic 'numbers' for the only joinery of musical Form, the intoxication of an opera-night's narcotic fumes for the sole effect of music's Essence. It was at end—that day the deified of Europe, *Rossini* lolling in the rankest lap of luxury, deemed it becoming to pay the world-shy anchorite, the moody *Beethoven*, already held for half-insane, a ceremonial visit— which the latter did not return. What thing may it have been, the wanton, roving eye of Italy's voluptuous son beheld, when it plunged unwitting in the eerie glance, the sorrow-broken, faint with yearning—and yet death-daring look of its unfathomable opposite? Did there toss before it the locks of that wild shock of hair, of the Medusa-head that none might look upon and live?—Thus much is certain: with Rossini died the Opera.—



In Paris, however, that great city where the most educated connoisseurs and critics can even yet not comprehend what distinction there can possibly be between two famous composers, such as Beethoven and Rossini, excepting mayhap that the one turned his heaven-sent genius to the composition of Operas, the other to writing Symphonies,—in this splendid seat of modern music-wisdom was still to be drawn up a wonderful fresh lease of life for Opera. There is always a masterful hold on being, in everything that once exists. The Opera was an accomplished fact, just like the Byzantine Cæsardom; and just like that will it endure, so long as shall remain in force the unnatural conditions that uphold it—dead at core—in lingering life: until at last the untutored Turks arrive, who [47] once already put an end to the Byzantine Empire, and were even so unmannerly as to stable their wild horses in the gorgeous sanctuary of S. Sophia.

*Spontini* erred, when he deemed the Opera buried with himself, inasmuch as he took the Opera's "dramatic tendency" for its essence: he forgot the possibility of a Rossini, who very well could prove to him the contrary. When *Rossini*, with far more reason, held the Opera concluded with himself, he certainly erred less; inasmuch as he had recognised its essence, had laid it bare and brought it into general acceptance, and thus was justified in assuming that he might indeed be imitated, but never overbid. However, it had escaped even *his* reckoning, that from all the quondam tendencies of Opera a caricature might be cobbled up, which should be greeted not only by the Public, but also by the wiseacres of Art, as a new and substantial shape of Opera; for in the flower of his prime he never could have dreamt that it would some day occur to the Bankers, for whom he had always made their music, to make it for themselves.

Ah! how wroth he waxed, the else so easy-going master; how fierce he grew and evil-whimmed; to see himself outdone, if not in talent, yet in skill at exploiting the good-for-nothingness of public art! Ah! how was he now the "*dissoluto punito*," the cast-off courtesan; and with what rankling indignation at this shame, did he reply to the Paris Opera-director—who invited him, amid a momentary lull, to blow off a little tune again for the Parisians—that he would never come back until "the Jews had finished with their Sabbath there!" He was made to learn that, so long as God's wisdom rules the world, each fault will find its punishment: even the candour wherewith he had told the crowd the truth concerning



Opera.—In righteous expiation of his sins, he became a fish-purveyor and church-composer.—

However, it is only by a wider circuit that we can reach an intelligible exposition of the essence of our modernest Opera.

[48]

### III.

THE history of Opera, since Rossini, is at bottom nothing else but the history of *operatic melody*; of its application from an art-speculative, its execution from an effect-hunting standpoint.

Rossini's hugely successful method of procedure had unconsciously turned composers from all seeking for the dramatic Content of the Aria, all attempt to read into it any dramatically-consistent meaning. *The Essence of Melody itself* into which the whole scaffolding of Aria had evaporated, was the thing that now led captive both the instinct and the speculation of the Composer. One could not but perceive that, even in the Aria of Gluck and his followers, the Public had only been edified in exact measure as the general sentiment indicated in the text-substratum had received in the purely melodic portion of that Aria an expression which, in its kindred generality, merely shewed itself as absolute, ear-pleasing Tune. If this is already visible enough in the case of Gluck, it becomes quite palpable in that of his latest follower, Spontini. They all, these serious Musical-dramatists, had more or less deceived themselves, when they ascribed the effect of their music less to the purely melodic essence of its airs, than to the realisation of the dramatic aim with which they had written them. The opera-house in their time, and especially in Paris, was the rendezvous of æsthetic *beaux esprits*, and of a world of notables which plumed itself on likewise being witty and æsthetic. The serious æsthetic intention of these masters was greeted by this public with all respect; the nimbus of an artistic lawgiver streamed from the Musician who undertook to write the Drama *in notes*; his public, nothing loath, imagined it was being moved by the dramatic "declamation," whereas, in truth, it was only carried away by the [49] charm of the Aria's melody. When the Public then, at last emancipated by Rossini, dared to confess this openly and unabashed, it simply avowed an undeniable truth, and proved how logical and natural it was that, where Music was the main affair, the end and aim,—not merely by an outward assumption, but in keeping with the whole artistic basis of this form of art,—there Poetry the handmaid, with all her hints of dramatic purpose, must stay helpless and effectless, leaving Music herself to call forth the whole effect by her individual powers. Every attempt to pass for dramatic and characteristic could only disfigure Music's genuine essence; and—once that Music wills not merely to help and cooperate in the reaching of a higher aim, but to *operate* entirely by and for herself—this essence speaks out alone in Melody, as the expression of a *general* emotion.

Every Opera-composer was plainly shewn this by Rossini's indisputable success. If a rejoinder still stood open to deeper-feeling musicians, it could only be the following: that they looked on the *character* of Rossinian melody not only as shallow and distasteful, but as by no means *exhausting* the essence of Melody. To such musicians the artistic project could not but present itself, to give this unquestioned power of Melody the whole full utterance of beautiful human Feeling (*Empfindung*) that is its own by birthright. In the effort to fulfil this task, they carried the reaction of Rossini—right back behind the nature and the origin of Opera—to the very fount from which the Aria once had drawn its artificial life, *to the restoration of the primal strains* (Tonweise) *of the Folk-song*.

It was a *German* musician who first, and with remarkable success, called this transformation of Melody into being. *Karl Maria von Weber* reached his artistic manhood in

an epoch of historic evolution wherein the waking pulse of Freedom as yet stirred less in *men* as units, than in the Folks as *national masses*. The feeling of Independence—not yet applied in politics to the Purely-human, and therefore not yet reading itself as absolutely and unconditionally an aspiration for purely-human independence [50]—sought still for grounds of vindication, as though inexplicable to itself and rather roused by chance than of necessity, and thought to find them in the National roots of Race. The resultant movement was more akin, in truth, to Restoration than to Revolution. In its farthest strayings it took the form of a passion for re-setting up the old and lapsed; and alone in quite recent days have we been taught the lesson, how this error could only lead to fresh-forged fetters on our evolution into truly human freedom. But in that we have been compelled to learn this, have we now been driven, with knowledge too, into the right road; and that by painful, aye, but healing force.

I have no idea of attempting to show the development of Opera as marching hand in hand with our political evolution; such a thesis allows too much room to wilful phantasy, for it not to run riot in the most absurd vagaries,—as indeed has already happened, in this reference, to a most unedifying pitch. I am far more concerned to demonstrate the unnatural and contradictory element in this art-genre, together with its manifest incapacity to really reach its professed aim, solely by a survey of its essence. However, the *national line*, as taken in the treatment of Melody, has in its import and its strayings, and finally in its ever plainer cleavages and barrenness,—the tokens of its error,—far too much parallelism with the errors of our political evolution of the last forty years, for the relationship to be quite passed by.

In Art, just as in Politics, this line has for its distinctive mark, that the error, lying at its base, appeared under a garment of bewitching beauty in its first instinctive innocence; but in its final selfish, cramped stiffneckedness, under one of loathsome hideosity. It was beautiful, so long as the first lispings of the soul of Freedom spoke out in it; it is repulsive now, when the soul of Freedom has already broken through it, and only vulgar Egoism can hold it artfully together.

In the case of Music the national line shewed all the more genuine beauty in its beginnings, as the specific character [51] of Music fits it more for the utterance of general, than of particular emotion. What with our romanticising *poets* betrayed itself as an ogling with the one eye at Roman-catholic mysticism and with the other at feudal-chivalric amours, (007) expressed itself in Music as homelike, deep and broad-breathed Tune, instinct with noble grace,—Tune as listened from the last vanishing sigh of the naïve spirit of the Folk.

The tone-poet of *Der Freischütz*, above all worth our love, was cut to the very heartstrings of his artistic purity by the voluptuous melodies of Rossini, in which the whole world had gone a-revelling. He could not allow that in *them* was bared the fount of genuine Melody; he needs must show the world that they were but an impure outflow of that fountain, and that the source itself, had man the wit to find it, still flowed in undisturbed limpidity. If those so eminent founders of the Opera had only bent a careless ear to the Folk's sweet song, now *Weber* hearkened to it with all the strain of fixed attention. If the scent of the lovely Folk's-bloom had risen from the fields and pierced the mansions of the luxurious music-world, to be there imprisoned in its portable distillates: a yearning for the vision of the flower itself (008) drove *Weber* down from the sumptuous halls into the meadow; and there he saw the bloom on the brink of the rippling brook, amid odorous wood-grasses, upon a bed of wondrous crinkled moss, beneath the dreamy whispering branches of trees grown gnarled with age. How the happy artist felt his heart-beat quicken at the sight, his breath grow light with all this fill of fragrance! He could not withstand the loving impulse, to bring to nerveless fellow-men this healing vision, this livening perfume, for a ransom from their madness; to tear the bloom itself from the godlike nurture of its woodlands, and hold it, the hallowedest of all created things, before a world of Luxury [52] bereft of blessing:—*he plucked it!*—Unhappy man!—Aloft in the banquet-hall he set the sweet shy flower, in a costly vase;

daily he sprinkled it with freshest water from the forest stream. But lo I—the petals, chastely clasped before, unfold themselves as though to lax delights; unshamed the bloom lays bare its dainty stamens, and offers them, with horrible indifference, to the prying nose of every ribald rake. "What ails thee, flower?" the master cries, in agony of soul: "forget'st so soon the verdant meadow, that fostered thy virginity?" But one by one the petals fall; weary and wan, they shower upon the carpet; with one last breath of its own sweet scent, the flower sighs to the master: "I die but—since thou pluck'dst me!"—And with the bloom the master died. For it had been the soul of all his art, and this Art the upholding secret of his life.—In the meadow no more grew a flower I—From their uplands came the Tyrolean singers: they sang before Prince Metternich; he gave them letters of safe conduct to every court; and all the Lords and Bankers amused themselves, in their reeking salons, with the merry *Jodel* of the children of the Alps, with their songs in honour of their "*Dierndel*" (lassie). Now the ploughboys march to Bellinian Arias to the murder of their brothers, and dance with their *Dierndel* to Donizettian Opera-melodies; for—*the flower bloomed no more!*—

It is a characteristic feature of the *German* Folk-melody, that it less affects a brisk, compact and lively rhythm, than a long-breathed, lusty (*froh*) and yet plaintive swell. A German song without its harmony is to us unthinkable: everywhere we hear it sung in two 'voices' at the least; art instinctively feels challenged to supply the bass and so easily filled-in second 'inner voice,' and thus to have the whole body of Harmonic-melody before it. This melody is the basis of the Weberian Folk-opera: leaving aside all local-national idiosyncrasies, it is of broad and general emotional expression; has no other adornment than the smile of sweetest and most natural sincerity (*Innigkeit*); and thus, by the indwelling force of its undisfigured grace, [53] it speaks directly to the hearts of men, no matter what their national peculiarity, simply because in it the Purely-human comes so unbesmeared to show. In the world-spread potency of Weber's Melody may we better recognise the essence of the *German* spirit, and its supposed predestination, than in those sham specific qualities with which the German people now is credited!— (009)

According to this Melody, does Weber shape the whole. Filled to the brim with *it*, whatever he had seen and would give forth, whatever in the farthest nook of Opera he had recognised as capable, or found means of making capable, of expression in this Melody,—be it only by breathing over it the perfume, or shaking on to it a dewdrop from the chalice, of the flower,—that he was bound to succeed in bringing to an exquisitely true and pertinent effect. And *this* Melody it was, that Weber made the actual factor of his Opera: through this melody the figment of Drama found in so far its realisation, as his whole drama was *ab initio* poured out in yearning to be taken up into this Melody, by it to be consumed, in it redeemed, and through it justified. If we look at the "*Freischütz*" drama in this light, we must give its poem exactly the same relation to Weber's music, as we give the poem of "*Tancredi*" towards its music by Rossini. Rossini's Melody laid down the lines of the poem of "*Tancredi*," precisely as much as Weber's Melody ordained Kind's poem of "*Der Freischütz*"; and Weber *here* was nothing other than Rossini *there*, excepting that *this* man was noble and senseful (*sinnig*) whereas *that* was frivolous and sensual (*sinnlich*). (010) Weber only opened [54] his arms so much the wider to take up the Drama, as his Melody was the veritable language of the heart, all true and undefiled: whatever ascended thereinto, was sheltered safe and sure from all disfigurement. Yet, for all its truthfulness, whatsoever was *not* utterable in this language, by reason of its limitation, even Weber toiled in vain to bring from out it. His stammering here may stand, for us, as the honest avowal of Music's inaptitude to herself become the genuine Drama: in other words, to allow the genuine Drama—and not one merely cut out to her order—to be taken up (*aufgehen*) into her; whereas, in right and reason, it is Music that must *herself* be taken up into this genuine Drama.





We have now to continue the history of Melody.

When Weber in his search for Melody had harked back to the *Folk*, and when in the *German Folk* he found the happy attribute of naive heartiness (*Innigkeit*) without the cramp of national insularity (*Sonderlichkeit*), he had led the operatic composers of all the world to a stream which now, wherever they could spy it out, was pounced on as a not unlikely source of profit.

The first to follow, were the *French* composers; who bethought them of serving up the herb they found a native of their soil. For years the witty or sentimental "Couplet" had flourished on their Folk-stage, in the spoken play. By its nature more adapted for a gay—or if for a tender, certainly never for a tragic expression, it has quite of itself laid down the character of the dramatic genre into which it was taken with set purpose. The Frenchman is not made so as to allow of his emotions rising altogether into music; if his agitation mounts to a longing for Musical Expression, he must still retain the right of speech withal, or at the very least, of dancing. With him, where the Couplet ends there begins the Contredanse; without that, there is no room for music in his economy. In his Couplet *speech* is [55] so much the main affair, that he insists on singing it *alone*, and never with another; for otherwise one would not clearly understand the matter spoken. In the Contredanse, too, the dancers for the most part stand singly facing one another; each does by himself what he has to do, and mutual claspings of the pair only occur when the general character of the dance makes them absolutely inevitable. Thus, in the French *Vaudeville*, all the items of the musical apparatus stand singly side by side, merely strung together by the prattling Prose; and where the Couplet is sung by several people at once, this is accomplished in the most painful musical *unison* imaginable. The *French Opera* is an enlarged *Vaudeville*; its broader musical apparatus is borrowed, *as to Form*, from the so-called Dramatic-opera, but *as to Content*, from that virtuosic element which reached its rankest outgrowth in the hands of Rossini.

The distinctive blossom of this opera is now, and ever has been, the more *spoken* than chanted Couplet; its *musical* essence, the Rhythmic-melody of the Contredanse. To this national product, which had remained a mere subsidiary of the dramatic aim, and had never been strictly taken up into it, the French opera-composers turned back with set intention so soon as they observed on the one side the death of Spontinian-opera, on the other, the world-inebriating effect of Rossini's and, above all, the heart-searching influence of Weber's Melody. But the living Content of that native French production had already vanished; *Vaudeville* and *Comic Opera* had sucked so long at it, that its source could no longer flow within its parched-up bed. Where the nature-craving art-musicians listened longingly for the babbling of the brook, they could no more hear it for the prosy clip-clap of the mill, whose wheel their selves were working with the water turned from out its natural channel and brought in wooden conduits. Where they wanted to hear the People sing, there hummed nothing for them but the *Vaudeville-factories* that they were sick to death of.

So the great hunt for Folk-melodies in foreign lands [56] was given tongue. Already Weber himself, who found his home-bred flower a-dying, had diligently thumbed the pages of Forkel's illustrations of Arabian music, and taken thence a march for harem-guarders. Our Frenchmen were nimbler on their legs; they merely thumbed the pages of tourists' handbooks, and at once set off themselves to hear and see, at closer quarters, if anywhere a morsel of Folk's naïvety were left, and how it looked and sounded. Our greybeard civilisation became a child again; and childish greybeards have short shrift!—

Far off in fair, but much soiled Italy, whose musical fat Rossini had skimmed so elegantly for the starving art-world, there sat the careless master at his ease, looking out with an astonished smile at the picking and grabbing of the brave Parisian hunters for Folk-melodies.

One of these was a capital horseman, and, whenever he dismounted after a smart canter, people knew that he had unearthed a right good melody which would bring him in a heap of money. This time he galloped, as one possessed, through all the piles of fish and fruit in the Naples market, sending everything flying right and left; cackles and curses sped behind him, threatening fists were reared in front,—and so with lightning-speed he scented out the notion of a splendid revolution of fruiterers and fishmongers. But there was still more yet to be made of the idea! Out to Portici stormed the Paris horseman, to the nets and wherries of the simple fisher-folk, who sing as they ply their trade; who pass their lives between sleeping and wrangling, playing with their wives or children and hurling knives at one another; who stab to death, but keep on singing. Master *Auber*, say now! that was a mighty fine ride, and better worth than one upon the Hippogryph that only soars into the clouds,—where, when all 's said and done, there's nothing to be caught but colds and sneezing!—The rider rode home; got off his horse; made Rossini an uncommonly handsome bow (he knew well enough the reason why); took extra-post for Paris; and what he polished off [57] with a turn of his wrist, was his famous "*Stumme von Portici*." (011)

This *Stumme* was the dumb-struck Muse of Drama, who wandered broken-hearted between the singing, raging throngs, and, tired of life, made away at last with herself and her hopeless sorrow in the artificial fury of a stage-volcano!—

Rossini gazed on the glittering spectacle from afar. Travelling to Paris, he thought it well to rest a while amid the snowy Alps of Switzerland, and there to hearken how the sturdy, healthy peasants divide their musical pastimes between their mountains and their cows. Arrived in Paris, he made Auber his civilest of bows (for he, too, knew what he was about), and, with all a happy father's pride, he shewed the world his youngest child, in a lucky moment christened "*William Tell*."

The "*Dumb Girl of Portici*" and "*William Tell*" henceforth became the poles round which the world of speculative opera-music revolved. A new recipe for galvanising the half-paralysed body of Opera had been found; so it now might live for just as long as one could discover anywhere a remnant of national peculiarity. All the countries of the Continent were ransacked, each province plundered, every Folk-stem drained of its last drop of musical blood; and the ardent extract was let off in blinding fireworks, to the supreme satisfaction of the princes and peddlers of the grand world of Opera. The German art-critics, on their side, discovered here a notable approximation of the Opera to its goal; for, behold! it had struck the "national," aye—if you will—the "historic" path. When all the world goes crazy, the Germans are in their seventh heaven; for they have so much the more to ponder, to unravel, to expound, and finally—so as to make themselves *quite* comfortable—to classify!—

Let us consider the operation of the *National* on Melody, and through it upon Opera.

The Folk-element has ever been the fruitful fount of [58] Art, so long as—free of all Reflection—it was able to lift itself by natural channels into Art-work. In Society, as in Art, we have merely fed upon the Folk, without our even knowing it. In our complete aloofness from the Folk, we have taken the fruit on which we lived for manna, for a gift dropped out of the clouds by heavenly Caprice into the mouths of us privileged persons, us elect of God, us plutocrats and geniuses. But when the manna was devoured, we looked ravenously round upon the orchards of the earth; and, robbers by the grace of God, we robbed their fruits with barefaced impudence, uncaring whether we had planted them or nursed them. Yea, the trees themselves we tore up by the roots,—to see if these might not be made quite tasty, or at any rate swallowable, by scientific cooking. And so have we dug up the whole fair native forest of the Folk, that *with it* we now stand naked, starving beggars.

Thus, so soon as ever it discovered its own sterility and drought, has Operatic Music thrown itself upon the Folk-song, and sucked it empty to its roots; in odious opera-melodies it flings the plundered Folk the stringy fruit-sheath, for pitiful and health-destructive food. But it

too, this Operatic Melody, is now without a shadow of a prospect of fresh food. It has swallowed all there was to swallow; without one chance of fresh manuring, it falls unfruitful to the ground. In the death-throes of an expiring glutton, it gnaws at its own flesh; and this horrible assault upon itself is called by German critics a "Striving for higher *Charakteristik*," just as they christened the uprooting of those plundered orchards of the Folk "*Emanzipation of the Masses*"!—

The true Folk-element the opera-composer had not the wit to grasp; to have done this, he must himself have worked in the spirit and with the notions of the Folk, i.e. have been himself a part and parcel of it. Only the *Insular* (das *Sonderliche*), in which the particularity of Folkhood shows itself to him, could he lay hold of; and this is the *National*. The national colouring, already washed [59] entirely from out the upper classes, now lived on only in those sections of the Folk which, fastened to the furrow of the field, the shore, the upland valley, had been held back from any fertilising interchange of idiosyncrasies. It was therefore but a fossilised memento of the past, that fell into the hands of those freebooters; and in these hands,—which must pluck out the last fibre of its reproductive organs, or ever they could use it for their own luxurious caprice,— it could become nothing but a *modish curiosity*. Just as the modistes take at lief some hitherto-neglected foreign item of Folk-costume, and force it into their new-fangled finery: so Opera stripped the life of secluded nationalities of its scraps of melody and rhythm, and decked therewith the motley carcase of its outlived empty forms.

Upon the general demeanour of Opera, however, this procedure could not but exert a by no means unimportant influence: to wit, it brought about that change in the relation of Opera's executant factors to one another which, as already said, has been termed the "*Emancipation of the Masses*." Into this we must now look closer.

[60]

#### IV.

IN exact measure as any art-tendency draws near its prime, does it gain the power of closer, plainer, surer shaping. In the beginning, the Folk expresses by cries of Lyric rapture its marvel at the constant wonders of Nature's workings; in its efforts to master the object of that marvel, it condenses (*verdichtet*) the many-membered show of Nature into a God, and finally its God into a Hero. In this Hero, as in the convex mirror of its being, it learns to know itself; his deeds it celebrates in Epos, but itself in Drama re-enacts them. The tragic Hero of the Greeks stepped out from amid the Chorus, and, turning back to face it, cried: "Lo!—so does, so bears himself, a human being! What ye were hymning in wise saws and maxims, I set it up before you in all the cogence of Necessity."

Greek Tragedy, in its Chorus and its Heroes, combined the Public with the Art-work: the latter held before the Folk, not only itself, but also its own judgment on itself—as it were, a concrete meditation. Now the Drama ripened into Art-work in exact measure as the interpretative judgment of the Chorus so irrefutably expressed itself in the actions of the Heroes, that the Chorus was able to step down from the stage and back into the Folk itself; thus leaving behind it only actual partakers in the living Action. (012) *Shakespeare's* Tragedy unconditionally stands above that of Greece, in so far as it has enabled artistic technique to dispense with the necessity of a Chorus. With Shakespeare, the Chorus is resolved into divers individuals directly interested [61] in the Action, and whose doings are governed by precisely the same promptings of individual Necessity as are those of the chief Hero himself. Even their apparent subordination in the artistic framework is merely a result of the scantier points of contact they have in common with the chief Hero, and nowise of any technical undervaluing of these lesser personages; for wherever the veriest subordinate has to take a share in the main plot, he delivers himself entirely according to his personal characteristics, his own free fancy.

If, in the further course of modern dramatic art, the sharply outlined personalities of Shakespeare have lost more and more of their plastic individuality, and sunk at last to fixed and rigid character-masks, this must solely be ascribed to the influence of a State which has put everything into a regulation livery, and has crushed out with ever direr violence the right of free personality. The shadow-pantomime of hollow masks like these, all bare of inner individuality, is what became the dramatic basis of the Opera. The more void of contents were the personalities beneath these masks, the more fitted were they deemed for singing Operatic Arias. "Prince and Princess,"—that is the dramatic pivot round which the Opera has revolved, and round which, if one would only look a little closer, it still revolves to-day. No Individualism could possibly come to these operatic masks, excepting by a coat of paint; and so at last a local peculiarity of scene must make good what they forever lacked inside. Composers having exhausted all the melodic productivity of their art, and being obliged to borrow from the Folk its local tunes, at last the whole *locale* itself was seized upon: scenery, costume, and the moveable stock to fill them out—the *Opera-Chorus*, became at last the main affair, the Opera itself, and must cast from every side their rainbow light upon the "Prince and Princess," so as to keep the poor wretches in their paint-daubed singer-life.

So was the Drama's circle rounded back upon itself, to its eternal shame: the individual personages into which the [62] chorus of the Folk had crystallised, were melted down into a motley, conglomerate Surrounding, without a centre to surround. In the Opera this Surrounding, and nothing but it, cries out to us from the whole gigantic scenic apparatus, from the machinery, the painted canvas and the piebald dresses; and its voice is the voice of the Chorus, singing: "I am I, and there is none other Opera beside me!"

Undoubtedly, noble artists had earlier employed the trappings of the National; but it had only been able to exert a veritable charm where it was added as an occasional embellishment to a dramatic Stuff already livened by a characteristic plot, and where it was introduced without the slightest ostentation. How admirably did *Mozart* infuse a national colouring into his Osmin and his Figaro, without having to seek in Turkey or in Spain, or any handbooks, for the tint he wanted. That Osmin and that Figaro, however, were genuine individual characters, the happy inspirations of a poet, furnished with a true expression by the musician, and utterly impossible to be misrendered by any common-sense performer. The national trimmings of our modern opera-composers, on the other hand, are not applied to individualities like these, but are intended to give to a quite characterless subject some vestige of a spurious character, in justification and enlivenment of its intrinsically meaningless and colourless existence. The summit toward which all healthy Folkhood tends, the characterisation of the *purely human*, has been from the first degraded in our Opera to a colourless and nothing-saying mask for Aria-singers. This mask, forsooth, is now to be artfully enlivened by reflexion of the surrounding colours; wherefore the surrounding is painted thick with the glaringest and cryingest of splotches.

The Folk having been robbed of its Melody, at last the Folk itself has been dragged upon the stage, in order to brighten up the scene around the Aria-singer; yet this naturally could not be *that* Folk which had invented the [63] tune, but the well-schooled *Mass*, which now is marched hither and thither in beat with the operatic Aria. It was not the *Folk*, that was wanted, but the *Mass*: i.e. the material leavings of the Folk, from which the living spirit had been sucked dry. The massive Chorus of our modern opera is nothing else but the stage machinery set into motion and song, the dumb pageant of the coulisses translated into nimble noise. "Prince and Princess," with the best will in the world, had nothing more to say than their thousand-times repeated florid Aria: so one sought at last to vary the theme by making the whole theatre, from the wings right down to the last-hundredth chorister, join in the singing of

that Aria, and indeed—the higher was the effect to mount—no longer in polyphonic harmony but in a downright thundrous *unison*. In the "Unisono," which has to-day become so fashionable, there is quite palpably revealed the inner purpose of this employment of the Masses; and, in an *operatic sense*, we hear the Masses quite fittingly "emancipated" when we hear them, as in the most famous passages of the most famous modern operas, delivering the same old worn-out Aria in hundred-throated unison. Thus, too, has our State of nowadays emancipated the Masses, when it makes them march battalion-wise in military uniform, wheel left and right, present and shoulder arms: when the Meyerbeerian "Huguenots" attain their highest pitch, we *hear* the selfsame thing as we *see* in a Prussian regiment of Guards. German critics—as remarked above—call it Emancipation of the Masses.



But, taken at bottom, the thus "emancipated" Surrounding was itself but a mask the more. If a truly characteristic life was absent from the chief personages of the opera, it could certainly be still less instilled into the mass-like apparatus. The reflected rays, that were to fall from this enlivening apparatus upon the hero and the heroine, could therefore only be of any effective service if the mask of this Surrounding also got itself, from here or [64] there outside, a coat of varnish that should cloak its inner emptiness. This varnish it gained from the *historic costume*, which must lend the national colouring a still more striking brilliance.

One might imagine that, with the introduction of the Historic element, it must have necessarily fallen to the lot of the Poet to take a determinative share in the shaping of Opera. Yet we shall soon be convinced of our mistake, if we remember the previous evolutionary course of Opera:

how it owed each phase of its development solely to the desperate struggle of the Musician to keep his work in artificial life; and how he had only been guided to the choice of the *historic* element, by no means through an imperious longing to yield himself to the Poet, but through the force of purely musical circumstances,—through a force which issued, in its turn, from the wholly unnatural proposal of the Musician to provide the Drama with both object and expression. We shall have to return later to the situation of the Poet toward our modernest Opera; for the moment let us follow undisturbed the actual factor of Opera, the Musician, and see into what a quandary his mistaken efforts were now to lead him.

Let him take on ne'er such airs and graces—the Musician could only give Expression, and nothing but Expression; he was therefore bound to lose even this faculty of true and sound Expression, in exact measure as, in his misguided eagerness to himself indite and shape the Object of expression, he purposely degraded that object to a vague and empty *schema*. As he had not asked the Poet for *men*, but the Mechanician for *puppets*, which he might drape according to his fancy, and daze the eye by the mere shimmer and arrangement of these draperies of his:

so now, since he could not possibly exhibit by these puppets the warm pulsings of the human frame, he was forced, amid the increasing poverty of his vehicle of expression, to hunt about at last for any new variety in the disposition of his folds and colours. But the Historic garb of Opera—so rich in opportunities because it allows the [65] most checkered play of clime and period—is really the property of the Scene-painter and Stage-tailor, and these two auxiliaries have in effect become the most important allies of the modern opera-composer. Still the Musician did not rest till he had adapted his tone-pallet to the requirements of Historic costume; for how should he, the creator of Opera, he who had turned the Poet into his lacquey, not find a means of distancing the painter and the tailor? Had he not dissolved the whole drama, plot and characters and all, into his music: and how should it stay beyond his power, to turn into musical water the drawings and colours of the painter and the tailor? He managed to tear down every dam, to open every sluice, that hedged the ocean from the land;



and thus to drown the Drama, man and beast, paint-brush and scissors, in the deluge of his music!

The Musician was bound to fulfil his destiny of presenting German Criticism—for whom it is well-known that God's all-caring providence created Art—with the joy of an "*Historic music*." His high vocation full soon inspired him to find the way.

How must an "historic" music sound, to produce an effect in keeping with its name? To be sure, quite otherwise than a not-historic music. But wherein lay the difference? Clearly in this: that the "historic music" should differ as much from that we are now accustomed to, as the costume of a former epoch from that of the present day. Would it not be wisest then, just as one had copied faithfully the costumes of the date in question, to take one's music also from that epoch? Alas! this was not quite so easy, for in those epochs, so piquant in their costume, there was, barbarically enough, no Opera: a general type of operatic speech was therefore not to be borrowed from them. On the other hand, the people of those epochs sang in *churches*, and these church-hymns have about them, if one springs their chanting suddenly upon us, something strikingly foreign to our modern music. Excellent! Fetch out the Hymns! Religion shall take a turn upon the [66] stage! (013) So Music's want of an historic costume became a Christian operatic virtue. For the crime of stealing the Folk's-melody one procured oneself Roman-catholic and Evangelical-protestant absolution, in return for the service rendered to the Church in that, just as earlier the Masses, now Religion too—to follow logically the expression of German Criticism—was "emancipated" by Opera.

Thus the opera-composer became the redeemer of all the world; and in the deeply-inspired and self-lacerating rapture of the fervent *Meyerbeer* we have in any case to recognise the modern saviour, the bearer of the sins of the modern world.

However, this atoning "emancipation of the Church" could be only conditionally fulfilled by the musician. If Religion wished for the blessing of Opera, it must be reasonably content to take its fitting place among the other emancipates. Opera, as enfranchiser of the world, must rule Religion, and not Religion Opera; if the opera was to be turned into a church, then Religion would certainly not be emancipated by it, but it by Religion. For sake of the purity of historic musical-costume, Opera would by all means have been only too delighted to have solely to do with Religion, since the only serviceable historic music was to be found in the Church alone. But to have to do with nothing but monks and clergy, would have seriously interfered with the gaiety of Opera: for the real thing that was to be glorified by the emancipation of Religion was the Operatic Aria, that luxuriantly unfolded germ of all the opera's being; and its roots were nowise bathed in longing for devout self-concentration, but for an entertaining dissipation. (014) Strictly speaking, Religion was only to be used as a side-dish, just the same as in our well-regulated civic life: the 'piece of resistance' must still be "Prince and [67] Princess," with a due seasoning of villain, court-choir and folk-choir, scenery and dresses.

How on earth, though, was this highly respectable Opera-symposium to be translated into Historic music?—

Here stretched a blank expanse of clouds in face of the musician, a grey mist of unadulterated, absolute Invention: the challenge to *creation out of nothing*. But see, how quickly he took its measure! He had only to look to it that his music should always sound a *shade different* from what one might have ordinarily expected, and his music would at once sound quite *outlandish* (*fremdartig*), while a skilful snip by the stage-tailor would suffice to make it out-and-out "historic."

Music, as the highest power of Expression, was now assigned a quite new, an uncommonly piquant task: to take this Expression, which she 'had already gone so far as to turn into the Object of expression, and contradict it out of its own mouth. Expression—which, without an object worth expressing, was already in itself completely *null*—now *denied itself* in its

endeavour to pose as that object; so that the resultant of our theories of the world's-creation, according to which a Something has been brought about by two negations, was to be set up for entire attainment by our opera-composers. We commend the outcome to German criticism, as "*Emancipated Metaphysics*."

Let us follow this course a little farther.—

If the composer wished to furnish a straightforward and appropriate Expression, he could not, with the best will in the world, do it otherwise than in that musical dialect which we recognise to-day as an intelligible musical utterance; but as he meant to henceforth lend it an Historic colouring, and as he could only deem this attainable, at bottom, by giving it a generally outlandish and unaccustomed twang, there stood chiefly at his service the expressional manner of an earlier musical epoch, which he might copy at his pleasure or borrow from according to his whim. In this way has the composer patched together from all the tasty peculiarities of style of various periods a [68] piebald jargon, which, taken on its merits, was in a fair way to meet his quest for outlandishness and unaccustomed ness. But musical-speech, once it is cut adrift from any Object worth expressing, once that it means to speak without a Content and according to the bare caprice of Operatic Aria,—i.e. to merely chirp and chatter,—is so completely given over to the tender mercies of the *Mode*, that it either has to submit itself to this Mode or, if luck is favouring, to rule it: that is, to bring it the *very latest thing* in modes. So that, in the event of his success, the jargon which the composer had invented in order to speak *outlandishly*—for sake of his Historic ends—becomes at once another Mode, which suddenly *ceases to sound outlandish* and turns into the dress we all are wearing, the speech we all are speaking. The composer cannot help despairing, to find himself thus everlastingly balked by his own inventions, in his effort to appear outlandish; he is therefore forced to hit upon some method of appearing outlandish for good and all, if he means to keep faith with his calling to "historic" music. Once for all, then, he must take pains to dislocate the very backbone of his most distorted utterance—since it has positively become a thing of Fashion by his own example: to cut the story short, he must make up his mind to say "No" where he really means "Yes," to give himself a joyous bearing where he has to express sorrow, to whine and whimper where his business is supreme delight. Yes indeed, only thus is it possible for him in every case to seem outlandish, odd, and as though sprung from God knows where; he must feign to be rightdown crazy, so as to appear "historico-characteristic." Thus have we won a truly brand-new element: the passion for the "historic" has turned into *hysterical* mania, and when the lights are turned up, this mania is found, to our intense delight, to be nothing else than—how shall we call it?—Eh!—*Neoromantic*.

[69]

## V.

To the distortion of all truth and nature, that we see practised on musical expression by the French so-called *Neoromantists*, there was furnished from a sphere of Tone-art lying entirely aside from Opera a seeming vindication, and above all a food-stuff, which we may easiest sum together under the title of a *misunderstanding of (015) Beethoven*.

It is very important to notice that, down to the present day, everything which has had a real and determinant influence upon the shaping of Opera has issued *simply from the domain of Absolute Music*; never from that of Poetry, nor from a healthy coöperation of both arts. As we found that from Rossini onwards the history of Opera had definitely narrowed itself to the history of operatic *melody*, so do we also see the whole bias given in recent times to the more and more historico-dramatic pose of Opera proceeding from *that* opera-composer who, in his forced endeavour to vary operatic-melody, has been driven step by step to take up into this



melody of his even the figment of an historical *Characteristique*, and who has accordingly instructed the Poet what to supply to the Musician in keeping with his plan. But as this melody had hitherto been propagated artificially as *vocal* melody,—i.e. melody which, parted from the poetic conditions of its base, yet obtained in the Singer's mouth or throat fresh conditions for its further cultivation,—and as it had chiefly gained these fresh conditions by a renewed eavesdropping of the primal nature-melody from the mouth of the Folk: so did it turn its greedy ears at last to where Melody, parted this time from the Singer's mouth, had won its further life-conditions from the mechanism of the Instrument. Thus [70] *Instrumental-melody*, translated into the melody of operatic Song, (016) became the main factor in this fictive *drama*:—and this, in fact, was what was bound to happen in the long run to the unnatural genre of Opera!—

Whereas Operatic-melody, deprived of any actual fecundation by Poetry, could only pass from violence to violence, in its endeavour to uphold a toilsome, barren life: Instrumental-music, taking the harmonic strains of Dance and Song, separating them into smaller and ever smaller portions, augmenting and diminishing these portions, and building them up again into constantly varying forms, had won itself an idiomatic speech; a speech which, in any higher artistic sense, however, was arbitrary and incapable of expressing the Purely-human, so long as the longing for a clear and intelligible portrayal of definite, individual human feelings did not become its only necessary measure for the shaping of those melodic particles. That the expression of an altogether definite, a clearly-understandable individual Content, was in truth impossible in this language that had only fitted itself for conveying the general character of an emotion,—*this* could not be laid bare, before the arrival of that instrumental composer with whom the longing to speak out such a content first became the consuming impulse of all his artistic fashioning.

The history of Instrumental-music, from the moment when that longing first evinced itself, is the history of an artistic error; yet of one that ended, not in the demonstration of an impotence of Music's, like that of the Operatic genre, but with the revelation of a boundless inner power. The error of *Beethoven* was that of Columbus, (017) who merely [71] meant to seek out a new way to the old known land of India, and discovered a new world instead. Columbus took his error with him to the grave: he made his comrades swear a solemn oath, that this new world of his was still the ancient India; but, never so involved in error, his deed tore off the bandage from the old world's eyes, and taught it to see, past all denial, the actual figure of the earth in its undreamt fulness.—For us, too, has there been unveiled the exhaustless power of Music, through Beethoven's all-puissant error. Through his undaunted toil, to reach the artistically Necessary within an artistically Impossible, is shown us Music's unhemmed faculty of accomplishing every thinkable task, if only she consent to stay what she really is—an *art of Expression*.

Beethoven's error, however, alike with the boon of his artistic deed, we could not fully estimate until we were in a position to survey his works in their totality, until he and his works had become for us a rounded whole, and until the artistic labours of his followers—who adopted into their own creations the error of the master, without either the right of ownership or the giant force of that longing of his—had shewn us the error in its clearest light. The contemporaries and immediate successors of Beethoven, on the other hand, saw in his separate works, whether in the magical impression of the whole or the peculiar shaping of its details, precisely That alone which, always according to the strength of their receptivity and comprehension, was obvious to them at a glance. So long as Beethoven was at unison with the spirit of his musical era, and simply embedded the flower of that spirit in his works: so long could the reflex of his art-production prove nothing but beneficial to his

surroundings. But from the time when, in concord with the moving sorrows of his life, there awoke in the artist a longing for distinct expression of specific, characteristically individual emotions,—as though to unbosom himself to the intelligent sympathy of fellow men,—and this longing grew into an ever more compulsive force; from the time when he began to care [72] less and less about merely making music, about expressing himself agreeably, enthrallingly or inspiringly in general, within that music; and instead thereof, was driven by the Necessity of his inner being to employ his art in bringing to sure and seizable expression a definite Content that absorbed his thoughts and feelings:—thenceforth begins the agony of this deep-stirred man and imperatively straying (*nothwendig irrenden*) artist. Upon the curious hearer who did not understand him, simply because the inspired man could not possibly make himself intelligible to such an one, these mighty transports and the half-sorrowful, half-blissful stammerings of a Pythian inspiration, could not but make the impression of a genius stricken with madness.

In the works of the second half of his artistic life, Beethoven is un-understandable—or rather mis-understandable—mostly just *where* he desires to express a specific, individual Content in the most intelligible way. He passes over the received, involuntary conventions of the Absolute-musical, i.e. its anyway recognisable resemblance—in respect of expression and form—to the dance- or song-tune; he chooses instead a form of speech which often seems the mere capricious venting of a whim, and which, loosed from any purely musical cohesion, is only bound together by the bond of a Poetic purpose impossible to render into Music with full poetic plainness. The greater portion of Beethoven's works of this period must be regarded as instinctive efforts (*unwillkürliche Versuche*) to frame a speech to voice his longing; so that they often seem like sketches for a picture, as to whose *subject* indeed the master was at one with himself, but not as to its intelligible grouping. The picture itself he could not carry out, until he had tuned its subject to the pitch of his expressional powers, had seized it in its more general meaning and translated its individual features into the native tints of Tone, and thus in a measure had 'musicalised' his very subject. If there had come before the world only these finished pictures, in which Beethoven spoke out his thoughts with delightful clearness and comprehensibility, then the misunderstanding about [73] himself, that the master gave rise to, would at any rate have had a less bewildering and misguiding effect on others. But Musical Expression, in its divorce from the conditionments of expression, had already fallen a prey to the relentless necessity of mere modish likes and dislikes, and therefore to all the conditionings of Mode itself. Certain melodic, harmonic, or rhythmic features would flatter the ear to-day so temptingly, that people used them to satiety; but after a brief to-morrow they would be worn out to such a pitch, that they would suddenly sound intolerable or ridiculous to ears of taste. Now, he who made it his business to catch the public's fancy, could think nothing more important than to appear as new as possible in those features of absolute-musical expression which we have just characterised; and seeing that the food for such a newness could only come from the art-domain of Music itself,—was nowhere to be borrowed from the changing shows of Life,—that musician was bound to see a most productive quarry in those very works of Beethoven which we have denoted as the sketches for his greater paintings, and in which the struggle for discovery of a new basis of musical language, with its excursions in all directions, often shewed itself in certain spasmodic traits (*kramphaften Zügen*) that perforce must strike the unintelligent listener as odd, original, bizarre, and in any case quite new. The abrupt contrastment, the hasty intersection, and above all the often wellnigh simultaneous utterance, of accents of joy and sorrow, ecstasy and horror, closely woven each with each,—such as the master's seeking instinct mingled in the strangest harmonic melismi and rhythms, to form fresh terms for definitely expressing individual moments of emotion,—all this, seized merely by its formal surface, fell into the technical forcing-pit of those composers who in the adoption of Beethoven's peculiarities

espied a rich manuring for their Music-for-all-the-world. Whereas the majority of *older* musicians could only comprehend and sanction that element in the works of Beethoven which lay the farthest from the master's individual being and appeared but as the crowning flower of [74] an earlier, less anxious period of musical art: the *younger* note-setters have chiefly copied the externals and singularities of the later Beethovenian manner.

However, as there were only externals to be copied, since the Content of those idioms was doomed to stay the *unspoken* secret of the master, so necessity commanded that some sort of inner subject should be sought for them, some subject that, despite its inevitable generality, might afford a pretext for employing those features which pointed so strongly to the particular and individual. This subject was naturally to be found alone beyond the bounds of Music; and this again, for unmixed Instrumental-music, could only be within the realm of Phantasy. A programme, reciting the heads of some subject taken from Nature or human Life, was put into the hearer's hands; and it was left to his imaginative talent to interpret, in keeping with the hint once given, all the musical freaks that one's unchecked license (*Willkür*) might now let loose in motley chaos.

*German* musicians stood close enough to the spirit of Beethoven, to keep aloof from the wildest antics that sprang from this misunderstanding of the master. They sought to save themselves from the consequences of that expressional manner, by polishing down its most jutting angles; by taking up again the older fashions of expression, and weaving them into these newest, they formed themselves an artificial mixture that we can only call a general Abstract style of music, in which one might go on music-ing with great propriety and respectability for quite a length of time without much fear of its being seriously disturbed by drastic individualities. If Beethoven mostly gives us the impression of a man who has something to tell us, which yet he cannot plainly impart: on the other hand these modern followers of his appear like men who, often in a charmingly circumstantial fashion, impart to us the news that they have nothing at all to say.—

[75]

It was in Paris, however, that great devourer of all artistic tendencies, that a Frenchman gifted with uncommon musical intelligence pursued the above-named tendency to its uttermost extreme. *Hector Berlioz* is the immediate and most energetic offshoot of Beethoven on *that* side from which the latter turned away so soon—as I have above described—as he pressed forward from the sketch to the actual picture. The often crabbed and hasty penstrokes in which Beethoven, without a closer scrutiny, jotted down his attempts at finding new methods of expression, were almost the only heirloom of the great artist that fell into the eager pupil's hands. Was it a suspicion that Beethoven's most finished picture, his Last Symphony, would also be the very last work of its kind, that restrained Berlioz in his own interest—for he, too, wished to create great works—from searching those pictures for the master's actual trend (*Drang*)?—a trend which surely headed somewhere else, than toward the appeasement of a mere fantastic whim. Certain it is, that Berlioz' artistic inspiration was fed upon an enamoured staring at those strangely crumpled penstrokes: horror and ecstasy seized him at the sight of the enigmatic symbols in which the master had bound both ecstasy and horror in one common spell, to show by them the secret which he never could speak out in Music and yet believed he could speak therein alone. At this sight the starrer was seized at last with giddiness; in wild confusion there danced a garish, witch-like chaos before eyes whose natural vision yielded to a purblind polyopia (*Vielsichtigkeit*), in which the dazed one fancied he was looking on human forms with all the hues of flesh, when there were really nothing but ghostly skeletons playing their tricks upon his fancy. But this spectre-roused vertigo was

Berlioz' only inspiration: when he woke from it he saw, with all the exhaustion of an opium-eater, a chilling void around him, which he now endeavoured to animate by artificially resummoning the fever of his dream; and this he could only manage by a toilsome re-arrangement of his musical household-stuff.

[76]

In his struggle to note down the apparitions of his gruesomely excited fancy, so as to present them accurately and palpably to the incredulous, hidebound world of his Parisian surroundings, Berlioz forced his enormous musical intelligence to a hitherto undreamt-of technical power. What he had to say to people was so wonderful, so unwonted, so entirely unnatural, that he could never have said it out in homely, simple words: he needed a huge array of the most complicated machines, in order to proclaim by help of many-wheeled and delicately adjusted Mechanism what a simple human Organism could not possibly have uttered—just because it was so quite un-human. We know, now, the supernatural wonders wherewith a priesthood once deluded childlike men into believing that some good god was manifesting himself to them: it was nothing but Mechanism, that ever worked these cheating wonders. Thus to-day again the super-natural, just because it is the un-natural, can only be brought before a gaping public by the wonders of mechanics; and such a wonder is the secret of the *Berliozian Orchestra*. Each height and depth of this Mechanism's capacity has Berlioz explored, with the result of developing a positively astounding knowledge, and if we mean to recognise the inventors of our present industrial machinery as the benefactors of modern State-humanity, then we must worship Berlioz as the veritable saviour of our world of Absolute-music; for he has made it possible to musicians to produce the most wonderful effect, from the emptiest and most un-artistic Content of their music-making, by an unheard marshalling of mere mechanical means.

Berlioz himself, in the beginning of his artistic career, was certainly not attracted by the glory of a mere mechanical inventor: in him there dwelt a genuine artistic stress (*Drang*), and this stress was of a burning, a consuming kind. That, in order to content this stress, he was driven by the unsound and the un-human along the line above-discussed, to such a point that he needs must sink as artist into mechanism, as supernatural, fantastic dreamer into an all-devouring materialism: this makes of him not [77] only a warning example,—but so much the more a deeply to be deplored phenomenon as he to-day is still consumed with a genuinely artistic yearning, notwithstanding that he lies already buried hopelessly beneath the desert waste of his machines.

He is the tragic sacrifice to a tendency whose results have been exploited from *another* side with the most grievous unabashedness, the most heedless self-complacency in all the world. The Opera, to which we shall now return, has swallowed down the Neoromanticism of Berlioz, too, as a plump, fine-flavoured oyster, whose digestion has conferred on it anew a brisk and well-to-do appearance.



From the sphere of Absolute-music an enormous increase in means of manifold Expression had been brought to Opera by the *modern orchestra*, by the orchestra that—in the opera-composer's sense—was now prepared to bear itself "dramatically." Formerly the Orchestra had never been anything beyond the rhythmic and harmonic bearer of the opera-melody: however richly equipped in this its station, yet it was always subordinated to that melody; and where it even reached so far as to take a direct share or interest in its delivery, still it really only served to render mistress Melody more dazzling and more proud, by sumptuously adorning, as it were, her court. Everything that belonged to the necessary accompaniment of the dramatic-action was taken from the sphere of Pantomime or Ballet,

whose melodic expression had evolved from the Folkdance-tune by precisely the same laws as Operatic Aria had evolved from the tune of the Folksong. Just as the one tune had owed its development and tricking-out to the wayward fancy of the Singer, and finally of the novelty-hunting Composer, so had the other owed *its* to that of the Dancer and Pantomimist. In neither had it been possible to tamper with its essential roots, since these lay beyond the soil of operatic art, were incognisable and [78] inaccessible to the factors of Opera; and this essence was enunciated in that hard-and-fast (*scharf gezeichneten*) rhythmic and melismic Form, whose surface the composer might haply vary, but never wash away its outlines without completely drowning himself in a chaos of the most hopelessly indefinite expression. Thus Pantomime itself had been domineered over by Dance-melody. The pantomimist could deem nothing expressible by gestures but what this Dance - melody, sternly chained to certain rhythmic and melismic conventions, was able to accompany with any degree of fitness. He was strictly bound to measure his movements and gestures, and consequently what they were intended to express, by the standard of the music's powers; by these to mould and stereotype himself and his individual powers,—exactly as in Opera the singing-actor must temper his dramatic powers to those of the stereotyped Aria-expression, and leave his own quite undeveloped, albeit entitled by the nature of the case to the real determinative voice. (018)

In this anti-natural relation of the artistic factors to one another, in both Pantomime and Opera, musical-expression had been starved into the barest formalism. Above all the Orchestra, as accompanist of dance or pantomime, had not been able to gain that faculty of expression which it must needs have reached if this subject of accompaniment, to wit the Dramatic pantomime, had ventured to evolve according to its own exhaustless inner powers, and thus *in itself* to offer the Orchestra the material for genuine invention. Even in Opera nothing else had been possible to the Orchestra, when accompanying pantomimic movements, but that tied-down, banal rhythmic-melodic expression: by luxuriance and glitter of surface colour alone, had one sought to induce it with variety.

Now, in independent Instrumental-music this fixed expression had been broken down, and that by actually smiting its rhythmic and melodic Form to pieces, from [79] which new and endlessly diverse forms were moulded according to purely musical design. *Mozart* still commenced his Symphonies with an entire melody, which he then, as though in sport, divided contrapuntally into smaller and smaller portions. *Beethoven's* most distinctive creation began with these divided pieces, from which he built before our very eyes an ever loftier and richer edifice. *Berlioz*, however, was delighted with the intricate and gay confusion into which he shook those fractions; and the hugely complicated machine, the kaleidoscope in which he rattled parti-coloured stones together, he took and reached it to the modern opera-composer in his *Orchestra*.

These splintered and atomic melodies, whose fragments he might join together at his lief—the more without rhyme or reason, the more quaintly and surprisingly—the Opera-composer now lifted from the orchestra *into the voice itself*. However fantastically whimsical this sort of melodic practice might appear in purely orchestral pieces, yet *here* everything could be excused; for the difficulty, nay impossibility of expressing oneself in Music alone, with full distinctness, had already betrayed even the most earnest masters into a like fantastic whimsicality. But in Opera, where the sharp-cut word of Poetry afforded the musician a quite natural basis for a sure, infallible expression, this scandalous confounding of all expression, this supercilious maiming of each still healthy organ of expression, such as is exhibited in the modernest Opera's preposterous stringing-together of utterly alien and radically diverse melodic elements—this we can only ascribe to the complete development of madness in the composer; who, in his arrogant pretension to bring about the Drama by his sole absolute-musical powers, with *merely labourer's assistance* from the Poet, was necessarily bound to arrive where we see him arrived to-day amid the ridicule of every man of



common sense.

In virtue of his hugely swollen musical apparatus, the Composer, who since Rossini's time had only developed his frivolous side and lived on absolute Opera-melody, now felt [80] called to boldly advance from the standpoint of melodic frivolity to the further stage of dramatic "Characteristique." As such a "Characteristicist" is the most famous opera-composer of modern times acclaimed; and that not only by the public, who had long-since been made his deeply compromised accomplice in the assault upon Music's truth, but also by the art-critics. In view of the greater melodic purity of former epochs, and compared therewith, 'tis true the Meyerbeerian melody is upbraided by our criticsists as *frivolous* and *flimsy* (*gehaltlos*); but in regard of the quite new marvels in the way of "Characteristique" that have blossomed from his music this composer is meted out a plenary indulgence,—which involves the corollary that, after all, one considers a *musical-dramatic Characteristique* only possible when couched in a *frivolous and flimsy Melodique*: a consideration which in its turn can only fill the æsthetician with an utter distrust of the whole genre of Opera—

Let us briefly survey the nature of this modern "Characteristique," as exhibited in Opera.

[81]

## VI.

MODERN "CHARACTERISTIQUE," in Opera, is something essentially different from its counterpart in the *pre*-Rossinian era, in the tendency of Gluck or of Mozart

In declaimed Recitative, as in be-sung Aria, Gluck—with full retention of these forms, and amid his instinctive carefulness to comply with the wonted claims upon their purely musical content—was consciously concerned to reproduce as faithfully as possible by his Musical Expression the emotion indicated in the 'text,' and above all to never sacrifice the purely declamatory accent of the verse in favour of this musical expression. He took pains to speak correctly and intelligibly in his music.

*Mozart*, by reason of a nature wholly sound at core, could never speak otherwise than correctly. He pronounced with the selfsame clearness the rhetorical 'pigtail' and the genuine dramatic accent: with him grey was always grey, and red red; only that this grey and this red were equally bathed with the freshening dew of his music, were resolved into all the nuances of the primordial colour, and thus appeared as many-tinted grey, as many-tinted red. Instinctively his music ennobled all the conventional stage-characters presented him, by polishing, as it were, the rough-hewn stone, by turning all its facets to the light, and finally by fixing it in that position where the light could smite it into brightest play of colour. In this way was he able to lift the characters of "Don Juan," for instance, into such a fulness of expression that a writer like Hoffmann could fall on the discovery of the deepest, most mysterious relations between them, relations of which neither poet nor musician had been ever really conscious. Certain it is, however, that Mozart could not possibly have made his music characteristic in such sort, [82] had the characters themselves not been already present in the poet's work. The more we are able to look through the glowing tints of Mozart's music to the ground behind, with the greater sureness do we recognise the sharp and definite penstrokes of the Poet, whose lines and touches first prescribed the colours of the Musician, and without whose skill that wondrous music would have straightway been impossible.

But the amazingly lucky relationship between Poet and Composer, that we have found in Mozart's masterwork, we see completely vanishing again in the further evolution of Opera; until, as we have already noticed, *Rossini* quite abolished it, making absolute Melody the only authentic factor of Opera, to which all other interests, and above all the coöperation of the Poet, had wholly to subordinate themselves. We further saw that *Weber's* objection to Rossini was only directed against this Melody's shallowness and want of character; by no means

against the unnatural position of the Musician toward the Drama. On the contrary, Weber only added to this unnaturalness, in that he assigned himself a still more heightened position, as against the Poet, by a characteristic ennobling of his Melody; a position loftier in exact degree as his melody outtopped Rossini's in just that point of nobility of character. To Rossini the Poet hung on like a jolly trencherman, whom the Composer—distinguished, but affable person that he was—treated to his heart's content with oysters and champagne; so that, in the whole wide world, the Poet found himself nowhere better off than with the famous maestro. Weber, on the other hand, from unbending faith in the characteristic pureness of his one and indivisible Melody, tyrannised over the Poet with dogmatic cruelty, and forced him to erect the very stake on which the wretch was to let himself be burnt to ashes for the kindling of the fire of Weber's melody. The poet of "Der Freischütz," entirely without his own knowledge, had committed this act of suicide: from out his very ashes he protested, while the flames of Weber's fire were already filling all the [83] air; he called to the world that these flames were really leaping forth from *him*. But he made a radical mistake; his wooden logs gave forth no flame until they were consumed—destroyed: their ashes alone, the prosaic dialogue, could he claim as his property after the fire.

After the "Freischütz" Weber sought him out a more accommodating poet; for a new opera he took into his pay a lady, from whose more unconditional subservience he even demanded that, after the burning of the funeral pile, she should not leave behind so much as the last ashes of her prose: she should allow herself to be consumed flesh and bone in the furnace of his melody. From Weber's correspondence with Frau von Chezy, during the preparation of the text of "Euryanthe," we learn with what painstaking care he felt again compelled to rack the last drop of blood from a poetic helper; how he rejects and prescribes, and once more prescribes and rejects; here cuts, there asks for more; insists on lengthenings here and shortenings there,—nay extends his orders even to the characters themselves, their motives and their actions. Was he in this, mayhap, a peevish malcontent, or a boastful parvenu who, inflated by the success of his "Freischütz," desired to play the despot where by rights he should have obeyed? No, no! Out of his mouth there spake alone the honourable artist-care of the Musician, who, tempted by stress of circumstance, had undertaken to construct the Drama itself from Absolute-melody. Weber here was led into a serious error, but into an error which was necessarily bound to take him. He had lifted Melody to its fairest, most feeling height of nobleness; he wanted now to crown it as the *Muse of Drama* herself, and by her strenuous hand to chase away the whole ribald pack of profaners of the stage. As in the "Freischütz" he had led each lyric fibre of the opera-poem into this Melody, so now he wished to shower down the Drama from the beams of his melodic planet. One might almost say that the melody for his "Euryanthe" was ready before a line of its poem; to provide the latter, he only [84] wanted someone who should take his melody completely into ear and heart, and merely poetise upon it. Since this was not practicable, however, he and his poetess fell into a fretful theoretic quarrel, in which a clear agreement was possible from neither the one side nor the other,—so that in this case of all others, when calmly tested, we may plainly see into what painful insecurity men of Weber's gifts and artistic love of truth may be misled, by holding fast to a fundamental artistic error.

After all was done, the Impossible was bound to stay impossible for Weber too. Spite all his suggestions and instructions to the Poet, he could not procure a dramatic groundwork which he might entirely dissolve into his Melody; because he wished to call into being a genuine drama, and not merely a play filled out with lyric moments, where—as in "Der Freischütz"—he would need to employ his music for nothing but those lyric moments. In the text of "Euryanthe," besides the dramatic-lyric elements,—for which, as I have expressed myself; the melody was ready in advance,—there was still so much of additional matter quite foreign to Absolute Music, that Weber was unable to get command of it by his Melody



proper. If this text had been the work of a veritable poet, who should only have called upon the musician for aid, in the same manner as the musician had now called upon the poet: then this musician, in his affection for the proffered drama, would never have had a moment's hesitancy. Where he recognised no fitting Stuff to feed or vindicate his broader musical expression, he would only have deployed his lesser powers, to wit of furnishing an accompaniment subordinate but ever helpful to the whole; and only where the fullest musical expression was necessarily conditioned by the Stuff itself, would he have entered with his fullest powers. The text of "Euryanthe," however, had sprung from the converse relationship between poet and musician, and wherever the Composer—the virtual author of that opera—should by rights have stood aside or withdrawn into the background, there he [85] now could only see a doubled task, namely that of imprinting on a musically quite sterile stuff a stamp which should be musical throughout. In this Weber could have succeeded only if he had turned to music's frivolous line; if, looking quite aside from truth, he had given rein to the epicurean element, and set death and the devil to amusing melodies *à la* Rossini. But this was the very thing against which Weber lodged his strongest artistic protest: *his* melody should be everywhere *characteristic*, i.e. true and answering to each emotion of his subject. Thus he was forced to betake himself to some other expedient.

Wherever his broad-breathed melody—mostly ready in advance, and spread above the text like a glittering garment—would have done that text too manifest a violence, there Weber broke this melody itself in pieces. He then took up the separate portions of his melodic building, and, always according to the declamatory requirements of the words, re-joined them together into a skilful mosaic; which latter he coated with a film of fine melodic varnish, in order thus to preserve for the whole construction an outward show of Absolute Melody, detachable as much as possible from the text-words. The desired illusion, however, he did not succeed in effecting.

Not only Rossini, but Weber himself had made Absolute Melody so decidedly the main content of Opera, that, wrested from its dramatic framework and even stripped of its text-words, it had passed over to the Public *in its barest nakedness*. A melody must be able to be fiddled and blown, or hammered-out upon the pianoforte, *without* thereby losing the smallest particle of its individual essence, if it was ever to become a real melody for the public. To Weber's operas, too, the public merely went to hear as many of such melodies as possible, and the musician was terribly mistaken when he flattered himself that he would see that lacquered declamatory mosaic accepted as Melody by this public: for, to tell the truth, that was what the composer 'really made for. Though in [86] the eyes of Weber himself that mosaic could only be justified by the words of the text, yet on the one side the public was entirely indifferent—and that with perfect justice—to those words; while on the other side it transpired that this text itself had not been quite suitably reproduced in the music. For it was just this immature half-melody that turned the attention of the hearer away from the words, and made him look out anxiously for the formation of a whole melody that never came to light,—so that any longing for the presentment of a poetic thought was throttled in advance, while the enjoyment of a melody was all the more painfully curtailed as the longing for it was roused indeed, but never satisfied. Beyond the passages in "Euryanthe" where the composer's artistic judgment could hold his own broad natural melody completely justified, we see in that work his higher artistic efforts only crowned with true and beautiful success where, for love of truth, he quite renounces Absolute-melody, and—as in the opening scene of the first act—gives the noblest, most faithful musical expression to the emotional dramatic declamation (*Rede*) as such; where he therefore sets the aim of his own artistic labours no longer in the music but in the poem, and merely employs his music for the furthering of that aim: which, again, could be attained by nothing but Music with such fulness and so convincing truth.

Criticism has never dealt with "Euryanthe" in the measure that its uncommonly instructive Content deserves. The Public gave an undecided voice, half stirred, half chagrined. Criticism, which at bottom always waits upon the public voice, in order—according to its own intention of the moment—either from that and the outward success to take its cue, or else to doggedly oppose it: this Criticism has never been able to take proper stock of the utterly contradictory elements that cross each other in this work, to sift them carefully, and from the composer's endeavour to unite them into one harmonious whole to find a warrant for its ill-success. Yet never, so long as Opera has existed, [87] has there been composed a work in which the inner contradictions of the whole genre have been more consistently worked out, more openly exhibited, by a gifted, deeply-feeling and truth-loving composer, for all his high endeavour to attain the best. These contradictions are: *absolute, self-sufficing melody, and—unflinchingly true dramatic expression*. Here one or the other must necessarily be sacrificed,—either Melody or Drama. Rossini sacrificed the Drama; the noble Weber wished to reinstate it by force of his more judicious (*sinnigeren*) melody. He had to learn that this was an impossibility. Weary and exhausted by the troubles of his "Euryanthe," he sank back upon the yielding pillow of an oriental fairy-dream; through the wonder-horn of Oberon he breathed away his last life's-breath.



What this noble, lovable Weber, aglow with a pious faith in the omnipotence of his pure Melody, vouchsafed him by the fairest spirit of the Folk,—what *he* had striven for in vain, was undertaken by a friend of Weber's youth, by *Jacob Meyerbeer*; but from the standpoint of Rossinian melody.

Meyerbeer passed through all the phases of this Melody's development; not from an abstract distance, but in a very concrete nearness, always on the spot. As a Jew, he owned no mother-tongue, no speech inextricably entwined among the sinews of his inmost being: he spoke with precisely the same interest in any modern tongue you chose, and set it to music with no further sympathy for its idiosyncrasies than just the question as to how far it shewed a readiness to become a pliant servitor to Absolute Music. This attribute of Meyerbeer's has given occasion to a comparison of him with *Gluck*; for the latter, too, although a German, wrote operas to French and Italian texts. As a fact, Gluck did not create his music from the instinct of Speech (which in such a case must always be the *mother-speech*): what he, as Musician, was concerned with in his attitude [88] toward Speech (*die Sprache*), was its Rhetoric (*die Rede*), that utterance of the speech-organism which merely floats upon the surface of this myriad of organs. Not from the generative force of these organs, did his productive powers mount through the Rhetoric into the Musical-expression; but from the sloughed-off Musical-expression he harked back to the Rhetoric, merely so as to give that baseless Expression some ground of vindication. Thus every tongue might well come equally to Gluck, since he was only busied with his rhetoric: if Music, in this transcendental line, had been able to pierce through the Rhetoric into the very organism of Speech, it must then have surely had to entirely transform itself.—In order not to interrupt the course of my argument, I must reserve this extremely weighty topic for thorough investigation in a more appropriate place; for the present I content myself with commending to notice, that *Gluck's* concern was with an animated Rhetoric in general—no matter in what tongue, —since in that alone did he find a vindication for his melody; whereas since Rossini this Rhetoric has been completely swallowed up in Absolute-melody, leaving only its materialest of frameworks, its vowels and its consonants, as a scaffolding for musical tone.

*Meyerbeer*, through his indifference to the spirit of any tongue, and his hence-gained power to make with little pains its outer side his own (a faculty our modern education has brought within the reach of all the well-to-do), was quite cut out for dealing with Absolute

Music divorced from any lingual ties. Moreover, he thus was able to witness on the spot the salient features in the aforesaid march of Opera-music's evolution: everywhere and everywhen he followed on its footsteps. Above all is it noteworthy that he merely *followed* on this march, and never kept *abreast* of; to say nothing of outstripping it. He was like the starling who follows the ploughshare down the field, and merrily picks up the earthworm just uncovered in the furrow. Not *one* departure is his own, but each he has eavesdropped from his forerunner, exploiting it with monstrous [89] ostentation; and so swiftly that the man in front has scarcely spoken a word, than *he* has bawled out the entire phrase, quite unconcerned as to whether he has caught the meaning of that word; whence it has generally arisen, that he has actually said something slightly different from what the man in front intended. But the noise of the Meyerbeerian phrase was so deafening, that the man in front could no longer arrive at bringing out his own real meaning: willy-nilly, if only to get a word in edgeways, he was forced at last to chime into that phrase.

In Germany alone was Meyerbeer unsuccessful, in his search for a new-fledged phrase to anyhow fit the word of Weber: what Weber uttered from the fill of his melodic life, could not be echoed in the lessoned, arid formalism of Meyerbeer. At last, disgusted with the fruitless toil, he betrayed his friend by listening to Rossini's siren strains, and departed for the land where grew those raisins (*Rosinen*). Thus he became the weathercock of European opera-music, the vane that always veers at first uncertain with the shift of wind, and only comes to a standstill when the wind itself has settled on its quarter. Thus Meyerbeer in Italy composed operas *à la* Rossini, precisely till the larger wind of Paris commenced to chop, and Auber and Rossini with their "*Stumme*" and their "*Tell*" blew the new gale into a storm! With one bound, was Meyerbeer in Paris! There he found, however, in the *Frenchified* Weber (need I recall "*Robin des bois*"?) and the *be-Berliozed* Beethoven, certain moments to which neither Auber nor Rossini had paid attention, as lying too far out of their way, but which Meyerbeer in virtue of his cosmopolitan capacity knew very well to value. He summed up all his overhearings in one monstrous hybrid phrase, whose strident outcry put Rossini and Auber to sudden silence: "Robert," the grim "Devil," set his clutches on them all.

In the survey of our operatic history, there is something most painful about being *only able to speak good of the dead*, and being forced to pursue the living with remorseless bitterness!—But if we want to be candid, since we *must*, [90] we have to recognise that the departed masters of this art deserve alone the martyr's crown; if *they* were victims to an illusion, yet that illusion shewed in them so high and beautiful, and they themselves believed so earnestly its sacred truth, that they offered up their whole artistic lives in sorrowful, yet joyful sacrifice thereto. No living and still active Tone-setter any longer strives from inner stress for such a martyrdom; the illusion now is laid so bare, that no more can anyone repose implicit trust in it. Bereft of faith, nay, robbed of joy, operatic art has fallen, at the hand of its modern masters, to a mere commercial article. Even the Rossinian wanton smile is now no more to be perceived; all round us nothing but the yawn of ennui, or the grin of madness! Almost we feel most drawn towards the aspect of the *madness* (Wahnsinn); in it we find the last remaining breath of that *illusion* (Wahn) from which there blossomed once such noble sacrifice. The juggling side of the odious exploitation of our modern opera-affairs we will therefore here forget, now that we must call before us the work of the last surviving and still active hero of operatic composition: that aspect could only fill us with indignation, whereby we might perhaps be betrayed into inhuman harshness towards a personage, did we lay on it alone the burden of the foul corruption of those affairs which surely hold this personage the more a captive as to us it seems set upon their dizziest peak, adorned with crown and sceptre. Do we not know that Kings and Princes, precisely in their most arbitrary dealings, are now the greatest slaves of all? —No, in this kind of operatic music let us only look upon the traits of Madness, by which he appears to us an object of regret and warning, not of scorn! For the

sake of everlasting Art, we must learn to read the symptoms of this madness; because by its contortions shall we plainest recognise *the illusion* that gave birth to an artistic genre, as to whose erroneous basis we must thoroughly clear up our minds before ever we can gain the healthy, youthful courage to set rejuvenating hands to Art itself.

To this inquiry we may now press on with rapid step, as [91] we have already shewn the essence of that Madness, and have only to observe a few of its most salient features in order to be quite sure about it.



We have seen the frivolous Opera-melody—i.e. that robbed of any real connexion with the poem's text—grow big with taking up the tune of National-song, and seen it swell into the pretence of Historic Characteristique. We have further noticed how, with an ever-dwindling individualisation of the chief rôles in the musical drama, the character of the Action was more and more allotted to the—"emancipated"—masses, from whom this Character was then to fall as a mere reflex on the main transactors. We have remarked that only by an Historic costume could the surrounding Mass be stamped with any distinctive, at all cognisable character; and have seen the Composer, so as to maintain his supremacy against the Scene-painter and Stage-tailor—to whom had virtually fallen the merit of establishing the historic Characteristique,—compelled to outdo them by the most unwonted application of his purely-musical nostrums. Finally, we have seen how the most desperate departure in Instrumental-music brought the composer an extraordinary sort of mosaïque-melody, whose waywardest of combinations offered the means of appearing strange and outlandish, whenever he had a fancy that way,—and how, by a miraculous employment of the Orchestra, calculated solely for material surprise, he believed he could imprint on such a method the stamp of a quite special Characteristique.

Now we must not leave out of sight that, after all, this whole conjuncture could never have arisen without the Poet's confederacy; wherefore we will turn, for a moment, to an examination of the modernest relationship of the Musician to the Poet.

Through Rossini the new operatic tendency started decidedly from Italy: *there* the Poet had degenerated into [92] an utter nonentity. But with the transshipment of Rossini's tendency to Paris, the position of the Poet also altered. We have already denoted the peculiarities of French Opera, and found that its kernel was the entertaining conversation (*der unterhaltende Wortsinn*) of the Couplet. In French Comic-opera the Poet had erstwhile relinquished to the Composer but a limited field, which he was to cultivate for himself while the poet abode in undisputed possession of the ground-estate. Now although, in the nature of the thing, that musical terrain had gradually so encroached upon the rest that it took up in time the whole estate, yet the Poet still held the title-deeds, and the Musician remained a mere foffeee, who certainly regarded the entire fief as his hereditary property, but notwithstanding—as in the whilom Romo-German Empire—owed allegiance to the Emperor as his feudal lord. The Poet enfeoffed, and the Musician enjoyed. In this situation alone, have there ever come to light the healthiest of Opera's progeny, when viewed as a Dramatic genre. The Poet honestly bestirred himself to invent characters and situations, to provide an entertaining and enthralling piece, which only in its final elaboration did he trim for the Musician and the latter's Forms; so that the actual weakness of these French opera-poems lay more in the fact that, by their very Content, they mostly called for no music at all, than in that they were swamped by Music in advance. On the stage of the *Opéra Comique* this entertaining, often delightfully witty genre was in its native element; and in it the best work was always done when the music could enter with unforced naturalness into the poetry.

This genre was now translated by Scribe and Auber into the pompous phraseology of so-called "Grand Opera." In the "*Muette de Portici*" we still can plainly recognise a



well-planned theatric piece, in which the dramatic interest is nowhere as yet subordinated with manifest intention to a purely musical one: only, in this poem the dramatic-action is already essentially transferred to the operations of the surrounding Mass, so that the main transactors behave more as talking representatives of the mass, than as real [93] Persons who act from individual necessity. So shack already, arrived before the imposing chaos of Grand Opera, did the Poet hold the reins of the opera carriage; those reins he was soon to drop upon the horses' backs! But whereas in the "Muette," and in "Tell," the Poet still kept the reins within his hand, since it occurred to neither Auber nor Rossini to do anything else but just take their musical ease and melodious comfort in the stately opera-coach—unworried as to how and whither the well-drilled coachman steered its wheels,—now Meyerbeer, to whom that rank melodic ease did not come so in the grain, felt impelled to seize the coachman's reins, and by the zig-zag of his *route* arouse the needful notice, which he could not succeed in attracting to himself so long as he quietly sat in the coach, with no other company than his own musical personality.—

Merely in scattered anecdotes has it come to our ears, what painful torments Meyerbeer inflicted on his poet, Scribe, during the sketching of his opera-subjects. But if we paid no heed to any of these anecdotes, and knew absolutely nothing of the mysteries of those opera-confabulations between Scribe and Meyerbeer, we should still see clearly by the resultant poems themselves what a potheresome, bewildering incubus must have weighed on the else so rapid, so easy-working and quick-witted Scribe, when he had to cobble up those bombastical, rococo texts for Meyerbeer. While Scribe continued to write fluent, often interestingly planned dramatic poems for other composers; texts in any case worked out with considerable natural skill, and at least based always on a definite plot, with easily intelligible situations to suit that plot,—yet this uncommonly expert poet turned out for Meyerbeer the veriest fustian, the lamest galimathias; actions without a plot, situations of the most insane confusion, characters of the most ridiculous buffoonery. This could never have come about by natural means: so easily does no sober judgment, like that of Scribe, submit to the experiments of craziness. Scribe must first have had his brain unhinged for him, [94] before he conjured up a "Robert the Devil"; he must have first been robbed of all sound sense for dramatic-action, before he lent himself in the "Huguenots" to the mere compilation of scene-shifters' nuances and contrasts; he must have been violently initiated into the mysteries of Historical hanky-panky, before he consented to paint a "Prophet" of the sharpers.—

We here perceive a determinant influence of the Composer on the Poet, akin to that which Weber exerted on the poetess of "Euryanthe": but from what diametrically opposite motives! Weber wanted a Drama that could pass with all its members, with every scenic nuance, into his noble, soulful Melody:—Meyerbeer, on the contrary, wanted a monstrous piebald, historico-romantic, diabolico-religious, fanatico-libidinous, sacro-frivolous, mysterio-criminal, autolyco-sentimental dramatic hotch-potch, therein to find material for a curious chimeric music,—a want which, owing to the indomitable buckram of his musical temperament, could never be quite suitably supplied. He felt that, with all his garnered store of musical effects, there was still a something wanting, a something hitherto non-existent, but which he could bring to bearing were he only to collect the whole thing from every farthest cranny, heap it together in one mass of crude confusion, dose it well with stage gunpowder and lycopodium, and spring it crashing through the air. What he wanted therefore from his librettist, was, so to speak, an inscenation of the Berliozian Orchestra; only—mark this well!—with the most humiliating degradation of it to the sickly basis of Rossini's vocal trills and *fermate*—for sake of "dramatic" Opera. To bring the whole stock of elements of musical effect into some sort of harmonious concord through the Drama, would have necessarily appeared to him a sorry way of setting about his business; for Meyerbeer was no idealistic dreamer, but, with a keen practical eye to the modern opera-public, he saw that by a

harmonious concord he would have gained no one to his side, whereas by a rambling hotch-potch he must certainly catch the moods [95] of all, i.e. of each man in his line. So that nothing was more important for him, than a maze of mad cross-purposes, and the merry Scribe must sweat blood to concoct a dramatic medley to his taste. In cold-blooded care the musician stood before it, calmly meditating as to which piece of the monstrosity he could fit out with some particular tatter from his musical store-room, so strikingly and cryingly that it should appear quite out-of-the-ordinary, and therefore—"characteristic."

Thus, in the eyes of our art-Criticism, he developed the powers of Music into *historical Characteristique*, and brought matters so far that he was told, as the most delicate compliment, that the texts of his operas were terribly poor stuff *but what wonders his music knew how to make out of this wretched rubbish!*—So the utmost triumph of Music was reached: the Composer had razed the Poet to the ground, and upon the ruins of operatic-poetry the *Musician* was crowned the only *authentic poet!*—



The secret of Meyerbeer's operatic music is—*Effect*. If we wish to gain a notion of what we are to understand by this "Effect" ("*Effekt*"), it is important to observe that in this connection we do not as a rule employ the more homely word "*Wirkung*" [lit. "a working"]. Our natural feeling can only conceive of "*Wirkung*" as bound up with an antecedent *cause*: but here, where we are instinctively in doubt as to whether such a correlation subsists, or are even as good as told that it does not subsist at all, we look perplexedly around us for a word to anyhow denote the impression which we think we have received from, e.g., the music-pieces of Meyerbeer; and so we fall upon a foreign word, not directly appealing to our natural feeling, such as just this word "Effect." If, then, we wish to define what we understand by this word, we may translate "Effect" by "a Working, without a cause" ("*Wirkung ohne Ursache*").

[96]

As a fact, the Meyerbeerian music produces, on those who are able to edify themselves thereby, a Working-without-a-cause. This miracle was only possible to the extremest music, i.e. to an expressional power which—in Opera—had from the first sought to make itself more and more independent of anything worth expressing, and had finally proclaimed its attainment of complete independence by reducing to a moral and artistic nullity the Object of expression, which alone should have given to this Expression its being, warranty and measure; by reducing it to such a degree that this *object* now could only gain its being, warranty and measure from a mere act of grace on the part of Music,—an act which had thus itself become devoid of any real expression. This act of grace, however, could only be made possible in conjunction with other coefficients of absolute-Working. In the extremest Instrumental-music appeal had been made to the vindicating force of Phantasy, to which a programme, or mayhap a mere title, had given an extramusical leverage: in Opera this leverage was to be materialised, i.e. the imagination was to be absolved from any painful toil. What had there been programmatically adduced from moments of the phenomenal life of Man or Nature, was here to be presented in the most material reality, so as to produce a fantastic Working without the smallest fellow-working of the Phantasy. This material leverage the Composer borrowed from the scenic apparatus, inasmuch as he took also purely for their own sake the workings it was able to produce, i.e. absolved them from the only object that, lying beyond the realm of Mechanism and on the soil of life-portraying Poetry, could have given them conditionment and vindication.—Let us explain our meaning clearly by one example, which will at the same time characterise the most exhaustively the whole of Meyerbeerian art.

Let us suppose that a poet has been inspired with the idea of a hero, a champion of light and freedom, in whose breast there flames an all-consuming love for his downtrod

brother-men, afflicted in their holiest rights. The poet [97] wishes to depict this hero at the zenith of his career, in the full radiance of his deeds of glory, and chooses for his picture the following supreme moment. With thousands of the Folk—who have left house and home, left wife and children, to follow his inspiring call, to conquer or to die in fight against their powerful oppressors—the hero has arrived before a fortified city, which must be stormed by his unpractised mob, if the work of freedom is to come to a victorious issue. Through earlier hardships and mishaps, disheartenment has spread apace; evil passions, discord and confusion are raging in his hosts: all is lost, if all shall not be won to-day. This is a plight in which heroes wax to their fullest grandeur. In the solitude of the night just past the hero has taken counsel of the god within him, of the spirit of the purest love for fellow-men, and with its breath has sanctified himself; and now the poet takes him in the grey of dawn, and leads him forth among those hosts, who are already wavering as to whether they should prove coward beasts or godlike heroes. At his mighty voice, the Folk assemble. That voice drives home into the inmost marrow of these men, who now alike grow conscious of the god within them: they feel their hearts uplifted and ennobled, and their inspiration in its turn uplifts the hero to still loftier heights; from inspiration he presses on to deed. He seizes the standard and waves it high towards those fearful walls, the embattled city of the foe, who, so long as they lie secure behind their trenches, make impossible a better future for mankind. "On, then, comrades! To die or conquer! This city *must* be ours!"—The poet now has reached his utmost confines: upon the boards he wills to show the one instant when this high-strung mood steps suddenly before us with all the plainness of a great reality; the scene must now become for us the stage of all the world; Nature must now declare herself a sharer in this exaltation; no longer can she stay a chilling, chance bystander. Lo! sacred Want compels the poet:—he parts the cloudy curtains of the morn, and at his word the [98] streaming sun mounts high above the city, that city henceforth hallowed to the victory of the inspired.

Here is the flower of all-puissant Art, and this wonder blossoms only from the art of Drama.

Only, the opera-composer has no longing for wonders such as blossom merely from the dramatic-poet's inspiration and may be effectuated by a picture taken lovingly from Life itself: he wishes for the *effect* but not the *cause*, since the latter lies outside his sway. In a leading scene of Meyerbeer's "Prophète," where the *externals* resemble those just described, we obtain for the ear the purely physical effect of a hymn-like melody, listened from the Folk-song and swelled into a sound like thunder: for the eye, that of a sunrise in which there is positively nothing for us to see but a master-stroke of Mechanism. The Object that should be fired by that melody, should be shone on by this sun, *the inspired hero* who from very ecstasy must pour his soul into that melody, who at the stressful climax of Necessity called forth the dawning of this sun,—the warranty, the kernel of the whole luxuriant dramatic fruit,—is *absolutely not to hand*. (019) In his place there functions a characteristically-costumed tenor, whom Meyerbeer has commissioned through his private-secretary poet, Scribe, to sing as charmingly as possible and at the same time behave a wee bit communistically, in order that the gentry might have an extra dash of piquancy to think [99] into the thing. The hero of whom we spoke before, is some poor devil who out of sheer weakness has taken on the rôle of trickster, and finally bewails in the most pitiful fashion—by no means any error, any fanatical hallucination, which might at a pinch have called for a sun to shine on it,—but solely his weakness and mendacity.

What considerations may have joined forces to call into the world such an unworthy object under the title of a "Prophet," we will here leave unexplored; let it suffice us to observe the resultant, which is instructive enough in all conscience. First, we see in this example the



complete moral and artistic dishonourment of the Poet, in whose work even those who are most favourably disposed to the Composer can find no single hair's-breadth of merit: so!—the poetic aim is no longer to attract us in the slightest; on the contrary, it is to revolt us. The Performer is now to interest us as nothing but a costumed Singer; in the above-named scene, he can only do this by his singing of that aforesaid melody, which makes its effect entirely for itself—as Melody. Wherefore the sun is likewise to work entirely for itself, namely as a successful theatrical copy of the authentic sun: so that the ground of its 'working' comes not at all into the province of Drama, but into that of sheer Mechanics,—the only thing left for us to think about when it puts in its appearance; for how alarmed the composer would be, if one chose to take this appearance as an intentional transfiguration of the hero, in his capacity of champion of mankind! No, no: for him and his public, everything must be done to turn such thoughts away, and guide attention solely to that master-stroke of mechanism. And thus in this unique scene, so heaped with honours by the public, the whole of Art is resolved into its mechanical integers: the externals of Art are turned into its essence; and this essence we find to be—*Effect*, the absolute Effect, i.e. the stimulus of an artificial love-titillation, without the potency of an actual taste of Love.



[100]

I have not taken upon myself to offer a criticism of Meyerbeer's operas, but merely to shew by them the essence of our modernest Opera, in its hang with the whole class in general. Though the nature of my subject has often compelled me to give my exposition the character of a historic survey, yet I have had to resist the being led aside into historic detail-writing. If I had to characterise in particular the calling and talent of Meyerbeer for dramatic composition, I should have for very sake of truth, which I here am labouring to bare completely, to lay the strongest stress upon one remarkable phenomenon in his works.—In Meyerbeer's music there is shewn so appalling an emptiness, shallowness and artistic nothingness, that— especially when compared with by far the larger number of his musical contemporaries—we are tempted to set down his specific musical capacity at zero. However, it is not that despite all this he has reaped such great successes with the European opera-public, which should fill us with wonderment; for this miracle is easily explained by a glance at that Public itself:—no, it is a purely artistic observation, which here should rivet and instruct us. We observe, namely, that for all the renowned composer's manifest inability to give by his unaided musical powers the slightest sign of artistic life, nevertheless in certain passages of his operatic music he lifts himself to the height of the most thoroughly indisputable, the very greatest artistic power. These passages are products of a genuine inspiration, and if we look a little closer we shall also see whence this inspiration derived its stimulus—namely, from the Poetic situation. Where the poet forgot his hampering regard for the musician, where amid his work of dramatic compilation he stumbled on a moment in which the free, the freshening breath of human Life might come and go,—there he suddenly transmits this breath alike to the musician, as a gust of Inspiration; and now the composer, who had exhausted all the resources of his musical ancestry without being able to strike one solitary spark of real Invention, is at a blow empowered to find the richest, noblest, most [101] heart-searching musical Expression. I here would chiefly call, to mind certain features in the well-known plaintive love-scene of the Fourth Act of the "Huguenots," and above all the invention of that wondrous moving melody in G-flat major, by side of which—sprung as it is, like a fragrant flower, from a situation which stirs each fibre of the human heart to blissful pain—there is very little else, and certainly none but the most perfect of Music's works, that can be set. This I signalise with the sincerest joy and frank enthusiasm, because precisely in this phenomenon is the real essence

of Art presented in so clear and irrefutable a fashion, that we can but see with rapture how the faculty for genuine art-creation must come to even the most corrupted music-maker, so soon as he treads the soil of a Necessity stronger than his self-seeking Caprice; of a necessity which suddenly guides his erring footsteps, to his own salvation, into the paths of sterling Art

But, that here we can only mention separate features, and not one whole great track—not e.g. the entire love-scene to which I have referred, but only scattered moments in it,—this compels us to above all ponder well the gruesome nature of that Madness, which nips in the folded bud the musician's noblest faculties, and stamps upon his muse the sickly smile of odious complaisance, or else the ghastly grin of crazy tyranny. This madness is the musician's passion to supply for himself, and by his own powers, what he does not in himself and of his powers possess, and in whose joint establishment he can only *take a share* when it is brought him by the individual powers of another. Through this unnatural eagerness of the Musician to satisfy his vanity, namely to exhibit his possessions (*Vermögen*) in the dazzling light of a measureless capacity, he has reduced these possessions—ample enough, in all truth—to that beggarly array in which the Meyerbeerian opera-music now appears. In her self-seeking endeavour to force her narrow forms upon the Drama as of sole validity, this Opera-music has exposed their wretched stiffness and unyieldingness, till [102] they have grown past any bearing with. In her mania for seeming rich and many-sided, she has sunk, as a musical art, to the utmost spiritual penury, been driven to borrowing from the most material Mechanism. In her egoistic feint of affording an exhaustive dramatic Characteristique by sheerly musical means, she has ended by losing all power of natural Expression, and won instead the doubtful honours of a contortionist and mountebank.—

As I said at the beginning, that the *error* in the Operatic art-genre consisted in "that a Means of expression (Music) had been made the end, while the End of expression (the Drama) had been made a means,"—so the heart of the *illusion*, and finally of that *madness* which has exposed the Operatic art-genre in its rankest un-naturalness to the ridicule of all, we must thus denote:

**that this means of Expression wanted of itself to prescribe the aim of Drama.**

[103]

## VII.

WE have reached the end;—for we have followed Music's powers in Opera to the proclamation of her utter impotence.

When to-day we talk of Opera-music, in any stricter sense, we speak no longer of an Art, but of a mere article of Fashion. Only the Critic, who feels no stir of artistic necessity within him, can still expound his hopes or fears about the future of Opera. The Artist—provided he does not degrade himself into a speculator on the Public—shews by the very fact of his seeking for outlets aside from Opera, and particularly his soliciting the energetic participation of the Poet, that he takes the Opera itself for dead already.

But here, in this to-be-solicited *participation of the Poet*, do we touch the point as to which we must reach a conscious clearness, bright as day, if we want to grasp and set fast in its genuine, its healthy naturalness the relation between Musician and Poet This relation must be one completely opposite to that wonted heretofore, so entirely changed that, for his own welfare, the Musician will only settle down to it when he dismisses every memory of the old unnatural union, whose last-remaining bond could but draw him back into the old unfruitful madness.

In order to get the clearest notion of this sane and only salutary relation that is to come, we must once more denote *the nature of our present music*, in brief but definite terms.—



We shall quickest reach a lucid survey, if we tersely sum up Music's nature in the concept, *Melody*.

As the inner is both ground and conditionment of the outer, but in the outer comes the inner first to plain and

[104]

definite show, so are *Harmony* and *Rhythm* indeed the shaping organs, but *Melody* the first real Shape of music. Harmony and Rhythm are the blood, flesh, nerves and bones, with all the entrails, and like these, when we look upon the finished, living man, stay closed against the gazing eye; Melody, on the other hand, is this finished Man himself, just how he shews his body to our eye. In gazing on this man we view alone the supple shape, as expressed in the form-giving demarcations of the outward skin; we linger on the most expressive aspect of this shape, in the features of his face; and finally we pause before the eye, the most life-full and communicative utterance of the whole man: who through this organ—which, in its turn, obtains its power-of-imparting solely from its quite universal faculty for taking up the utterances of the surrounding world—at once reveals the most convincingly his inner soul. So is Melody the most perfect expression of the inner being of Music, and every true melody, conditioned by this inmost being, speaks also through that eye to us; that eye which most expressively imparts to us this Inmost, but always so that we see alone the flashing of the pupil, and not the inner, in itself still formless organism in all its nakedness.

When the *Folk* invented melodies, it proceeded like the natural bodily-man, who, by the instinctive exercise of sexual functions, begets and brings forth Man; this finished Man, arrived at light of day, reveals himself at once by his outer stature: not first, forsooth, by his hidden inner organism. *Greek Art* still apprehended this Man by his outer stature alone, and strove to mould his faithful, lifelike counterfeit—at last in bronze and marble. *Christianity*, on the contrary, proceeded anatomically: it wanted to find man's *soul*; it opened and cut up his body, and bared all that formless inner organism at which our gaze rebelled, because it neither is nor should be set there for the eye. (020) In searching for the soul, however, [105] we had slain the body; in hunting for the source of Life we had destroyed its utterance, and thus arrived at nothing but dead entrails, which only in completely unbroken faculty of utterance could be at all conditionments of Life. But the searched-for *soul*, in truth, is nothing other than *the life*: wherefore what remained over, for Christian anatomy to look upon, was only—*Death*.

Christianity had choked the organic impulse of the Folk's artistic life, its natural force of procreation: it had hacked into its flesh, and with dualistic scissors had played havoc with even its artistic organism. Community, in which alone the Folk's artistic force of procreation can mount to the full power of perfect art-creation, belonged to Catholicism: only in solitude, where fractions of the Folk—far distant from the highways of associate life—found themselves alone with Nature and each other, was there preserved in its childlike simpleness and straitened indigence the *Folkslied*, so indivorcibly ingrown with Poetry.

If for the moment we turn aside from this, we see Music taking in the realm of cultured-art an amazing new development: from its anatomically disjointed, its inwardly slaughtered organism, we see it making for a new life-evolution by piecing together its severed organs and allowing them to freshly coalesce.—In the Christian Church-song Harmony had independently matured itself. Its natural life-need now drove it of necessity to utterance as Melody; for that utterance, however, it could not dispense with the hold on form and

movement given by the organ of Rhythm; and this it took, as an arbitrary, more fancied than actual standard, from Dance. The new union could only be an artificial one. Just as Poetry had been constructed by the rules which Aristotle had abstracted from the tragic poets, so must Music be dressed by scientific canons and assumptions. This was at the time when *men*, in sooth, were to be made by scholarly recipes, and from chemical decoctions. Such a Man did bookish music endeavour to construct: *Mechanism* was to set up *Organism*, or else replace it. [106] But, in truth, the restless mainspring of this mechanical inventiveness drove ever toward the genuine Man, the man who was to be re-erected from out the *Concept*, and thus was finally to wake to real organic life.—We here impinge upon the whole vast course of modern manhood's evolution!—

But the man whom Music wished to erect, was really none other than *Melody*, i.e., the moment of most definite, most convincing utterance of her actual hiving, inner organism. The farther Music evolved, in this necessary longing to become a human being, the more decisively do we see the struggle for a plain melodic message wax into a positively painful yearning; and in the works of no musician do we see this yearning grow to such a stress and power, as in the great Instrumental works of *Beethoven*. In these we marvel at the gigantic efforts of *Mechanism* longing to become a Man; efforts to resolve its every component part into the flesh and blood of an actual living organism, and through that to reach an unerring utterance as *Melody*.

In this respect, the characteristic, decisive course of our whole art-evolution shows out with *Beethoven* by far more genuinely than with our Opera-composers. These apprehended *Melody* as something lying outside the realm of their art-production, as something ready-made; *Melody*, in whose organic generation they had taken absolutely no part, they snatched from the mouth of the Folk, thus tearing it loose from its *Organism*, and *applied* it just according to their wayward whim, without ever being able to justify it by anything but their own luxurious pleasure. If that Folk's-melody was the outward Shape of man, then in a sense the Opera-composers stripped this man of his skin and covered therewith a puppet, as though to give it a human look: but with it they could only dupe at most the civilised savages of our purblind opera-public.

With *Beethoven*, on the contrary, we perceive the natural thrust of Life, to breed *Melody* from out music's inner *Organism*. In his weightiest works, he by no means posits *Melody* as something ready in advance, but in a measure lets it *be born* from Music's organs before our very eyes; he [107] inducts us into this act of bearing, inasmuch as he sets it before us in all its organic Necessity. But his most decisive message, at last given us by the master in his *magnum opus*, is the necessity he felt *as Musician* to throw himself into the arms of the Poet, in order to compass the act of *begetting* the true, the unfailingly real and redeeming *Melody*. To become a *human being*, *Beethoven* perforce must become *an entire*, i.e. a social (*gemeinsamer*) being, subjected to the generic conditionments of *the manly and the womanly*.—What an earnest, deep and yearning brooding unveiled at last to the endless-gifted master the limpid melody wherewith he broke into the Poet's words: "Joy, thou fairest spark of Godhead!" ("*Freude, schöner Götterfunken!*").—With this *Melody* is solved withal the mystery of Music: we *know* now, we have won the faculty, to be *with consciousness* organically-working artists.—

Let us linger now beside the weightiest point of our investigation, and let us take the "*Freude*"-melody of *Beethoven* for guide.—

The *Folk'smelody*, at its rediscovery on the part of Culture-musicians, afforded us a twofold interest: that of joy in its native beauty, where we met it undisfigured in the Folk, and that of inquiry into its inner organism. The joy in it, speaking accurately, was bound to stay unfruitful for our art-production; to imitate the form and content of this melody too, with any success, we should have had to restrict our movements within an art-variety similar to the

*Folkslied* itself; nay, we should ourselves have had to be Folk-artists in the strictest sense, in order to win the faculty for such an imitation. We should thus have had—intrinsically—not to imitate it at all, but as Folk ourselves, to invent it.

In bondage to another sort of art-procedure—differing by all the breadth of heaven from that of the Folk—we could at best apply this melody in the crudest sense, and that amid surroundings and conditions which must necessarily disfigure it. At bottom, the history of Operatic Music goes always back to the history of this melody alone; a history in which according to certain laws like those of ebb and flow, [108] the periods of taking up and re-taking up the Folksmelody alternate with periods of advancing and finally overwhelming corruption and disfigurement thereof.—Those musicians who became the most painfully conscious of this evil attribute of the Folksmelody, when converted into Operatic Aria, saw themselves therefore driven with more or less plainly felt necessity to take thought for the organic Begetting of Melody itself. The Opera-composer stood the nearest to the discovery of the needful process; yet with *him*, of all others, it must inevitably fail, because he stood in an utterly false relation to the only fructifying element, that of Poetry; because, in his unnatural and usurpatorial attitude, he had in a measure robbed that element of its begetting organs. In his distorted attitude towards the Poet the Composer might try his hardest, but wherever the Feeling soared to the height of a melodic outpour he must bring with him his ready-made melody, because the Poet had *à priori* to adapt himself to the entire *form* in which that melody was to declare itself: this Form, moreover, had so imperious an influence over the shaping of the opera-melody, that in truth it prescribed its substantial Content as well.

*This Form* was taken from the *Folkslied*-tune; its outermost shape, the change and reiteration of movement in rhythmic time-measures, was even borrowed from the Dance-tune,—which latter, however, was originally one and the same thing as the Song-tune. This Form was merely varied in, but has itself remained the irremovable scaffold of the Opera-aria right down to the present day. Within it alone, was a melodic structure thinkable; and naturally, this stayed always such a structure as was strictly governed by that scaffold in advance. The musician, seeing that once he stepped within this Form he could no longer invent but merely vary, was robbed in advance of all power for the organic generation of Melody; for true Melody is, as we have seen, itself the utterance of an inner organism; to arise organically, therefore, it must have *shaped for itself its very Form*, and a form entirely adequate to explicitly convey [109] its inner essence. On the other hand, the melody that was constructed from the Form, could never be anything but an imitation of the pristine melody which had first spoken in that selfsame form. (021) With many opera-composers we therefore see an endeavour to break this Form: yet such an attempt could only have proved artistically successful, provided suitable new forms were found. Yet again, the new Form could only have been a genuine art-form, provided it shewed itself as the explicit utterance of a specific musical Organism: *but every musical organism is by its nature—a womanly*; it is merely a *bearing*, and not a *begetting* factor; the begetting-force lies clean *outside it*, and without fecundation by this force it positively cannot bear.—Here lies the whole secret of the barrenness of modern music!

We have denoted Beethoven's artistic procedure in his weightiest Instrumental works as "our induction into the act of bearing Melody." Let us keep well in view this characteristic fact, however, that though *only in the progress* of his tone-piece, does the master set his full melody before us as a finished whole, yet this melody is to be subsumed as already finished in the artist's mind *from the beginning*. He merely broke at the outset the narrow Form,—that very Form against which the opera-composer had striven in vain,—he shattered it into its component parts, in order to unite them by organic creation into a new whole; and this he did, by setting the component parts of different melodies in changeful contact with each other, as though to show the organic affinity of the seemingly most diverse of such parts, and therewith



the prime affinity of those different [110] melodies themselves. Beethoven but discloses to us here the inner organism of Absolute Music: his concern was, in a sense, to restore this organism from its mechanical state (*diesen Organismus aus der Mechanik hersustellen*), to vindicate its inner life, and to show it at its livingest in the very act of Bearing. But what he employed to fertilise this organism, was still the Absolute Melody; he thus put life into this organism only so far as he *practised it in Bearing*—so to say—and indeed, let it re-bear an already finished melody. Precisely through that process, however, he found himself driven on to supply this musical organism, now freshly quickened into bearing-power, with the fecundating seed as well; and this he took from the Poet's power of begetting. Far as he was from any æsthetic experimenting, yet Beethoven, here taking up unconsciously the spirit of our whole artistic evolution, could not go to work otherwise than speculatively, in a certain sense. He himself had by no means been- spurred to instinctive creation by the begetting Thought of a Poet, but in his desire for Music-bearing he had looked around him for the Poet. Thus even his "*Freude*"-melody does not as yet appear invented for, or through, the Poet's verse, but merely conceived with an eye to Schiller's poem after an incitation by its general contents. First where, in the progress of this poem, Beethoven is worked-up by its contents into a dramatic directness, (022) do we see his melodic combinations springing ever more definitely from the diction also; so that at last the unprecedented many-sidedness of his music's Expression answers to the highest sense, at any rate, both of the poem and its wording; and with such directness, that the music, once divorced from the poem, would appear to us no longer thinkable or comprehensible.

This is the point where we see the results of our æsthetic inquiry into the organism of the *Volklied* confirmed with. startling plainness by an artistic Deed. Just as the living [111] Folk's-melody is inseparable from the living Folk's-poem, at pain of organic death, so can Music's organism never bear the true, the living Melody, except it first be fecundated by the Poet's Thought. Music is the bearing woman, the Poet the begetter; and Music had therefore reached the pinnacle of madness, when she wanted, not only to bear, but also to *beget*.



*Music is a woman.*

The nature of Woman is *love*: but this love is a *receiving* (*empfangende*), and in receipt (*Empfängniss*) an unreservedly *surrendering*, love.

Woman first gains her full individuality in the moment of surrender. She is the Undine who glides soulless through the waves of her native element, till she receives her soul through love of a man. The look of innocence in a woman's eye is the endlessly pellucid mirror in which the man can only see the general faculty for love, till he is able to see in it the likeness of himself. When he has recognised himself therein, then also is the woman's all-faculty condensed into one strenuous necessity, to love him with the all-dominant fervour of full surrender.

The true woman loves unconditionally, because she *must*. She has no choice, excepting where she does not love. But where she must love, there she experiences a vast *constraint* (*Zwang*), which withal develops for the first time her *Will*. (023) This Will, which rebels against that constraint, is the first and mightiest stirring (*Regung*) of the individuality of the beloved object; and, taken up by sympathy into the woman, it is that individuality which has gifted her with Will and Individuality. (024) This is the honourable *pride* (*Stolz*) of woman, a pride that comes solely from the force of the [112] individuality that has won her and constrains her with all the exigence (*Noth*) of Love. For sake of the cherished boon she strives against the constraint of Love itself until, beneath the all-dominance of this constraint, she learns that both it and her own pride are but the energising of the individuality which she has taken up; that Love and the beloved object are one, that without them she has neither force

nor will, that from the instant when she first felt pride she was already conquered (*vernichtet*). The plain avowal of this conquest is then the effective offering of woman's last surrender: her pride ascends with consciousness into that only thing which she can sense, can feel, can think—nay, what she is,—into love for *this one* man.—

A woman who loves not with this pride of surrender, truly does not love at all. But a woman who does not love at all, is the most odious, most unworthy spectacle in the world. Let us adduce the characteristic types of such ladies!

Some one has very appropriately called the modern *Italian* opera-music a *wanton*. A courtesan may pride herself on always remaining her self; she never steps outside herself, never sacrifices herself but when she wishes for either pleasure or profit in return, and in this case she only offers to the joys of others that portion of her being which she can lightly enough dispose of, since it has become an object of her own caprice. In the embraces of the courtesan the Woman is never present, but only a portion of her physical organism: from love she reaps no individuality, but gives herself in general to the general world. Thus the wanton is an undeveloped, wasted woman: yet she at least fulfils the physical functions of the female sex, by which we can still—albeit with regret—detect the Woman in her.

*French* opera-music passes rightly for a *coquette*. The coquette adores to be admired, nay even loved: but her peculiar joy at being admired and loved she can only taste, providing she herself be snared by neither love nor admiration [113] for the object she inspires with each. The profit she seeks is delight in herself, satisfaction of her vanity: the whole enjoyment of her life lies in being admired and loved; and this would be instantly disturbed, were she herself to feel either love or admiration for another. Were she in love, she would be robbed of her self-enjoyment; for in Love she must necessarily forget herself, and make surrender to the distressful, often suicidal enjoyment of another. From nothing, therefore, does the coquette so guard herself, as from Love, in order to preserve untouched the only thing she loves—to wit her Self; that being which yet gains its force of tempting, its practised individuality, from the love-approach of Man alone; from whom the coquette thus withholds his own possession. Wherefore the coquette loves from thievish Egoism, and her vital force is icy coldness. In *her* the nature of Woman is perverted to its odious opposite; from her chilling smile, which only mirrors back our broken likeness, we turn mayhap, in desperation, to the Italian wanton.

But there is still another type of unsexed dames, a type that fills us with the utmost horror: this is the *prude*, as which the so-called "German" (025) opera-music must pass for us.—It *may* happen to the courtesan, that the caresses of some ardent youth shall suddenly awake in her the sacrificial glow of Love,—as witness the God and the Bayadere!—; it may fall out that the coquette, who is always playing at love, shall one day find herself the victim of this game, and caught, for all the battlings of her vanity, in a net where she now bewails with tears the losing of her will. But never will this beautiful human lot befall the [114] woman who guards her spotlessness with the fanaticism of orthodox belief,—the woman whose Virtue consists in lovelessness on principle. The prude has been brought up in all the regulations of decorum, and from earliest youth has heard the word "love" pronounced with a flutter of uneasiness. Her heart filled with Dogma, she steps into the world, looks coyly round her, perceives the courtesan and the coquette, smites her pious breast, and cries: "I thank thee, Lord, that I am not as these!"—Her life-force is Decorum, her only will the denial of love, which she knows no else than in the likeness of the courtesan and the coquette. Her virtue is the avoiding of crime, her works unfruitfulness, her soul the pride of insolence.—And yet how near is this woman, of all others, to the most disgusting fall! In her bigoted heart there stirs no love, but in her ambushed flesh a vulgar lust. We know the conventicles of the self-righteous, the respectable towns where bloomed the flower of the "saints"! (026) We have seen the prude fall headlong into all the vices of her French and Italian sisters,—only, still further tainted by the arch-vice of hypocrisy, and alas without one glimmer of



originality!—

Let us turn from this revolting sight, and ask: What kind of woman must *true music* be?

A woman *who really loves*, who sets her virtue in her *pride*, her pride, however, in her *sacrifice*; that sacrifice whereby she surrenders, not *one portion* of her being, but *her whole being* in the amplest fulness of its faculty—when [115] she *conceives*. But in joy and gladness to *bear* the thing conceived, this is *the deed* of Woman,—and to work deeds the woman only needs *to be entirely what she is*, but in no way *to will* something: for she can will but one thing—to *be a woman!* To man, therefore, woman is the ever clear and cognisable measure of natural infallibility, (*Untrüglichkeit*), for she is at her perfectest when she never quits the sphere of beautiful Instinctiveness (*Unwillkürlichkeit*), to which she is banned by that which alone can bless her being,—by the Necessity of Love.

And here, again, I point you to the glorious musician in whom Music was all that in a human being she ever can be, if in all the fulness of her essence she is to stay precisely *music* and nothing else but music. Look on *Mozart!*—Was he haply a lesser musician because he was Musician out-and-out, because he could not, would not, be anything other than *Musician*? Take his "Don Juan"! Where else has music won so infinitely rich an Individuality, been able to characterise so surely, so definitely, and in such plenteous fill as here,—where the Musician, by the very nature of his art, was in no whit other than an unconditionally-loving Woman?



—Yet, let us halt, and precisely here, to put ourselves the searching question: *Who* then must be *the Man*, whom this Woman is to love so unreservedly? Before we give away this woman's love, let us well ponder whether the counter-love of the Man is something haply to be got by begging, or something that he also *needs* for his redemption.

Let us closely view *the Poet!*

[116]

[117]

## Second Part

### The Play and the Nature of Dramatic Poetry

[118]

#### Translator's Notes

In *Letters to Uhlig* No. 21, dated "Beginning of February '51," Wagner writes: "Herewith you receive the second part. The third will, I think, follow in a fortnight... Kolatschek offered of his own accord to open negotiations with the publisher of the *Deutsche Monatschrift* (now Kühnemann at Bremen) respecting my book. I accepted, so as in any case to have a choice. If I came to an understanding with Kühnemann, some sections of the book would first have to appear as special articles in the *Monatschrift*. ... In the accompanying manuscript you will find three articles already marked with pencil."—Kolatschek was the editor of the *Monatschrift*, a literary and scientific monthly, which flourished for little more than a twelvemonth.

Though Kühnemann did not become the publisher of *Oper und Drama*, arrangements being finally concluded with J. J. Weber of Leipzig; early in May 1851, yet the three articles duly appeared in the *Monatschrift*; the first in the March number, and the second and third in that for May '51. My footnotes to the text of this Second Part will indicate the passages selected, &c.

[119]

#### [0.]

WHEN LESSING laboured in his "Laocöon" to discover and map out the bounds of Poetry and Painting, he had in his eye that poetry which was already mere description (*Schilderei*). He starts from lines of comparison and demarcation which he draws between the plastic group portraying the scene of Laocöon's death-struggle, and that description of the same scene as sketched by Virgil in his "Æneid," an epos written for dumb reading. Though in the course of his inquiry Lessing touches on Sophocles, again he has only in mind the literary Sophocles, such as alone exists *for us*; or, if he takes into his purview the poet's Tragic Artwork in all its life of actual performance, he instinctively places it outside any comparison with the works of Sculpture or Painting: since not the living Tragic Artwork is bounded as against these plastic arts, but *these*, compared with *that*, find in their straitened natures their necessary bounds. Wherever Lessing sets up limits and boundaries for Poetry, he does not mean the *dramatic Artwork* directly brought before the senses by physical performance, that Artwork which sums in itself each factor of the plastic arts, in highest potency such as it alone can reach, and by its power has first brought to these their higher potentiality of artistic life; but he means the exiguous phantom of this Artwork, the narrating, depicting, literary poem, appealing to the imagination and not the senses—the form in which that force of imagination has been turned into the virtual performer, toward which the poem merely acts as stimulus.

Such an *artificial* art, 'tis true, can only produce an effect at all by the exactest observance of boundaries and limits, since she must be ever on her watch to guard the unlimited force of imagination—which has here to play the performer's [120] rôle *in place of her*—from any bewildering digression, and thus to guide it to the one fixed point at which she can display her purposed object as definitely and distinctly as possible. But it is to the force of imagination alone, that all the egoistically severed arts address themselves; and especially the Plastic art,

which can only bring into play the weightiest moment of Art, namely *motion*, by appealing to the Phantasy. All these arts *merely suggest*: an *actual representation* would to them be possible only could they parley with the universality of man's artistic receptivity, could they address his entire sentient (*sinnlichen*) organism, and not his force of imagination; for the true Artwork can only be engendered by an advance from imagination into actuality, i.e. physicality (*Sinnlichkeit*).

Lessing's honest endeavour to map out the boundaries of those severed art-varieties, which can no longer directly represent but merely figure (*schildern*), is foolishly misunderstood to-day by those to whom the huge difference between those *arts* and the *one veritable Art* remains a thing incomprehensible. Inasmuch as they keep before their eye these separate art-varieties alone, all powerless in themselves for a direct impersonation, they naturally can only assign to each of these arts—and thus (as they must deem) to Art in general—the task of overcoming *with as little disturbance as possible* the difficulty of giving the force of imagination a firm leverage in their *figuring*. To *heap the means* of this their figuring, can only confuse the Figuring itself—with which I quite agree,—and by distressing or distracting the Phantasy through the presentation of disparate means, can only turn it from a full grasp of the object.

*Purity* of the art-variety is therefore the first requisite for its comprehensibility, whereas an *alloy* (*Mischung*) from other art-varieties can only foul this comprehensibility. In fact we can imagine nothing more bewildering, than if the Painter, for instance, should want to show his subject in motion such as can be depicted by the Poet alone; the [121] acme of repulsiveness, however, we find in a painting where the poet's verses are written as issuing from some person's mouth. When the Musician—i.e. the absolute musician— attempts to paint, he brings-about neither music nor a painting; but if he wanted to accompany with his music the inspection of an actual painting, then he might be quite sure that no one would understand either the painting or his music. He who can only conceive the combination of all the arts into the Artwork as though one meant, for example, that in a picture-gallery and amidst a row of statues a romance of Goethe's should be read aloud while a symphony of Beethoven's was being played, (027) such a man does rightly enough to insist upon the *severance* of the arts, and to wish each unit left to help itself to the plainest possible depicting of its subject in its own way. But, that our modern æstheticians [orig. ed. "State-æstheticians"] should rank *the Drama* also as an *art-variety*, and as such assign it to the Poet for his special property, in the sense that the blending with it of another art, like that of Music, would need *apology* but could by no means gain acquittal—this is to draw from Lessing's definition a conclusion for which there is not one trace of support in the original. These people, however, see in Drama nothing but a *branch of literature*, a species of poesy such as the romance or didactic poem; only with this difference, that, instead of being merely read, it is to be learnt by rote by several persons, declaimed, accompanied with gestures, and lit up by the footlights. To be sure, to the stage-performance of a literary-drama its musical embellishment would bear almost the same relation as though it were executed in presence of an easel-ed painting, and therefore the so-called Melodrama has been branded as a genre of most pernicious medley. But this [122] drama, the only one our literarians have in mind, is just as little a true Drama as a *clavichord* (028) is an orchestra, to say nothing of a troupe of singers. The literary drama owes its origin to the same egoistic spirit of our general art-development as does the clavichord, and by the latter will I endeavour to make plain this course in brief.

The oldest, truest, most beautiful organ of music, the organ to which alone our music owes its being, is the *human voice*. The most naturally was it counterfeited by the *wind-instrument*, and this again by the *stringed instrument*: the symphonic concord of an orchestra of wind and

strings, again, was counterfeited by the *Organ*; the unweildy Organ, in its turn, was replaced by the handy clavichord. The most noticeable thing in this march of events, from the primal organ of the human voice to the clavichord, is the sinking of music to an ever greater lack of Expression. The instruments of the orchestra, though they had already lost the articulations (*Sprachlaut*) of the human voice, were still able to sufficiently counterfeit the human tone, in its endless variety and lively alternation of expressional power; the organ-pipes could only retain this tone in respect of its Time-duration, but no longer of its changeable Expression; till at last the clavichord merely hinted at this tone itself, and left its actual body to be thought-out by the ear's imagination. Thus in the clavichord we have an instrument which does nothing more than *delineate* music.

But how came it, that the musician finally contented himself with a toneless instrument? From no other ground than a desire to make music for himself *alone*, without any mutual aid from others. The human voice, which intrinsically requires the use of Speech, to pronounce itself melodically, is *an individual*; only the concurrence of several such [123] individuals, can produce symphonic harmony. The wind and stringed instruments stood near the human voice in this degree, that they alike retained that individual character, whereby each of them possessed a definite, however richly modulable a colour, and for the production of harmonic effects they were likewise forced to work together. In the Christian Organ all these living individualities were already ranged into a register of dead pipes, which raised their mechanical voices to the glory of God at the masterful key-tread of the one and indivisible performer. On the clavichord at last the virtuoso, without so much as the help of another (the organ-player had still required a bellows-blower), could set a multitude of hammers a-clattering to his private glory; for the hearer, deprived of all delight from music's *tone*, was only left the entertainment (029) of bewondering the keyboard-hitter's skill.—Assuredly, our whole Modern Art is like the clavichord: in it each unit does the work of a community, but alas! in bare *abstracto* and with an utter dearth of tone. Hammers—but no Men!—

From the standpoint of the clavichord (030) let us follow back the Literary-drama, whose doors our æsthetes bar with such puritanic pride against the noble breath of Music; let us follow it back to the origin of this clavichord—and what do we find? We find at last the living *tone of human speech*, which is one and the same with *the singing tone*, and with out which we should have known neither clavichord nor Literary-drama.

[124]

I.

(031)

THE MODERN DRAMA has a twofold origin: the one a natural, and peculiar to our historic evolution, namely *the Romance*,—the other an alien, and grafted on our evolution by reflection, namely the *Greek Drama* as looked at through the misunderstood rules of Aristotle.

The real kernel of all our poesy may be found in the Romance. In their endeavour to make this kernel as tasty as possible, our poets have repeatedly had recourse to a closer or more distant imitation of the Greek Drama.—

The topmost flower of that Drama which sprang directly from Romance, we have in the plays of *Shakespeare*; in the farthest removal from this Drama, we find its diametrical opposite in the "Tragédie" of *Racine*. Between these two extremes our whole remaining dramatic literature sways undecided to and fro. In order to apprehend the exact character of this wavering, we must look a little closer into the natural origin of our Drama.

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Searching the history of the world, since the decay of Grecian art, for an artistic period of which we may justly feel proud, we find that period in the so-called "Renaissance," a name we give to the termination of the Middle Ages and the commencement of a new era. Here the inner man is struggling, with a veritable giant's force, to utter himself. The whole ferment of that wondrous mixture, of Germanic individual Hero-dom with the spirit of Roman-Catholicising [125] Christendom, is thrusting from within outwards, as though in the externalising of its essence to rid itself of indissoluble inner scruples. Everywhere this thrust evinced itself as a passion for delineation of surface (*Schilderung*), and nothing more; for no man can give himself implicitly and wholly, unless he be at one within. But this the artist of the Renaissance was not; he only seized the outer surface, to flee from his inner discord. Though this bent proclaimed itself most palpably in the direction of the *plastic arts*, yet it is no less visible in *poetry*. Only, we must bear in mind that, whereas Painting had addressed itself to a faithful delineation of the living man, Poetry was already turning from this mere delineation to his *representment* (*Darstellung*), and that by stepping forward from Romance to Drama.

The poetry of the Middle Ages had already brought forth the Narrative poem and developed it to its highest pitch. This poem described men's doings and undergoings, and their sum of moving incident, in much the same way as the painter bestirred himself to present the characteristic moments of such actions. But the field of the poet who waived all living, direct portrayal of his Action by real men, was as unbounded as his reader's or hearer's force of imagination, to which alone he appealed. In this field he felt the more tempted into extravagant combinations of incidents and localities, as his vision embraced an ever wider horizon of outward actions going on around him, of actions born from the very spirit of that adventurous age. Man, at variance with himself, and seeking in art-production a refuge from his inward strife—just as he had earlier sought in vain to heal this strife itself by means of art (032)—felt no urgency to speak out a definite *something* of his inner being, but rather to go a-hunting for this Something in the world outside. In a sense he dissipated his inner thoughts, by an altogether wayward dealing with everything brought him from the outer world; and the more motley he could make his mixture of these diverse shows, the surer might he hope [126] to reach his instinctive goal, of inward dissipation. The master of this charming art, but reft of any inwardness, of any hold on soul,—was *Ariosto*.

But the less these shimmering pictures of Phantasy were able, after many a monstrous divagation, to distract in turn the inner man; and the more this man, beneath the weight of political and religious deeds of violence, found himself driven by his inner nature to an energetic counter-thrust: so much the plainer, in the class of poetry now under notice, do we see his struggle to become master of the multifarious stuff from within outwards, to give his fashionings a firm-set centre, and to take this centre, this axis of his art-work, from his own beholdings, (033) from his firm-set will-ing of Something in which his inner being may speak out. This Something is the matrix of the newer age, the condensing (034) of the individual essence to a definite artistic Will. From the vast mass of outward matters, which theretofore could never shew themselves diversified enough to please the poet, the component parts are sorted into groups akin; the multiple points of action are condensed into a definite character-drawing of the transactors. Of what unspeakable weight it is, for any inquiry into the nature of Art, that this inner urgency of the Poet, such as we may see before our very eyes, could at last content itself with nothing but reaching the plainest utterance through direct portrayal to the senses: in one word, *that the romance became a drama!* This mastery of the outward stuff, so as to shew the inner view of the essence of that stuff, could only be brought to a successful issue by setting the subject itself before the senses in all [127] the persuasiveness of actuality; and this was to be achieved in Drama and nothing else.

With fullest necessity did *Shakespeare's Drama* spring from Life and our historic



evolution: his creation was just as much conditioned by the nature of our poetic art as the Drama of the Future, in strict keeping with its nature, will be born from the satisfaction of a need which Shakespearian Drama has aroused but not yet stilled.

*Shakespeare*—of whom we here must always think as in company with his forerunners, and only as their chief—condensed the narrative Romance into the Drama, inasmuch as he translated it, so to say, for performance on the stage. Human actions, erewhile merely figured by the narrative talk of poesy, he now gave to actual talking men to bring before both eye and ear,—to men who, so long as the performance lasted, identified themselves in look and bearing with the to-be-represented persons of the romance. For this he found a stage and actors, who till then had hidden from the Poet's eye,—like a subterranean stream of genuine Folk's-artwork, flowing secretly, yet flowing ever,—but, now that Want compelled him to their finding, were discovered swiftly by his yearning gaze. The characteristic of this Folk-stage, however, lay in that the *mummers* (035) addressed themselves *to the eye*, and intentionally, almost solely to the eye; whence their distinctive name. Their performances, being given in open places before a wide-stretched throng, could produce effect by almost nothing but gesture; and by gesture only actions can be rendered *plainly*, but not—if speech is lacking—the inner motives of such actions: so that the Play of these performers, by its very nature, bristled with just as grotesque and wholesale [128] odds and ends of Action, as the romance whose scrappy plethora of Stuff (*zerstreute Vielstoffigkeit*) the poet was labouring to compress. The poet, who looked towards this Folk's-play, could not but see that for want of an intelligible speech it was driven into a monstrous plethora of action; precisely as the narrative Romancist was driven thither, by his inability to actually display his talked-of persons and their haps. He needs must cry to these mummers: "Give me your stage; I give you my speech; and so we both are suited!"

In favour of Drama, we see the poet narrowing-down the Folk-stage to the Theatre. Exactly as the Action itself, through a clear exposition of the motives that called it forth, must be compressed into its weightiest definite moments: so did the necessity become evident, to compress the show-place also; and chiefly out of regard for the spectators, who now were not merely to see, but alike to plainly hear. Together with its effect upon the space, this curtailment had also to extend to the time-duration, of the dramatic play. The Mystery-stage of the Middle Ages, set up in spreading fields, in streets or open places of the towns, offered the assembled populace an entertainment lasting all day long, nay—as we even still may see—for several days on end: whole histories, the complete adventures of a lifetime, were represented; from these the constant ebb and flow of lookers-on might choose, according to their fancy, what most they cared to see. Such a performance formed a fitting pendant to the monstrously discursive Histories (*Historien*) of the Middle Ages themselves: just as mask-like in their dearth of character, in their lack of any individual stir of life, just as wooden and rough-hewn were the much-doing persons of these Histories *be-read*, as were the players of those *beheld*. For the same reasons that moved the poet to narrow down the Action and the Showplace, he had therefore to curtail the Time-length of performance also, since he wanted to bring to his spectators, no longer fragments, but a self-included whole; so that he took his spectator's power of giving continuous and [129] undivided attention to a fascinating subject, when set before him, as the measure for the length of that performance. An artwork which merely appeals to Phantasy, like the be-read romance, may lightly break the current of its message; since Phantasy is of so wayward a nature, that it hearkens to no other laws than those of whimsy chance. But that which steps before the senses, and would address them with persuasive, unmistakable distinctness, has not only to trim itself according to the quality, faculty and naturally bounded vigour of those senses, but to shew itself complete from top to toe, from beginning to end: if it would not, through sudden break or incompleteness of its exposition, appeal once more for needful supplementing to the Phantasy, to the very factor it

had quitted for the senses.

Upon this narrowed stage one thing alone remained still left entirely to Phantasy,—*the demonstration of the scene* itself, wherein to frame the performers conformably with the local requirements of the action. Carpets hung the stage around; an easily shifted writing on a notice-board informed the spectator what place, whether palace or street, forest or field, was to be *thought of* as the scene. Through this one compulsory appeal to Phantasy, unavoidable by the stage-craft of those days, a door in the drama remained open to the motley-stuffed Romance and the much-doing History. As the poet, hitherto busied only with a speaking, bodily representation of the Romance, did not yet feel the necessity of a naturalistic representment of the surrounding Scene as well, neither could he experience the necessity of compressing the Action, to be represented, into a still more definite circumscription of its leading moments. We here see plain as day how it is Necessity alone that drives the artist toward a perfect shaping of the artwork; the artistic necessity that determines him to turn from Phantasy to Sense, to assist the indefinite force of fancy to a sure, intelligent operation through the senses. This necessity which shapes all Art, which alone can satisfy the artist's strivings, comes to us [130] solely from the definiteness of a universally sentient intuition (*universell sinnlichen Anschauung*): if we render complete justice to all its claims, then it drives us withal to the completest art-creation. Shakespeare, who did not yet experience this one necessity, of a naturalistic representment of the scenic surroundings, and therefore only so far sifted and compressed the redundance of his Dramatised Romance as he was bidden-to by the necessity he did experience,—to wit of narrowing the show-place, and curtailing the time-length, of an Action represented by men of flesh and blood,—Shakespeare, who within these limits quickened History and Romance into so persuasive, so characteristic a truth, that he shewed us human beings with individualities so manifold and drastic as never a poet before,—this Shakespeare nevertheless, through his dramas being not yet shaped by that single aforesaid necessity, has been the cause and starting-point of an unparalleled confusion in dramatic art for over two centuries, and down to the present day.

In the Shakespearian Drama the Romance and the loose-joined History had been left a door, as I have expressed it, by which they might go in and out at pleasure: this open door was the relinquishing to Phantasy the representment of the Scene. We shall see that the consequent confusion increased in exact degree as that door was relentlessly (036) shut from the other side, and as the felt deficiency of Scene, in turn, drove people into arbitrary deeds of violence against the living Drama.



Amongst the so-called Romanic nations of Europe, with whom the adventure-hunting of the Romance—which tumbled every Germanic and Romanic element into one mass of wild confusion—had raged the maddest, this Romance had also become the most ill-suited for dramatising. [131] The stress to seize the motley utterances of earlier fantastic whim, and shape them by the strenuous inwardness of human nature into plain and definite show, was only exhibited in any marked degree by the Germanic nations, who made into their deed of Protestance the inward war of conscience against tormenting outward prescripts. The Romanic nations, who outwardly remained beneath the Catholic yoke, clove steadfastly to the line along which they had fled before the irreconcilable inward strife, in order to distract from without—as I have above expressed myself—their inward thoughts. Plastic art, and an art-of-poetry which—as descriptive—was kindred to the plastic, if not in utterance, yet in essence: these are the arts, externally distracting, diverting, and engaging, peculiar to these nations.

The educated Frenchman and Italian turned his back upon his native Folk's-play (037); in its raw simplicity and formlessness it recalled to him the whole chaos of the Middle Ages.



which he had just been labouring to shake off him, like some heavy, troublous dream. No, he harked back to the historic feeders of his language, and chiefly from Roman (038) poets, the literary copiers of the Greeks, he chose his pattern for that drama which he set before the well-bred world of Gentlemen, in lieu of the Folk's-play that now could entertain alone the rabble. Painting and architecture, the principal arts of the Romanic Renaissance, [132] had made the eye of this web-bred world so full of taste, so exacting in its demands, that the rough carpet-hung platform of the British Shakespeare could not content it. For a show-place, the players in the Princes' palaces were given the sumptuous ball, in which, with a few minor modifications, they had to erect their Scene. Stability of Scene was set fast as the criterion for the whole drama; and in this the accepted line of taste of the well-bred world concurred with the modern origin of the drama placed before it, with the rules of Aristotle. The princely spectator, whose *eye* had been trained by Plastic-art into his best-bred organ of positive sensuous pleasure, had no lief that *this* sense of all others should be bandaged, to submit itself to sightless Phantasy; and that the less, as he shrank on principle from any excitation of the indefinite, medieval-shaping Phantasy. At the drama's each demand for Change of Scene, he must have been given the opportunity of seeing that scene displayed with strict fidelity to form and colour of its subject, to allow a change at all. But what was made possible in the later mixing of the two dramatic genres, it was by no means needful to ask for here, since from the other side the rules of Aristotle, by which alone this fictive drama was constructed, made Unity of Scene its weightiest condition. So that the very thing the Briton, with his organic creation of the drama from within, had left disregarded as an outer moment, became an outward-shaping 'norm' for the French drama; which thus sought to construct itself from without inwards, from Mechanism into Life.

Now, it is important to observe closely, how this outward Unity of Scene determined the whole attitude of the French drama, almost entirely excluding from this scene any representment of the action, and replacing it by the mere delivery of speeches (*Rede*). Thus the root poetic element of medieval and more recent life, the action-packed Romance, must also be shut out on principle from any representment on this Scene, since the introduction of its [133] multifarious stuff would have been rightdown impossible without a constant shifting. So that not only the outward form, but the whole cut of the plot, and finally its subject too, must be taken from those models which had guided the French playwright in planning out his form. He was forced to choose plots which did not need to be first condensed into a compact measure of dramatic representability, but such as lay before him already thus condensed.

From their native Sagas the Greek tragedians had condensed such stuffs, as the highest artistic outcome of those Sagas: the modern dramatist, starting with outward rules abstracted from these poems, and faced with the poetic element of his own era's (039) life, which was only to be mastered in an exactly opposite fashion, namely that of Shakespeare, could never compress it to such a density as should answer to the standard outwardly imposed; therefore nothing remained for him but a—naturally *disfiguring*—imitation and repetition of those already finished dramas. Thus in *Racine's* Tragédie we have Talk upon the scene, and behind the scene the Action; grounds of movement, with the movement cut adrift and turned outside; will-ing without can-ning. All art was therefore focused on *the mere outside of Talk*, and quite logically in Italy—whence the new art-genre had started—this soon lost itself in that musical delivery which we have already learnt to recognise as the specific content of opera-ware (*des Opernwesens*). The French Tragédie, also, of necessity passed over (040) into Opera: *Gluck* spoke aloud the actual content of this tragedy-ware. Opera was thus the premature bloom on an unripe fruit, grown from an unnatural, artificial soil. With what the Italian and French Drama *began*, to wit the outer form, to that must the newer Drama first attain by organic evolution from within, upon the path of Shakespeare's [134] Drama; then first will ripen, also, the natural fruit of Musical Drama. (041)



Between these two extremes, however, between the *Shakespearian* and the *Racinian* Drama, did *Modern Drama* grow into its unnatural, mongrel shape; and *Germany* was the soil on which this fruit was reared.

Here Roman Catholicism continued side by side, in equal strength, with German Protestantism: only, each was so hotly engaged in combat with the other, that, undecided as the battle stayed, no natural art-flower came to light. The inward stress, which with the Briton threw itself into dramatic representment of History and Romance, remained with the German Protestant an obstinate endeavour to inwardly appease that inward strife itself. We have indeed a *Luther*, whose art soared up to the Religious Lyric; but we have no Shakespeare. On the other hand, the Roman-catholic South could never swing itself into that genial, light-minded oblivion of the inward conflict, wherewith the Romanic nations took up Plastic art: with gloomy earnestness it guarded its religious dream (*Wahn*). While the whole of Europe threw itself on Art, still Germany abode a meditant barbarian. Only what had already outlived itself outside, took flight to Germany, upon its soil to blossom through an after-summer. English comedians, (042) whom the performers of Shakespearian dramas had robbed of their bread at home, came over to Germany to play their grotesquely pantomimic antics before the Folk: not till long after, when *it* had likewise faded out of England, followed Shakespeare's Drama itself; German [135] players, fleeing from the ferule (043) of their wearisome dramatic tutors, laid hands on it and trimmed it for their use.

From the South, again, the Opera had forced its way in,—that outcome of Romanic drama. Its distinguished origin, in the palaces of Princes, commended it to German princes in their turn; so that these princes introduced the Opera into Germany, whereas—mark well!—the Shakespearian Play was brought in by the Folk.—In Opera the scenic penury of Shakespeare's stage was contrasted by its utmost opposite, the richest and most far-fetched mounting of the Scene. The Musical drama became in truth a *peep-show* (*Schauspiel*), whereas the *Play* (*Schauspiel*) remained a hear-play (*Hörspiel*). We need not here go far for reasons for the scenic and decorative extravagance of the opera-genre: this loose-limbed drama was constructed from without; and only from without, by luxury and pomp, could it be kept alive at all. One thing, however, it is important to observe: namely, that this scenic ostentation, with its unheard-of complexity and far-fetched change of exhibition to the Eye, proceeded from the same dramatic tendency which had originally set up unity-of-scene as its 'norm.' Not the Poet, who, when compressing the Romance into the Drama, had left its plethora of stuff thus far unhedged, as in that stuff's behoof he could change the scene as often and as swiftly as he chose, by mere appeal to phantasy,—not the Poet, from any wish to turn from that appeal-to-phantasy to a positive confirmation by the senses,—not *he* invented this elaborate mechanism for shifting actually presented scenes: but a longing for outward entertainment and constant change thereof, a sheer lust of the Eye, had called it forth. Had *the poet* devised this apparatus, we should have had to further suppose that he felt the necessity of a frequent change of Scene as a need, inherent in the drama's plethora of Stuff itself; and since the poet, as we have seen, was constructing organically from within outwards, this supposition would have as good as proved that the historic and romantic plethora-of-stuff [136] was a necessary postulate of the Drama: for only the unbending *necessity* of such a postulate could have driven him to invent a scenic apparatus whereby to enable that plethora of Stuff (*Vielstoffigkeit*) to also utter itself as a panoramic plethora of Scene (*Vielscenigkeit*). But the very reverse was the case. Shakespeare felt a necessity impelling him to represent History (044) and Romance dramatically; in the freshness of his ardour to content this impulse, there came to him no feeling of the necessity for a naturalistic (*naturgetreuen*) representment of the Scene as well;—had he experienced this further necessity, toward a completely convincing

representation of the dramatic action, he would have sought to answer it by a still more careful sifting, a still more strenuous compression of the Romance's plethora of Stuff: and that in exactly the same way as he had contracted the show-place, abridged the time-length of performance, and for their sakes had already curtailed this plethora of Stuff itself. The impossibility of still further condensing the Romance—an insight which he certainly would have arrived at—must then have enlightened him as to the true nature of this Romance: namely, that its nature does not really correspond with that of Drama; a discovery which we could never make, till the undramatic plethora of History's Stuff was brought to our feeling by the actualisation of the Scene, whereas the circumstance that this Scene *need only be suggested* had alone made possible to Shakespeare the dramatised Romance.—

Now, the necessity of a representation of the Scene, in keeping with the place of action, could not for long remain unfelt; the medieval stage was bound to vanish, and make room for the modern. In Germany this was governed by the character of the Folk's mimetic art, which likewise, since the dying-out of Mystery and Passion plays, took its dramatic basis from the History and the Romance. At the time when German mimic art first took an upward swing—about the middle of the past century—this basis [137] was formed by the Burgher-romance, (045) in its keeping with the then Folk-spirit. It was by far more manageable, and especially less cumbered with material, than the Historic or Legendary (*sagenhafte*) romance that lay to Shakespeare's hand: a suitable representation of its local scenes could therefore be effected with far less outlay than would have been required for Shakespeare's dramatisations. The Shakespearian pieces taken up by these players had to submit to the most hampering adaptation on every side, in order to become performable by them at all. I here pass over every other ground and measure of this adaptation, and lay my finger on that of the purely scenic requirements, since it is the weightiest for the object of my present inquiry. (046) These players, the first importers of Shakespeare to the German stage, were so honest to the spirit of their art, that it never occurred to them to make his pieces representable by either accompanying his constant change of scene with a kaleidoscopic shifting of their own theatric scenery, or even for his sake renouncing any actual exhibition whatsoever of the scene, and returning to the sceneless medieval stage. No, they maintained the standpoint of their art, once taken up, and to it subordinated Shakespeare's plethora-of-scene; inasmuch as they downright left out those scenes which seemed to them of little weight, while the weightier ones they tacked together.

It was from the standpoint of Literature, that people first perceived what Shakespeare's art-work had lost hereby, and urged a restoration of the original form of these pieces for their performance too. For this, two opposite plans were broached. The first proposal, and the one not carried out, is Tieck's. Fully recognising the essence of Shakespearian Drama, *Tieck* demanded the restoration of [138] Shakespeare's stage, with its Scene referred to an appeal to Phantasy. This demand was thoroughly logical, and aimed at the very spirit of Shakespearian Drama. But, though a half attempt at restoration has time out of mind remained unfruitful, on the other hand a radical one has always proved impossible. Tieck was a radical restorer, to be honoured as such, but bare of influence.—The second proposal was directed to employing the gigantic apparatus of Operatic scenery for the representation of Shakespearian Drama too, by a faithful exhibition of the constant change of scene that had originally been only hinted at by him. Upon the newer English stage, people translated Shakespeare's Scene into the most realistic actuality (047); wonders of mechanism were invented, for the rapid change of the most elaborate stage-mountings: marches of troops and mimic battles were presented with astonishing exactitude. In the larger German theatres this course was copied.

In face of this spectacle, the modern Poet stood brooding and bewildered. As literature, Shakespearian Drama had given him the exalting impression of the most perfect poetic unity; so long as it had only addressed his phantasy, that phantasy had been competent to form

therefrom a harmoniously rounded image: but now, with the fulfilment of his necessarily wakened longing to see this image embodied in a thorough representment to the senses, he saw it vanish suddenly before his very eyes. The embodiment of his fancy-picture had merely shewn him an unsurveyable mass of realisms and actualisms, out of which his puzzled eye absolutely could not reconstruct it. This phenomenon produced two main effects upon him, both of which resulted in a disillusionment as to Shakespeare's Tragedy. (048) Henceforth the Poet either renounced all wish to see his dramas acted on the stage, so as to be at peace again to model according to his [139] intellectual aim the fancy-picture he had borrowed from Shakespearian Drama,—i.e. he wrote literary-dramas for dumb reading;—or else, so as to practically realise his fancy-picture on the stage, he instinctively turned more or less towards the reflective type of drama, whose modern origin we have traced to the pseudo-antique (*antikisirenden*) drama, constructed according to Aristotle's rules of Unity.

Both these effects and tendencies are the guiding motives in the works of the two most important dramatic poets of modern times—*Goethe* and *Schiller*. With them I must therefore deal a little closer, so far at least as concerns the object of my present inquiry.



*Goethe* began his career, as dramatic poet, by dramatising a full-blooded Germanic Feudal-romance (*Ritterroman*), "*Götz von Berlichingen*." The method of Shakespeare was quite faithfully followed here: the romance (049) with all its circumstantial details was in so far translated for the stage, as the narrowing of that stage and the abridgment of the time-length of performance would allow. But *Goethe* was already faced with a stage on which the Action's *locale*, however scantily and roughly, was yet exhibited with a definite intention to meet that Action's claims. This circumstance led the poet to revise for actual stage-performance a poem written rather from a literary, than a theatric standpoint. In its second shape, given it [140] out of consideration for scenic requirements, the poem has lost the freshness of Romance, without gaining in its stead the perfect strength of Drama.

*Goethe* next chose the material for his dramas chiefly from the Burgher-romance. The characteristic of this *citizen romance* consists in this: that its plot is completely cut adrift from any wider group of historic actions and associations, that it holds only to the social precipitate of these historical events for its conditioning medium (*bedingende Umgebung*), and within this medium—which at bottom is but the reaction of those historic incidents, with all their colour blotted out—evolves itself more according to certain humours (*Stimmungen*) tyrannously imposed on it thereby, than according to any inner motives strong enough for a completely plastic utterance. This plot is just as cramped and poor, as the humours which gave it birth are bare of freedom and self-dependent inwardness. Its dramatisation, however, answered to both the intellectual view-point of the public and, more especially, the outward possibilities of scenic representment; and that inasmuch as these threadbare plots brought to the practical 'mounting' no necessities which it could not answer out of hand. What a mind like *Goethe's* composed (*dichtete*) amid such limitations we must take as coming almost solely from his felt necessity of submitting to certain cramping maxims, if he were to bring about a drama at all, (050) and certainly far less from any voluntary submission to the cramped spirit of the Burgher-romance, or to the humours of the public which favoured its style of plot. But *Goethe* rescued himself from this limitation, and won the most unfettered freedom, by completely giving up the 'acting-drama.' In planning out his "*Faust*" he merely retained for the literary poem the advantages of a dramatic mode of statement, but left purposely out of sight the possibility of a scenic representment. In this poem, *Goethe* was the first to sound with full consciousness the keynote of the poetic element distinctive of the present age, *the thrust of Thought* [141] *toward Actuality*, though he could not yet give it artistic redemption in the actuality of Drama. Here stands the watershed (*Scheidepunkt*)



between the medieval *romance*, sicklied to the shallowness of its burgher type, and the real *dramatic matter* of the Future. We must defer a closer entry upon the characteristics of this 'watershed': for the present let us hold it weighty, that Goethe, arrived at this watershed, could neither give us a genuine romance nor a genuine drama, but precisely a poem which enjoyed the advantages of both classes in an abstract artistic measure.

From this poem—which sent its plastic impulse threading through the poet's whole artistic life, like a welling vein of living water—let us here look aside, and follow Goethe's art-creation wherever we may find it turned, in fresh attempts, towards the Scenic Drama.

From the dramatised Burgher-romance—which in "Egmont" he had sought to raise to its highest pitch from within outwards, by extending its medium so as to embrace a widely-branching group of historical moments—Goethe had departed for good, with the sketch for his "Faust": if the Drama still had charms for him, as the most perfect branch of poetic art, it was chiefly through a regardal of it in its most perfect artistic form. This *Form*—which, in keeping with their degree of classical knowledge, had been only cognisable to the French and Italians as an outwardly constraining 'norm'—presented itself to the more enlightened gaze of German searchers as an integral moment-of-utterance of Greek *Life*: the warmth of that Form had power to enkindle them, when they had felt out for themselves the warmth of this life that lingered in its very monuments. The German poet grasped the fact, that the unitarian (*einheitliche*) Form of Grecian Tragedy could not be imposed upon the drama from outside, but must be vitalised afresh from within outwards, through a unitarian Content. The Content of modern life, which could utter itself intelligibly in nothing now but the Romance, it was impossible to compress into such plastic [142] unity that with an at all intelligible dramatic treatment it could have spoken through the Form of Grecian Drama, could have justified this Form, could, in fact, have begotten it of necessity. To the poet, here concerned with absolute-artistic Shaping, it was now only open to return—at least outwardly—to the method of the French; in order to justify the use of the Form of Greek Drama, for his artwork, he must also employ the finished Stuff of Grecian Mythos. But when Goethe laid hands on the finished stuff of "Iphigenia in Tauris," he proceeded exactly as did Beethoven in his weightiest symphonic pieces: just as Beethoven made himself master of the finished Absolute Melody, in a measure loosened it, broke it up, and fitted its limbs afresh together by a new organic vitalising, in order to make the organism of Music (051) itself capable of bearing melody,—so did Goethe lay hands on the finished Stuff of "Iphigenia in Tauris," resolved it into its component parts, and fitted these afresh together by an organically-vitalising act of poetic Shaping, in order thus to make the organism of Drama itself capable of begetting the perfect dramatic art-form.

But only with this already finished Stuff, could Goethe succeed in such a procedure: with none borrowed from modern life, or from Romance, might the poet reach a like success. (052) We shall come back to the reason of this phenomenon: let it suffice for now, to establish from a survey of Goethe's art-creation that the poet turned away from *this* attempt in Drama too, so soon as ever he had a mind for the (053) exhibition of Life itself, and not for absolute Art-creation. This Life, in its complex branchings, its will-less outward shaping by influences from far and near, even Goethe could subdue to an intelligible demonstration alone in Romance. The choicest flower of his modern worldview [143] (*Weltanschauung*) the poet could only give us in a delineation, in an appeal to Phantasy, and not in a direct dramatic representment,—so that Goethe's most pregnant art-creation must lose itself again in the Romance; the Romance from which, at the beginning of his poetic career, he had turned with a true Shakespearian stress toward Drama.—

*Schiller*; like Goethe, began with the Dramatised Romance, beneath the influence of Shakespearian Drama. The domestic and political Romance engaged his dramatic shaping-force, till he reached the modern source of this Romance, reached naked *history*

itself, and from that endeavoured to construct the Drama without an intervener. Here it was, that the stubbornness of Historic matter, and its incompetence for presentment in a dramatic form, became manifest.—Shakespeare translated the dry but honest historic Chronicle into the living speech of Drama. This Chronicle outlined with exact fidelity, and step by step, the march of historical events and the deeds of those engaged therein: it went about its task without any criticism or individual views, and thus gave a daguerreotype of historic facts. Shakespeare had only to vivify this daguerreotype into a luminous oil-painting; he necessarily had to unriddle from the group of facts their underlying motives, and to imprint these on the flesh and blood of their transactors. For the rest, the historic scaffolding stayed entirely undisturbed by him: his stage allowed him that, as we have seen.—But in presence of the modern Scene, the poet soon perceived the impossibility of dressing History, for the play, with the chronicler's fidelity of Shakespeare: he grasped the fact, that only to the Romance—all heedless as to brevity or length—had it been possible to deck the Chronicle with lifelike portraits of its characters; and that only Shakespeare's stage, again, had permitted the compression of the Romance into a drama. If Schiller, then, sought in History itself for the stuff for Drama, this was with the wish and effort to submit the historic subject from the first to so directly poetic an [144] adaptation that it might be presented in the dramatic Form, which only in the utmost possible Unity can make itself intelligible. But in this very wish and effort, lies the reason for the nullity of our (054) Historic Drama. History is only *history* in virtue of its shewing us, with unconditional veracity, the naked doings of human beings: it does not give us men's inner thinkings, but merely lets us infer these thinkings from their doings. If, then, we believe we have rightly fathomed these thinkings, and if we wish to present history as vindicated by them, we can only do it in pure Historiography, or—with the utmost artistic warmth attainable—in the Historical Romance, i.e. in an art-form where we are not constrained by any outward consideration to disfigure the naked facts of history through a wilful sifting or compressing. We can make thoroughly intelligible to ourselves the thoughts which we have unriddled from the actions of historical persons, in no other way than by a faithful portrayal of the identical actions from which we have unriddled those thoughts. If, however, in order to make plain to ourselves the inner motives of action, we in any item alter or disfigure the actions which have thence arisen, for sake of their portrayal: then this necessarily involves a disfigurement of the thoughts as well, and therefore a total falsification of history itself. The poet who, avoiding the chronicler's exactitude, attempted to adapt historic subjects for the dramatic Scene,—and with this object, treated the facts of history according to his own artistic formula,—could bring neither History, nor yet a Drama, into being.

If, in illustration of the above-said, we compare Shakespeare's Historic dramas with Schiller's "*Wallenstein*," we shall see at a glance how *here* by the evasion of outward historical fidelity, the history's very Content is set awry as well; whereas *there*, by maintenance of the chronicler's exactitude, (055) the characteristic Content of the history is [145] brought to light with most persuasive truth. Without a doubt, Schiller was a greater expert than Shakespeare in historical inquiry, and in his purely-historic works (056) he fully makes amend for his handling of History as dramatic poet. But our present business is the statistical proof, that for Shakespeare indeed, upon whose stage appeal was made to Phantasy, might the stuff for Drama be borrowed from history; but not for *us*, who demand a sense-convincing exhibition of the Scene as well. For it was not possible even to Schiller, to compress the historic stuff, howsoever deliberately prepared by him, into the dramatic unity he had in mind. All which first gives to History its intrinsic life, the Surrounding that stretches far and wide, (057) and yet exerts its conditioning force upon the central point—all this, since he felt its delineation indispensable, he was forced to shift into an entirely independent, self-included adjunct, and to split his drama itself into two dramas: a very different matter to

Shakespeare's handling of his serial historic dramas; for there we have whole life-careers of persons, who serve for a historical focus, parcelled off into their weightiest periods, whereas in "Wallenstein" only *one* such period, proportionally not (058) over-rich in matter, is divided into several sections merely for sake of circumstantially motivating a historical moment which is clouded into positive obscurity. In three plays, upon *his* stage, Shakespeare would have given the whole Thirty-years War.

This "dramatic poem"—as Schiller himself calls it—was nevertheless the most conscientious attempt to win from History, as such, material for the Drama.

In Drama's further evolution, we see Schiller henceforth dropping more and more his regard for History: on the [146] one hand, to employ it (059) merely as itself a clothing for an intellectual motive peculiar to the poet's own general phase of culture—on the other, to present this motive more and more definitely in a form of drama which, by the nature of the thing and especially since Goethe's many-sided attempts, had become the object of artistic speculation. With this purposed subordination and arbitrary regulation of the Stuff, Schiller fell ever deeper into the inevitable fault of a sheer reflective and rhetorical presentment of his subject; until at last he ruled it merely by the Form, which he took from Greek Tragedy as the most suitable for a purely artistic purpose. In his "Bride of Messina" he even went farther in his imitation of the Greek Form, than Goethe in his "Iphigenia." Goethe only went so far back to this Form, as thereby to fix the plastic *unity* of an Action: Schiller sought to shape the drama's Stuff itself, from out this Form. In this he approached the method of the French tragic poets; his only essential difference from them being, that he restored this Form more completely than had been possible to their limited knowledge of it, that he sought to vivify its Spirit, of which they knew absolutely nothing, and to stamp that spirit on the Stuff itself. Further, he adopted from the Greek tragedy its "Fate,"—at least so far as was possible to *his* understanding of it,—and constructed with this Fate a plot which, by its medieval costume, (060) was meant to afford a halfway-house between the Antique and our modern understanding. Never was anything so purposely planned from a purely art-historical standpoint, as this "Bride of Messina": what Goethe shadowed in his marriage of Faust with Helena, was here to be embodied through artistic speculation. But [147] this embodiment would not succeed at all: stuff and form were made alike so turbid, that neither did the sophisticated medieval Romance come to any effect, nor the antique Form to lucid view. Who may not learn a profound lesson, from this fruitless attempt of Schiller's?—In despair, himself he turned his back upon this form; in his last dramatic poem, "William Tell," by taking up again the form of dramatised Romance he sought to save at least his poetic freshness, which had markedly flagged beneath his æsthetic experimentings.

Thus we see the dramatic creativeness of Schiller, also, swaying between History and Romance—the real life element of our era's poetry—on the one side, and the perfect Form of the Grecian drama on the other: with every fibre of his poetic life he clung to the former, while his higher artistic shaping-impulse was driving him towards the latter.

What specially characterises Schiller, is that in him the thrust (*Drang*) towards the pure, the antique art-form, took the line of a thrust towards the Ideal in general. He was so bitterly distressed at not being able to fill this Form artistically with the contents of our own life-element, that at last he loathed any artistic employment of that element at all. *Goethe's* practical sense reconciled itself with our life-element, by giving up the perfect art-form and developing farther the only one in which this life can enounce itself intelligibly. Schiller never turned back again to the Romance proper; the Ideal of his higher artistic vision, as revealed to him in the antique art-form he made into the essence of true Art itself. But he only saw this Ideal from the standpoint of our present life's poetic incapacity; and, confounding the things of *our* life with those of Human Life in general, he could at last but picture Art as a thing divorced from Life, the utmost plenitude of Art as a thing to be dreamt of, but never more



than approximately reachable.—

Thus Schiller stayed hovering between heaven and earth; and in this hovering hangs, after him, our whole dramatic [148] poetry. That heaven, however, is really nothing but *the antique art-Form*, and that earth *the practical Romance of modern times*. The newest school of dramatic poetry—which, *as art*, lives only on the attempts of Goethe and Schiller, now turned to literary monuments—has developed the aforesaid hovering between opposite tendencies into a positive reeling. Wherever it has left the field of mere literary dramatics, and engaged in representing Life, it has fallen back upon the dead level of the dramatised Burgher-romance, in order to produce an at all intelligible scenic effect; or if it has wanted to give voice to any higher import of Life, it has seen itself compelled to gradually strip off again its spurious dramatic plumes, and present itself to the dumb reader as a naked six- or nine-volume novel. (061)

To take our whole art-literary doings at one hasty glance, let us range their notable phenomena in the following order.

Our modern life-element can only be displayed, at once intelligibly and artistically, in the *Romance*. In the endeavour for a more effectual, more direct display of its Stuff, the Romance becomes *dramatised*. As each new poet recognises afresh the impossibility of this attempt, the Stuff, which distracts by its too-much-doing, is pounded down into first an unveracious, and next a completely purposeless [149] foundation for the modern *stage-piece*, i.e. the Play; which, in its turn, becomes a mere platform for the modern theatre-Virtuoso. From this play, so soon as he grows aware of his wrecking on the routine of the coulisses, the poet returns to undisturbed presentment of his Stuff in the *romance*; the perfect dramatic Form, which he had striven for in vain, he gets set before him as something foreign out-and-out, in an actual performance of the genuine Greek drama. Finally, in the literary-*Lyrical* he attacks and ridicules,—laments and bewails the contrariness of our life-affairs; which appears to him, in the matter of Art, a contradiction between stuff and form,—in that of Life, a contradiction between man and nature.

It is noteworthy that the most recent epoch has shewn this irreconcilable contradiction so conspicuously in the daily history of its art, that any continuance in error with regard thereto must seem clean impossible to any man with half an eye. Whereas the Romance in every country (*überall*),—and especially among the French, (062)—after its last fantastic attempts at painting History, has thrown itself on the nakedest exhibition of the life of the present day; has taken this life by its most vicious social basis (*lasterhaftesten sozialen Grundlage*); and, with its own completed unloveliness as art-work, has employed its literary artifice (063) as a revolutionary weapon against this [150] life-base;—whereas the Romance, I say, has become an appeal to that revolutionary force of the Folk which shall destroy these life-foundations, — on the other hand a talented poet, who as creative artist had never found the ability to master any sort of Stuff for the actual Drama, induced an absolute monarch to command his Stage-intendant to produce before him with antiquarian fidelity a *real Greek tragedy*, for which a famous composer had to prepare the needful music. (064) In face of our present-day life, this *Sophoclean Drama* shewed itself as a clumsy artistic fib (*Nothlüge*): as a quibble patched up by artistic penury, to cloak the untruthfulness of our whole art-doings; as a prevarication which tried to lie away the true Want of our times, under all manner of artistic pretexts. Yet *one* plain truth this tragedy could not help unbaring: namely, that *we have no Drama, and can have [151] no Drama*; that our Literary-drama is every whit as far removed from the genuine Drama, as the pianoforte from the symphonic song of human voices; that in the Modern Drama we can arrive at the production of poetry only by the most elaborate devices of literary mechanism, just as on the pianoforte we only arrive at the production of music through the most complicated devices of technical mechanism,—in either case, however, a soulless poetry, a toneless music.—

With *this* Drama, at all events, true Music, the loving wife, has nothing at all to do. The coquette can approach this shrivelled man, to lure him into the net of her flirtations; the prude can unite herself with the impotent one, to journey with him into godliness; the wanton lets him pay her, and laughs at him behind his back: but the true, love-yearning woman turns away from him, unmoved!— (065)



If, now, we want to pry a little closer into *what* has made this Drama impotent, we must get to the bottom of *the Stuff* on which it has fed. This Stuff was, as we saw, the *Romance*. To the essence of the Romance we must therefore turn our more particular attention.

[152]

## II.

MAN is in a two-fold way a poet: in his *beholding*, and in his *imparting*.

His *natural* poetic-gift is the faculty of condensing into an inner image the phenomena presented to his senses from outside; his *artistic*, that of projecting this image outwards.

Just as the eye can only take up farther-lying objects in a proportionally diminished scale, so also the human brain—the inner starting-point of the eye, and that to whose activity, conditioned by the whole internal organism, the eye imparts the shows which it has gathered from without—can only grasp them in the diminished scale of the human individuality. Upon this scale, however, the functioning brain is able to take the phenomena, brought to it in a state of disruption from their native actuality, and shape them into new and comprehensive pictures by its double endeavour, to sift them or to group them; and this function of the brain, we call it *Phantasy*.

The Phantasy's unconscious effort is directed to becoming familiar with the actual measure of these shows, and this drives it to impart its image to the outer world; so to say—it tries to fit its image on to the reality, in order to compare it therewith. But this imparting to the outer world can only take an artistic, a mediated path; the senses, which instinctively took up the outer shows themselves, demand, for any imparting to them of a fancy-picture, that the man who fain would address them intelligibly should first have exercised and regulated his organ of utterance. Completely intelligible in its externalisation will the fancy-picture never be, until it re-presents to the senses the phenomena in the selfsame measure as that in which the latter had originally presented themselves to them; while by the final correspondence of the effect of [153] his message with his previous longing, does man first become insofar acquainted with the correct measure of the phenomena, as he recognises it for the measure in which they address themselves to men in general. No one can address himself intelligibly to any but those who see things in a like measure with himself: but this measure for his communication is the concentrated image of the things themselves, the image in which they present themselves to man's perception. This measure must therefore rest upon a view in common; for only what is perceptible to this common view allows, in turn, of being artistically imparted thereto: a man whose mode of viewing is not that of his fellow-men, neither can address himself to them artistically.—Only in a finite measure of inner viewing of the essence of things, has the artistic impulse-to-impart, since the memory of man, been able to develop itself to the faculty of explicit portrayal (*überzeugendster Darstellung*) to the senses: only from the Greek world-view, has the genuine Artwork of Drama been able as yet to blossom forth. But this drama's Stuff was the *Mythos*; and from its essence alone, can we learn to comprehend the highest Grecian art-work, and its Form that so ensnares us.

In the *Mythos* the Folk's joint poetic-force seizes things exactly as the bodily eye has power to see them, and no farther; not as they in themselves really are. The vast multiplicity of

surrounding phenomena, whose real association the human being cannot grasp as yet, gives him first of all an impression of unrest: in order to overcome this feeling of unrest he seeks for some connexion of the phenomena among themselves, some connexion which he may conceive as their First Cause. The real connexion, however, is only discoverable by the Understanding, which seizes the phenomena according to their reality; whereas the connexion invented by the man who is only able to seize the phenomena according to their directest impression upon himself, can merely be the work of Phantasy—and the Cause, thus subsumed for them, a mere product of his poetic imaginative-force. God and gods, are the first [154] creations of man's poetic force: in them man represents to himself the essence of natural phenomena as derived from a Cause. Under the notion of this Cause, however, he instinctively apprehends nothing other than his own human essence; on which alone, moreover, this imagined Cause is based. If the 'thrust' of the man who fain would overcome his inner disquietude at the multiplicity of phenomena, if this thrust makes toward representing as plainly as possible to himself their imagined cause,—since he can only regain his peace of mind through the selfsame senses wherethrough his inner being had been disquieted,—then he must also bring his God before him in a shape which not only shall the most definitely answer to his purely human manner of looking at things, but shall also be outwardly the most understandable by him. All understanding comes to us through love alone, and man is urged the most instinctively towards the essence of his own species. Just as the human form is to him the most comprehensible, so also will the essence of natural phenomena—which he does not know as yet in their reality—become comprehensible only through condensation to a human form. Thus in Mythos all the shaping impulse of the Folk makes toward realising to its senses a broadest grouping of the most manifold phenomena, and in the most succinct of shapes. At first a mere image formed by Phantasy, this shape behaves itself the more entirely according to human attributes, the plainer it is to become, notwithstanding that its Content is in truth a suprahuman and supranatural one: to wit, that joint operation of multi-human or omninatural force and faculty which, conceived as merely *the concordant action* of human and natural forces in general, is certainly both natural and human, but appears superhuman and supernatural by the very fact that it is ascribed to *one* imagined individual, represented in the shape of Man. (066) By its faculty of thus using its force of imagination [155] to bring before itself every thinkable reality and actuality, in widest reach but plain, succinct and plastic shaping, the Folk therefore becomes in Mythos the creator of Art ; for these shapes must necessarily win artistic form and content, if—which, again, is their individual mark—they have sprung from nothing but man's longing for a *seizable* portrait of things, and thus from his yearning to recognise in the object portrayed, nay *first to know* therein, himself and his own-est essence : that god-creative essence. Art, by the very meaning of the term, is nothing but the fulfilment of a longing to know oneself in the likeness of an object of one's love or adoration, to find oneself again in the things of the outer world, thus conquered by their representment. (067) In the object he has represented, the Artist says to himself: " So art thou so feel'st and thinkest thou. And so wouldst thou do if, freed from all the strenuous caprice of outward haps of life, thou mightest do according to thy choice." Thus did the Folk portray in Mythos to itself its *God*; thus its *Hero*; and thus, at last, its *Man*.—

Greek Tragedy is the artistic embodiment of the spirit and contents of Greek Mythos. As in this Mythos the widest-ranging phenomena were compressed into closer and ever closer shape, so the Drama took this shape and re-presented it in the closest, most compressed of forms. The view-in-common of the essence of things, which in Mythos had condensed itself from a view of Nature to a view of Men and morals, here appeals in its distinctest, most pregnant form to the most universal receptive-force of man ; and thus steps, as Art-work, from Phantasy into reality. As in Drama the shapes that had been in Mythos merely shapes of

Thought, were now presented in actual bodily portrayal by living men : so the actually represented Action now compressed itself, in thorough keeping with the mythic essence, into a compact, plastic whole. If a [156] man's idea (*Gesinnung*) is only bared to us convincingly by his action, and if a man's character consists in the complete harmony between his idea and his action: then this action, and therefore also its underlying idea—entirely in the sense of the Mythos—gains significance, and correspondence with a wide-reaching Content, by its manifesting itself in utmost concentration. An action which consists of many parts, is either over-weighted, redundant, and unintelligible—when all these parts are of equally suggestive, decisive importance ; or it is petty, arbitrary and meaningless—when these parts are nothing but odds and ends of actions. The Content of an action is the idea that lies at the bottom of it : if this idea is a great one, wide of reach, and drawing upon man's whole nature in any one particular line, then it also ordains an action which shall be decisive, one and indivisible ; for only in such an action does a great idea reveal itself to us.

Now, by its nature, the Content of Greek Mythos was of this wide-reaching but compact quality; and in their Tragedy it likewise uttered itself, with fullest definition, as this one, necessary, and decisive Action. To allow this Action, in its weightiest significance, to proceed in a manner fully vindicated by the idea of its transactors—*this* was the task of the Tragic-poet ; to bring to understanding the Necessity of the action, by and in the demonstrated truth of the idea,—in this consisted the solution of that task. The unitarian Form of his artwork, however, lay already mapped out for him in the contours of the Mythos; which he had only to work up into a living edifice, but in no wise to break to pieces and newly fit together in favour of an arbitrarily-conceived artistic building. The Tragic-poet merely imparted the content and essence of the myth in the most conclusive and in telligible manner ; his Tragedy is nothing other than the artistic completion of the Myth itself; while the Myth is the poem of a life-view in common.



[157]

Let us now try to make plain to ourselves, what is the life-view of the modern world which has found its artistic expression in *the Romance*.—

So soon as the reflective Understanding looked aside from the image, to inquire into the actuality of the things summed-up in it, the first thing it saw was an ever waxing multitude of units, where the poetic view had seen a whole. Anatomical Science began her work, and followed a diametrically opposite path to that of the Folk's-poem. Where the latter instinctively united, she separated purposely where it fain would represent the grouping, she made for an exactest knowledge of the parts: and thus must every intuition of the Folk be exterminated step by step, be overcome as heresy, be laughed away as childish. The nature-view of the Folk has dissolved into physics and chemistry, its religion into theology and philosophy, its commonwealth into politics and diplomacy, its art into science and aesthetics,—and its Myth into the historic Chronicle.—

Even the new world won from the Myth its fashioning force. From the meeting and mingling of two chief mythic rounds, which could never entirely permeate each other, never lift themselves into a plastic unity, there issued the medieval Romance.

In the *Christian Mythos* we find that That to which the Greek referred all outer things, what he had therefore made the sure-shaped meeting-place of all his views Nature and the World,—the *Human* being,—had become the *à priori* Incomprehensible, become a stranger to itself. The Greek, by a comparison of outward things with Man, had reached the human being from without: returning from his roving through the breadth of Nature, he found in Man's stature, in his instinctive ethical notions, both quieting and measure. But this measure was a

fancied one, and realised in Art alone. With his attempt to deliberately realise it in the State, the contradiction between that fancy standard, and the reality of actual [158] human self-will, (068) revealed itself: insofar as State and Individual could only seek to uphold themselves by the openest overstepping of that fancy standard. When the natural custom had become an arbitrarily enacted Law, the racial commonweal an arbitrarily constructed political State, then the instinctive life-bent of the human being in turn resisted law and state with all the appearance of egoistic caprice. In the strife between that which man had recognised as good and right, such as Law and State, and that toward which his bent-to-happiness was thrusting him—the freedom of the Individual,—the human being must at last become incomprehensible to himself; and this confusion as to himself, was the starting-point of the Christian mythos. In this latter the *individual* man, athirst for reconciliation with himself, strode on towards a longed-for, but yet a Faith-vouchsafed redemption into an extra-mundane Being, in whom both Law and State were so far done away with, as they were conceived included in his unfathomable will. Nature, from whom the Greek had reached a plain conception of the Human being, the Christian had to altogether overlook: as he took for her highest pinnacle redemption-needing Man, at discord with himself, she could but seem to him the more discordant and accurst. Science, which dissected Nature into fragments, without ever finding the real bond between those fragments, could only fortify the Christian view of Nature.

The Christian myth, however, won bodily shape in the person of a man who suffered martyr's-death for the withstanding of Law and State; who, in his submission to judgment, vindicated Law and State as outward necessities; but through his voluntary death, withal, annulled [159] them both in favour of an inner Necessity, the liberation of the Individual through redemption into God. The enthralling power of the Christian myth consists in its portrayal of a *transfiguration through Death*. The broken, death-rapt look of an expiring dear one, who, already past all consciousness, for the last time sends to us the lightning of his glance, exerts on us an impression of the most poignant grief. But this glance is followed with a smile on the wan cheeks and blanching lips; a smile which, sprung in itself from the joyful feeling of triumph over Death's last agony, at onset of the final dissolution, yet makes on us the impression of a forebodal of over-earthly bliss, such as could only be won by extinction of the bodily man. And just as we have seen him in his passing, so does the departed one stay pictured in our memory: it removes from his image all sense of wilfulness or uncertainty in his physical life-utterance; our spiritual eye, the gaze of loving recollection, sees the henceforth but remembered one in the soft glamour of unsuffering, reposeful bliss. Thus the moment of death appears to us as the moment of actual redemption into God; for, through his dying, we think alone of the beloved as parted from all feeling of a Life whose joys we soon forget amid the yearning for imagined greater joys, but whose griefs, above all in our longing after the transfigured one, our minds hold fast as the essence of the sensation of Life itself.

This *dying*, with the yearning after it, is the sole true content of the Art which issued from the Christian myth; it utters itself as dread and loathing of actual life, as flight before it,—as longing for death. For the Greek, Death counted not merely as a natural, but also as an ethical necessity; yet *only as the counterpart of Life*, which *in itself* was the real object of all his viewings, including those of Art. The very actuality (069) and instinctive necessity of Life, determined of themselves the tragic death; which [160] in itself was nothing else but the rounding of a life fulfilled by evolution of the fullest individuality, of a life expended on making tell this individuality. To the Christian, however, Death was *in itself* the object. For him, Life had its only sacredness and warranty as the preparation for Death, in the longing for its laying down. The conscious stripping-off the physical body, achieved with the whole force of Will, the purposed demolition of actual being, was the object of all Christian art; which therefore could only be limned, described, but never *represented*, and least of all in Drama. (070) The distinctive element of Drama is its artistic realising of the Movement of a sharply



outlined content A movement, however, can chain our interest only when it *increases*; a diminishing movement weakens and dissipates our interest,—excepting where a necessary lull is given expression to in passing. In a Greek drama the movement waxes from the beginning, with constantly accelerated speed, to the mighty storm of the catastrophe; whereas the genuine, unmixed Christian drama must perforce begin with the storm of life, to weaken down its movement to the final swoon of dying-out The Passion-plays of the Middle Ages represented the sufferings of Jesus in the form of a series of living pictures: the chief and most affecting of these pictures shewed Jesus hanging on the cross: hymns and psalms were sung during the performance.—*The Legend*, that Christian form of the Romance, could alone give charm to a portrayal of the Christian Stuff, because it appealed only to the Phantasy,—as alone was possible with this Stuff,—and not to physical vision. To Music alone, was it reserved to represent this Stuff to the senses also, namely by an outwardly perceptible motion; albeit merely in this wise, that she resolved it altogether into moments of Feeling, into blends of colour without drawing, expiring [161] in the tinted waves of Harmony in like fashion as the dying one dissolves from out the actuality of Life. (071)



Of the myths which have worked decisively upon the life-views and art-fashionings of the modern era we now come to the other circle, and that opposed to the Christian myths. It is the native Saga of the newer European, but above all the *German* peoples.

Like that of the Hellenes, the Mythos of these peoples waxed from beholdings of Nature into picturings of Gods and Heroes. In the case of one of these sagas—that of Siegfried—we now may look with tolerable clearness into its primordial germ, which teaches us no little about the essence of myths in general. We here see natural phenomena, such as those of day and night, the rising and the setting sun, condensed by human Phantasy into personal agents revered or feared in virtue of their deeds; at last, from man-created Gods we see them transformed into actual human Heroes, supposed to have one-time really lived, and from whose loins existing stems and races have boasted themselves as sprung. The Mythos so reached into the heart of actual Life, giving shape and measure, revindicating claims and kindling men to deeds, where it not only was nurtured as a religious Faith but proclaimed itself as energised Religion. A boundless wealth of cherished haps and actions filled out the breadth of this religious Mythos, when fashioned into the Hero-saga: yet how manifold soever these sung and fabled actions might give themselves to be, they all arose as variations of one very definite type of events, which, on closer examination, we may trace back to one simple religious notion. In this [162] religious notion, taken from the beholding of Nature, the most varied utterances of the endless-branching Sagas—amid the undisturbed development of a specific Mythos—had each their ever-fruitful source. Let the shapings of the Saga enrich themselves as they might with fresh stores of actual events, among the countless stems and races: yet the poetic shaping of the new material was instinctively brought about in the one and only way that belonged to the poetic intuition for good and all, and this was rooted deeply in the same religious beholding of Nature which once had given birth to the primordial Mythos.

Thus these peoples' poetic shaping-force was a religious one withal, unconsciously common to them and rooted in their oldest intuition of the essence of things. On *this root*, however, Christianity now laid its hands. The enormous wealth of leaves and branches of the Germanic Folk-tree the Christians' pious passion for conversion could not come at; (072) but it tried to drag up the root wherewith that tree had anchored in the soil of being. Christianity upheaved the religious faith, the ground-view of Nature's essence, and supplanted it by a new belief, a new way of beholding, diametrically opposed to the older. Though it could not completely root out the old belief, at least it robbed it of its virile wealth of artist-force: and

that which hitherto had sprung from out this force, the teeming amplitude of Saga, stayed now a bough cut off from stem and stringers, un-nourished by its vital sap and offering but a sorry sustenance to the Folk itself. Whereas the religious intuitions of the Folk had earlier formed a girth which bound into one whole each never so varied shaping of the Saga: since the rending of this girdle there now was nothing left beyond a loose entanglement of motley shapes, flitting holdless and disbanded to and fro, in a fancy henceforth merely bent on recreation but no more in itself creative. [163] The Mythos, grown incapable of procreation, dispersed itself into its individual hedged-off fractions; its unity into a thousandfold plurality; the kernel of its Action into a mass of many actions. These actions, in themselves but the individualisations of a great root-action—as it were the personal variations of the same *one action* that had been the necessary utterance of the spirit of the Folk—became splintered and disfigured to such a degree, that their separate parts could be pieced together again by arbitrary whim; and this to feed the restless impulse of a Phantasy which, maimed within and reft of power to shape without, could now devour alone the outer matter, but no longer give the inner from itself. The splintering and extinction of the German Epos, as evinced to us by the whirring figures of the "Heldenbuch," shews itself in a monstrous mass of actions, swelling all the larger the more has every genuine Content vanished from them.—

Through the adoption of Christianity the Folk had lost all true understanding of the original, vital relations of this Mythos, and when the life of its single body had been resolved by death into the myriad lives of a swarm of fables, the *Christian religious-view* was fitted under it, as though for its fresh quickening. By its intrinsic property, this view could do absolutely nothing more, than light up *that corpse* of Mythos and deck it with a mystic apotheosis. In a sense it justified the death of Myth, inasmuch as it set before itself those clumsy actions, that tangle of cross-purposes—in themselves no longer explicable or vindicable by any intelligible idea still proper to the Folk—in all their whimsical caprice, and, finding it impossible to assign an adequate motive to them, conveyed them to the Christian Death as their redeeming issue. (073) The Christian [164] *Ritter-Romance* (074) gives a faithful expression to the life of the Middle Ages, by beginning with the myriad leavings of the corpse of the ancient Hero-Mythos, with a swarm of actions whose true idea appears to us unfathomable and capricious, because their motives, resting on a view of life quite alien to the Christian's, had been lost to the poet: to expose the utter lack of rhyme or reason in these actions, and out of their own mouths to vindicate to the instinctive Feeling the necessity of their transactors' downfall,—be it by a sincere adoption of the Christian rules, which inculcated a life of contemplation and inaction, or be it by the uttermost effectuation of the Christian view, the martyr's-death itself,—this was the natural bent and purpose of the spiritual-poem of Chivalry.

The original Stuff of the pagan Mythos, however, had already swelled into the most extravagant complexity of 'actions,' by admixture of the Sagas of every nation—of Sagas cut adrift, like the Germanic, from their vital root. By Christianity every Folk, which adopted that confession, was torn from the soil of its natural mode of viewing, and the poems that had sprung therefrom were turned into playthings for the unchained Phantasy. In the multifarious intercourse of the Crusades, the orient and the occident had interchanged these stuffs, and stretched their manysidedness to a monstrosity. Whereas in earlier days the Folk included nothing but the *homelike* in its myths: now that its understanding of the homelike had been lost, it sought for recompense in a constant novelty of the *outlandish*. In its burning hunger, it gulped down everything foreign and unwonted: its voracious phantasy exhausted all the possibilities of human imagination,—to digest them into the wildest medley of adventures.

This bent at last the Christian view could no more guide, albeit itself, at bottom, had been its generator; for this bent was primarily nothing but the stress to flee from an un-understood reality, to gain contentment in a world [165] of fancy. But this fancied world, however great



the divagations of Phantasy, still must take its archetype from the actual world and nothing else: the imagination finally could only do over again what it had done in Mythos; it pressed together all the realities of the actual world—all that it could comprehend—into close-packed images, in which it individualised the essence of totalities and thus furbished them into marvels of monstrosity. In truth this newer thrust of Phantasy, just as with the Mythos, made again toward finding the reality; and that, the reality of a vastly extended outer world. Its effectuation, in this sense, did not go long a-begging. The passion for adventures, in which men yearned to realise the pictures of their fancy, condensed itself at last to a passion for undertakings whose goal—after the thousand-times proved fruitlessness of mere adventures—should be the knowledge of the outer world, a tasting of the fruit of actual experiences reaped on a definite path of earnest, keen endeavour. Daring voyages of discovery undertaken with a conscious aim, and profound scientific researches grounded on their results, at last uncloaked to us the world as it really is.—By this knowledge was the Romance of the Middle Ages destroyed, and the delineation of *fancied* shows was followed by the delineation of their reality.

This reality, however, had stayed untroubled, undisfigured by our errors, in the phenomena of *Nature alone*, unreachable by our activity. On the reality of *Human Life* our errors had lain the most distorting hand of violence. To vanquish these as well, to know the life of Man in the Necessity of its individual and social nature; and finally, since that stands within our might, *to shape it*—this is the trend of humankind since ever it wrested to itself the outward faculty of knowing the phenomena of Nature in their genuine essence; for from this knowledge have we won the measure for the knowledge, also, of the essence of Mankind.



[166]

The Christian life-view—which had unwittingly engendered this outward thrust of man, but of itself could neither feed nor guide it—had withdrawn into itself before this vision, had shrunk into a stolid Dogma, as though for sanctuary against a thing it could not comprehend. It is here that the intrinsic weakness and contradictoriness of this view bewrayed itself. Actual Life, and the ground of its phenomena, to it had ever been a thing incomprehensible. The strife between the law-made State and the selfwill (075) of the Individual it had been the less able to overcome, as the roots of its own origin and essence lay in that strife alone: were the individual man completely reconciled with the commonwealth—nay, should he find therein the fullest satisfaction of his bent toward happiness, then would all necessity of the Christian view be done away with, and Christianity itself be practically annulled. But as this view had originally sprung from that discord in the human mind, so Christianity, in its bearings toward the world, fed itself on the continuance of that discord, nothing else; and its *purposed maintenance* must therefore become the life-task of the Church, so soon as ever she grew fully conscious of her life spring.—

The *Christian Church* had also striven for unity: every vital manifestment was to converge in her, as the centre of all life. She was not, however, life's central, but its terminal point; for the secret of the truest Christian essence was Death. At the other terminus there stood the natural fount of Life itself, of which Death can only become master through its annihilation: but the power which ever led this life towards the Christian-death, was none other than *the State* itself. The State was the veritable lifespring of the Christian Church; this latter warred against herself, when she strove against the State. What the Church of the Middle Ages disputed, in her despotic *but honest* zeal for the Faith, was the remnant of old pagan ideas which expressed itself in the individual self-sanction of the worldly rulers. By imposing on these rulers the duty of seeking [167] their authority from divine sanction, through the Church

as intermediary, she drove them to consolidate the absolute, four-square State, (076) as though she had felt that such a State was needful to her own existence. Thus the Church was obliged at last to help fortify her own antithesis, the State, so as to render possible her own existence by making it a dualistic one; she became herself a political might, because she felt that she could exist in none but a political world. The Christian life-view,—whose inner consciousness, rightly speaking, did away with the State,—now that it had condensed into a Church, not only became the vindicatrix of the State, but she brought its standing menace to the freedom of the Individual to such a pitch that henceforth man's outward-thrust turned towards his liberation from Church and State alike, as though to find in human life itself a final realising of the nature of things, which he had now beheld in their true essence.

But first the actuality (*Wirklichkeit*) of Life and its shows themselves, was to be explored in like fashion as the actuality of natural phenomena had been explored by voyages of discovery and scientific research. Men's thrust, directed heretofore to outward things, now turned back to the actuality of Social Life; and that with all the greater zeal as, after flight to the uttermost ends of the earth, they had never been able to rid themselves of these social conditions, but everywhere had stayed subjected to them. What man instinctively had fled from, and yet in truth could never flee away from, must at last be recognised as rooted so deeply in our own heart and our involuntary view of the essence of things human, that a flight from *it* to outer realms was clean impossible. Returning from the endless breadths of Nature, where we had found the imaginings of our Phantasy refuted by the essence of things, we [168] were necessarily driven to seek in a plain and lucid contemplation of human affairs the selfsame refutation for a visionary, a false opinion thereof; for we felt that we must have fed and formed those affairs themselves in the same way as we had earlier formed our erroneous opinions of the phenomena of Nature. The first and weightiest step toward knowledge consisted, therefore, in grasping the phenomena of Life according to their actuality: and that, at first, without passing any judgment on them, but with the single aim to bring before ourselves their actual facts and grouping as perspicuously and truthfully as possible. As long as seafarers had set before themselves the object of discovery according to preconceived opinions, so long did they always find themselves disillusioned by the reality at last perceived; wherefore the explorer of our life-affairs held himself freer and freer from prejudgment, the surer to reach the bottom of their actual essence. The most unruffled mode of looking at the naked, undisfigured truth henceforth becomes the Poet's plumb-line: to seize and exhibit human beings and their affairs as they *are*, and not as one had earlier imagined them, is from now the task alike of the Historian and of the Artist who fain would set before himself in miniature the actuality of Life,—and *Shakespeare* was the unmatched master in this art, which let him find the shape for his Drama.

Yet not in the actual Drama, as we have seen, was this actuality of Life to be portrayed artistically, but only in the describing, delineating Romance; and that for reasons which this Actuality itself alone can teach us.



Man (077) can only be comprehended in conjunction with [169] men in general, with his Surrounding: man divorced from this, above all *the modern man*, must appear of *all things the most incomprehensible*. The restless inner discord of this Man, who between 'will' and 'can' had created for himself a chaos of tormenting notions, driving him to war against himself, to self-laceration and bodiless abandonment to the Christian death,—this discord was not so much to be explained, as Christianity had sought to do, from the nature of the Individual-man himself, as from the confusion wrought on this nature by an unintelligent view of the essence of Society. Those torturing notions, which disturbed this view, must needs be referred back to the reality that lay at bottom of them; and, as this reality, the investigator had to recognise the

true condition of Human Society. Yet neither could this condition, in which a thousandfold authority was fed upon a millionfold (078) injustice and man was hedged from man by infranchisable barriers, first imagined and then realised,—neither could *this* be comprehended out of its mere self; out of historical traditions converted into rights, out of the heart of facts and finally of the spirit of historical events, out of the ideas which had called them forth, must it be unriddled.

Before the gaze of the Investigator, in his search for the human being, these historic facts upheaped themselves to so huge a mass of recorded incidents and actions, that the medieval Romance's plethora-of-Stuff seemed naked penury compared therewith. And yet this mass, whose closer regardal shewed it stretching into ever more intricate ramifyings, was to be pierced to its core by the searcher after the reality of man's affairs, in order to unearth from amidst its crushing waste the one thing that might reward such toil, the genuine undisfigured Man in all his nature's verity. Faced with an expanse of matters-of-fact beyond what his two eyes could grasp, the historical investigator must perforce set bounds to his avidity of research. From a broader conjunction, which he could only have suggested, [170] he must tear off fragments: by them to shew with greater exactitude a closer coherence, without which no historical representment can ever be intelligible. But even within the narrowest bounds, this coherence, through which alone an historic action is understandable, is only to be made possible by the most circumstantial setting forth of a Surrounding; in which, again, we can never take any sort of interest, until it is brought to view by the liveliest description. Through the felt necessity of such description, the Investigator must needs become a Poet again: but his method could only be one opposed outright to that of the dramatic-poet. The dramatic-poet compresses the Surrounding of his personages into proportions easy to take in, in order to allow their Action—which again he compresses, both in utterance and content, into a comprehensive main-action—to issue from the essential 'idea' of the Individual, to allow this individuality to come to a head therein, and by it to display Man's common essence along one of its definite lines.

The Romance-writer (*Romandichter*), on the other hand, has to explain the action of an historic chief-personage by the outer necessity of the Surrounding: in order to give us the impression of historic truth, he has above all to bring to our understanding the character of this Surrounding, since therein lie grounded all the calls which determine the individual to act *thus* and not otherwise. In the Historical Romance we try to make comprehensible to ourselves the man whom we positively cannot understand from a purely human standpoint. If we attempt to image to ourselves the action of an historic man as downright and purely human, it cannot but appear to us highly capricious, without rhyme or reason, and in any case unnatural, just because we are unable to vindicate the 'idea' of that action on grounds of purely-human nature. The idea of an historic personage is the idea of an Individual only in so far as he acquires it from a generally-accepted view of the essence of things; this generally-accepted view, however,—*not* being a purely-human one, nor therefore [171] valid for every place and time,—finds its only explanation in a purely Historic relation, which changes with the lapse of time and is never the same at two epochs. This relation, again, and its mutation we can only clear up to ourselves by following the whole chain of historic events, whose many-membered series has so worked upon a simpler historic-relation that it has taken *this* particular shape, and that precisely *this* idea has enounced itself therein as a commonly current view. Wherefore the Individual, in whose action this idea is to express itself, must be degraded to an infinitesimal measure of individual freedom, to make his action and idea at all comprehensible to us :—his idea, to be in any way cleared up, is only to be vindicated through the idea of his Surrounding; while this latter, again, can only make itself plain in a number of actions, which have to encroach the more upon the space of the artistic portrait, as only in its most intricate branching and extension can the Surrounding, also, become

understood of us.

Thus the Romance-writer has to occupy himself almost solely with a description of the Surrounding, and to become understandable he must be circumstantial. On what the dramatist *presupposes*, for an understanding of the Surrounding, the romance-writer has to employ his whole powers of portrayal; the current view, on which the dramatist takes his footing from the first, the romance-writer has to cunningly develop and fix in the course of his portrayal. The Drama, therefore, goes from within outwards, (079) the Romance from without inwards. From a simple, universally intelligible Surrounding, the dramatist rises to an ever richer development of the Individuality; from a complex, toilsomely explained Surrounding, the romance-writer sinks exhausted to a delineation of the [172] Individual, which, poverty-stricken in itself, could be tricked-out with individuality by that Surrounding alone. In the Drama, a sinewy and fully self-developed individuality enriches its surrounding; in the Romance, the surrounding feeds the ravings of an empty individuality. Thus the Drama lays bare to us the Organism of mankind, inasmuch as it shews the Individuality as the essence of the Species; whereas the Romance shews us the Mechanism of history, according to which the Species becomes the essence of the Individuality. (080) And thus also, the art-procedure in Drama is an *organic* one, in Romance a *mechanical*: for the Drama gives us the *man*, the Romance explains to us the *citizen*; the one shews us the fulness of Human nature, the other apologises for its penury on plea of the State. The Drama, then, shapes from innermost necessity, the Romance from outermost constraint

Yet the Romance was no arbitrary, but a necessary product of our modern march of evolution: it gave honest artistic expression to life-affairs which were only to be portrayed by it, and not by Drama. The Romance made for representing Actuality (*Wirklichkeit*); and its endeavour was so sincere, that at last it demolished itself, as art-work, in favour of this Actuality.

Its highest pitch, as an art-form, was reached by the Romance when, from the standpoint of purely artistic necessity, it made its own the Mythos' plan of moulding [173] types. Just as the medieval romance had welded into wondrous shapes the motley shows of foreign peoples, lands and climates: so the newer Historical-romance sought to display the motleyest utterances of the spirit of whole historic periods as issuing from the essence of one particular historic individual. In this procedure, the customary method of looking at history could but countenance the Romance-writer. In order to arrange the excess of historical facts for easy survey by our eye, we are accustomed to regard the -most prominent personalities alone, and in them to consider as embodied the spirit of a period. As such personalities, the wisdom of the chronicler has mostly bequeathed us the Rulers; those, from whose will and ordering the historic undertakings and State-economy were supposed to have issued. The unclear 'idea' and contradictory manner of action of these chiefs, but above all the circumstance that they never really reached their aimed-for goal, allowed us in the first place so far to misunderstand the spirit of history, that we deemed it necessary to explain the caprice (*Willkür*) in these rulers' actions by higher, inscrutable influences, guiding and foreordering the course and scope of history. Those factors (*Faktoren*) of history seemed to us will-less tools—or if wilful, yet self-contradictory—in the hands of an extrahuman, heavenly power. The end-results of history we posited as the cause of its movement, or as the goal toward which a higher, conscious spirit had therein striven from the beginning. Led by this view, the expounders or setters-forth of History believed themselves justified in deriving the seemingly arbitrary actions of its ruling personages from 'ideas' in which was mirrored back the imputed consciousness of a governing World-spirit: wherefore they destroyed the unconscious Necessity of these rulers' motives of action, and, so soon as they deemed they had sufficiently



accounted for those actions, they displayed them as arbitrary out-and-out.—

Through this procedure alone, whereby historic actions could be disfigured and combined at will, did the Romance [174] succeed in inventing types, and in lifting itself to a certain height of art-work, whereon it might seem qualified anew for dramatisation. Our latter days have presented us with many such an Historical-drama, and the zest of making history in behoof of the dramatic form is nowadays so great, that our skilled historical stage-conjurors fancy the secret of history itself has been revealed for the sole benefit of the play-maker. They believe themselves all the more justified in their procedure, as they have even made it possible to invest History's dramatic installation (081) with the completest Unity of place and time: they have thrust into the inmost recesses of the whole historic mechanism, and have discovered its heart to be the antechamber of the Prince, where Man and the State make their mutual arrangements between breakfast and supper. That this artistic Unity and this History, however, are equal forgeries, and that a falsehood can only have a forged effect,—*this* has established itself plainly enough in the course of our present-day Historic Drama. But, that true history itself is no stuff for Drama,—this we now know also; since this Historical Drama has made it clear to us, that even the Romance could only reach its appointed height, as art-form, by sinning against the truth of history.

From this height the Romance stepped down again, in order, while giving up its aimed-for purity (082) as art-work, to engage in truthful portraiture of historic life.

The seeming Caprice in the actions of historical chief-personages could only be explained, to the honour of mankind, through discovering the soil from which those actions sprang of instinct and necessity. As one had earlier thought it incumbent to place this Necessity *above*, soaring over the historic personages and using them as tools of its transcendent wisdom; and as one at last had grown convinced of both the artistic and the scientific barrenness of this view: so thinkers and poets now sought for this [175] explanatory Necessity *below*, among the foundations of all history. The soil of history is *man's social nature*: from the individual's need to unite himself with the essence of his species, in order in Society (*Gesellschaft*) to bring his faculties into highest play, arises the whole movement of history. The historic phenomena are the outward manifestations of an inner movement, whose core is the Social Nature of man. But the prime motor of this nature is the *Individual*, who only in the satisfaction of his instinctive longing for Love (*Liebesverlangen*) can appease his bent-to-happiness. Now, to argue from this nature's manifestations to its core,—from the dead body of the completed Fact to go back upon the inner life of man's social bent, from which that fact had issued as a ready, ripe, and dying fruit,—in *this* was evinced the evolutionary march of modern times.

What the Thinker grasps by its essence, the Poet seeks to shew in its phenomena: the phenomena of human society, which *he*, too, had recognised as the soil of history, the Poet strove to set before him in a conjunction through which he might be able to explain them. As the most seizable conjunction of social phenomena he took the wonted surroundings of Burgher-life, in order by their description to explain to himself the man who, remote from any participation in the outward facts of history, yet seemed to him to condition them. However, this *Burgher society*, as I have before expressed myself, (083) was nothing but a precipitate from that history which weighed upon it from above,—at least in its outward form. Without a doubt, since the consolidation of the modern State, the world's new life-stir begins to centre in the burgher class: the living energy of *historic* phenomena weakens down in direct ratio as the burgher class endeavours to bring its claims to tell upon the State. But precisely through its inner lack of interest in the events of history, through its dull, indifferent looking-on, it bares to us the burden wherewith they weigh it down, and under which it [176] shrugs its shoulders in resigned ill-will. Our Burgher society is in so far no living organism, as its shaping is effected from Above, by the reaction of historic agencies. The physiognomy of Burgher

society is the flattened, disfigured physiognomy of history, with all its expression washed out: what the latter expresses through living motion in the breath of Time, the former gives us in the dull expanse of Space. But this physiognomy is the mask of Burgher-society, under which it still hides from the human-seeking eye the Man himself: the artistic delineators of this society could only describe the features of that mask, not those of the veritable human being; the more faithful was their description, the more must the artwork lose in living force of expression.

If, then, this mask was lifted, to peer beneath it into the unvarnished features of human society, it was inevitable that *a chaos of unloveliness and formlessness* should be the first to greet the eye. Only in the garment of History had the human being—bred by this history, and by it crippled and degraded from his true sound nature,—preserved an aspect at all tolerable to the artist. This garment once removed, we were horrified to see nothing but a shrivelled, loathly shape, which bore no trace of resemblance to the true man, such as *our thoughts* had pictured in the fulness of his natural essence; no trace beyond the sad and suffering glance of the stricken unto death,—that glance whence Christianity had derived the transports of its inspiration (*seine schwärmerische Begeisterung*). The yearner for Art turned away from this sight: like Schiller, to dream him dreams of beauty in the realm of Thought; or like Goethe, to shroud the shape itself in a cloak of artistic beauty,—so well as it could be got to hang thereon. His romance of "Wilhelm Meister" was such a cloak, wherewith Goethe tried to make bearable to himself the sight of the reality: it answered to the naked reality of Modern Man for just so far as he was conceived and exhibited as struggling for an artistically beautiful Form.

Up to then the human shape had been veiled, no less for [177] the eye of the historical student than for that of the artist, in the costume of History or the uniform of the State: this costume left free play to fancy, this form (084) to disputations. Poet and Thinker had before them a vast assortment of discretionary shapes, among which they might choose at their artistic pleasure or arbitrary assumption a garment for the human being, whom they still conceived alone in that which was wrapped about him from without. Even Philosophy had allowed this garment to lead her astray, in respect of man's true nature; while the writer of Historical romances was—in a certain sense—a mere costume-drawer. With the baring of the actual shape of modern society, the Romance now took a more practical stand: the poet (085) could no longer extemporise artistic fancies, now that he had the naked truth unveiled before him, the actuality that filled the looker-on with horror, pity, and indignation. His business was only (*Er brauchte nur*) to display this actuality, without allowing himself to belie it,—he needed only to feel pity, and at once his passion became a vital force. He still could poetise (*dichten*), when he was bent alone on portraying the fearful immorality of our society: but the deep gloom, into which his own portrayings cast him, drove away all pleasure of poetic contemplation, in which he now could less and less delude himself; it drove him out into the actuality itself, there to strive for human society's now recognised real Need. On its path to practical reality the Romance-poem, too, stripped-off yet more and more its artistic garment: its possible Unity, as art-form, must part itself—to operate through the intelligence—into the practical plurality of everyday occurrences. An artistic bond was no longer possible, where everything was struggling to dissolve, where the strenuous bond of the Historic State was to be torn asunder. The Romance-poem turned to [178] *Journalism*; its content flew asunder, into *political articles*; its art became the *rhetoric of the Tribune*, the breath of its discourse a *summons to the people*.



Thus the Poet's art has turned to *politics*: no one now can poetise, without politising. Yet the politician will never become a poet, precisely until he ceases to be a politician: but in a

purely political world (086) to be *not* a politician, is as good as to say one does not exist at all; whosoever at this instant steals away from politics (*wer sich jetzt noch unter der Politik hinwegstiehlt*), he only belies his own being. The Poet cannot come to light again, until we have no more Politics.

Politics, however, are the secret of our history, and of the state of things therefrom arising. *Napoleon* put this clearly. He told Goethe that: the rôle of *Fate* in the ancient world is filled, since the empire of the Romans, by *Politics*. Let us lay to heart this saying of him who smarted in St Helena! In it is briefly summed the whole truth of what we have to comprehend before we can come to an understanding, also, about the Content and the Form of Drama.

[179]

### III.

THE Greek *Fate* is the *inner Nature-necessity*, from which the Greek—*because he did not understand it* (087)—sought refuge in the arbitrary political State. *Our Fate* is the arbitrary political State, which to us shews itself *as an outer necessity* for the maintenance of Society; and from which we seek refuge in the Nature-necessity, because we have learnt to understand the latter, and have recognised it as the conditionment of our being and all its shapings.

The Nature-necessity utters itself the strongest and the most invincibly in the physical life-bent (*Lebenstrieb*) of the *Individual*,—less understandably, however, and more open to arbitrary interpretations, in the *ethical views of society* by which the instinctive impulse of the State-included Individual is finally influenced or judged. The life-bent of the Individual utters itself forever *newly* and *directly*, but the essence of Society is *use and wont* and its 'view' a *mediated* one. Wherefore the 'view' of Society, so long as it does not fully comprehend the essence of the Individual and its own genesis therefrom, is a hindering and a shackling one; and it becomes ever more tyrannical, in exact degree as the quickening and innovating essence of the Individual brings its instinctive thrust to battle against habit. Recognising this thrust as a disturbance, from the standpoint of his ethical Wont, the Greek misinterpreted it in this wise: that he traced it to a conjuncture in which the individual agent was conceived as possessed by an influence robbing him of his freedom of action, of that freedom in which he would have done the ethically (*sittlich*) wonted thing. Since the Individual, through his deed committed against ethical Wont, had ruined himself in the eyes of [180] Society (*vor der Gesellschaft*); but yet, with [later] conscience of his deed, in so far re-entered the pale of Society as he condemned himself by its own conscience (*aus ihrem Bewusstsein selbst*): so the act of unconscious sinning appeared explicable through nothing but a curse which rested on him without his personal guiltiness. This curse—represented in the Mythos as the divine chastisement for a primordial crime, and as cleaving to one special stock until its downfall—is in truth nothing other than an embodiment of the might of Instinct (*Unwillkür*) working in the unconscious, Nature-bidden actions of the Individual; whereas Society appears as the conscious, the capricious (*Willkürliche*), the true thing to be explained and exculpated. Explained and exculpated will it only be, however, when *its* manner of viewing is likewise recognised as an instinctive one, and its conscience as grounded on an erroneous view of the essence of the Individual. (088)

Through the *Myth of Ædipus*, significant in so many other respects, let us make clear to ourselves this relation.



*Ædipus* had slain a man who affronted and finally drove him into self-defence. In this, public opinion found nothing worthy of condemnation; for such-like cases were of common occurrence, and to be explained on the universally [181] intelligible principle of the necessity



of warding off an attack Still less did Œdipus commit a crime, in that, as payment for a benefit conferred upon the land, he took its widowed Queen to wife.

But it transpired that the slaughtered man was not only the husband of this Queen, but also the father—and thus his widowed wife the mother—of Œdipus himself.

To men the reverence of children for their father, their love toward him, and love's eagerness to cherish and protect him in old age, were such instinctive feelings, and upon these feelings was so founded of itself the most essential ground-view (*Grundanschauung*) of human beings united by that very view into a Society, that a deed which wounded these feelings in their tenderest spot must perforce appear to them both incomprehensible and execrable. These feelings, moreover, were so strong and insurmountable that even the consideration, how that father had first attempted the life of his son, could not overpower them: certainly there was recognised in the death of Laius a punishment for that earlier crime of his, so that we are unmoved by his destruction; nevertheless, this circumstance was incompetent to quiet us in any way concerning the deed of *Œdipus*, from which nothing could remove the stain of parricide.

Still more violently was roused the public horror, by the circumstance that Œdipus had wedded his own mother and begotten children of her.—In the life of the Family—the most natural, albeit the most straitened basis of Society—it had been established quite of itself, that betwixt parents and children, as betwixt the children of one pair, there is developed an inclination altogether different from that which proclaims itself in the sudden, violent commotion of sexual love. In the Family the natural ties between begetter and begotten become the ties of Wont; and only from out of Wont, again, is evolved a natural inclination of brothers and sisters toward one another. But the first attraction of sexual love is brought the stripling by an unwonted object, freshly fronting him from Life itself; this attraction is so overpowering, that it draws him [182] from the wonted surroundings of the Family, in which this attraction had never presented itself, and drives him forth to journey with the un-wonted. Thus sexual love is the revolutionary, who breaks down the narrow confines of the Family, to widen it itself into the broader reach of human Society. The intuition of the essence of family-love and its distinction from the love between the sexes is therefore an instinctive one, inspired by the very nature of the thing: it rests upon Experience and Wont, and is therefore a view which takes us with all the strength of an insuperable feeling.

Œdipus, who had espoused his mother and begotten children of her, is an object that fills us with horror and loathing, because he unatonably assaults our *wonted* relations towards our mother and the views which we have based thereon.

But if these views, now thriven into ethical conceptions (*sittlichen Begriffen*), were of so great strength only because they had issued instinctively from human nature's feeling, then we ask: Did Œdipus offend against this Human Nature, when he wedded his own mother?—Most certainly not. Else would revolted Nature have proclaimed her wrath, by permitting no children to spring from this union: yet Nature, of all others, shewed herself quite willing; *Jocasta* and *Œdipus*, who had met as two unwonted objects, loved each other; and it was only at the instant when it was made known to them from without that they were mother and son, that their love was first disturbed. Œdipus and *Jocasta* *knew* not, in what social relation they stood to one another: they had acted unconsciously, according to the natural instinct of the purely human Individual; from their union had sprung an enrichment of human Society, in the persons of two lusty sons and two noble daughters, on whom henceforth, as on their parents, there weighed the irremovable curse of that Society. The hapless pair, whose Conscience (*Bewusstsein*) stood within the pale of human Society, passed judgment on themselves when they became conscious of their unconscious crime: [183] by their self-annulling, for sake of expiation, they proved the strength of the social loathing of their action,—that loathing which had been their own through Wont, *even before* the action itself; but in that they had done the

deed, despite this social conscience, they testified to the far greater, more resistless might of unconscious individual Human Nature.

How full of meaning it is, then, that precisely this Œdipus had solved the riddle of the *Sphinx*! In advance he uttered both his vindication and his own condemnal, when he called the kernel of this riddle *Man*. From the half-bestial body of the Sphinx, there fronted him at first the human Individual in its subjection to Nature: when the half brute-beast had dashed itself from its dreary mountain-stronghold into the shattering abyss below, the shrewd unriddler of its riddle turned back to the haunts of men; to let them fathom, from his own undoing, the whole, the Social Man. When he stabbed the light from eyes which had flamed wrath upon a taunting despot, had streamed with love towards a noble wife,—without power to see that the one was his father, the other his mother,—then he plunged down to the mangled carcass of the Sphinx, whose riddle he now must know was yet unsolved.—It is *we* who have to solve that riddle, to solve it by vindicating the instinct of the Individual from out Society itself; whose highest, still renewing and re-quickening wealth, that Instinct is.—

But let us next pursue the wider circuit of the Œdipus-saga, and see how *Society* (089) behaved itself, and whither its moral conscience went astray!—From the strifes of the sons of Œdipus there fell to *Creon*, brother of *Jocasta*, the rulership of Thebes. As [184] lord, he decreed that the corpse of *Polynices*, one of these two sons,—who together with *Eteocles*, the other, had fallen in mutual combat,—should be given unburied to the winds and vultures, whilst that of *Eteocles* was interred with all befitting pomp: whoever should act in contravention of the edict, should himself be buried alive. *Antigone*, the sister of both brothers,—she who had followed her blind father into banishment,—in full consciousness defied the edict, interred the corpse of her outlawed brother, and suffered the appointed punishment.—Here we see *the State*, which had imperceptibly waxed from out the Society, had fed itself on the latter's habit of view, and had so far become the attorney (*Vertreter*) of this habit that now it represented abstract Wont alone, whose core is fear and abhorrence of the thing unwonted. Armed with the power of this Wont, the State now turns upon Society itself, to crush it; inasmuch as it wards from it the natural sustenance of its being, in the holiest and most instinctive social feelings. The above-recited mythos shews us plainly how this came about, if we will only regard it a little closer.

What profit had *Creon*, from the decreeing of such a ruthless edict? And what made him deem it possible, that such an edict should *not* be abrogated by the general indignation of his people? *Eteocles* and *Polynices*, after the downfall of their father, had agreed to divide their inheritance, the rulership of Thebes, in this wise: that they should administer it by turns. *Eteocles*, who was the first to enjoy their common birthright, refused to make it over to his brother, when *Polynices* at the appointed time returned from voluntary exile to enjoy his spell of government. Thus *Eteocles* forswore his oath. Did oath-revering Society mete him punishment therefor? No: it supported him in his designs, designs which rested on a broken oath. Had men already lost all reverence for the sacredness of oaths? No, on the contrary: they cried aloud to the Gods, deploring the forswearal, for they feared [185] it would be avenged. But, despite their evil conscience, the citizens of Thebes acquiesced in the conduct of *Eteocles*, because the oath's *object*, the compact sworn between the brothers, at the moment seemed to them far more flagitious than the consequences of an act of perjury, which might haply be circumvented through gifts and sacrifices to the Gods. What pleased them not, was a change of rulers, a constant innovation, because Wont had already become their virtual lawgiver. Moreover, in this taking sides for *Eteocles* the citizens evinced their practical sense (090) of the nature of Property,—which everyone was only too glad to enjoy alone, without sharing it with another. Each citizen who recognised in Property the guarantee of wonted

quiet, was *ipso facto* an accomplice of the unbrotherly deed of Eteocles, the supreme Proprietor. The might of self-serving Wont thus lent support to Eteocles; whilst against it fought the defrauded Polynices with all the heat of Youth. In him there only dwelt the feeling of an injury meet to be avenged: he assembled a host of like-feeling hero-hearted comrades, advanced upon the citadel of broken oaths, and summoned it to drive from out its walls the birthright-robbing brother. This mode of dealing, albeit prompted by a thoroughly justifiable wrath, yet appeared to the good citizens of Thebes as but another monstrous crime; for Polynices was unconditionally a very *bad patriot*, when he besieged his father-city. The friends of Polynices had gathered from every race: a purely human interest made them favour the cause of Polynices; wherefore they represented the Purely-human, Society in its widest and most natural sense, as against a straitened, narrow-hearted, self-seeking society which was imperceptibly shrinking, under their attacks, into the ossified State.—In order to end the lengthy war, the brothers called each other forth to single combat: *both* fell upon the field.—

[186]

The crafty Creon now surveyed these incidents in their conjunction, and recognised therein the essence of Public Opinion; seeing its kernel to be nothing but Wont, Care, and dislike of Innovation. The ethical view (*sittliche Anschauung*) of the nature of Society—which had still been so strong in the great-hearted Œdipus that, from loathing at his own unconscious outrage on it, he had annulled himself—lost its power in exact degree as the Purely-human, which inspired it, came into conflict with the strongest social interest, that of absolute Wont, i.e. of joint self-seeking. Wherever this ethical conscience fell into conflict with the practice of society, it severed from the latter and established itself apart, as *Religion*; whereas practical society shaped itself into *the State. Morality* (*Sittlichkeit*), which in Society had heretofore been something warm and living, in Religion remained merely something *thought*, something wished, but no longer able to be carried out. In the State, on the contrary, folk acted according to the practical judgments of Utility; and, if the moral conscience came by an offence,—why! it was appeased by religious observances quite innocuous to the State. Herewith the great advantage was this, that one gained someone, both in Religion and State, upon whom to shift one's sins: the crimes of the State the Prince (091) must smart for, but the Gods had to answer for offences against religious ethics.—Eteocles was the practical scapegoat of the new-made State: the consequences of his oath-break, the accommodating Gods had had to bring home to him; but the stability of the State—so they hoped, at least, though alas it did not so turn out!—the valiant [187] citizens of Thebes were to enjoy all to themselves. Whoever felt inclined to offer himself anew as such a scapegoat, was therefore to them most welcome: and that was the crafty Creon, who well knew how to make his own arrangements with the Gods; but not the over-heated Polynices, who for the simple breaking of an oath, forsooth, had knocked so rudely at the good city's gates.

But, from the intrinsic cause of the Laiids' tragic fate, Creon further recognised how extremely indulgent the Thebans were toward actual crimes, provided only they did not disturb the peaceful burghers' Wont. The father Laius had been warned by the Pythia that a son, as yet un-born, would one day murder him. Merely to forestall any public annoyance, the honourable father gave secret orders to slay the newborn child, in some secluded spot. In this he shewed himself most considerate toward the moral sentiment of the Theban burghers, who, had the execution been carried out under their very eyes, would simply have resented the scandal and been obliged to pray an unwonted amount to their Gods, but would by no means have felt the horror needful to impel them practically to hinder the deed and punish the conscious murderer of his son; for their horror would at once have been choked down by the

consideration, that through this deed at least the public peace would be preserved, whereas it must have been disturbed by the son—who, in any case, could only turn out a ne'er-do-weel. Creon had remarked that, on discovery of the inhuman deed of Laius, that deed itself had, strictly speaking, called forth no righteous indignation; nay, that everyone would certainly have been better pleased, had the murder been really consummated, for *then* everything would have gone smoothly, and there would have been no such atrocious scandal as that which had so terribly upset the burghers for many a weary year. *Quiet and Order*, even at the cost of the most despicable outrage on human nature and the wonted morality itself,—at the cost of a conscious, deliberate murder of a child [188] by its own father, prompted by the most unfatherly self-regard,—this Quiet and Order were at any rate more worth considering than the most natural of human sentiments, which bids a father sacrifice himself to his children, not them to *him*.—What, then, had this Society become, whose natural moral-sense had been its very basis? The diametrical opposite of this its own foundation: the representative of *immorality* and *hypocrisy*. The poison which had palsied it, however, was—*use-and-wont*. The passion for use-and-wont, for unconditional quiet, betrayed it into stamping down the fount from which it might have ever kept itself in health and freshness; and this fount was the free, the self-determining Individual. Moreover, in its utmost palsy, Society has only had morality brought back to it, i.e. the truly *human* morality, by the Individual; by the Individual who, of the instinctive thrust of Nature's-necessity, has lifted up his hand against and morally annulled it. This glorious vindication of genuine Human Nature, also, is further inscribed in plainest letters on the world-historical myth we have before us.

Creon had become ruler: in him the people recognised the legitimate successor to Laius and Eteocles; and this he confirmed in the eyes of every burgher, when he doomed the corpse of unpatriotic Polynices to the terrible shame of lack of burial, and thus his soul to eternal unrest. This was an edict of the highest political wisdom: by it Creon cemented his rule, inasmuch as he vindicated Eteocles, who by his oath-break had preserved the Quiet of the burghers; and inasmuch as he thus gave plainly to be understood that he, too, was willing to maintain the State in quiet and order by taking on his shoulders the burden of every offence against true human morals. Through his edict he at like time gave the surest, strongest proof of his friendly disposition toward the State: he struck Humanity across the face, and cried—long live the State!—

In this State there was but one sorrowing heart, in [189] which the feeling of Humanity had sought a shelter:—it was the heart of a sweet maiden, from whose soul there sprang into all-puissant beauty the flower of *Love*. Antigone knew nothing of politics;—*she loved*—Did she try to play the advocate for Polynices? Sought she for special pleadings, points of circumstance or lawful right, to explain his mode of dealing, to exculpate or justify his deed?—No ;—she loved him.—Was it *because* he was her brother, that she loved him ?—Was not Eteocles her brother, too,—were not Œdipus and Jocasta her parents? After the horrors that had come to pass, could she think of her family ties without a shudder? From them, the hideously disrupted ties of nearest nature, was she to win the strength for Love ?—No, she loved Polynices because of his misfortune, and because the highest power of Love alone could free him from his curse. What, then, was this love, which was not the love of sex, not love of child to parent, not love of sister for her brother?—It was the topmost flower of all. Amid the ruins of love of sex, of parents, and of brethren,—which Society had disowned and the State annulled,—there sprang, from the ineradicable seed of all these loves, the fullest flower of *pure Human-love*.

Antigone's love was *fully conscious*. She knew, what she was doing,—but she also knew that do it she must, that she had no choice but to act according to love's Necessity; she knew,



that she had to listen to this unconscious, strenuous necessity of *self-annihilation in the cause of sympathy*; and in this consciousness of the Unconscious she was alike the perfect Human Being, the embodiment of Love in its highest full and potency.—Antigone told the godly citizens of Thebes: Ye condemned my father and my mother, because they loved unwittingly; but ye condemned not Laius, the witting murderer of his son, and ye sheltered Eteocles, his brother's foe: condemn then *me*, who deal from pure human-love alone,—so is the measure of your outrage brimmed!— —And lo!—*the love-curse of Antigone annulled the State!*—No hand was stirred to save [190] her, when she was led to death. The State-burghers wept, and prayed the Gods to take away the pain of pity for the wretched girl; they followed her with words of comfort: that so it was and so it must be; that the quiet and order of the State, alack! required Humanity to be made a victim!—But there, where all Love was born, was also born high Love's avenger. A stripling burned with sudden love towards Antigone; to his father he disclosed his plight, and begged that father's love to spare the victim: harshly was he thrust aside. Then the stripling stormed his loved one's grave, that grave which had erst received her living: he found her dead, and with his sword he pierced his loving heart. But this was the son of *Creon*, the son of the State personified: at sight of the dead body of the son who through Love perforce had cursed his father, the ruler became again a father. The sword of his son's love drove a deadly gash into his heart: wounded deep within, *the State* fell crashing to the ground, to become in death a *Human Being*.—

*O holy Antigone! on thee I cry! Let wave thy banner, that beneath it we destroy and yet redeem!*—

Wondrous! that, when the modern Romance had turned to Politics, and Politics become a bloody field of battle; when the Poet, in anxious yearning for the sight of a perfect art-form, induced a ruler to command the performance of an old Greek tragedy—this tragedy should have been none other than our "Antigone." One sought for the work in which *this art-form was shewn the purest*; and lo!—it was precisely the work whose *content was the purest essence of humanity*, the destructrix of the State!—How rejoiced were the learned old children, at this "Antigone" in the Court-theatre of Potsdam! They got strewn upon them from on high the roses which "Faust's" redeeming host of angels scatter down upon the tail-decked "devils thick and thin, with short and straight, and long and [191] crumpled horns": (092) but alas! the roses only roused in them that repulsive itching which they kindled in Mephistopheles,—not Love f—The "Eternal Womanly drew" them not "up," but the eternal old-womanly (*das ewig Weibische*) brought them wholly down!—

The incomparable thing about the Mythos is, that it is true for all time, and its content, how close soever its compression, is inexhaustible throughout the ages. The only task of the Poet, was to expound it. Even the Greek tragedian did not always stand in full unconstraint, before the myth he had to expound: the myth itself was mostly juster to the essence of the Individuality, than was the expounding poet. The tragedian had completely taken up the spirit of this Mythos into himself, however, in so far as he made the essence of the Individuality the irremovable centre of his artwork, from which the latter fed and refreshed itself on every hand. So undisfigured stood before the poet's soul this all-begetting essence-of-the-individuality, that therefrom a Sophocleian *Ajax* and *Philoctetes* could spring forth,—heroes whom no side-glance at the prudent world's opinion could lure from their nature's self-annihilating Necessity and truth, to drift into the shallow waters of Politics, on which the weather-wise *Ulysses* understood so masterly to ship him to and fro.

To-day we only need to faithfully expound the *myth of Ædipus* according to its inmost essence, and we in it win an intelligible picture of the whole history of mankind, from the beginnings of Society to the inevitable downfall of the State. The necessity of this downfall

was foreboded in the Mythos: it is the part of actual history (*der wirklichen Geschichte*) to accomplish it.

Since the establishment of the *political State*, no single [192] step has been taken in history but, let it be directed with never so deliberate aim to that State's consolidation, has led towards its downfall. The State, as *abstractum*, has been ever on the point of going under, or more correctly, it has never so much as come to actuality; merely States *in concreto* have found—in perpetual change, as constantly incipient variations of an inexecutable theme—a violent, but yet an ever interrupted and contested footing. The State, as *abstractum*, is the fixed-idea of well-meaning but mistaken thinkers,—as *concretum*, the booty for the caprice of forceful or intriguing individuals, who fill the pages of our history with the record of their deeds. With this concrete State—whose substance Louis XIV. correctly designated as *himself*—we need not further occupy ourselves; *its* kernel, also, is bared us in the Œdipus-saga: as the seed of all offences we recognise the *rulership* of Laius, since for sake of its undiminished possession he became an unnatural father. From this possession grown into an *ownership* (*Eigenthum*), which wondrously enough is looked on as the base of all good order, there issue all the crimes of myth and history.—Let us keep our eye upon the abstract State alone. The Thinkers of this State desired to plane down and equalise the imperfections of actual Society, according to a thought-out 'norm': yet that they retained these very imperfections (093) as a given thing, as the only thing to fit the "sinfulness" of human nature, and never went back to the real Man himself,—who from his at first instinctive, but at last erroneous views had called those inequalities into being, exactly as through Experience and the consequent correction of his errors he must also bring about, quite of itself, the perfect Society, i.e. one answering to the real Needs of men,—this was the grand error through which the Political State evolved itself to the unnatural height whence it fain would guide our Human Nature far below; that nature which it did [193] not understand at all, and understood the less, the more it fain would guide it.

The Political State lives solely on the *vices of society*, whose *virtues* are derived solely from the *human individuality*. Faced with the vices of society, which alone it can espy, the State cannot perceive the virtues which society acquires from that individuality. (094) In this situation it [the State] weighs on Society to such a degree, that the latter further turns its vicious side towards the Individuality, and thus must finally dry up its every source of sustenance, were the Necessity of individual instinct not stronger of nature than the arbitrary notions of the politician.—In their "Fate" the Greeks mistook the nature of the Individuality, because it disturbed Society's moral-wont: to battle against this Fate, they armed themselves with the political State. Now, *our* Fate is the political State, in which the free Individuality perceives its destroying Destiny (*Schicksal*). But the essence of the political State is *caprice*, whereas the essence of the free Individuality is *necessity*. (095) From out this Individuality, which we have recognised as in the right (*als das Berechtigte*) in its thousand-years' battle with the political State,—from this *to organise* (096) Society, is the conscious task imposed upon us for the Future. But to organise Society in this sense, means to base it on the free self-determining of the Individual, as its eternally exhaustless source. But, to bring *the unconscious part* of human nature to *consciousness* [194] *within Society*, and in this consciousness to know nothing other than *the necessity common to every member of Society*, namely of *the Individual's own free self-determining*,—this is as good as to say, *annul the State*; for through Society has the State marched on to a denial of the free self-determining of the Individual,—upon the death of *that*, has it lived.

[195]

#### IV.

FOR *Art*, with which alone our present inquiry is concerned, (097) there lies in the *annulling of the State* (*Vernichtung des Staates*) the following superlatively weighty 'moment.'

It all the more necessarily became the poet's task to display the battle in which the Individual sought to free himself from the political State or religious Dogma, as political life — remote from which the poet at last could merely lead a life of dreams—was more and more consciously filled by the changing hazards of that battle, as by its genuine Content. If we leave aside the religious State-poet, who even as artist offered up the human being with gruesome satisfaction to his idol, we then have solely before us the poet who, aching with undissembled fellow-feeling for the sufferings of the Individual, and as such an one himself, has turned to face the State, to face the world of Politics, with an exhibition of that Individual's struggle. By the nature of the thing, however, the individuality which the poet led into battle against the State was *no purely human one*, but an individuality *conditioned by the State itself*. It was of like genus with the State, included in it, and merely the opposite of that State's extremest apex.

A *conscious* individuality,—i.e. an individuality which determines us in this one particular case, to act *so* and not otherwise—we win *alone within society*, which brings us first the case in which we have to form decisions. The Individual without Society is completely unthinkable by us, *as* [196] an individuality; for first in intercourse with other individuals, is shewn the thing wherein we differ from them, wherein we are peculiar to ourselves. Now, when Society had grown into the political State, it governed (*bedang*) this Particularity of the individual by its own essence, just as much as the free Society had done: only, as a State, but far more strongly and categorically. No one can depict an individuality, without the Surrounding which conditions (*bedingt*) it as such: if this Surrounding was a natural one, giving ample breathing-space to the development of the individuality, and freely, elastically, and instinctively shaping *itself* anew by contact with that individuality,—then this Surrounding could be truly and strikingly denoted in the simplest of outlines; for only through an exhibition of the Individuality had the Surrounding, itself, to gain its characteristic idiosyncrasy. The State, however, is no such flexible, elastic Surrounding, but a stiff, dogmatic, fettering and domineering might; which lays down for the individual in advance, "So shalt thou think and deal I" The State has assumed the education of the individual's character: it takes possession of him already in the mother's womb, through foreordaining him an unequal share in the means toward social self-dependence; (098) by forcing its *morale* upon him, it takes away the instinctiveness of his viewing; and it appoints to him, as *its* own property, the standing he is to take toward his surrounding. The State-citizen has to thank the State for his individuality; but it is strictly nothing more than his predetermined standing toward the State, the standing in which his purely-human individuality is annulled for all his *dealings* and bounded, at the utmost, to the *thoughts* he may keep entirely to himself.

The dangerous corner of the human brain, into which the entire individuality had fled for refuge,—the State [197] endeavoured to sweep it out as well, by the aid of religious Dogma; but here the State was doomed to failure, since it could merely bring up hypocrites, i.e. State-burghers who deal otherwise than as they think. Yet it was *from thinking*, that there first arose the force to withstand the State. The first purely human stir of freedom manifested itself in warding off the bondage of religious dogma; and *freedom of thought* the State at last was forced to yield. How, then, does this sheer *thinking* individuality utter itself in its dealings?—So long as the State is to hand, the helpless thing will only be able to deal as a *State-burgher*, i.e. as an individuality whose way of dealing is not the counterpart of its way of thinking. The State-burgher is impotent to take a single step which is not set down for him in advance, as either a *duty* or a *crime*. The character of his duty and his crime is not one proper to his individuality; let him try as he may, to act upon his never so free thinking, yet he



cannot step outside the State—to whom even his crime belongs. Only through *death*, can he cease to be a citizen of the State; thus only where he also ceases to be a human being.

The poet, then, who had to portray the battle of the Individuality against the State, could *portray* the State alone; but the free Individuality he could merely *suggest to Thought*. The State was the actual extant thing, in all its pomp of form and colour: whereas the Individuality was but the thing imagined, shapeless, colourless, and non-extant. All the features, contours and colours, which lend the Individuality its set, its definite and knowable artistic shape, the poet had to borrow from a Society politically divided up and compressed into a State; not to take them from the rightful individuality, which gains its own drawing and colour from contact with other individualities. The Individuality, thus merely *thought-out* but not *portrayed* could therefore be exhibited to nothing but the *thought*, and not to the directly-seizing *feeling*. Our Drama has therefore been *an appeal to the Understanding*,—not to the Feeling. It thus has taken the place of the Didactic-poem, [198] which exhibits a subject from the life only as far as it suits the conscious aim, of imparting a thought to the Understanding. But, to impart a thought to the Understanding the poet has to proceed just as *circumspectly* as, on the contrary, he must go to work with the greatest *simplicity* and straightforwardness when he addresses himself to the directly receptive Feeling. The Feeling seizes nothing but the actual (*das Wirkliche*), the physically enacted, the perceivable by the senses: to *it* one can only impart the fulfilled, the rounded-off, the thing that is just wholly what it is, just what at this instant (099) it *can* be. To the Feeling the at-one-with-itself alone is understandable; whatsoever is at variance with itself, what has not reached an actual and definite manifestment, confounds the Feeling and drives it into thinking,—drives it into an act of combination which does away with it as Feeling.

In order to convince it, the poet who turns towards the Feeling must be already so at one with himself, that he can dispense with any aid from the mechanism of Logic and address himself with full consciousness to the infallible receptive powers (*Empfängniss*) of the un-conscious, purely human Feeling. With this message of his he has therefore to proceed as straightforwardly and (in view of physical perception) as unconditionally, as the Feeling is addressed by the actual phenomenon itself—such as warmth, the wind, the flower, the animal, the man. But, in order to impart the highest thing impartable, and alike the most convincingly intelligible—the purely human Individuality—the *modern* dramatic poet, as I have pointed out, has to move along a directly opposite path. From out the enormous mass of its actual surroundings—in the visible measure, form-, and colour-giving State, and in History petrified into a State—he has first with infinite toil to reconstruct this Individuality; in order at last, as we have [199] seen, to do nothing more than exhibit it to the Thought. (100) The thing that our feeling involuntarily seizes in advance, is solely the form and colour of the State. From the earliest impressions of our youth, we see Man only in the shape and character given him by the State; the individuality drilled into him by the State our involuntary feeling takes for his real essence; we cannot seize him otherwise, than by those distinctive qualities which in truth are not his very own, but merely lent him by the State. To-day the Folk cannot conceive the human being otherwise than in the uniform of his 'class,' the uniform in which, from youth up, it sees his body clad; and the "Folk's-playwright," also, can address himself understandably to the Folk only when not for a single instant does he tear it from this State-burgherly illusion—which holds its unconscious Feeling captive to such a degree, that It would be placed in the greatest bewilderment if one attempted to reconstruct before it the actual human being beneath this visible semblance. (101) Wherefore, to exhibit the purely-human [200] individuality, the modern poet has to turn, not to the *feeling*, but to the *understanding*; since even to himself it is only a thought-out thing. For this, his method of procedure must be a hugely circumstantial one: all that the modern sentiment takes as the most comprehensible, he has, so to say, to slowly and circumspectly divest of its form and

colour, *under the very eyes* of this sentiment, and, throughout this systematic stripping process, to gradually bring the Feeling round to Thinking; since, after all, the individuality he makes-for is nothing but a thing of thought. Thus the modern poet must turn aside from the feeling, to address the understanding: to him, Feeling is the obstacle; only when he has overcome It with the utmost caution, does he come to his main purpose, the demonstration of a thought to the Understanding.—

The *understanding* is thus, from first to last, the human faculty which the modern poet wishes to address; and with it he can only parley through the *organ* of the combining, dispersing, severing and re-piecing Understanding; through abstract and conditioned Word-speech, which merely describes and filters down the impressions and acquirements of the Feeling. Were our State itself a worthy object of Feeling, the poet, to reach his purpose, would have in a certain measure to pass over, in his drama, from tonespeech to word-speech: In Greek Tragedy such was very near the case, but from opposite reasons. (102) This Tragedy's basis was the Lyric, from which it advanced to word-speech in the same way as Society advanced from the natural, ethico-religious ties of Feeling, to the political State. The return from Understanding to Feeling will be the march of the Drama of the Future, in so far as we shall advance from the *thought-out* Individuality to the genuine one. But, from the very beginning of his work, the modern poet has to exhibit a Surrounding—the State—which is void of any purely-human sentiment, and therefore is un-communicable through the Feeling's highest utterance. So that he can only reach his purpose, at all, [201] through the organ of the 'combining' Understanding, through un-emotional modern speech; and rightly does the playwright of nowadays deem it unfitting, bewildering and disturbing, to employ Music for an object which can at best be intelligibly conveyed as Thought to the Understanding, but never to the Feeling as Emotion.



But what sort of shaping of the Drama, in the sense aforesaid, would be called forth by the going-under of the State, by the rise of an organically healthy Society? (103)

Looked at reasonably, the Going-under of the State can mean nothing else but *the self-realisation of Society's religious conviction* (*Bewusstsein*) *of its purely-human essence*. By its very nature, this conviction can be no Dogma stamped upon us from without, i.e. it cannot rest on historical traditions, nor be drilled into us by the State. So long as any one of life's actions is demanded of us as an outward Duty, so long is the object of that action no object of Religious Conscience; for when we act from the dictates of religious conscience we act from out ourselves, we *so* act as we cannot act otherwise. But Religious Conscience means a *universal* conscience (*allgemeinsames Bewusstsein*); and conscience cannot be universal, until it knows the Unconscious, the Instinctive, the Purely-human, as the only true and necessary thing, and vindicates it by that knowledge. So long as the Purely-human shall loom before us in any troubledness soever, as it positively cannot [202] but do in the present state of our society, so long must we remain the prey to a million differences of opinion as to *how* the genuine Man should be. So long as, in error about his true essence, we form notions for ourselves as to how this essence might haply manifest, so long must we also strive for arbitrary Forms in which this imaginary essence is to manifest itself. So long, moreover, shall we have states and religions, till we have but *one* Religion and *no longer any* State. But, if this Religion must necessarily be a universal one, so can it be none other than the true and conscience-vindicated nature of Mankind (104) and every man must be capable of feeling this unconsciously, and instinctively putting it into practice. This common human nature will be felt the strongest by the *Individual* as his own, his individual nature, such as in him it manifests itself as the *trend to life and love*: the contentment of this trend, it is, that drives the unit into Society; in which, by very reason *that he can satisfy that trend in fellowship alone*,

he attains quite of himself the religious, *i.e.* the common conscience, which vindicates his nature. *In the free self-determining of the Individuality there therefore lies the basis of the social Religion of the Future*; which will not have stepped into life, until this Individuality shall have received through Society its utmost furthering and vindication.—

The exhaustless variety of the relations of *living* individualities to one another, the endless fill of constantly new forms, exactly answering in their changefulness the idiosyncrasy of these vital relations, we are not in a position to so much as conceive; for until now we can only apprehend each human relationship in the shape of a [203] Right conferred by historical tradition, and in its prescription by a statutory 'norm of standing.' (106) But we may guess the measureless wealth of living individual relationships, if we take them as purely-human, ever fully and entirely present; *i.e.* if we think every extrahuman or non-present thing that in the State, as Property and historic Right, has placed itself between them, has torn asunder their ties of Love, has dis-individualised, Class-uniformed, and State-established them,—if we think this all sent far away.

Yet again, we can picture those relations in their greatest simplicity, if we take the most distinctive chief-'moments' (107) of individual human life,—which must also be the regulator of the life in common,—and sum in them the characteristic distinctions of Society itself: such as *youth and age, growth and maturity, ardour and repose, activity and contemplation, instinct and conscience.*

The 'moment' of *Wont*, which we have seen at its naïvest in the maintenance of socio-ethical concepts, but in its hardening into a State-political *morale* have found completely hostile to all development of the Individuality, and finally have recognised as a demoraliser and disowner of the Purely-human,—this *Wont* is nevertheless a valid 'moment' of instinctive human nature. If we examine a little closer, we shall find in it but one aspect of Man's mansidedness, which shews-out in the individual according [204] to his time of life. The human being is not the same in maturity as in youth: in youth we yearn for deeds, in age for rest. The disturbance of our quiet is just as grievous to us in old age, as is the hindrance of our activity in youth. Age's claim is vindicated, of itself, by the gradual exhaustion of the bent toward action, whose profit is *experience*. Experience is doubtless in itself instructive and delectable, for the experienced man himself; for the non-experienced instructee, however, it can only have a determinant result when either his bent-to-action is weak and easily kept down, or the points of Experience are forced upon him as an inexorable standard for his dealings :—but only by such a constraint, is the natural activity of man in general to be weakened; this weakening therefore, which to a superficial glance seems absolute and grounded in sheer human nature, and by whose cause we seek to justify in turn those laws of ours which admonish to activity,—this weakening is but conditional.—

Just as human society received its first ethical concepts from the Family, so did it acquire therefrom its reverence for age. In the Family, however, this reverence was one called forth, conducted, conditioned and motivated, by Love: the father before all *loved* his son; of love he counselled him; but, also out of love, he gave him scope. In Society this motivating love was lost, in exact degree as the reverence for the person transferred itself to fixed ideas and extra-human things which—unreal in themselves—did not stand toward us in that living reciprocity wherein Love is able to requite our reverence, *i.e.* to take from it its fear. The father, now become a *God*, could no more love us; the counsel of our elders, now become a *Law*, could no longer leave us our free play; the family, become a *State*, could no more judge us according to the instinctive forbearance of Love, but only according to the chilling edicts of moral compacts. The State—taken at its wisest—thrusts upon us the experiences of History, as the plumb-line for our dealings: yet we can only deal sincerely, when through our instinctive dealings themselves we reach experience; [205] an experience taught us by communications can only be resultful for us, when by our instinctive dealings we make it over

again for ourselves. Thus the true, the reasonable love of age toward youth substantiates itself in this: that it does not make its own experiences the measure for youth's dealings, but points it toward a fresh experience, and enriches its own thereby; for the characteristic and convincing thing about an experience is its individual part, the specific, the *knowable*, which it acquires by being won from the spontaneous dealings of this one specific Individual in this one specific case.

The Going-under of the State means therefore the falling-away of the barrier which the egoistic vanity of Experience, in the form of Prejudice, has erected against the spontaneity of individual dealings. This barrier at present takes the place that naturally (108) belongs to *love*, and by its essence it is *lovelessness*: i.e. Experience eaten up with its own conceit; and at last, the violently prosecuted will to reap no more experiences,—the self-seeking narrow-mindedness of Habit, the cruel doggedness of Quiet.—Now, by Love the father knows that he has not as yet experienced enough, but that by the experiences of his child, which in love toward it he makes his own, he may endlessly enrich his being. In the aptitude for rejoicing at the deeds of others, whose import it knows to turn through love into a delight-worthy and delight-giving object for itself, consists the beauty of reposeful age. Where this repose is naturally at hand through Love, it is by no means a hindrance on the activity of youth, but the latter's furtherance. It is the giving space to the activity of youth in an element of Love; *by the beholding of this activity, it becomes a highest artistic participation therein,—becomes the very life-element of Art in general.* (109)

[206]

Already-experienced age is able to take according to their *characteristic import* the deeds of youth, by which the latter unconsciously evinces its instinctive thrust, and to survey them *in their full conjunction*: it thus can vindicate these deeds more completely than their youthful agent, since it knows how to explain and consciously display them. *In the repose of age we thus win the 'moment' of highest poetic faculty*; and only *that* more youthful man can make this faculty his own, who *wins that repose*, i.e. that justness toward the phenomena of Life.—

The loving admonition of the experienced to the inexperienced, of the peaceful to the passionate, of the beholder to the doer, is given the most persuasively and resultfully by bringing faithfully before the instinctive agent his inmost being. He who is possessed with life's unconscious eagerness, will never be brought by general moral exhortations to a critical knowledge (*zur urtheilfähigen Erkenntniss*) of his own being, but this can only succeed entirely when in a likeness faithfully held up before him he is able to look upon himself; for right cognisance is re-cognition, just as right conscience is knowledge of our own Unconsciousness. The admonisher is the *understanding*, the experienced-one's conscious power of view: the thing to be admonished is the *feeling*, the unconscious bent-to-doing of the seeker for experience. The Understanding can know nothing other than the *vindication of the Feeling*; for, itself, it is but the quiet which follows on the begetting stir of Feeling. It can only vindicate itself, when it knows itself conditioned by instinctive Feeling; and Understanding justified by Feeling—no longer entangled in the feelings of this unit, but *upright towards Feeling in general—is the Vernunft.* (111) As *Vernunft* the Understanding is so far [207] superior to the Feeling, as it can judge all-righteously the agency of individual feelings, in their contact with their objects and opposites; which latter likewise act from individual feelings. It is the highest social force, itself conditioned by Society alone; the force which knows to class the specialities of Feeling according to their proper genus; in *that* to re-discover them, and by that, again, to vindicate them. It is thus capable withal of rousing itself to utterance through Feeling, when it proposes to address itself merely to the man-of-feeling,—and Love lends to it the instrument therefor. It knows through the feeling of Love, which spurs it to impart, that to the man of passion—in midst of his instinctive dealing—that thing alone is understandable which addresses itself to his Feeling: were it to



wish to address his Understanding, then in him it would take for granted *that* which even itself has first to win through its communication, and it must therefore stay understood. (112) But Feeling only grasps the akin to itself; just as the naked Understanding—as such—can only parley with the Understanding. The Feeling stays cold amid the reflections of the Understanding: only the reality of an object kindred to itself can warm it into interest. This object must be the sympathetic image of the instinctive doer's own nature; and sympathetically it can only work, when it displays itself in an action vindicated by the self-same feeling which, from out this action and this vindication, he fellow-feels (*mitfühlt*) as his very own. Through this fellow-feeling he just as instinctively attains an understanding of his own individual nature, as by the objects and [208] opposites of his feeling and dealing—by whose contact his own feeling-and-dealing had evolved itself, in the image—he has also learnt the nature of those opposites; and this because, snatched out of himself by lively sympathy for his own likeness, he is carried on to take instinctive interest in the feelings and dealings even of his opposites, is tuned to acknowledgment of, and justice toward these opposites, since they no longer stand confronting the bias of his actual dealings.



Only in the most perfect artwork therefore, in *the Drama*, can the insight of the experienced-one impart itself with full success; and for the very reason that, through employment of every artistic expression al-faculty of man, the poet's *aim* (Absicht) is in Drama the most completely carried from the Understanding to the Feeling,—to wit, is artistically imparted to the Feeling's most directly receptive organs, *the senses*. The Drama, as the most perfect artwork, differs from all other forms of poetry in just this,— that in it the Aim is lifted into utmost imperceptibility, by its *entire realisation*. In Drama, wherever the aim, i.e. the Intellectual Will, stays still observable, there the impression is also a chilling one; for where we see the poet still wilting, we feel that as yet he *can* not. The poet's canning, however, is the complete ascension of the Aim into the Artwork, the *emotionalising of the intellect* (die Gefühlswerdung des Verstandes). His aim he can only reach by physically presenting to our eyes the things of Life in their fullest spontaneity; and thus, by vindicating Life itself out of the mouth of its own Necessity; for the Feeling, to which he addresses himself, can understand this Necessity alone.

In presence of the Dramatic Artwork, nothing should remain for the combining Intellect to search for. Everything in it must come to an issue sufficient to set our [209] Feeling at rest thereon; for in the setting-at-rest of this Feeling resides the repose, itself, which brings us an instinctive understanding of Life. In the Drama, we must become *knowers* through *the Feeling*. (113) The Understanding tells us: "*So is it,*"—only when the Feeling has told us: "*So must it be.*" Only through *itself* however, does this Feeling become intelligible to itself: it understands no other language than its own. Things which can only be explained to us by the infinite accommodations of the Understanding, embarrass and confound the Feeling. In Drama, therefore, an action can only be explained when it is completely vindicated by the Feeling; and it thus is the dramatic poet's task, not to invent actions, but to make an action so intelligible through its emotional Necessity, that we may altogether dispense with the intellect's assistance in its vindication. The poet therefore has to make his main scope the *choice of the Action*,—*which* he must so choose that, alike in its character as in its compass, it makes possible to him its entire vindication from out the Feeling; for in this vindication alone, resides the reaching of his aim.

An action which can only be explained on grounds of historic relations, un-based upon the Present; an action which can only be vindicated from the standpoint of the State, or understood alone by taking count of religious Dogmas stamped upon it from without,—not sprung from common views within,—such an action, as we have seen, is only representable to

the Understanding, not to the Feeling. At its most successful, this was to be effected through narration and description, through appeal to the intellect's imaginative-force; not through direct presentment to the Feeling and its definitely-seizing organs, the senses: for we saw that those senses were positively unable to take-in the full extent of such an action, that in it there lay a mass of relations beyond all possibility of bringing to physical view and bound to be relegated, for their comprehension, [210] to the combining organ of Thought. In a politico-historical drama, therefore, it became the poet's business to eventually give out his Aim (114) quite nakedly—as such: the whole drama stayed unintelligible and unimpressive, if this Aim, in the form of a human 'moral,' did not at last quite visibly emerge from amid the desert waste of pragmatic motives, employed for sheer description's sake. In the course of such a piece, one asked oneself instinctively: "What is the poet trying to tell us?"

Now, an Action which is to justify itself before and through the Feeling, busies itself with no *moral*; its whole moral consists precisely in its justification by the instinctive human Feeling. It is a goal to itself, insofar as it has to be vindicated only and precisely by the feeling out of which it springs. Wherefore this Action can only be such an one as proceeds from relations the truest, i.e. the most seizable by the Feeling, the highest to human emotions, and thus the simplest,—from relations such as can only spring from a human Society intrinsically at one with itself, uninfluenced by inessential notions and non-present grounds-of-right: a Society belonging to itself alone, and not to any Past.

However, no action of Life stands solitary and apart: it has always some sort of correlation with the actions of other men; through which it is conditioned alike as by the individual feelings of its transactor himself. The weakest correlation is that of mere petty, insignificant actions; which require for their explanation, less the strength of a necessary feeling, than the waywardness of whim. But the greater and more decisive an action is, and the more it can only be explained from the strength of a necessary *feeling*: in so much the more definite and wider a connexion does it also stand with the actions of others. A great action, one which the most demonstratively and exhaustively displays [211] the nature of Man along any one particular line, issues only from the shock of manifold and mighty opposites. But, for us to be able to rightly judge these opposites themselves, and to fathom their actions by the individual feelings of the transactors, a great action must be represented in a wide circle of relations; for only in such a circle, is it to be understood. The Poet's chief and especial task will thus consist in this: that at the very outset he shall fix his eye on such a circle, shall completely gauge its compass, shall scrutinise each detail of the relations contained therein, with heed both to its own measure and to its bearing on the main-action; this done, that he then shall make the measure of his understanding of these things the measure of their understandable-ness as a work of Art, by drawing-in this ample circle towards its central point, and thus condensing it into the periphery which gives an understanding of the central Hero. This *condensation* (*Verdichtung*) is the work proper to the poetising intellect (*des dichtenden Verstandes*); and this intellect is the centre and the summit of the whole man, who from thence divides himself into the receiver and the imparter.

As an object (*Erscheinung*) is seized in the first place by the outward-turned instinctive Feeling, and next is brought to the Imagination, as the earliest function of the brain: so the Understanding, which is nothing else but the imaginative-force as regulated by the actual Measure of the object, has to advance in turn through the Imagination to the instinctive Feeling—in order to impart what it now has recognised. In the Understanding objects mirror themselves as what they actually are; but this mirrored actuality is, after all, a mere thing of thought: to impart this *thought-out* actuality, the Understanding must display it to the Feeling in an image akin to what the Feeling had originally brought to *it*; and this image is the work of Phantasy. Only through the *Phantasy*, can the Understanding have commerce with the Feeling. The Understanding can only grasp the full actuality of an object, when it breaks the

image, in which the object is brought it by the Phantasy, [212] and parcels it into its singlest parts; when it fain would bring these parts before itself again in combination, it has at once to cast for itself an image, which no longer answers strictly to the actuality of the thing, but merely in the measure wherein Man has power to recognise it. Thus even the simplest action confounds and bewilders the Understanding, which would fain regard it through the anatomical microscope, by the immensity of its ramifications: would it comprehend that action, it can only do so by discarding the microscope and fetching forth the image which alone its human eye can grasp; and this comprehension is ultimately enabled by the instinctive Feeling— as vindicated by the Understanding. This image of the phenomena, in which alone the *Feeling* can comprehend them, and which the Understanding, to snake itself in telligible to the Feeling, must model on that image which the latter originally brought it through the Phantasy,— this image, for the Aim of the poet, who must likewise take the phenomena of Life and compress them from their view less many-member-edness into a compact, easily surveyable shape,—this image is nothing else but *the Wonder*. (115)

[213]

## V.

THE WONDER in the Poet's work is distinguished from the (116) Wonder in religious Dogma by this: that it does not, like the latter, *upheave* the nature of things, but the rather makes it *comprehensible* to the Feeling.

The Judæo-Christian Wonder tore the connexion of natural phenomena asunder, to allow the Divine Will to appear as standing *over* Nature. In it a broad connexus of things was by no means condensed in favour of their understanding by the instinctive Feeling, but this Wonder was employed entirely for its own sake alone; people demanded it, as the proof of a suprahuman power, from him who gave himself for divine, and in whom they refused to believe till before the bodily eyes of men he had shewn himself the lord of Nature, i.e. the arbitrary subverter of the natural order of things. This Wonder was therefore claimed from *him* one did not hold for authentic in himself and his natural dealings, but whom one proposed to first believe when he should have achieved something unbelievable, something *un-understandable*. A *fundamental denial of the Understanding* was therefore the thing hypothecated in advance, both by the wonder-claimer and the wonder-worker: whereas an *absolute Faith* was the thing demanded by the wonder-doer, and granted by the wonder-getter.

Now, for the operation of its message, the poetising intellect has absolutely no concern with *Faith*, but only with an *understanding through the Feeling*. It wants to display a great connexus of natural phenomena in an image swiftly understandable, and this image must therefore [214] be one answering to the phenomena in such a way that the instinctive Feeling may take it up without a struggle, not first be challenged to expound it: whereas the characteristic of the Dogmatic Wonder consists just in this, that, through the obvious impossibility of explaining it, it tyrannously subjugates the Understanding despite the latter's instinctive search for explanation; and precisely in this subjugation, does it seek for its effect. The Dogmatic Wonder is therefore just as unfitted for Art, as the Poetic Wonder is the highest and most necessary product of the artist's power of beholding and displaying.

If we picture to ourselves more plainly the Poet's method in the moulding of his 'wonder,' we shall see in the first place that, in order to present in intelligible survey a great connexus of reciprocally conditioned actions, he must compress those actions themselves to a measure in which, for all their perspicuity, they shall yet lose nothing of the fulness of their Contents. A mere abridging or lopping-off of lesser 'moments' of action would of itself but mar the moments kept; since these stronger moments of the Action can only be vindicated to the



Feeling as the climax (117) of its lesser moments. Wherefore the moments excised for sake of poetic clearing of space must be carried over into the retained chief-moments themselves, i.e. they must be included in the latter in some fashion cognisable to the Feeling. The reason why the Feeling cannot dispense with them is, that for an understanding of the main-action it needs withal a sentence of the motives from which it sprang, and which enounced themselves in those lesser moments-of-action. The crest (*Spitze*) of an action is in itself a fleeting moment, which is utterly meaningless as a pure matter-of-fact, if it does not appear as motivated by ideas (*Gesinnungen*) that in themselves lay claim to our fellow-feeling: a heaping of such moments must rob the poet of all power of vindicating them to our Feeling; whereas it is this very vindication, this exposition of [215] motives, that has to fill the artwork's space,—which would be completely thrown away, were it filled with a mass of non-vindicable moments of action.

In the interest of intelligibleness, therefore, the poet has so to limit the number of his Action's moments, that he may win the needful space for the motivation of those retained. All those motives which lay hidden in the moments excised, (118) he must fit into the motives of his Main-action in such a way that they shall not appear detached; because in detachment they would also demand their own specific moments of action, the very ones excised. On the contrary, they must be so included in the Chief-motive, that they do not shatter, but *strengthen* it as a whole. But the strengthening of a motive makes also necessary a strengthening of the moment-of-action itself, which is nothing but the fitting utterance (*die entsprechende Äusserung*) of that motive. A strong motive cannot utter itself through a weak moment-of-action; both action and motive must thereby become un-understandable.—In order, then, to intelligibly enounce a Chief-motive thus strengthened by taking into it a number of motives which in ordinary life would only utter themselves through numerous moments-of-action, the action thereby conditioned must also be a strengthened, a powerful one, and in its unity more ample than any that ordinary life brings forth; seeing that in ordinary life the selfsame action would only have come to pass in company with many lesser actions, in a widespread space, and within a greater stretch of time. The poet who, in favour of the perspicuity of the thing, would draw-together not only these actions but this expanse of space and time as well, must not merely *cut off* parts, but *condense* the whole intrinsic contents. A condensation of the shape of actual life, however, can be comprehended by the latter only when—as compared with itself—it appears magnified, strengthened, [216] unaccustomed. It is just in his busy scattering through Time and Space, that Man cannot understand his own life-energy: but the image of this energy, as brought within the compass of his understanding, is what the Poet's shapings offer him for view; an image wherein this energy is condensed into an utmost-strengthened 'moment,' which, taken apart, most certainly seems wondrous and unwonted, yet shuts within itself its own unwontedness and wondrousness, and is in nowise taken by the beholder *for a Wonder* but apprehended as the *most intelligible* representment of reality.

In virtue of this Wonder, the poet is able to display the most measureless conjunctures (*Zusammenhänge*) in an all-intelligible Unity. The greater, the farther-reaching the conjuncture he desires to make conceivable, only the stronger has he to intensify the attributes of his shapings. Time and Space, to let them appear in keeping with the movement of these figures, he will alike condense from their amplest stretch, to shapings of his Wonder ;—the attributes of infinitely scattered moments of Time and Space will he just as much collect into one intensified attribute, as he had assembled the scattered motives into one Chief-motive; and the utterance of this attribute he will enhance as much, as he had strengthened the action issuing from that motive. Even the most unwonted shapes, which the poet has to evoke in this

procedure, will never truly be *un-natural*; because in them Nature's essence is not distorted, but merely her utterances are gathered into one lucid image, such as is alone intelligible to artist-man. The poetic daring, which gathers Nature's utterances into such an image, can *first for us* be crowned with due success, precisely because *through Experience we have gained a clear insight into Nature's essence*.

So long as the phenomena of Nature were merely an 'objective' (119) of man's Phantasy, so long also must the [217] human imagination (*Einbildungskraft*) be subjected to them: moreover, their semblance governed and determined its view of the human phenomenal-world in such a way, that men derived the inexplicable in that world—that is to say, the unexplained—from the capricious orderings of an extranatural and extrahuman Power, which finally in the Miracle upheaved both Man and Nature. When the reaction against belief in miracles set in, even the Poet had to bow before the prosaic rationalism of the claim, that poetry should also renounce its Wonder; and this happened in the times when natural phenomena, theretofore regarded only with the eye of Phantasy, began to be made the object of scientific operations of the Understanding. The scientific Understanding, however, was so long unsettled about the essence of these phenomena, as it believed that only in an anatomical disclosing of all their inner minutiae could it set them comprehensibly before it. Positive about this essence have we only been, from the time when we learnt to look on Nature as a living Organism, not as an aimfully constructed Mechanism; from the time when we grew clear, that she was not a thing *created*, but herself the *forever becom-ing*; that she includes within herself the begetter and the bearer, the Manly and the Womanly; that Time and Space, by which we earlier had held her circumscribed, were but abstractions from her own reality; that, further, we may rest content with this knowledge in general, because we no longer need, for its confirmation, to assure ourselves of farthest distances by the calculations of Mathematics,—since in closest nearness, and in the tiniest fact of Nature, we may find proofs for the selfsame thing as that which the remotest distance can only send us in confirmation of our knowledge of Nature. Thenceforth, however, we also know that we are here *to enjoy* Nature, because we *can* enjoy her, i.e. we are qualified for such enjoyment. But the *most reasonable* (vernünftigste) enjoyment of Nature is that which satisfies our *universal* aptitude for delight: in the universality of man's organs of reception, and in the highest enhancement of their aptitude [218] for delight, lies alone the measure according to which he has to enjoy; and the artist, who addresses himself to this highest aptitude for delight, has therefore to take this measure alone for the measure also of the phenomena he wishes to impart as a connected whole. This measure needs only to so far follow Nature's utterances, in her phenomena, as they have to answer to her intrinsic essence; nor does the poet disfigure that essence through his strengthening and intensifying, but—precisely in his utterance of it—he merely compresses it to a measure answering that of the most ardent human longing to understand a vast connexus of phenomena. It is just the fullest understanding of Nature, that first enables the poet to set her phenomena before us in wondrous shaping; for only in such shaping, do they become intelligible to us as *the conditionments of human actions intensified*.

Nature in her actual reality is only seen by the *Understanding*, which *de-composes her into her separatist of parts*; if it wants to display to itself these parts in their living *organic connexion*, then the quiet of the Understanding's meditation is involuntarily displaced by a more and more highly agitated mood, which at last remains nothing but a *mood of Feeling*. In this mood, Man unconsciously refers Nature once more *to himself*; for it is his individually human feeling, that has given him precisely the mood wherein he has apprehended Nature according to one particular impression. In Feeling's highest agitation, Man sees in Nature a sympathising being; and in truth the character of her phenomena governs also the character of

man's mood, past all escaping. Only in the utmost egoistic coldness of the Understanding, can he withdraw himself from her immediate sphere of operation,—albeit even then he must confess to himself, that her more mediate influence still determines him.—In his times of great commotion man sees no longer any *hasard*, in his encounter with natural phenomena: whereas the utterances of Nature, though grounded on an organic concord of phenomena, yet [219] brush against our daily life with all the semblance of Caprice, and in our moods of indifference or egoistic preoccupation—when we have neither lief nor leisure to ponder on their founding in a natural concord—they appear to us as Hazard; which, according to our human purpose of the moment, we seek to either turn to our advantage or turn away as to our dis-advantage. Man deeply-moved, when he suddenly turns from his inner mood to face surrounding Nature, finds in her either an intensifying aliment, or an alterative stimulus, of his mood, —according to her passing aspect. By whatever Being he feels dominated or supported in such a fashion, to that Being man ascribes a power great in exact measure as he finds himself in a great mood. His own sense of hanging-together with Nature he instinctively feels expressed, as well, in a great hanging-together of Nature's passing phenomena with himself, with his own mood; his own enhanced or altered mood he recognises again in Nature, whose mightiest utterances he thus refers to himself, equally as he feels himself determined by them. In this sense of a great reciprocal operation the phenomena of Nature crowd together, before his Feeling, into a definite shape to which he assigns an individual emotion answering to their impression upon him and his own mood; to this shape he finally attributes organs—intelligible to himself—wherewith to speak-out that emotion. Then he *speaks* with Nature, and she *answers* him.—In this his colloquy with Nature does he not understand her better, than the regarnder of her through the microscope? What does the latter understand of Nature, excepting what he has no need to understand? But the former perceives that part of her which is necessary to him in the highest agitation of his being, in an agitation wherein he understands Nature according to an infinitely greater compass, and understands her in such a way as the widest-reaching Understanding can never picture to itself. Here Man *lo ves* Nature; he ennobles her, and uplifts her to a sympathising sharer in the highest [220] mood of Man, whose physical existence she has unconsciously conditioned from out herself. (120)

If, then, we wish to define the Poet's work according to its highest power thinkable, we must call it *the—vindicated by the clearest human Consciousness, the new-devised to answer the beholdings of an ever-present Life, the brought in Drama to a show the most intelligible,—the Mythos.*

We now have only to ask ourselves, through *what expressional means* this Mythos is the most intelligibly to be displayed in Drama. For this, we must go back to that 'moment' of the whole artwork which conditions its very essence; and this is the necessary *vindication of the action through its motives*, for which the poetising Understanding turns to face the instinctive *Feeling*, upon the latter's unforced fellow-feeling to ground an understanding of them. We have seen that the condensation—so necessary for a practical understanding — of the manifold moments-of-action, immeasurably ramified in actual reality (*in der realen Wirklichkeit*), was conditioned by the poet's longing to display a great conjuncture of human life's phenomena, through which alone can the Necessity of these phenomena be grasped. This condensation he could only bring about, in keeping with his main scope, by taking-up into the motives of the moments chosen for actual representment all those motives which lay at bottom of the moments-of-action that he had discarded; and by vindicating their adoption,

before the judgment-seat of Feeling, in that he let them appear as a strengthening of the Chief-motives; [221] which latter, in turn, conditioned of themselves a strengthening of their corresponding moments-of-action. Finally we saw that this strengthening of a moment of action could only be achieved by lifting it above the ordinary human measure, through the poetic figment (*durch Dichtung*) of the Wonder—in strict correspondence with human nature, albeit exalting and enhancing its faculties to a potency unreachable in ordinary life;—of the Wonder, which was not to stand beyond the bounds of Life, but to loom so large from out its very midst, that the shows of ordinary life should pale before it.—And now we have only to come to definite terms, as to *wherein should consist the strengthening of the Motives* which are to condition from out themselves that strengthening of the Moments of Action.

What is the meaning, in the sense indicated above, of a "Strengthening of the Motives"?

It is impossible—as we have already seen—that a heaping-up of motives can be the thing we mean; because motives thus crowded together, without any possible utterance as action, must remain unintelligible to the Feeling; and even to the Understanding—if explicable—they would still be reft of any vindication. (121) Many motives to a scanty action (*Viele Motive bei gedrängter Handlung*), could only appear petty, whimsical and irrelevant, and could not possibly be employed for a great action, excepting in a caricature. The strengthening of a motive cannot therefore consist in a mere addition of lesser motives, but in the complete absorption of *many motives* into this *one*. An interest (*Interesse*) common to divers men at divers times and under divers circumstances, and ever shaping itself afresh according to these diversities: such an interest—once that these men, these times and circumstances are typically alike at bottom, and in themselves make plain an [222] essential trait of human nature—is to be made the interest of *one* man, at one given time and under given circumstances. In the Interest of this man all outward differences are to be raised into *one* definite thing; in which, however, the Interest must reveal itself according to its greatest, most exhaustive compass. But this is as good as saying, that from this Interest all which savours of the particularistic and accidental must be taken away, and it must be given in its full truth as a necessary, purely human *utterance of feeling* (*Gefühlsausdruck*). Of such an emotional-utterance *that* man is incapable, who is not as yet at one with himself about his necessary Interest: the man whose feelings have not yet found the object strong enough to drive them to a definite, a necessary enunciation; but who, faced with powerless, accidental, unsympathetic outward things, still splits himself into two halves. But should this mighty object front him from the outer world, and either so move him by its strange hostility that he girds up his whole individuality to thrust it from him, or attract him so irresistibly that he longs to ascend into it with his whole individuality,—then will his Interest also, for all its definiteness, be so wide-embracing that it takes into it all his former split-up, forceless interests, and entirely consumes them.

The moment *of this consumption* is the act which the poet has to prepare for, by strengthening a motive in such sort, that a powerful moment-of-action may issue from it; and this preparation is the last work of his enhanced activity. Up to this point his organ of the poetising intellect, *Word-speech*, can do his bidding; for up to here he has had to set forth interests in whose interpreting and shaping a necessary *feeling* took no share as yet,—interests variously influenced by given circumstances from Without, without there being any definite working on Within in such a way as to drive the inner Feeling to a necessary, choiceless activity, in its turn determining the outer course of things. Here still reigned the combining

Understanding, with its parcelling of parts and piecing-together of this or that detail in this [223] or that fashion; here it had not directly to *display*, but merely to shadow forth, to draw comparisons, to make like intelligible by like,—and for *this*, not only did its organ of Word-speech quite suffice, but it was the only one through which the intellect could make itself intelligible.—But where the thing prepared-for is to become a *reality*, where the poet has no longer to separate and compare, where he wants to let the thing that gainsays all Choice and definitely gives itself without conditions, the determinant motive strengthened to a determinative force—to let this proclaim itself in the very Utterance (*Ausdruck*) of a necessary, all-dominating feeling,—there he can no longer work with the merely shadowing, expounding (122) Word-speech, *except he so enhance it* as he has already enhanced the motive: and this he can only do by pouring it into *Tone-speech*.

[224]

## VI.

TONE-SPEECH is the beginning and end of Word-speech: as the *Feeling* is beginning and end of the Understanding, as *Mythos* is beginning and end of History, the *Lyric* beginning and end of Poetry. The mediator between beginning and middle, as between the latter and the point of exit, is *the Phantasy*.

The march of this evolution is such, however, that it is no retrogression, but a progress to the winning of the highest human faculty; and it is travelled, not merely by Mankind in general, but substantially by every social Individual.

Just as in the unconscious Feeling lie all the germs for evolution of the Understanding, while this latter holds within it a necessitation to vindicate the unconscious feeling, and the man who from out his Understanding vindicates this Feeling is first the man of *Vernunft*; just as in *Mythos* justified by History, which alike grew out of *it*, is first won a really intelligible image of Life: so does the Lyric also hold within itself each germ of the intrinsic art of Poetry, which necessarily can but end with speaking out the vindication of the Lyric; and this work of vindication is precisely the highest human Artwork, the *Entire Drama* (*das vollkommene Drama*).

The primal organ-of-utterance of the inner man, however, is *Tone-speech*, as the most spontaneous expression of the inner Feeling stimulated from without. A mode of Expression similar to that still proper to the beasts was, in any case, alike the first employed by Man; and this we can call before us at any moment,—as far as its substance goes,—by removing from our Word-speech its dumb [225] articulations (*die stummen Mitlauter*), and leaving nothing but the open sounds (*die tönenden Laute*). In these vowels, if we think of them as stripped of their consonants, and picture to ourselves the manifold and vivid play of inner feelings, with all their range of joy and sorrow, as given-out in them alone, we shall obtain an image of man's first emotional language; a language in which the stirred and high-strung Feeling could certainly express itself through nothing but a joinery of ringing tones, which altogether of itself must take the form of Melody. This melody, which was accompanied by appropriate bodily gestures in such a way that it appeared, itself in turn, to be nothing but the simultaneous inner expression of an outer announcement through those gestures, and therefore also took its time-measure—its Rhythm—from the changeful motion of those gestures, in such a manner that it returned it to them as the melodically-vindicated measure for their own announcement,—this *rhythmic melody*, which we should do wrong to set down as of poor effect and beauty, in view of the infinitely greater variety of man's emotional fund as compared with that of the beasts, and especially in view of its endless capacity for



enhancement through interaction between the inner expression of the voice and the outer expression of the gestures, (123) —this melody, both by its nature and its origin, so thoroughly decreed the Measure for the word-verse, that the latter appears to have been governed by it to the extent of positive subordination,—as we still may see to-day by inspecting any genuine *Volkslied*; in which we shall always find the word-verse plainly governed by the melody, and so much so, that it often has to accommodate itself, even for the sense, to the melody's most intimate requirements.

This matter shews us very palpably the rise of Speech. (124) [226] In the Word, the ringing tones of pure emotional-speech seek as much to bring themselves to a distinguishment from one another, as the inner Feeling seeks to discriminate between the outer objects working on the senses, to tell its tale about them, and finally to make intelligible its inner thrust toward such a tale itself. In pure Tone-speech, with its tale of the received impression, the Feeling gave only *itself* to be understood; and this, supported by the gestures, it was quite competent to do, through its countless raisings and sinkings, prolongings and abridgings, intensifyings and abatings of the open sounds. To denote and distinguish between outer objects themselves, however, the Feeling must cast about it for something answering-to and embodying the impression of the object, for a distinctive garment wherewith to clothe the open tone; and this *it* borrowed from the Impression, and through it from the object itself. This garment it wove from dumb articulations, which it fitted on to the open sound as a prefix or suffix, (125) or even as both together, so that it was enveloped in them and held down to a definite, distinguishable announcement; in the same way as the object, thus distinguished, marked off and announced itself to the outer world by a garment—the animal by its skin, the tree by its bark, &c. The vowels thus clothed, and parcelled by such clothing, form the *roots of speech* through whose fitting and fixing together the whole sensuous edifice of our endless-branching Word-speech has been erected.

Let us first notice, however, with what instinctive foresight this Speech but very gradually left its nursing mother, Melody, and her breast-milk the open tone. In keeping with an unaffected view of Nature and a longing to impart the impressions of such a view, Speech set only the kindred and analogous together, in order not only to make plain the kindred by its analogy and explain the analogous by [227] its kinship, but also, through an Expression based on analogy and kinship of its own 'moments,' to produce a still more definite and intelligible impression upon the Feeling. Herein was evinced the sensuously composing (*sinnlich dichtende*) force of Speech. Through taking the open sound, employed for purely subjective expression of the feelings inspired by an object—in scale with its impression,—and clothing it with a garment of mute articulations, which stood to the Feeling as an objective expression borrowed from an attribute of the object itself, it had arrived at moulding different 'moments' of expression, in its speech-roots. Now, when Speech set these roots together according to their kinship and alike-ness, it made plain to the Feeling both the impression of the object and its answering expression, in equal measure, through an increased strengthening of that Expression; and hereby in turn, it denoted the object as itself a strengthened one,—namely, as an object strictly-speaking multiple, but *one* in essence through its kinship and likeness. This 'composing moment' of Speech is its *alliteration* or *Stabreim*, in which we recognise the very oldest attribute of all poetic speech.

In *Stabreim* the kindred speech-roots are fitted to one another in such a way, that, just as they sound alike to the physical ear, they also knit like objects into one collective image in which the Feeling may utter its conclusions about them. Their sensuously cognisable resemblance they win either from a kinship of the vowel sounds, especially when these stand open in front, without any initial consonant; (126) or from the sameness of this initial consonant itself, which characterises the likeness as one belonging peculiarly to the object; (127) or again, from the sameness of the terminal consonant that closes up the root behind (as

an assonance), provided the individualising force of the word lies in that terminal. (128) The distribution and arrangement of these [228] *rhyming roots* takes place by similar laws to those that lead us in every walk of Art to repeat, as necessary for an understanding, those motives on which we lay chief weight, and which we therefore so bestow between lesser motives, in turn conditioned by them, that they stand out plainly as the conditioning and essential ones.

As I must reserve till later a fuller treatment of this subject, for the purpose of demonstrating the Stabreim's possible operation upon our Music, I will at present content myself with pointing out in how strict a relation the Stabreim, and the Word-verse rounded-off thereby, once stood to that *melody* which we have to consider as the earliest message of a more complex human feeling, albeit a feeling rounding off its complexity into a unity. By that Melody we have to explain not only the dimensions of the Word-verse, but also the position and, in general, the attributes of the Stabreim which governed those dimensions; while the production of that Melody, again, was conditioned by man's natural capacity of breath and the possibility of giving out a number of stronger intonations in one breath. The duration of an outflow of the breath through the organ of song governed the dimensions of a segment of the melody, in which one pregnant portion of the sense must come to a conclusion. But this possible duration governed also the number of special intonations in one melodic segment: if these special intonations were of impassioned strength, and thus more rapidly consumed the breath, then this number was diminished,—or if, their strength being less, they did not require so swift a breath-consumption, then their number was increased. These intonations, which fell together with the gestures and thereby disposed themselves to a rhythmic measure, were in Speech condensed into the alliterative root-words, whose number and position they conditioned in the same way as the melodic segment, itself conditioned by the breath, determined the length and compass of the Verse.—How simple is an explanation and understanding of all *Metrik*, if only we take the reasonable pains to go back to the natural conditionments of all human [229] art-ability, from which alone can we also reach again to genuine art-production!—

But let us follow for the present the evolutionary career of *Word-speech*, and reserve for ourselves a later return to the Melody it left behind.—



In exact degree as poesis (*das Dichten*) ceased to be a function of the Feeling and became a transaction of the Understanding, did the creative league of Gesture-, Tone-, and Word-speech, originally united in the Lyric, disband itself; Word-speech was the child that left its father and mother, to help itself along in the wide world alone.—As the number of objects and their relations to his Feeling increased before the adolescent's eye, so accumulated the words and combinations of Speech which were to answer to those added objects and relations. So long as this growing man still kept his eye on Nature, and was able to grasp her by his Feeling, so long also did he invent linguistic roots in characteristic keeping with the objects and their relations. But when amid the eventual stress of life he turned his back on this fruitful fountain of his powers of speech, then all his inventive-force was blighted, and he had to content himself with the harvest handed down to him but no longer a possession to be ever-newly reaped; in such-wise that, according to his need, he took his heritage of speech-roots and pieced them doubly and trebly together for extranatural objects, pared them down for sake of this his piecing, and above all marred them past all knowledge by evaporating the ring of their sounding vowels to the hasty clang of Talk; while, by heaping-up the dumb articulations needful for combining un-related roots, he wrinkled grievously the living flesh of Speech. When Speech had thus lost an instinctive understanding of her own roots—only possible through Feeling,—she naturally could no longer answer *in these* to the intonations of that fostering mother-melody. She either contented herself—where Dance



remained an inseparable [230] portion of the Lyric, as in Greek antiquity—with snuggling as briskly as possible to the *Rhythm* of the melody: or she sought—where Dance had more and more completely swerved away from Lyric, as among the modern nations—for another bond of union with the melodic breathing- snatches; and this she procured in the *end-rhyme*.

The End-rhyme—to which we must also come back, on account of its attitude towards our music—set itself up at the exit of a melodic segment, without being able to answer the intonations (*Betonungen*) of the melody itself. It no longer knit the natural band of Tone- and Word-speech, in which the Stabreim brought its radical affinities to the melodic intonations within the purview of both the outer and the inner sense; but it merely fluttered at the loose end of the ribands of melody, toward which the word-verse fell into a more and more arbitrary and uncomplying attitude.—The more confusedly and circuitously this Word-speech must proceed, at last, to designate objects and relations belonging solely to social Convention, and no longer to the self-determining nature of things; the more she must busy herself to find terms for concepts which, themselves skimmed-off from natural phenomena, were to be employed in turn for combinations of these abstractions; the more, for this, she must screw up the original meaning of roots to accommodate a twofold and threefold meaning, ingeniously laid under them but merely to be *thought out*, no longer to be *felt*; and the more elaborately she had to equip the mechanical apparatus which was to bolster up, and set in motion, this system of screws and levers: so much the more shrewish and estranged did she become towards that primal melody (*Urmelodie*),—till at last she lost even the remotest memory of it, when, out of breath and reft of tone, she must flounder into the grey morass of *Prose*.

The Understanding, condensed from Feeling through the Phantasy, acquired in Prosaic word-speech an organ through which it could make itself intelligible *alone*, and in direct [231] ratio as it became un-intelligible to Feeling. In modern Prose we speak a language we do not understand with the Feeling, since its connection with the objects, whose impression on our faculties first ruled the moulding of the speech-roots, has become incognisable to us; a language which we speak as it was taught us in our youth,—not as, with waxing self-dependence of our Feeling, we haply seize, form, and feed it from ourselves and the objects we behold; a language whose usages and claims, based on the logic of the Understanding, we must unconditionally obey when we want to impart our thoughts. This language, in our Feeling's eyes, rests therefore on a *convention* which has a definite scope,—namely, to make ourselves thus far intelligible according to a given norm, in which we are to think and to *dominate* our feelings, that we may demonstrate to the Understanding an aim of the Understanding. Our Feeling—which quite of itself found unconscious expression in the primitive Speech—we can only *describe* in this language; and describe in a far more circuitous way than an object of the Understanding, because we are obliged to screw ourselves *down* from our intellectual language to its real stock, in the same way as we screwed ourselves *up* from that stock to *it*.—Our language accordingly rests upon a State-historico-religious convention, which in France, under the rule of Convention personified, under Louis XIV., was also very logically fixed into a settled 'norm,' by an Academy under orders. Upon no living and ever-present, no really felt *conviction* does it rest, for it is the tutored opposite of any such conviction. In a sense, we cannot discourse in this language according to our innermost emotion, for it is impossible to *invent* in it according to that emotion; in *it*, we can only impart our emotions to the Understanding, but not to the implicitly understanding Feeling; and therefore in our modern evolution it was altogether

consequent, that the Feeling should have sought a refuge from absolute intellectual-speech by fleeing to absolute tone-speech, our Music of to-day.



[232]

In modern Speech no *poesis* is possible, (129) —that is to say, a poetic Aim cannot be *realised* therein, but only spoken out *as such*.

The poet's Aim is never realised, until it passes from the Understanding to the Feeling. The Understanding, that merely wants to impart an Aim which can be *entirely* imparted in the language of the Understanding, does not concern itself with a *uniting* aim, but its aim is a dis severing, a *loosening* one. (130) The Understanding poetises only when it grasps the scattered fragments as a connected whole, and wants to bring this whole to an infallible impression. A connected whole is only to be *fully surveyed* from a *remoter* standpoint, in keeping with the object and the aim; the image, which thus offers itself to the eye, is not the actual reality of the object, but merely that reality which the eye can take in as a *connected whole*. An actual reality only the *loosening* Understanding is able to know according to its details, and to impart through its organ, modern intellectual-speech; the ideal, the sole intelligible reality only the *composing* (*dichtende*) Understanding is able to comprehend as a connected whole, but can intelligibly impart it only through an organ which, being itself a concentrator (*ein verdichtendes*), shall answer also to the concentrated object, in that it imparts it the most intelligibly to the Feeling. A great conjuncture of phenomena —through which alone they are individually explicable— is only to be displayed, as we have seen, through a concentration of these phenomena; this concentration (*Verdichtung*), as applied to the phenomena of human life, means their simplification, and for its sake a *strengthening* of the moments-of-action—which, again, could only proceed from motives likewise strengthened. But a motive can gain an access of strength only through the ascension [233] of the various intellectual-moments contained in it, into one decisive 'moment'-of-*feeling*'; while the Word-poet can arrive at imparting this convincingly, only through the primal organ of the soul's inner feeling,—through *Tone-speech*.

But the poet must see his Aim unrealised, were he to lay it bare so undisguisedly that he waited for the instant of highest need, to lay hands upon the redeeming utterance of Tone-speech. If *first* where Melody has to enter as the most perfect utterance of a high-strung feeling, he wanted to transpose the *naked* word-speech into *full-dad* tone-speech, he would plunge both intellect and feeling into one common depth of bewilderment, from which he could only rescue them by the most unblushing revelation of his Aim: to wit, by openly revoking all pretence of Artwork and imparting his Aim, as such, to the Understanding, while he offered to the Feeling a mere emotional expression un-governed by the Aim, an expression both diffluent and superfluous, — that of our modern Opera. The *n'ady-made* (*fertige*) melody is unintelligible to the Understanding that up to its entry has been the only principle at work, even for the expounding of nascent feelings; in that melody it can only take an interest in ratio as it has itself passed over into the Feeling, which arrives, amid its *growing* stir, at the perfection of its most exhaustive method of *expression*. In the growth of this expression, towards its utmost plenitude, the Understanding can only take an interest from the instant when it steps upon the soil of Feeling. This soil the poet definitely treads, however, from the time when he urges onward from the *aim* of Drama towards its *realising*; since the longing for this realisation *is already* the necessary, the strenuous stir, within him, of the selfsame Feeling to which he wants to communicate a *thought-out* object and gain for it a sure, redeeming comprehension.—The poet can only hope to realise his Aim, from the instant when he *hushes* it and keeps it secret to himself: that is to say, when, *in the language* [234]

wherein alone it could be imparted as a naked intellectual aim, he no longer speaks it out at all. His redeeming, namely his realising work first begins from the time when he is able to unbosom himself in the new, redeeming and realising tongue; in which at last, and alone, he can also deliver the most convincingly the deepest Content of his Aim,—to wit, from the time when the Art-work itself begins: and that is, from the earliest entry of the Drama.

A *Tone-speech to be struck-into from the outset*, is therefore the organ of expression proper for the poet who would make himself intelligible by turning from the Understanding to the Feeling, and who for that purpose has to take his stand upon a soil on which alone he can have any commerce with Feeling. The strengthened moments-of-action, which the poetising Understanding has descried, can—by reason of their necessarily strengthened motives—only come to an intelligible show upon a soil which in itself is raised above the ordinary life and its habitual methods of expression; upon a soil which thus towers (*hervorragt*) above that of the ordinary means of expression, in the same way as those strengthened shapes and motives tower over those of ordinary life. Yet this Expression can as little be an unnatural one, as those actions and motives may dare to be un-human and unnatural. The poet's shapings have to fully correspond with real Life, in so far as they are merely to display the latter in its most succinct cohesion, and in the utmost force of its arousal; and thus also, their Expression should be nothing but that of the most deep-roused human feeling, according to its highest power of self-enunciation. Unnatural, on the contrary, would the poet's figures seem, if, amid the highest enhancement of their motives and 'moments' of action, they enounced them through the organ of ordinary life; unintelligible, moreover, and positively ridiculous, if they employed this organ by turns with that unwonted, heightened one,—just as much as though, before our very eyes, they were to exchange from time to time the soil of [235] ordinary life for that heightened soil of the poetic Art work. (131)



If now we pry a little closer into the Poet's business, we shall see that the realisation of his Aim consists solely in the making possible an exhibition of the 'strengthened actions' of his characters (*seiner gedichteten Gestalten*) through an exposition of their motives to the Feeling; and that this, again, can only be effectuated through an *Expression* which shall in so far claim his active aid, as *its invention and establishment first makes possible the displaying of those motives and actions*.

*This Expression* is therefore the prime condition of the realisation of his Aim, which without it could never step from the realm of thought into that of actuality. But the sole effectual Expression, here, is *an altogether different* one from that of the poetic Understanding's own organ of speech. The Understanding is therefore driven by necessity to wed itself with an element which shall be able to take-up into it the poet's Aim as a fertilising seed, and so to nourish and shape this seed by its own, its necessary essence, that it may bring it forth as a realising and redeeming utterance of Feeling.

This element is that same mother-element, the womanly, from whose womb—the *ur-melodic* (132) expressional-faculty,—there issued Word and Word-speech, so soon as it was fecundated by the actual outward-lying objects of Nature; just as the Understanding throve from out the Feeling, and is thus the condensation of this womanly into a manly, into an element fitted to impart. Now, just as the Understanding has to fecundate in turn the Feeling,—just as amidst this fecundation it is impelled to find itself encompassed by the [236] Feeling, in *it* justified, by it mirrored back, and in this mirroring recognisable, i.e. first cognisable, by itself,—just so is the intellectual Word impelled to recognise itself in Tone, the Word-speech to find itself justified in Tone-speech. (133) The stimulus which rouses this impulse and whets it to the highest agitation, lies outside the one impelled, and in the object of his yearning; whose charm is brought him first through Phantasy — the all - puissant

mediatrix between Feeling and Understanding,—but this charm cannot content him until he pours himself into that object's full reality. This charm is the influence of the "eternal womanly," which draws the man-ly Understanding out of its egoism,—and this again is only possible through the Womanly attracting that thing in it which is kindred to itself: but That in which the Understanding is akin to the Feeling is *the purely-human*, that which makes-out the essence of the human *species* as such. In this Purely-human are nurtured both the Manly and the Womanly, which only by *their union through Love become first the Human Being*.

The impetus necessary to the poetic intellect, in this its poesis, is therefore *Love*,—and that the love *of man to woman*. Yet not that frivolous, carnal love, in which man only seeks to satisfy an appetite, but the deep yearning to know himself redeemed from his egoism through his sharing in the rapture of the loving woman; and *this yearning is the creative moment* (das dichtende Moment) of the Understanding. The necessary bestowal, the seed that only in the most ardent transports of Love can condense itself from his noblest forces—*this procreative seed is the poetic Aim, which brings to the glorious loving woman, Music, the Stuff for bearing*.



Let us now lend ear to this act of Birth.

[237]

### Third Part

#### The Arts of Poetry and Tone in the Drama of the Future

[238]

#### Translator's Notes

In *Letters to Uhlig* No. 19 (December, 1850), Wagner writes: "Part III.—Here first, do I begin."—

[239]

#### I.

HERETOFORE the Poet has in two ways endeavoured to tune the organ of the Understanding, absolute Word-speech, to an emotional expression which might help him to convey his message to the Feeling: through the verse's *measure*—on the side of *Rhythmik*; through its *end-rhyme*—on the side of *Melodik*.—

For measuring their verse, the poets of the Middle Ages still kept definitely to *the melody*, in respect both of the number of syllables, and especially of their emphasis (*Betonung*). But after the verse's at last purely outward dependence on a stereotype melody had degenerated into slavish pedantry—as in the schools of the Meistersingers,—in more recent times there sprang from Prose a Measure altogether independent of any real melody; and this was brought about by taking for model the rhythmic structure of Greek and Latin verse,—such as we now have under our eyes in the form of Literature. The attempts at copying and appropriating this model were at first restricted to the next of kin, and launched out so very gradually that we could not grow fully aware of their fundamental error until, on the one side, we had acquired a more intimate acquaintance with the ancient *Rhythmik*, while on the other, our very attempts at copying it had brought us to an insight into the impossibility and fruitlessness of this copying. We know *now*, that what begot the endless variety of Grecian *Metrik* was the indivisible, the living collaboration of the Dance's gesture with the Tone-Word's speech; and we know that all the hence-arisen verse-forms were strictly conditioned by a Speech which had so moulded itself through just this partnership, that we can scarcely grasp an iota of its rhythmic peculiarities from the standpoint of [240] *our own* language, whose moulding principle has been quite an other one.

The special mark of Grecian culture lies in its paying so preponderant an attention to man's bodily appearance, that we have to regard the latter as the basis of all Greek art. The lyric and the dramatic artwork were the speech-enabled spiritualising of this body's motion, and the monumental plastic-art was finally its open deifying. As for the art of Tone, the Greeks only felt urged to develop it sufficiently to serve as a prop for Gesture, whose tale was already expressed melodiously by Speech itself. In its accompaniment of Dance's motion their sounding Word-speech won so sure a prosodic Measure,—i.e. so delicately balanced a physical standard for the weight or lightness of each syllable and its ordering in point of time-length,—that the instinctive speaking-accent, with its emphasis of syllables which bear no 'quantitative' weight, had absolutely to stand back as against this purely sensuous ruling. Yet this ruling was no arbitrary one, but derived, even for speech, from the natural attributes of the root-syllable's vowel sound, or this sound's position toward the strengthened consonants; while on the other hand, by its heightening (*Hebung*) of the speaking-accent the Melody made good again the latter's ousting by the Rhythm. (134)



Now, the metres of Greek verse-building have come down to us without this reconciling melody (as their architecture without its quondam ornament of colour), and still less can we explain the endless *changefulness* of these metres from the changeful movements of the dance, because we no longer have before our eyes those movements, any more than we have that melody before our ears.—A verse-measure abstracted from the Greek *Metrik*, under such conditions, must therefore unite in itself every conceivable [241] element of contradiction. For its counterfeiting purposes it demanded, before all else, a ruling of our syllables into 'longs and shorts,' which was utterly against their natural disposition. In a language already dissolved into the rankest prose, liftings and lowerings (*Hebungen und Senkungen*) of the speaking-tone can only be dictated by the *accent* which we place upon certain words or syllables *for sake of intelligibleness*. This Accent, however, is by no means good for once and all, as the 'quantity' (*das Gewicht*) of Greek prosody was good for every case; but it varies in exact degree as this word or that syllable in the sentence is of stronger or weaker *import* for the meaning. In our speech we can only imitate a Greek  $\mu#####$  by, on the one hand, arbitrarily coining the Accent itself into a prosodic value, or on the other, sacrificing the Accent to an *imaginary* prosodic value. Hitherto both plans have been tried in turn, so that the bewilderment, which such rhythmic-posing verses have inflicted on the Feeling, could only be smoothed away again by an arbitrary arrangement on the part of the Understanding: for a better explanation it set the Greek 'schema' above the word-verse, and thereby told itself much the sort of thing that the painter once told the viewer, when he wrote beneath his picture: "This is a cow."

How incapable is our language of any accurately rhythmic utterance in Verse, is shewn the plainest by that simplest of all metres in which she has been accustomed to clothe herself, in order—as modestly as possible—to shew herself in at least some sort of rhythmic garb. We mean the so-called *Iambic*, in which she loves to present herself to our eyes—and alas! to our ears also—as a five-footed monster. Taken on its own merits, the unloveliness of this metre irks the Feeling, so soon as it is set before us without a break, as in our spoken plays: but when—as indeed is inevitable—the most grievous violence is done to the live Accent of speech, for sake of this monotonous rhythm, then the hearing of such verses becomes a positive martyrdom; for, led astray from a correct and [242] rapid comprehension of the subject-matter, through the mutilation of the speaking - accent, the hearer next is violently held down to abandon his feelings to a painfully fatiguing ride on the hobbling Iambic, whose clattering trot must rob him of the last shred of sense and understanding.—An intelligent actress was once so distressed by the iambics, such as they are ambled on to the stage by our modern poets, that she had all her rôles written out in prose, so as not to be tempted *by their look* to exchange the natural speaking-accent for a sense-destroying scansion of the verse. Through this sensible procedure this artist most certainly discovered that the pretended iambic was an illusion of the poet, which vanished so soon as ever the Verse was written out in prose and this prose was declaimed in an intelligible fashion; most certainly she found that each line, when spoken with natural feeling and intoned with sole regard to an unmistakable delivery of its meaning, contained but *one*, or at the utmost *two* syllables which called for a special lingering together with a sharper intonation; that to these one or two accented syllables the remainder bore a quite equable relation, unbroken by any pause, any swelling or sinking, any rise or fall; while prosodic 'longs and shorts' could only figure among them through the expedient of stamping the root-syllables with an accent altogether foreign to our modern habit, and thoroughly obstructive, nay destructive of the understanding of a phrase—namely an accent which, in favour of the Verse, must shew itself as a rhythmic retardation (*als ein rhythmisches Verweilen*).

I admit, that good verse-makers are distinguished from bad ones by just the fact that they only place the 'longs' of the Iambic upon the root-syllables, and the 'shorts' on the prefix or suffix: but if the thus-determined 'longs,' as is certainly the intention of the Iambic, are delivered with rhythmical exactitude—say, in the proportion of the whole notes of a bar to its half notes—, that very treatment constitutes an offence against our linguistic usage, and an [243] offence which completely blocks any true and intelligible expression in consonance with our feeling. Were any prosodically increased 'quantity' present to our Feeling, in hearing these root-syllables, then it would have been quite impossible for the musician to let those iambic verses be declaimed in any rhythm you please, and above all to rob them of their distinctive 'quantity' in such a way, that he should allot indiscriminately to long or short notes the supposititious long and short syllables. But the musician was bound to the Accent alone; and first in music does this Accent gain importance, from its bearing on syllables which—as a chain of rhythmically uniform moments—in ordinary speech behave to the main-accent like a gradual upstroke: (135) for it here has to answer to the rhythmical weight of the 'good and bad' parts of the bar, and to win a marked distinction through raising or sinking the tone (*durch Steigen oder Sinken des Tones*).—As a rule, however, the Poet further saw himself compelled, in the Iambic, to give up all thought of turning the root-syllables into prosodic 'longs,' and to choose at hief or hazard either this or that, from out a row of equally accented syllables, whereto to accord the honour of a prosodic 'length'; whereas, next-door to it, he was constrained to degrade a root-syllable into a prosodic 'short,' so as to dispose his words intelligibly.—

The secret of this Iambic has become patent on our acting stages. Intelligent actors, concerned to address the hearer's Understanding, have spoken this verse as naked prose; unintelligent ones, unable to grasp the content of the verse by reason of its beat, have declaimed it as a sense- and tone-less melody, alike un-intelligible as unmelodious.



[244]

Where, as among the Romanic peoples, a *Rhythmik* based on prosodic longs and shorts has never been attempted in spoken verse, and the verse-line therefore has only been governed by the number of syllables, there the *end-rhyme* has been set fast as an indispensable condition of the verse's very existence.

In this End-rhyme lies the characteristic essence of the *Christian Melody*, as whose verbal residue it is to be regarded. Its significance we may figure to ourselves at once, by calling to mind the *chorale* of the Church. The melody of this chant is absolutely neutral in its rhythm; it strides on, step by step, in completely even beats (*Taktlängen*), merely pausing at the end of a breath to take its breath anew. The division into stronger and weaker bar-parts is a substitution of later date; the original church-melody knew nothing of such a division. For *it*, the root and coupling syllables were quite alike; Speech had no authority over it, but only an aptitude for being resolved into an emotional expression, whose substance was fear of the Lord and desire of Death. Only where the breath gave out, at the close of a melodic segment, did Word-speech take a share in the melody, through the rhyme of its ending syllable; and this rhyme was so definitely an affair of the melody's last-held note, that in the case of so-called feminine endings the short after-syllable alone needed to rhyme, and the rhyme of such a syllable was deemed a fitting pendant for a preceding or succeeding masculine end-rhyme: a positive proof of the absence of any *Rhythmik* in either this melody or this verse.

Finally divorced from this melody by the secular poet, the word-verse would have been



wholly unrecognisable as Verse, without its end-rhyme. Seeing that the breathing-periods did not so obviously mark off the lines, as in the chanted melody, and that the syllables were uniformly dwelt-on without the smallest distinction,—their *number*, the line's sole governing factor, could not have parcelled-off the verse-lines at all recognisably, had not the end-rhyme [245] so audibly denoted the moment of severance that it made good the lacking 'moment' of Melody, the taking of a fresh deep breath. This End-rhyme therefore, since it was also dwelt on as the stanza's rounding-off (*da auf ihm zugleich als auf dem scheidenden Versabsatze verweilt wurde*), acquired so weighty a significance for spoken verse, that all the other syllables of the line had to rank as a mere preparatory onset on its closing syllable, as a lengthened upstroke for the down-beat of the rhyme.

This movement towards the closing syllable was thoroughly in keeping with the character of the Romanic peoples' speech, which, after its heterogeneous mixing of fragments from alien and outlived tongues, had modelled itself in such a fashion, that the Feeling was completely debarred from any understanding of the primal roots. This we may learn the plainest from the French language, in which the speaking accent has become the absolute antithesis of an intonation of the root-syllables, such as must be natural to the Feeling when there still remains a vestige of connection with the roots of speech. The Frenchman never lays stress upon any but the final syllable of a word, however far ahead the root may lie, in compound or elongated words, and even if this final syllable is a mere inessential appendage. Moreover, in his phrase he drives all the words together into one monotonously hastening onset upon the closing word, or rather—the closing syllable; and on this he lingers with a strongly lifted accent, even when this closing word—as customary—is by no means the weightiest of the phrase: for, in direct opposition to this speaking accent, the Frenchman habitually constructs his phrase so as to drive all its determinative moments into its commencement; whereas the German, for instance, relegates them to its close. This strife between the Content of the phrase and its Expression through the speaking-accent, we may easily explain by the influence of the end-rhymed verse upon the speech of everyday. So soon as this latter is roused by any particular excitement, it involuntarily expresses itself [246] in accordance with the character of that verse, the remnant of the older melody; just as on the other hand the German, in a like event, speaks out in Stabreims—e.g. "Zittern und Zagen," "Schimpf und Schande."—

Thus the chief characteristic of the End-rhyme is, that, without any integral connection with the phrase, it appears as a help-in-need for establishing the Verse, and a help to which the expression of ordinary speech feels driven whenever it wishes to give utterance to a heightened emotion. As compared with the ordinary verbal expression, the end-rhymed verse is the attempt to communicate a heightened matter in such a way as to produce a corresponding impression on the Feeling, and this by very means of an expression differing from that of everyday.—This everyday expression, however, was the organ of communication between the Understanding on the one part and the Understanding on the other; through an expression different from this, through a *heightened* one, the communicator wanted, in a sense, to avoid the Understanding, i.e. to address himself just to that which differs from the Understanding, namely to the Feeling. This he sought to attain by rousing the physical organ of speech-reception—which took up the Understanding's message in a quite indifferent un-consciousness—to a consciousness of its functions, inasmuch as he sought to evoke in it a purely sensuous pleasure in the Expression itself. The word-verse which closes with an end-rhyme may well incite the sentient organ of hearing to give heed so far, that it feels captivated by the listening for a return of the rhyming period: but hereby it is only attuned to just giving heed, i.e. it falls into a state of strained expectancy, which must be *satisfied in the full capacity* of the hearing-organ if the latter is to be stirred into such active interest, and finally to be so completely contented, that it may transmit the delightful acquisition to man's

whole receptive-faculty. Only when the *whole* power of man's Feeling is completely stirred to interest in an object conveyed to it through a recipient sense, does that object win the force to expand its concentrated essence [247] again, in such a way as to bring the Understanding an infinitely enriched and sapid food. But as every communication is aimed at a *mutual-understanding*, so also the poet's aim at last makes only for a communication to the Understanding: to reach this positive understanding, however, he does not assume it in advance, in the quarter to which he addresses himself, but in a sense he wishes to get it first begotten by a comprehension of his aim; and the bearing-organ for this begetting is, so to say, man's Feeling-power. (136) This Feeling-power, however, is not a consenting party to that birth, until it has been set into the highest state of agitation through the thing received, and thus acquires the force for bearing. But this force comes first to it through Want (*Noth*), and Want through the overflow to which the thing received has thriven: only that which overburdens a bearing organism, compels it to the act of birth; and the bringing forth an understanding of the poetic-aim is the recipient Feeling's impartal of this aim to the inner Understanding,—which we must look on as the ending of the bearing Feeling's Want.

Now, the Word-poet, who cannot impart his Aim to the nearest recipient organ, that of Hearing, so amply that this organ shall be roused into that highest agitation wherein it is driven, in turn, to impart the thing received to the *whole* receptive-faculty,—the Word-poet, if he wants to enchain this organ for long, can only degrade and blunt it, when [248] he makes it forget, in a sense, its infinite capacity for reception,—or else he renounces all appeal to its infinite power of aid, and employs it again as a mere slavish go-between for the transference of thought to thought, for the parleying of the Understanding *with* the Understanding: which is as much as to say that the poet abandons his Aim, he ceases his *poesis*, he merely stirs in the recipient Understanding its stock of things already known, of things brought to it earlier through the senses; he arranges the old in new combinations, but imparts to it nothing new.—Through a mere enhancement of Word-speech by the rhymed verse, the poet can reach nothing beyond the forcing of the recipient ear to an unsympathetic, puerilely superficial attention, which—busied with its own object, just the inexpressive Word-rhyme—cannot at all extend its field *within*. The poet, whose Aim was not this mere arousal of so unsympathetic an attention, must at last look quite aside from the coöperation of the Feeling and try to dissipate again its fruitless stir, in order to be able once more to address the Understanding undisturbed.

*How* that highest, bearing power of the Feeling is alone to be aroused, we shall learn a little better when we have first inquired in what relation our modern Music stands to this rhythmic or end-rhymed verse of our modern Poetry, and what influence this verse has been able to exert on her.



Divorced from the Word-verse, which had cut itself adrift from her, Melody had gone on her own particular path of evolution. We have already followed this somewhat closely, and recognised that Melody—as the surface of an endlessly developed Harmony, and borne on the wings of a complex *Rhythmik* borrowed from the bodily Dance and unfolded into rankest fill—had inflated herself to the pitch of laying claim to govern Poetry and ordain the Drama, as a [249] self-dependent entity in Art Word-verse, likewise thriven to independence, could not exert any shaping influence upon this Melody, wherever it came in contact with her, on account of its ricketiness and incapacity for emotional expression; on the contrary, in any brush with Melody its own entire falsity and nothingness must come to open show. The

rhythmic-verse was resolved by Melody into its truly quite un-rhythmic factors, which then were newly patched together according to rhythmic Melody's absolute good-pleasure: while the End-rhyme was drowned, past any trace or hearing, in the mighty billows of her sound. When Melody held *strictly* to the Word-verse and arranged her ornament so as to bring into relief the *sensuous* purpose of its structure, she disclosed the very thing in this verse which the intelligent declaimer, concerned for an understanding of its Content, had thought needful to conceal: namely its poverty-stricken outward Setting (*Fassung*), which disfigured the right pronunciation of the words and confounded all their meaning. This Setting might do the smallest harm, when it was not markedly driven-in upon the senses; but it cut off all possibility of the Content's being understood, so soon as ever it aired its own importance before the sense of hearing and thus induced the latter to post itself as a rigid barrier between the message and the inner receptivity. Moreover, when Melody thus subordinated herself to the Word-verse, when she contented herself with giving its rhymes and rhythms just precisely the roundness of her singing tone, then she not only exposed the lie and ugliness of the verse's sensuous Setting—together with the stultification of its Content,—but she robbed her self of all power of shewing herself in sensuous beauty and raising the verse's Content to an enthralling 'moment'-of-Feeling.

Wherefore that Melody which remained conscious of her aptitude for infinite emotional-expression,—acquired on Music's own domain,—paid no heed at all to the sensuous setting of the Word-verse, since it must grievously affect her shaping from her own resources. She [250] chose instead the task of announcing herself, entirely *for* herself as independent vocal-melody, in an expression which rendered the emotional-content of the words according to its broadest generality; and indeed in a specifically musical setting, toward which the word-verse merely held the position of the explanatory label beneath a painting.

Where the melody did not go so far as to cast away the Content of the verse, and employ the vowels and consonants of its syllables as a mere material for the singer's mouth to chew, there the connecting bond between the verse and melody remained the *speaking accent*.—Gluck's endeavour, as I have already mentioned, was only directed to gaining from the speaking accent a vindication for the melodic accent, which before his time had been mostly wayward as regards the verse. If, however, in his sole concern for a melodically-strengthened but otherwise faithful reproduction of the natural speaking-expression, the musician held to the *rhetorical accent* as the only thing that could afford a natural and intelligible bond between the talk and the melody,—then he had at like time to *completely upset the verse*: for he had to lift out of it the Accent, as the only thing to be dwelt on, and must let fall all the other intonations, whether of an imaginary prosodic 'quantity' or of the end-rhyme. He thus passed over the Verse for the same reasons as those which decided the intelligent actor to speak it as naturally-accented Prose. But the musician herewith *dissolved into prose* not only the verse, but also his own melody; for, of that melody which merely reinforced by Tone the rhetorical accent of a verse already disbanded into prose, there remained nothing over but a *musical prose*.

As a matter of fact the whole dispute, in the different conceptions of Melody, has revolved round the question as to whether, and how, the melody should be governed by the word-verse. The ready-made melody, essentially obtained from Dance—the melody as which alone our modern ear can conceive the essence of Melody at all—will by no manner of means accommodate itself to the [251] speaking-accent of the word-verse. This accent shews itself now in this, now in that member of the verse, and never returns to the same position in the verse-line; because our poets have flattered their fancy with the will-o'-the-wisp of either a prosodically rhythmic verse, or a verse become melodic through its end-rhyme, and for sake of this phantom have forgotten to take for the verse's only rhythm-setting 'moment' the actual living Accent of Speech. Nay, in non-prosodic verse these poets have not even paid heed to

definitely placing their speaking-accent on the only landmark of this verse, its End-rhyme; but the more habituated they have become to the use of rhyme, the more frequently have they taken any entirely un-emphasised end-syllable and used it for an end-rhyme.

But a melody can only stamp itself at all seizably upon the ear, through its containing a repetition of definite melodic moments in a definite rhythm; if such moments either do not return at all, or make themselves unrecognisable by returning upon parts of the bar which do not rhythmically correspond, then the melody lacks the very bond of union which first makes of it a melody,—just as the word-verse first becomes a genuine verse through a precisely similar bond. A melody thus united in itself, however, will not fit a word-verse which only possesses this uniting bond in imagination, and not in reality: here the speech-accent, to be emphasised according to the verse's *sense* alone, does not answer to the necessary return of the melismic and rhythmic accents of the melody, and the Musician who does not wish to sacrifice his melody, but to give it forth before all else,—since in it alone can he intelligibly address the Feeling,—sees himself therefore compelled to regard the speech-accent only where it *accidentally* coincides with the melody. But this is tantamount to giving up all cohesion of the melody with the verse: for, once the musician leaves the speaking accent out of count, far less can he feel any compunction as to the verse's imaginary prosodic rhythm, and at last he treats this verse [252] —the original instigating 'moment of speech'—purely and solely according to his melodic good pleasure; a course in which he feels completely justified, so long as he remembers to render as effectively as possible, in his melody, the general emotional-contents of the verse.

Had the Poet ever come by a genuine longing to raise his vehicle of Speech to the persuasive plenitude of Melody, then he must first of all have bestirred himself to so employ the speaking Accent as the only measure-giving 'moment' for his verse, that in its symmetrical return (*entsprechenden Wiederkehr*) it should establish a wholesome Rhythmos, as necessary to the verse itself as to the melody. But we nowhere see the slightest trace of this: or if we recognise a trace, it is where the verse-maker gives up *à priori* all pretence of a poetic aim; where he proposes, not to create (*dichten*), but, as the Absolute Musician's humble servant and word-purveyor, to merely patch together certain counted-out and rhyming syllables, with which the Musician, in supreme contempt for the words, then does whatever he listeth.

How significant it is, on the other hand, that certain beautiful verses of Goethe's—verses in which the poet bestirred himself, so far as in him lay, to reach a certain melodic swing—are commonly designated by musicians as *too beautiful*, too perfect for musical setting! The truth of the thing is, that a musical setting completely answering the sense of these verses, too, would resolve them into prose, and from out this prose must first *re-bear* them as an independent melody; for our musical Feeling is instinctively aware that that *verse-melody* withal is a mere *imaginary* one, its semblance a pretty fiction of the Phantasy, and thus that it is a melody quite other than the Musical one, which has to manifest itself in altogether definite and sensible reality. If, then, we hold those verses too beautiful to set to music, we are only saying that it pains us to think of destroying them as Verse,—a thing we [253] allow ourselves to do with fewer qualms of conscience, whenever a less respectable effort of the poet is placed before us. But at the same time we thus admit, that we can form no idea of a correct relation between Verse and Melody.

The most recent melodist, after he had passed in review all the fruitless attempts at devising a mutually redeeming, a creatively furthering union of the Word-verse with the

Tone-melody, and above all had observed the evil influence which a faithful reproduction of the Speaking-accent exerted on the Melody, even to its distortion into a kind of musical prose,—this melodist, so soon as on the other hand he declined to disfigure or completely give the lie to the verse through a frivolous melody, saw himself induced to compose melodies wherein he might altogether avoid any vexatious contact with Verse; which he respected in itself but found a drag on Melody. He named his product "*Songs without Words*"; and very properly must songs-*without-words* be the outcome of disputes in which one could only come to an issue by leaving them unsettled.—This now so favourite "Song without words" is the faithful translation of our whole music into the language of the pianoforte, for the use of our art-commercial-travellers. In it, the Musician tells the Poet: "Do as you please, and I will do as *I* please! We shall get on best together, when we have nothing to do with each other."—

Let us now see how we are so to get at this "Musician without Words," through the driving force of the highest Poetic-aim, that we may lift him off his quilted piano-stool, and place him in a world of highest artistic faculty; which shall open out to him at last the begetting power of the *Word*,—of the Word, whereof he disembarrassed himself with such feminine ease,—of the Word which *Beethoven* got born for him from out the giant labour-pains of Music!



[254]

## II.

IF we want to keep on reasonable terms with Life, we have to win *from the Prose of our ordinary speech* the heightened Expression in which the poetic Aim shall manifest itself in all its potence to the Feeling. A verbal expression which tears asunder the bond of connection with ordinary speech, by basing its physical manifestment on imported 'moments' foreign to the nature of our ordinary speech—such as that prosodic rhythm above-denoted,—can only bewilder the Feeling.

In modern speech no other intonations are employed than those of the prosaic *speaking-accent*, which has no fixed dwelling in the natural stress of the Root-syllables, but in each fresh phrase is lodged *wherever* needful for the *purpose* of an understanding of one particular aim, in keeping with that phrase's sense. The speech of modern daily life differs from the older, poetic speech in this: that, for sake of an understanding, it needs a far more copious use of words and clauses, than did the other. In our language of daily life we discuss matters having no more touch with the meaning of our own roots of speech, than they have with Nature at large; it therefore has to take the most complicated turns and twists, in order to paraphrase the meanings of primitive or imported speech-roots—which have become altered or newly accommodated to our social relations and views, and in any case estranged from our Feeling,—and thus to bring them to a conventional understanding. As our sentences are diffuse and endlessly expanded, to admit this apparatus of accommodation, they would be made completely unintelligible if the speaking-accent gave prominence to the root-syllables by a frequent emphasis. A comprehension of these phrases must have [255] its path smoothed for it, by the accent being employed but very sparingly, and only for their weightiest moments; whereas all the remaining moments, however weighty the significance of their roots, must naturally be left entirely un-emphasised, for very reason of their frequency.

If, now, we give a little thought to what we have to understand by the compression and concentration of the moments-of-action and their motives, as necessary to a realisation of the poetic Aim; and if we recognise that these operations, again, can only be effected through a similarly compressed and concentrated Expression: then we shall be driven at once to see *how*



we have to deal with our language. Just as we cut away from these 'moments' of action, and for their sakes from their conditioning motives, all that was accidental, petty, and indefinite; just as we had to remove from their Content all that disfigured it from outside, all that savoured of the State, of pragmatically Historical and dogmatically Religious,— in order to display that Content as a purely Human one and dictated by the Feeling: so also have we to cut away from the verbal expression all that springs from, and answers to, these disfigurements of the Purely-human and Feeling-bidden (*des Gefühlsnothwendigen*); and to remove it in such a way that this purely-human core shall alone remain.—But the very thing which marred the purely-human content of a verbal utterance, is the same which so stretched out the Phrase that its speaking-accent had to be most sparingly distributed, while a disproportionate number of the words must necessarily be left un-emphasised. So that the poet, who wanted to assign a prosodic weight to these un-emphasisable words, gave himself up to a complete illusion; as to which a conscientious scanning of his verse, out loud, must have in so far enlightened him, as he saw the phrase's sense disfigured and made unintelligible by such a method of delivery. Certainly, the beauty of a verse has hitherto consisted in the poet's having Cut away from his phrase, as much as possible, whatever auxiliary words too cumbrously hedged-in its Main-accent: [256] he has sought for the simplest expressions, needing the fewest go-betweens, in order to bring his Accents closer together; and for this purpose he has also freed his subject-matter, as much as he could, from a burdensome Surrounding of historico-social and state-religious relations and conditionings. But the poet has never heretofore been able to bring this to such a point, that he could impart his subject unconditionally to the Feeling and nothing else,—any more than he has brought his vehicle of expression to a like enhancement; for this enhancement to the highest pitch of emotional utterance could only have been reached precisely in an ascension of the verse into the melody,—an ascension which, as we have seen because we *must* see, has not as yet been rendered feasible. Where the poet, however, has believed that he had condensed the speaking-verse itself into a pure moment-of-Feeling, without this ascension of his verse into actual Melody, *there* neither he, nor the object of his portrayal, has been comprehended either any longer by the Understanding, or by the Feeling. We all know verses of this sort, the attempts of our greatest poets to tune Words, without music, into Tones.

Only *that* poetic Aim whose nature we have already explained above, and in its necessary thrust toward realisation, can succeed in so freeing the prose-phrase of modern speech from all its mechanical apparatus of qualifying words, that the genuine Accents may be drawn together into a swiftly-seizable message. A faithful observance of the mode of expression we employ when our Feeling is highly wrought, even in ordinary life, will supply the poet with an unailing measure for the number of accents in a natural Phrase. In frank emotion, when we let go all conventional consideration for the spun-out modern phrase, we try to express ourselves briefly and to the point, and if possible, *in one breath*. But in this succinct expression we emphasise far more strongly than usual—through the force of feeling—and also shift our accents closer together; while, to make these accents *impress* the [257] hearer's Feeling as forcibly as we want to *express* in them our own feelings, we dwell on them with sharply lifted voice. These Accents round themselves instinctively into a phrase, or a main section of a phrase, during the outflow of the breath, and their number will always stand in direct ratio to the excitement; so that, for instance, an ireful, an *active* emotion will allow a greater number of Accents to be emitted in one breath, whereas a deep, a *suffering* one will consume the whole breath-force in fewer, more long-drawn tones.—

The Accents being governed by the breath, and shaping themselves to either a whole phrase or a substantial section of a phrase according to the subject of expression, the poet will therefore regulate their number by the particular emotion to which he gives his immediate sympathy; and he will see to it that his coil of words is rid of that excess of auxiliary and

explanatory lesser-words peculiar to the complicated phrase of Literature: at least so far, that their numerical bulk—despite the slurring of their intonation—shall not consume the breath in vain.—The harm of our complex modern phrase, as regards the expression of Feeling, has consisted in its being overstocked with unemphatic side-words, which have taken up the speaker's breath to such an extent that, already exhausted, or for sake of 'saving' himself (*aus sparerer Vorsicht*), he could only briefly dwell on the main-accent; and thus an understanding of the hastily accented main-word could only be imparted to the Understanding, but not to the Feeling: since it needs the *fulness* of a sensuous expression, to rouse the Feeling's interest.—In a compact construction the side-words, merely retained by the poet in their smallest necessary number, will behave to the words emphasised by the Speaking-accent like the mute consonants to the sounding vowels, which they enclose in order to individualise and condense them from a vague ejaculation (*aus einem allgemeinen Empfindungsdrucke*) to an expression illustrative of a particular object. A massing of consonants around a vowel, without any justification before the Feeling, [258] robs that vowel of all emotional ring; just as a massing of side-words around a main-word, when merely dictated by the meddling Understanding, shuts-off that main-word from the Feeling. In the eyes of Feeling, a doubling or trebling of the consonant is only of necessity when the vowel thereby gains a drastic colouring, in harmony with a drastic property of the object which the root expresses; and in the same way, an extra number of subsidiary words is only justified before the Feeling when the accented main-word is specifically enhanced thereby in its expression, but not when it is lamed—as in the modern phrase.

We thus arrive at the natural basis of Rhythm, in the spoken verse, as displayed in the *liftings and lowerings* (Hebungen und Senkungen) of the accent; while this accent's utmost definiteness and endless variety can only come to light through its intensifying into Musical Rhythm.



Whatever number of liftings of the voice we may decide-on for one breath, and thus for one phrase or segment of a phrase, in keeping with the mood to be expressed, yet they will never be of equal strength among themselves. In the first place a *completely equal strength* of accents is not permitted by the sense of a clause, which always contains both *conditioning* and *conditioned* 'moments,' and, according to its character, either lifts the *conditionor* above the *conditionee*, or the other way about. But neither does the Feeling permit an equal strength of accents; since the Feeling, of all others, can only be roused to interest (*Theilnahme*) by an easily grasped and physically marked *distinction* between the moments of expression. Though we shall have to learn that this interest is finally to be determined the most surely through a Modulation of the musical tone, for the present we will neglect that means of enhancement, and merely bring home to ourselves the [259] influence which an unequal strength of accents must necessarily exert upon the Rhythm of the phrase.

Now that we have drawn the Accents together and freed them from their surrounding load of side-words, and mean to shew their differentiation into weaker and stronger ones, we can only do it in a way that shall completely answer to the *good and bad halves of the musical bar*, or—which is the same thing at bottom—to the 'good and bad' bars of a musical period. But these good and bad bars, or half-bars, only make themselves known to the Feeling, as such, through their standing in a mutual relation whose path, again, is paved and lighted by the smaller, intermediate fractions of the bar. Were the good and bad half-bars to stand entirely naked side by side—as in the *chorales* of the Church—they could only make themselves known to Feeling as the merest ridge and hollow of the accent, (137) whereby the 'bad' bar-halves of a period must entirely lose their own accent, and in fact would cease to count at all as such: only by the intervening fractions of the bar acquiring rhythmic life, and



being brought to a share in the accent of the bar-halves, can the weaker accent of the 'bad' half-bars be also made to tell.—Now, the accented Word-phrase governs of itself the characteristic relation of those bar-fractions to the bar-halves, and that through the *hollows* of the accent and the ratio of these 'hollows' to the 'ridges.' In ordinary pronunciation the unemphatic words and syllables, which we place on the slope of the wave, mount upwards to the main-accent through a swelling of the emphasis, and fall away again through a slacking of the emphasis. The point to which they fall, and from which they mount to a fresh main-accent, is the weaker, minor accent, which—in keeping with both the *sense* and the *expression* of the phrase—is governed by the main-accent [260] as much as is the planet by the fixed star. The number of preparatory or after (*nachfallende*) syllables depends solely on the sense of the poetic diction; of which, however, we presuppose that it shall express itself in utmost succinctness. But the more necessary it may seem to the poet, to increase the number of his preparatory or after syllables, so much the more characteristically is he thus enabled to liven the rhythm and give the Accent itself a special importance,—just as, on the other hand, he may specialise the character of an Accent by placing it close beside the following one, *without* any preparation or afterthought.

His power here is boundless in variety: but he cannot become fully conscious of it, until he intensifies the rhythm of the Speaking-accent into the rhythm of Music, in its endless livening by Dance's varied motion. The purely musical beat affords the poet possibilities of speech-expression which he was forced to forego, from the outset, for his merely spoken word-verse. In merely spoken verse the poet had to restrict the number of syllables in a 'hollow' to two at the utmost, since with *three* he could not have avoided an emphasis being placed on one of them, which naturally would have thrown his verse awry at once. This false accentuation he would never have had to fear, if genuine prosodic longs and shorts had stood at his behest; but since he could only allot his emphasis to the speaking-accent; and since its incidence must be assumed as possible on every root-syllable, for sake of the verse,—it passed his wit to find a means of indicating the proper accent so unmistakably, that it should not be given to root-syllables on which he wished *no* emphasis to be placed. We are here speaking, of course, of verses communicated by means of writing, and read as written: the living Verse, un-belonging to literature, we have in nowise to understand as without its rhythmic-musical Melody; and if we take a good look at the monuments of Grecian Lyric which have come down to us, we shall find that a merely recited Greek verse presents us with the embarrassment [261] —whenever we deliver it in accordance with the instinctive accentuation of Speech—of placing the accent on syllables which were left unemphasised in the original rhythmic melody, *as being included in the upstroke*. In merely spoken verse we can never employ more than two syllables in the 'hollow,' because more than two syllables would at once displace the correct accent, and the resulting dissolution of the Verse would force us into the necessity of speaking it out as nothing but a washy Prose.

The truth is, that in spoken, or to-be-spoken verse we lack the 'moment' that might fix the duration of the crest of the wave (*Hebung*) in such a way, that by it we could accurately measure out the hollows. According to our sheer pronouncing powers, we cannot stretch the duration of an accented syllable beyond the length of two unaccented syllables, without falling into the fault of drawling, or—as in fact we call it—"sing-song." In ordinary speech this "sing-song," where it does not really become an actual singing and thus completely do away with ordinary speech, is rightly held for a fault; for, as a mere toneless drawling of the vowel, or even of a consonant, it is rightdown ugly. Yet at the bottom of this tend to drawling—where it is not a sheer habit of dialect, but shews itself involuntarily, in an access of emotion—there lies a something which our Prosodists and Metricists would have done well to regard, when they set themselves the task of explaining Grecian metres. They had nothing in ear but our hurried speaking-accent, cut loose from the melody of Feeling, when they

invented the measure by which two 'shorts' must always go to one 'long'; the explanation of Greek metres, in which six or more 'shorts' are matched at times by two or even a single 'long,' must have readily occurred to them if they had had in ear for that so-called 'long' the *long-held note of a musical bar*, such as those Lyrists still had at least in *their* ear when they varied the setting of words to known Folk-melodies. This sustained and rhythmically measured Tone, however, is a thing the poet of our speaking-verse had no longer in his ear, whereas he now knew only the [262] brief-lived accent of Speech. But if we hold fast by this Tone, whose duration we not only can accurately determine in the musical bar but also divide into its rhythmic fractions in the most varied manner, then we shall obtain in those fractions the rhythmically vindicated, the meaningfully distributed, melodic moments-of-expression for the syllables of the 'hollow'; while their number will have solely to be regulated by the sense of the phrase and the intended effect of the expression, since we have found in the musical beat the certain Measure in accordance with which they cannot fail of coming to an understanding.

This beat, however, the poet has to regulate solely by the Expression he intends; he himself must make it into a knowable Measure, and not have it haply thrust on him as such. This he does by distributing the Accents, whether stronger or weaker, in such sort that they shall form a phrase- or breathing-segment to which a following one may correspond, and that this following one may appear necessarily conditioned by the first; for only in a necessary, an enforcing or assuaging repetition, can a weighty moment-of-expression display itself intelligibly to Feeling. The arrangement of the stronger and weaker accents is therefore what sets the Measure for the particular kind of beat, and for the rhythmic structure of the 'period.'—Let us now gain an idea of such a measure-setting arrangement, as issuing from the poet's Aim.

We will take the case of an expression which is of such a character as to allow the emphasising of three accents in one breath, whereof the first is the strongest, the second the weakest (as is almost always to be assumed in such a case), and the third again a lifted one: here the poet would instinctively arrange a phrase of two even bars, whereof the first would have the strongest accent on its 'good' half, and on its 'bad' half the weaker one, while the second bar would have the third, the other lifted accent on its down-beat. The 'bad' half of the second bar would serve for taking breath, and for the upstroke toward the first bar of the second rhythmic phrase, which must suitably [263] reiterate its predecessor. In this phrase the 'hollows' would mount as an upstroke for the down-beat of the first bar, and fall away as a downstroke to its 'bad half'; from which, again, they would mount to the 'good half' of the second bar. Any strengthening of the *second* accent, as called-for by the sense of the phrase, would be easily effected rhythmically (apart from a melodic rise of pitch) by allowing either the depression between it and the first accent, or the upstroke toward the third, to completely drop out,—which must necessarily draw increased attention to just this intermediate accent.—

I trust that this illustration—to which a host of others might readily be added—will suffice to indicate the endless variety of *common-sense* (sinnvollen) rhythmic devices at the service of the Word-verse, when its speaking-expression, in entire keeping with its Content, makes up its mind to the necessary ascension into musical Melody, and in such a way that it predetermines the melody as the realisation of its own intrinsic aim. Through the number, position, and importance of the Accents, and through the greater or lesser volubility (*Beweglichkeit*) of the 'hollows' between the 'ridges,' and their exhaustless relations to the latter, the sheer faculty of Speech itself affords so ample a variety of rhythmic forms, that their wealth, and the thence-sprung fecundation of man's purely Musical powers, must only shew itself still more immeasurable through each fresh art-creation that issues from the Poet's inner stress.



The rhythmically-accented verse of Speech has already brought us so close to the held tone of Song, that we now must necessarily draw nearer to the matter lying at its bottom.

If we continue to keep this one thing in eye, that the Poetic Aim can only be realised through its complete transmission from the Understanding to the Feeling: then [264] here, where we are busied with figuring the *act* of realisation through that transmission, we must examine closely into the capacity of each factor of Expression for a direct communication to the senses; since the Feeling can only apprehend directly through the senses. With this end in view, we had to cut away from the Word-phrase all that made it unimpressive to the Feeling, all that made it a sheer organ of the Understanding; we thereby compressed its Content to a purely human one and seizable by the Feeling, and we gave this Content a just as compact verbal Expression: inasmuch as, by drawing them closer to one another (and especially through a repetition of their sequence), we lifted the necessary Accents of emotional discourse to a Rhythm instinctively entralling to the ear.

Now, the Accents, of a phrase thus ordered, cannot fall anywhere but on parts of speech in which the purely human Content, the thing seizable by Feeling, expresses itself the most decisively; therefore they will always fall on those significant root-syllables wherein was originally expressed by us, not only a definite object seizable by the Feeling, but also the sensation (*Empfindung*) which answers to that object's impression (138) upon us.

Until we are able, so to say, to 'feel back' our sensations—made utterly unintelligible to ourselves by State-politics or religious dogmas—and thus to reach their original truth, we shall never be in a position to grasp the sensuous substance of our *roots of speech*. What scientific research has disclosed to us, can only instruct the Understanding, but never bring the Feeling to an understanding of them; and no scientific instruction, were it made so popular as to reach down to even our Folk-schools, would be able to wake this understanding of our speech. Only from an unruffled, a loving intercourse with Nature, from a necessary Need for purely human understanding of her: in short, it can only come from a *Want*, such as the Poet feels when he is [265] driven to impart himself with convincing sureness to the Feeling.—Science has laid bare to us the organism of speech; but what she shewed us was a *defunct* organism, which only the Poet's utmost *Want* can bring to life again: and that by healing up the wounds with which the anatomic scalpel has gashed the body of Speech, and by breathing into it the breath that may ensoul it into living motion. *But this breath is—Music.*—

Pining for redemption, the Poet stands at present in the winter frost of Speech, and looks yearningly across the snow-flats of pragmatic prose, with which are cloaked the erst so richly dizen'd fields, the sweet countenance of loving Mother Earth. But here and there, under the warm gushes of his sorrowing breath, the stubborn snow begins to melt; and lo I—from out Earth's bosom sprout before him fresh green buds, shooting forth all new and lush from the ancient roots he took for dead,—until at last the sun of a new and never-aging human springtide mounts aloft, dissolves away the snow, and lets the buds all burgeon into fragrant blossoms welcoming the sun with smiling eye.—

In those old primal roots, as in the roots of plants and trees—so long as they still can keep an anchorage in the solid soil of Earth,—there must be dwelling an ever new-creative force, if so be they are not yet torn completely from the soil of the Folk itself. Beneath the frosty mantle of its civilisation the Folk preserves, in the instinctiveness of its natural mode of speech, the roots through which it holds to the soil of Nature; and everyone may come by an instinctive understanding of them, if he turns from the hubbub of our State-society conversation to seek a loving intercourse with Nature, and thus unbars these roots to his Feeling, through an 'unconscious' use of their *kindred* properties. The Poet, however, is the

*knower of the unconscious*, the aimful demonstrator of the instinctive; the Feeling, which he fain would manifest to fellow-feeling, teaches him the expression he must use; but his Understanding shews him the Necessity of that expression. If the poet, who thus speaks from consciousness to unconsciousness, [266] would fain take count of the natural sway (*Zwang*) which bids him use *this* expression and none other, then he learns to know the nature of this expression; and, in his impulse to impart, he wins from that nature the power of mastering this expression itself in all its necessity.—Now, if the poet pries into the nature of the word which is forced upon him by his Feeling, as the only word to fit an object or an emotion woken by that object, he discovers this constraining force in the *root* of this word, which has been invented or found (*erfunden oder gefunden*) through the Necessity of man's earliest emotional stress. If he plunges deeper into the organism of this Root, in order to track the emotion-swaying force he knows must dwell within it, since that force has made so determinant an impression on his Feeling,—then he perceives at last the fountain of that force in the purely *sensuous* body of this root; whose primal substance is the *open sound*.

This Open-sound is the embodied inner feeling, which wins the stuff for its embodiment in the moment of its outward manifestal, and wins, indeed, precisely that stuff which manifests itself—according to the particularity of the stimulus—through the vowel of this root. In this uttering of the inner feeling there also lies the strenuous reason why the root arouses the corresponding inner feeling of the fellow-man to whom that utterance reaches; and this emotional-sway—if the poet would bring it to bear on others in the way he has experienced it himself—can only be effected through the greatest fulness in the enunciation of the open-sound wherein alone the specific inner feeling can impart itself the most exhaustively and convincingly.

But this Open-sound, whose full enunciation becomes quite of itself a Musical Tone, is regulated in the speech-root by the *closed sounds* (*Mitlauter*), which convert it from a moment of *general* expression into the particular expression of this one object, or of this one emotion. The Consonant thus has two chief functions, which, on account of their decisive weightiness, we have accurately to note.



[267]

The first function of the *consonant* consists in this: that it raises the open-sound of the root to a definite characteristic, by firmly hedging-in its infinitely fluid element, and through the lines of this delimitation it brings to the vowel's colour, in a sense, the drawing which makes of it an exactly distinguishable shape. This function of the consonant is consequently the one turned *outward* from the vowel. Its object is to definitely sever from the vowel whatever is to be differentiated therefrom, and to place itself as a sort of boundary-fence between the two. This important position the consonant takes up *before* the vowel, as its initial sound (*Anlaut*). As a terminal sound (*Ablaut*), *after* the vowel, the consonant is of less importance for hedging it from without, inasmuch as the vowel must already have shewn itself in its characteristic quality before the sounding of the terminal, and the latter will therefore be more conditioned by the vowel itself, as its necessary set-off (*Absatz*). On the other hand, the consonantal closing sound is of determinative weight whenever it is so strengthened as to affect the sound of the vowel, and thus is raised, itself, into the characteristic moment of the root.

We shall return to the influence exerted by the consonant upon the vowel itself. For the present we have to deal with its outward function, and this it exercises the most determinatively in its position *before* the vowel, as an initial sound. In this situation the consonant shews us, in a sense, the countenance (*Angesicht*) of the root, whose body is filled by the vowel's warmly streaming blood, and whose hinder side is turned from the eye, in the



terminal. If we may understand by the root's "countenance" the whole physiognomic exterior of man, which he turns to face us as we meet him, we shall gain an accurate designation for the decisory importance of the initial consonant. In it the Individuality of the oncoming root is first shewn us; just as man first shews himself as an individual through his physiognomic exterior, and by this exterior we hold until the inner being has been able to display itself to us through a broader unfolding. This physiognomic surface of the [268] speech-root imparts itself—so to say—to the eye of our *speech-intelligence*; and to this eye the poet has to commend it in the most effective way, if he is seeking to bring his shapings before eye and ear alike, so as to gain full comprehension by the Feeling. But, just as one phenomenon, among many, can rivet the ear's intelligent attention only through presenting itself in a repetition which does not fall to the others' lot, and in virtue of this repetition it is singled out by the ear as a salient feature of especial interest: so also to the "eye" of Hearing it is necessary that there should be a repeated presentation of any phenomenon which is to display itself as a distinct and definitely knowable thing. Only through the enunciation of at least two corresponding Accents, in a connexion embracing both the subject and the predicate, could the rhythmic word-phrase—knit according to the breath's necessity—intelligibly impart the meaning of its Content. In his thrust to open up to *Feeling* an understanding of the phrase as an utterance of *feeling*, and in his consciousness that this thrust can be satisfied only through the keenest interest of the directly recipient sense-organ, the poet has now to commend these Accents to the Hearing in the most effective manner possible; and to do this, he must present them in a garb which not only shall distinguish them completely from the unemphasised root-words of the phrase, but shall also make this distinction obvious to the "eye" of Hearing by displaying itself as a *like*, a kindred garb of *both the accents*. The physiognomic likeness of the root-words, accented according to the sense of language, (139) makes them swiftly recognisable by that "eye," and shews them in a kinship which is not [269] only swiftly seizable by the sensory organ, but is in truth indwelling also in the *sense* of the root.

The *sense* of a root is the 'objective' sensation embodied therein (140); but first by its *embodiment* does a sensation become *understandable*, and this body itself is alike a *sensuous* one, and one that can be determinately apprehended by nothing but the answering sense of Hearing. The poet's utterance will therefore be a swiftry understandable one, if he concentrates the to-be-expressed sensation to its inmost essence (*Gehalt*); and this inmost essence will necessarily be a *unitarian* (*einheitliche*) one, in the kinship of its conditioning and its conditioned moments. But a unitarian sensation instinctively utters itself in a uniform (*einheitlichen*) mode of *expression*; and this uniform expression wins its fullest enablement from that *oneness* of the speech-root which reveals itself in a kinship of the conditioning and conditioned chief-moments of the phrase. A sensation [or "emotion"] such as can vindicate its own expression through the *Stabreim* of rootwords which call instinctively for emphasis, (141) is comprehensible to us beyond all doubt,—provided the kinship of the roots is not deliberately disfigured and made unknowable through the sense of the phrase, as in our modern speech; and only when this sensation, so expressed, has brought our Feeling to instinctively grasp it as *one thing*, does that Feeling warrant any mixing of it with another. In the *Stabreim*, again, poetic speech has an infinitely potent means of making a *mixed* sensation swiftly understandable by the already biased (*bereits bestimmten*) Feeling; and this means we may likewise call a *sensuous* one,—in the significance that it, too, is grounded on a comprehensive, and withal a definite *sense* in the speech-root. In the first place, the purely sensuous aspect of the *Stabreim* is able to unite the physical expression of one sensation with that of another, in such a way that the [270] union shall be keenly perceptible to the ear, and caress it by its naturalness. But further—through this innate power of the similar 'clang'—the *sense* of the *Stabreim*-ed rootword which introduces the fresh sensation already dawns upon the ear as one *essentially akin*, i.e. as an antithesis included in the genus of the

main-sensation; and now, in all its general affinity with the first-expressed sensation, it is transmitted through the captivated Hearing to the Feeling, and onward through this, at last, to the Understanding itself. (142)

In this respect the capacity of the immediate receiver, Hearing, is so unbounded that it can knit the farthest-removed sensations, so soon as ever they are brought it in a physiognomic resemblance, and can transfer them to the Feeling as kindred, purely human ones. Against this all-embracing, all-uniting power of the sentient organ, what boots the naked Understanding? which foregoes this wonder-help, and degrades the sense of hearing to a servile porter for its bales of industrial goods! This sentient organ is so self-surrendering to him who lovingly addresses it, so lavish with its fund of love, that it can take the subversive Understanding's myriad tatters, remake them as a Purely-human, a first and last and ever One, and offer them to the Feeling for its highest, most enravishing delight.—Draw nigh this glorious sense, ye Poets! But draw nigh it as entire men, in full trust! Give it the amplest ye can ever compass, and what your Understanding nevermore can bind; this sense will bind it up for you, and give it back as an unending whole. So come to it with all your hearts, and eye to eye; offer it your countenance, the visage of the Word,—but not the hinder draggled side, which ye trail dully after you in the End-rhyme of your prosaic talk, and try to palm upon the ear,—just as though the payment of this childish tinkle, which one offers as a sop to savages and fools, would earn your words unhindered entrance through its gateway to the brain's unresting threshing-ground. [271] The Ear is no child; it is a staunch and loving woman, who in her love will make that man the blessedest who brings *in himself* the fullest matter for her bliss.



And how little as yet we have offered this Ear, with our mere bringing it the consonantal Stabreim; albeit, through *that* alone, it has already opened-up to us the understanding of all Speech! Let us search farther, and see how this understanding of Speech may raise itself to the highest understanding of Man, through the utmost arousal of the Ear.—

We have to return once more to the Consonant; to set it before us in its second function.—

The force that enables it to present to the Ear the seemingly most diverse objects and feelings, as allied through their initial rhyme,—this outward efficacy the Consonant acquired from nothing but its situation towards the sounding Vowel of the root, in which, again, it exercises its *inward* function through determining that vowel's character.—Just as the consonant hedges the vowel from without, so does it also bound the vowel within: i.e. it determines the specific nature of the latter's manifestment, through the roughness or smoothness of its inward contact therewith. (143) This weighty inward working of the consonant, however, brings us into so direct a contact with the vowel, that our comprehension of it must largely depend on a consideration of [272] the vowel itself, to which we are irresistiblypointed as the intrinsic content of the root.

We have called the enclosing consonants the garment of the vowel, or more precisely, its physiognomic exterior. In view of their inward agency, let us call them still more accurately the fleshy covering of the human body, organically ingrown with the interior; we thus shall gain a faithful image of the essence both of Consonant and Vowel, as well as of their organic relations to one another.— If we take the vowel for the whole *inner organism* of man's living body, which prescribes from out itself the shaping of its outward show, as offered to the eye of the beholder: then we have to ascribe to the consonants—beyond the outward function of displaying themselves to the eye, as that aforesaid show — the additional weighty office of bringing to the inner organism, through the branching conduits of the sense-organs, those outward impressions which in turn determine this inner organism to a particular employment of its faculty of utterance. Just as the fleshy covering of the human body has a skin which hedges it outwards from the eye, so has it also a skin turned inwards to the inner vital organs

(144): yet through this inner skin it is nowise completely sundered from these organs, but clings together with them in such a fashion as to win from them its nourishment and power of outward shaping.—The blood, that bodily sap which in unbroken flow alone can mete out life, this blood drives onward from the heart, in virtue of that connection of the fleshy covering with the inner organs, and thrusts to the outermost skin of this flesh; from thence, leaving behind it the needful nourishment, it flows back to the heart again; and the heart, as though in an overflow of inner riches, now pours forth through the lungs—which had brought the outer air-stream [273] for the blood's enlivenment and freshening—this air-stream pregnant with its own impassioned content, this directest outward manifestal of its inmost living warmth.—This heart is the *open sound*, in its richest, least dependent energy. Its livening blood, which it outwardly condensed into the consonant, it turns back from this consonant to its primal seat, since its overflow could never be consumed in that condensation; and now, with its blood directly livened by the air-stream, the heart in utmost fulness breathes *itself* without.

Toward Without the inner man, as a *tone*-emitter, addresses himself to Hearing; just as his outer shape had turned toward Sight We have recognised the consonant as this *outer* shape of the root-vowel; and, since vowel and consonant alike addressed the *Hearing*, we were obliged to figure this Hearing as endowed with both a hearing and a seeing faculty, so as to claim the latter's service for the consonant—as it were, the outer speaking man. In the *Stabreim* we have pictured this consonant in its outermost and weightiest function, as regards both sense and sound, and it there displayed itself to the Hearing's "eye": on the other hand the vowel, whose innate vitalising property we have lately learnt, imparts itself to the very "ear" of Hearing. But only when it is able to display its utmost quality, in the same fulness and self-dependence as we have allowed the consonant to unfold in the *Stabreim*; only when it can shew itself as not merely a sounding *vowel* (tönender *Laut*) but a sounding *tone* (lautender *Ton*), is it in a position to engross the infinite capacity of the "ear" of that Hearing whose "seeing power" we demanded at its highest for the consonant: only then, can this "ear" be filled to such a pitch, that it falls into that excess of ecstasy where it needs must impart its boon to man's All-feeling, and rouse it into highest stir.—Just as that man alone can display himself in full persuasiveness, who announces himself to our ear and eye at once: so the message-bearer of the inner man cannot completely convince our Hearing, until it addresses itself with equal [274] persuasiveness to both "eye and ear" of this Hearing. But this happens only through *Word-Tone-speech*, and poet and musician have hitherto addressed but half the man apiece: the poet turned towards this Hearing's eye alone, the musician only to its ear. Yet nothing but the whole seeing and hearing,—that is to say, the completely *understanding* Ear, can apprehend the inner man past all mistake.—

That strenuous force which dwelt in the *Speech-root*, and necessarily determined the poet, in his search for the surest expression of a feeling, to employ this one particular word as alone complying with his Aim,—that force the poet recognises with full conviction as inherent in the sounding vowel, so soon as ever he sets it before him at its fullest, as the genuine, breath-souled (*athembeseelten*) *tone*. In this *Tone* speaks out the most unmistakably the vowel's *emotional content*, which an innermost Necessity bade clothe itself in this vowel and none other; just as this vowel, confronted with the outer object, condensed for its outer covering this consonant and none other. To resolve this vowel into its highest emotional expression, to let its utmost fulness broaden out and consume itself in the heart's-tone of Song: for the poet this means, to make the erewhile wilful, and therefore disquieting factor of his poetic Expression into an un-wilful, into a thing which as determinately renders back the feeling as it determinatively seizes it. He therefore gains full quieting in nothing but the fullest stir of his Expression; only by employing his expressional-faculty according to its highest innate power, can he make it to the organ of Feeling, which in its turn imparts itself directly to



the Feeling; and from his own faculty of Speech, does this organ thrive, so soon as ever he measures and employs it in its *whole* capacity.—

To impart a feeling with utmost plainness, the poet has already ranged his row of words into a musical bar, according to their spoken Accents, and has sought by the Consonantal Stabreim to bring them to the Feeling's understanding in an easier and more sensuous form; he will still more completely facilitate this understanding, if he takes the [275] vowels of the accented root-words, as earlier their consonants, and knits them also into such a rhyme as will most definitely open up their understanding to the Feeling. An understanding of the vowel, however, is not based upon its superficial analogy with a rhyming vowel of another root; but, since *all the vowels are primally akin to one another*, it is based on the *disclosing of this Ur-kinship* through giving full value to the vowel's *emotional content, by means of musical Tone*. The vowel itself is nothing but *a tone condensed*: its specific manifestation is determined through its turning toward the outer surface of the Feeling's 'body'; which latter—as we have said—displays to the 'eye' of Hearing the mirrored image of the outward object that has acted on it. The object's effect on the body-of-Feeling, itself, is manifested by the vowel through a direct utterance of feeling along the nearest path, thus expanding the individuality it has acquired from without into the universality of pure emotion (145); and this takes place in the Musical Tone. To That which bore the vowel, and bade it outwardly condense itself into the consonant,—to That the vowel returns as a specific entity, enriched by the world outside, in order to dissolve itself in *it*, now equally enriched. (146) This enriched, this individually established, this Tone expanded to the universality of Feeling, is the redeeming 'moment' of the poet's Thought; and Thought; in this redemption, becomes an immediate *outpour of the Feeling*.

By the poet's resolving the Vowel of his accentuated and [276] stabreimed root-word into its mother-element, the Musical Tone, he now enters definitely upon the realm of Tone-speech. From this instant he has to attempt no further regulation of his Accents according to a measure of kinship which shall be cognisable by that "eye" of Hearing; but now that the vowels have become musical tones, their kinship, as needful for their swift adoption by the Feeling, is regulated by a measure which is cognisable solely to the "ear" of Hearing, and surely and imperiously grounded on that receptive idiosyncrasy.—Already in Word-speech the prime affinity of all vowels is shewn so definitely, that when root-syllables lack an initial consonant we recognise their aptitude for Stabreim by the very fact of the vowel's standing open in front, and we are by no means governed by a strict outward likeness of the vowel; we rhyme, for instance, "eye and ear" ("Aug' und Ohr"). (147) This *Ur-kinship*, which has preserved itself in Word-speech as an unconscious moment of feeling, the full-fledged Tone-speech brings quite unmistakably to Feeling's consciousness. Inasmuch as it widens the specific vowel into a musical tone, it tells our Feeling that this vowel's particularity is included in an *ur-akin* relationship, and born from out this kinship; and it bids us acknowledge as the mother of the ample vowel-family the purely human Feeling, in its immediate facing outwards,—the Feeling, which only faces outwards so as to address itself, in turn, to our own purely human Feeling.

Wherefore the Word-poet can no farther demonstrate to our Feeling the kinship of the vowel sounds, already turned to tones; this the *Tone-poet* alone can compass.



[277]

## III.

THE characteristic distinction between the *Word-poet* and the *Tone-poet* consists in this: the *Word-poet* has concentrated an infinitude of scattered moments of action, sensation, and expression,—only cognisable by the Understanding,—to a point the most accessible to the Feeling; now comes the *Tone-poet*, and has to expand this concentrated, compact point to the utmost fulness of its emotional-content. In its thrust towards an impartial to the Feeling, the procedure of the poetising (*dichtenden*) Understanding was directed to assembling itself from farthest distances into the closest (*dichtester*) cognisability by the sensory faculty; from here, from the point of immediate contact with the sensory faculty, the poem has now to broaden itself out, exactly as the recipient sensory-organ—likewise concentrated upon an outward-facing point; for sake of taking-in the poem—now broadens itself to wider and yet wider circles, under the immediate influence of the acquisition, until it rouses at last the whole inner emotional faculty.

The perversity of the makeshift procedure of the lonely Poet and the lonely Musician has hitherto lain in precisely this: to address the Feeling at all seizably, the Poet wandered into that vague diffuseness in which he became the delineator of a thousand details, intended to set a definite shape before the Phantasy as knowably as possible; the Phantasy, bombarded by a host of motley details, at last could only master the proffered object by trying to grasp these perplexing details one by one, and thereby losing itself in the function of pure Understanding; to which latter alone could the poet return, when, dazed by the massy reaches of his own delineations, he finally looked round him for a familiar foothold. On the other hand, the [278] Absolute Musician saw himself driven, in his shapings, to condense an endless element of Feeling into a definite point such as the Understanding best might apprehend; for this purpose he had more and more to renounce the fulness of his element, to labour to concentrate the feeling to a thought—albeit a task impossible in itself—and finally to commend to arbitrary Phantasy this imaginary concentrate, only produced through completely discarding all emotional expression and counterfeiting some chosen outward object.—Music thus resembled the good God of our legends, who came down from heaven to earth, but, to make himself visible there, must assume the shape and vesture of a common man of every-day: in the oft-times ragged beggar not a creature recognised the God. But the true Poet has one day to come, who with the clairvoyant eye of poet's-Want, in its utmost craving for redemption, shall recognise in the dust-stained beggar the redeeming God; shall take from him his rags and crutches; and, wafted upwards by his longing, shall soar with him to endless spaces, whereon the enfranchised God knows well to breathe undreamt delights of blissful Feeling. So the chary speech of daily life, in which we are not yet what we *can* be, nor therefore give forth what we *can* give forth,—this language we will cast behind us: in the Artwork to speak a tongue in which alone we are able to give forth what we *must*, if we *are* entirely what we can be.



Now, the *Tone-poet* has so to regulate the verse's tones by their kinship of Expression, that they not only shall make known the emotional-content of this or that vowel, as a vowel *apart*, but shall at the same time shew this content as one akin to *all* the tones of the verse, and display to the Feeling this kindred content as *one specific member of the Ur-Kinship of all tones*.

[279]

To the *Word-poet* the disclosure of a kinship of his lifted Accents,—such as should be obvious to the Feeling, and through this at last to the Understanding itself,—was only

possible through the consonantal Stabreim of the root-words. What determined this kinship, however, was merely the particularity of their common consonant; no other consonant could rhyme with it, and therefore the kinship was restricted to one specific family, which was cognisable to the Feeling precisely and only through its making itself known as a completely shut-off family. The Tone-poet, on the contrary, has at his disposal a clan whose kindred reaches to infinity; and whereas the Word-poet had to content himself with presenting to the Feeling merely the specially accented root-words of his phrase, as allied in sense and sound through the complete likeness of their initial consonants, the Musician, on the other hand, has before all to display the kinship of his tones in such an extension that, starting with the Accents, he pours it over *all*—even the least emphasised—vowels of the phrase; so that not alone the vowels of the Accents, but all the vowels in general display themselves to the Feeling as akin to one another.

Just as the Accents in the phrase did not first of all acquire their special light through its sense alone, but through their being thrown into physical relief by the un-emphasised words and syllables that lay in the 'hollow,' so have the chief-tones to win their special light from the lesser tones, which must bear precisely the same relation to them as the up- and down-strokes bear to the 'ridges.' The choice and significance of those minor words and syllables, as well as their bearing on the accentuated words, were governed in the first place by the intellectual-content of the phrase; only in degree as this intellectual-content, through a condensation of its bulk, was intensified into a compact utterance conspicuous to the sense of Hearing, did it transform itself into an emotional-content. Now, the choice and significance of the lesser tones, as also their bearing on the Chief-tones, [280] are in so far independent of the intellectual-content of the phrase as the latter has already condensed itself to an emotional-content, in the rhythmic verse and by the Stabreim; while the full realisation of this emotional-content, through its most direct communication to the senses, is further to be accomplished solely in that quarter where the pure language of Feeling has already been recognised as the only efficacious one, in that the Vowel has been resolved into the Singing-tone. From the instant of the musical intonation of the vowel in word-speech, the Feeling has become the appointed orderer of all further announcements to the senses, and henceforward Musical Feeling alone prescribes the choice and significance both of lesser tones and chief tones; and that, according to the nature of the Tone-clan (*Tonverwandschaft*) whose particular member has been chosen to give the necessary emotional expression to the phrase.

This kinship of the Tones, however, is musical *harmony*; and we here have first to take it according to its superficial extension, (148) in which the unit families of the broad-branched clan of *tone-varieties* display themselves [in open rank]. If we keep in eye at present its aforesaid *horizontal* extension, we expressly reserve the all-determining attribute of Harmony, in its *vertical* extension towards its primal base, for the decisive moment of our exposition. But that horizontal extension, being the surface of Harmony, is its physiognomy as still discernible by the poet's eye: it is the water-mirror which still reflects upon the poet his own image, while at the same time it presents this image to the view of him whom the poet wanted to address. This image, however, is in truth the poet's realised Aim,—a realisation which can only fall to the lot of the musician, in his turn, when he mounts from the depths, to the surface of the sea of Harmony; and on that surface will be celebrated the glorious marriage of Poetry's begetting Thought with Music's endless power of Birth.

That wave-borne mirror-image is *Melody*. In it the [281] poet's Thought becomes an instinctively entrancing moment of Feeling; just as Music's emotional-power therein acquires the faculty of definite and convincing utterance, of manifesting itself as a sharp-cut human shape, a plastic Individuality. Melody is the redemption of the poet's endlessly conditioned thought into a deep-felt consciousness of emotion's highest freedom (*höchster*

): it is the willed and achieved Unwilful, the conscious and proclaimed Unconscious, the vindicated Necessity of an endless-reaching Content, condensed from its farthest branchings into an utmost definite utterance of Feeling.



If now we take this melody that appeared on the horizontal plane of Harmony, as the mirrored image of the poet's thought, and is ranged in the primordial Tone-clan by adoption into one particular family of that clan—the special Key,—if we take this melody and hold it up against that *mother-melody* whence Word-speech once was born: then there is evinced the following most weighty difference, which we must here take definitely into view.

Starting with an infinitely confluent fund of Feeling, man's sensations gradually concentrated themselves (149) to a more and more definite Content; in such sort that their expression in that Ur-melody advanced at last, by Nature's necessary steps, to the formation of Absolute Word-speech. The most characteristic mark of the oldest Lyric is this, that in it the words and verse proceeded from the tones and melody; just as bodily Gesture, starting with the vague suggestions of the dance-movement, only understandable in frequent repetitions, abridged itself to the more measured, more definite Mimetic-gesture. In the evolution of the human race, the more the instinctive faculty of Feeling [282] (*Gefühlsvermögen*) condensed itself to the arbitrary faculty of Understanding; and the more, in consequence, the content of the Lyric departed from an Emotional-content (*Gefühlsinhalt*) to become an Intellectual-content,—so much the more palpably did the Word-poem depart from its original 'hang-together' with that *Ur-melody*, and merely use it, in a manner, to make its own delivery of a cold Didactic Content as palatable as possible to the rooted habits of the Feeling. Melody itself, such as it once had blossomed from man's primitive emotional faculty as a necessary expression of feeling, and in its fitting union with word and gesture had developed to that fulness which we still may observe to-day in the genuine Folksmelody,—this melody those reflective poets-of-the-Understanding (*Verstandesdichter*) were unable to mould or vary to meet the contents of their diction (*dem Inhalte ihrer Ausdrucksweise*). Still less was it possible for them to find in that mode of diction, itself, a spur to fashioning fresh melodies: since just the progress of general evolution, in this great Cultural period, was a stepping forth from Feeling into Understanding; and the growing intellect would only have felt hindered in its experimentings, had it been in any way driven to invent fresh expressions for emotions which lay so far behind it.

Wherefore, so long as the Lyric form was welcomed and demanded by the public, these poets—whom the Content of their poems had made incapable of inventing melodies—addressed themselves to varying the poem, but not the melody; the latter they left all unassailed, and merely lent to the expression of their poetic thoughts an outward Form, which they laid below the unaltered melody as a variation of its text. The so exuberant Form of Greek speaking-Lyric, such as it has come down to us, and specially the choruses of the Tragicists, we can never explain as necessarily conditioned by the *content* of these poems. The mostly didactic and philosophic content of these chants stands generally in so vivid a contrast with its sensuous expression, in the profusely changing [283] Rhythmik of the verses, that we can only conceive this manifold investiture, not as having emanated from the Content of the poetic-aim, but as conditioned by the melody and obediently conforming to its immutable demands.—Even to-day we know the most sterling Folk-melodies only with later texts, which on this or that outward occasion have been engrafted on *them*, the favourite melodies that stood so handy; and—though on a far lower level—when our modern

Vaudeville-poets, particularly the French, write verses to well-known melodies and curtly refer the performer to their names, they behave not unlike the Greek Lyricists and Tragic-poets: who in any case composed to melodies belonging to the oldest Lyric art, and surviving—notably in the sacred rites—in the mouth of the Folk, those verses whose wondrous wealth of Rhythm still fills us with amazement at the present day, now that we no longer know their melodies.

But a positive proof of the Greek Tragic-poets' aim, both as to content and form, is afforded by the whole progress of their dramas; which unquestionably move from the lap of the Lyric to an intellectual Reflection, just as the Song of the chorus embouches into the merely spoken iambic Talk of the characters. What sets the working of these dramas in so enthralling a light for us, however, is precisely the Lyric element preserved in them, and recurring more strongly in their crises; that Lyric element which the poet employed with full and deliberate consciousness, exactly as the Didacticist who delivered his educational poems to youth in school, in the stirring strains of lyric song. Yet a deeper look will shew us that the Tragic poet was less open and honest of aim when he clothed it in the lyric garb, than where he undisguisedly expressed it in the merely spoken dialogue: and in this didactic probity, but artistic disingenuousness, there lies the downfall of Greek Tragedy; for the Folk soon noticed that it did not want instinctively to move their Feeling, but arbitrarily to rule their Understanding. Euripides had to shed blood beneath [284] the lash of Aristophanean ridicule, for this open blurring of the lie. That the more and more deliberately didactic poetry must next become the practised rhetoric of the forum (*zur staatspraktischen Rhetorik*), and at last the downright prose of literature, was the extreme, but altogether natural consequence of the evolution of Understanding out of Feeling, and—for artistic Expression—of Word-speech out of Melody.—

But *that* Melody to whose birth we now are listening, forms a complete contrast to the primal Mother-melody; and after the above more detailed observations, we may briefly denote its course as an advance from Understanding to Feeling, from Word-speech to Melody: as against the advance from Feeling to Understanding, from the Mother-melody to Word-speech. Upon the path of progress from Word-speech to Tone-speech we reached the horizontal *surface* of Harmony, on which the word-phrase of the poet mirrored back itself as a musical melody. How, starting from this surface, we are to master the whole immeasurable depths of Harmony, that aboriginal womb of all the kin of Tones, and bring it into ever more extended realisation of the poet's Aim; how we are to plunge the poetic Aim, as a begetting 'moment,' into the full profundity of this *Urmother*-element, in suchwise that we may prompt each atom of its vast emotional chaos to conscious, individual manifestation, yet in a compass never narrowing but ever stretching wider: in a word, the artistic advance that shall consist in broadening a conscious, definite Aim into an infinite and, for all its boundlessness, an exact and definitely manifested emotional-Power,—this must be the subject of our concluding argument.



Let us first settle one thing further, however, so as to come to an understanding about the results of to-day's inquiry.

[285]

Whereas we have taken Melody—such alone as we have hitherto denoted (150)—as the acme of emotional-expression in Word-speech, to which the Poet must necessarily climb; and on this height we have already seen the Word-verse mirrored back from the surface of musical Harmony: yet, upon closer examination, we are astonished by the discovery that this melody is precisely the same, to all appearance, as that which rose from the immeasurable depths of



*Beethoven's* music, in the "Ninth Symphony" to greet the shining light of day. The appearance of this melody on the surface of the Harmonic sea was made possible, as we have seen, solely by the urgency of the Musician to look upon the Poet eye to eye; the Poet's word-verse alone was able to keep it afloat upon that surface, on which it else had merely been a fleeting vision and, without this holdfast, would have swiftly sunk back to the bottom of the sea. This melody was the love-greeting of the woman to the man, and the open-armed "Eternal Womanly" here shewed itself more loveable than the egoistic Man-ly; for it is Love itself, and only as the highest love-entreaty (*Liebesverlangen*) is the Womanly to be taken,—be it revealed in woman or in man. For all the wonders of that meeting, the man yet left the loving woman: what to this woman was the highest sacrificial incense of a life-time, to the man was a mere passing fume of love. Only the poet whose Aim we have here expounded, will feel driven so irresistibly to a heart-alliance with the "eternal womanly" of Tone-art, that in these nuptials he shall celebrate alike his own redemption.

Through the redeeming love-kiss of that Melody the poet is now inducted into the deep, unending mysteries of Woman's nature: he sees with other eyes, and feels with other senses. To him the bottomless sea of Harmony, from which that beatific vision rose to meet him, is no longer an [286] object of dread, of fear, of terror, such as earlier it seemed in his imaginings of the strange and unknown element (151); now, not only can he float upon the surface of this ocean, but—gifted with new senses—he dives into its lowest depth. From out the lonely, fearsome reaches of her mother-home the woman had been self-driven, to wait the nearing of the beloved; now, with his bride, he sinks him down, and learns the hidden wonders of the deep. His insight pierces, clear and tranquil, sheer to the ocean's primal fount; whence he sends the wave-shafts mounting to the surface, to run in ripples at the sun-rays, to softly plash beneath the souging west-wind, or manlike rear their crests against the north-wind's storm. (152) For the very winds of heaven, does the poet now command,—since those winds are nothing but the breath of never-ending Love; of the Love in whose delight the poet is redeemed, and through its might becomes the lord of Nature.



Let us examine now, with sober eye, this reign of the Tone-wed Poet.—



The bond-of-kinship of those tones whose rhythmic-moving chain, with its links of 'ridge and hollow,' makes out the Verse-melody, is first of all made plain to Feeling *in the Key* (Tonart); for it is this which prescribes the particular tone-ladder [or *scale*] in which the tones of that melodic chain are contained as separate rungs.—Hitherto, in the necessary endeavour to impart his poem to the Feeling, we have seen the poet engaged in drawing-together [287] the organic units of his diction—sembled from circles wide apart,—and removing from them all that was heterogeneous, so as to lead them before the Feeling, especially through the [Stab-]rhyme, in the utmost displayable kin ship. At bottom of this thrust of his there lay an instinctive knowledge of Feeling's nature, which takes-in alone the homogeneous (*das Einheitliche*), alone the thing that in its oneness includes alike the conditioned and the conditioner; of Feeling, which seizes the imparted feeling according to its generic essence, so that it refuses to heed the opposites contained therein, *quâ* opposites, but is guided by the nature of the *genus* in which those opposites are reconciled. The Understanding loosens, the Feeling binds; i.e. the Understanding loosens the genus into the antitheses which lie within it, whereas the Feeling binds them up again into one harmonious whole. This unitarian Expression the poet most completely won, at last, in the ascension of his Word-verse into the melody of Song; and the latter wins its unitarian Expression, its unflinching operation on the

Feeling, through instinctively displaying to the senses the inner kinship of its tones. (153)

The *Key* (Tonart) is the most united, most closely kindred *family* of the whole *tone-genus*; it shews itself as truly of one kin with the *whole* tone-genus, however, where it advances to an alliance with other Keys, through the instinctive inclination of its individual members. We here may suitably compare the tone-key with the ancient patriarchal families of the various human stems: by an instinctive error the kinsmen of these families considered themselves [288] as a peculiar people, and not as members of the entire human race; yet the Individual's sexual love was not enkindled by a wanted, but solely by an un-wanted object, and thus it climbed the barriers of the patriarchal family, to knit alliances with other families. In a prophetic transport Christianity proclaimed the oneness of the human race: the art which owes its most characteristic development to Christianity, the art of Music, has taken up that evangel into itself, and has transformed it, as our modern Tone-speech, into a sybaritic message to the sensuous Feeling. (154) If we take those *ur*-patriarchal national melodies, the genuine heirlooms of particular stems, and compare them with the Melody which the advance of Music through the Christian evolution has made possible to us to-day, we shall find as their characteristic token, that they almost never move away from one definite key, appearing positively engrown therewith: whereas the Melody possible to *us*, has acquired the most unheard variety of power of placing its initial chief-key in alliance with the remotest tone-families, by means of harmonic Modulation; so that in a larger composition the *ur*-kinship of all keys is presented to us, as it were, in the light of one particular chief-key.

This boundless power of extension and alliance so intoxicated the modern musician, that, upon recovery from his bout, he has deliberately looked round him for that earlier straitened family-melody, so as to make himself intelligible by copying its simplicity. The looking-round for that patriarchal straitenedness reveals to us the real weak side of our whole art of Music, in which we heretofore had made our reckoning—so to say—without our host. From the Fundamental note of Harmony, Music had spread itself into a huge expanse of waters, in which the Absolute-musician swam aimlessly and restless to and fro, until at last he lost his nerve: before him he saw nothing but an endless surge of possibilities, albeit he was conscious in [289] himself of no definite purpose to which to put those possibilities,—just as the Christian all-humanitarianism (*Allmenschlichkeit*) was merely a floating sentiment, without any holdfast to vindicate it as a definite feeling; and this hold-fast is the *actual* Man. Thus the musician was bound to wellnigh bewail his immoderate power of swimming; he yearned back to his primal homeland's quiet creeks, where the water flowed restfully between its narrow shores, and always in one definite tide. What moved him to this return, was nothing but the experienced aimlessness of his roving on the high seas; to put it strictly, the admission that he possessed a faculty which he was unable to use,—the Yearning for the Poet.

Beethoven, the daringest of swimmers, spoke plainly out this yearning; not only, however, did he strike again that patriarchal melody, but he spoke aloud the poet's verse thereto. Already in another place I have drawn attention to an uncommonly weighty 'moment' in this regard, to which I must here come back, since it now has to serve us for a new anchorage in the dominion of experience. That patriarchal melody—as I shall continue to call it, in token of its historic bearings,—that melody which Beethoven strikes in the "Ninth Symphony," as found at last for *fixing* the Feeling (*zur Bestimmung des Gefühles*), and of which I earlier asserted that it did not arise from *out* the poem of Schiller, but rather was invented outside the word-verse and merely spread above it: that melody shews itself wholly confined to the tone-family ties which rule the movements of the old national *Volkslied*. It contains as good as *no* modulation, and appears in so marked a simplicity of key, that in it the aim of the musician, to go back upon the historic fount of Music, is spoken out without disguise. This



aim was a necessary one for Absolute Music, which does not stand on a basis of Poetry: the musician who wishes to intelligibly address the Feeling in Tones alone, can do this only through tuning-down his endless powers to an extremely straitened measure. When Beethoven wrote down that melody, he said:—So only, can we absolute musicians give out an [290] understandable message. But the march of evolution of all things human is no returning to the old, but a constant stepping forward: each turning back, whatever, shews itself no natural, but an artificial movement. Even Beethoven's return to the patriarchal melody, like this melody itself, was an artificial one. Neither was the bare construction of this melody the artistic goal of Beethoven; much rather do we see how deliberately, though only for an instant, he so far lowered the pitch of his melodic inventiveness: it was merely to strike the natural foundation of all Music, where he not only might reach his hand to greet the Poet, but also grasp the poet's own. Once that with this simple, straitened melody he feels the Poet's hand within his own, he strides towards the poem itself; and from out this poem—shaping after its spirit and its form—he passes forward to an ever bolder and more manifold building of his tones: at last to set before us wonders such as we had never dreamt of, wonders such as the "*Seid umschlungen, Millionen!*", the "*Ahnst du den Schöpfer, Welt?*" and finally the un-misunderstandable combination of the "*Seid umschlungen*" with the "*Freude, schöner Götterfunken!*"—all arisen from the puissance of poetic (*dichtenden*) tone-speech. If, now, we compare the broad melodic structure of the whole musical setting of the verse "*Seid umschlungen*" with the melody which the master, in his absolute-musical capacity, so to say merely spread above the verse "*Freude, schöner Götterfunken,*" we shall gain an exact understanding of the distinction between that patriarchal melody—as I have called it—and the melody which grows forth upon the word-verse through the working of the Poetic Aim. As the former made itself intelligible only in the most straitened of tone-family ties, so the latter—not only *without* becoming un-understandable, but to first become *right* understandable by the Feeling—can stretch the narrower kinship of the Key to the broad ur-kinship of all Tones, through alliance with other keys akin; and thus it widens the surely-guided feeling, into the endless Purely-human Feeling.—

[291]

The Key of a melody is that which presents to Feeling its various included tones in their earliest bond of kinship. The incitement to widen this narrower bond to a richer, more extended one, is derived from the Poetic Aim, insofar as that has already condensed itself in the speaking-verse to a moment-of-feeling; while this extension is governed by the particular expressional character of single chief-tones, which have themselves, in turn, been prompted by the verse. These Chief-tones are, in a sense, the adolescent members of the family, who yearn to leave its wonted surrounding for an unhindered independence: this independence, however, they do not gain as egoists, but through encounter with another being, a being that lies outside the family. The maiden attains her independence, her stepping beyond the family, only through love of the youth who, himself the scion of another family, attracts her over to him. Thus the tone which quits the circle of the Key is a tone already prompted and attracted by that other key, and into the latter must it therefore pour itself according to the necessary law of Love. The leading-tone (*Leitton*) that urges from one key into another, and by this very urgency discloses its kinship with that other key, can only be taken as prompted by the motive of Love. The motive of Love is that which drives the 'subject' (*Subjekt*) out beyond itself, and compels it to an alliance with another. For the unit tone, this motive can spring from nothing but a [general] connection which determines *it* in particular; but the connection that determines the Melody, resides in the 'sensuous' expression of the Word-phrase, which again has been first of all determined by the sense of that phrase. If we look closer, we shall see that the selfsame principle is here at work, as that which had bound remoter-lying sensations together in the Stabreim.

For the sentient ear, as we have seen, the Stabreim already coupled speech-roots of opposite emotional expression (as "*Lust und Leid*," "*Wohl und Weh*"), and thus presented them to the Feeling as generically akin. Now, in a far higher measure can musical Modulation make such [292] a union perceptible to the Feeling. If we take, for instance, a stabreimed verse of completely like emotional-content, such as: "*Liebe giebt Lust zum Leben*," (155) then, as a like emotion is physically disclosed in the Accents' stabreimed roots, the musician would here receive no natural incitement to step outside the once selected key, but would completely satisfy the Feeling by keeping the various inflections of the musical tone to that one key alone. On the contrary, if we take a verse of mixed emotion, such as: "*die Liebe bringt Lust und Leid*," then here, where the Stabreim combines two opposite emotions, the musician would feel incited to pass across from the key first struck in keeping with the first emotion, to another key in keeping with the second emotion, and determined by the latter's relation to the emotion rendered in the earlier key. The word "*Lust*" ("delight")—which, as the climax of the first emotion, appears to thrust onward to the second—would have in this phrase to obtain an emphasis quite other than in that: "*die Liebe giebt Lust zum Leben*"; the note sung to it would instinctively become the determinant leading-tone, and necessarily thrust onward to the other key, in which the word "*Leid*" ("sorrow") should be delivered. In this attitude toward one another, "*Lust und Leid*" would become the manifestment of a specific emotion, whose idiosyncrasy would lie precisely in the point where two opposite emotions displayed themselves as conditioning one the other, and thus as necessarily belonging together, as actually akin; and this manifestment is possible alone to Music, in her faculty of harmonic Modulation, because in virtue thereof she exerts a binding sway upon the 'sensuous' Feeling such as no other art has force for.

Let us next see how musical Modulation, hand in hand with the verse's Content, is able to lead back again to the first emotion.—Let us follow up the verse "*die Liebe bringt Lust und Leid*" with a second: "*doch in ihr Weh auch webt sie Wonnen*," (156) —then "*webt*," again, would become a [293] tone leading into the first key, as from *here* the second emotion returns to the first, but now enriched, emotion. To the Feeling's sensory organ the Poet, in virtue of his Stabreim, could only display this return as an advance from the feeling of "*Weh*" to that of "*Wonnen*," but not as a rounding-off of the generic feeling "*Liebe*"; whereas the Musician becomes completely understandable by the very fact that he quite markedly goes back to the first tone-variety, and therefore definitely denotes the genus of the two emotions as one and the same,—a thing impossible to the poet, who was obliged to change the root-initial for the Stabreim.—Only, by the *sense* of both verses the Poet indicated the generic bond uniting the emotions; he thus desired its realisation to the Feeling, and determined the realising process of the Musician. For his procedure, which, if unconditioned, would seem arbitrary and unintelligible, the Musician thus obtains his vindication from the Poet's aim,—from an aim which the latter could only suggest, or at utmost, merely approximately realise for fractions of his message (precisely in the Stabreim), but whose full realisation is possible precisely to the Musician; and that, through his power of employing the Ur-kinship of the tones to harmoniously display to Feeling the primal unity of the emotions.

We may easiest gain a notion of how immeasurably great this power is, if we imagine the sense of the above-cited pair of verses as still more definitely laid down: in such sort that, between the advance from the one emotion and the return thereto in the second verse, a longer sequence of verses shall express the most manifold gradation and blend of intermediate emotions,—in part corroborating, in part reconciling,—until the final return of the chief-emotion. Here, to realise the poetic aim, the musical Modulation would have to be led across to, and back from, the most diverse keys; but all the adventitious keys would appear in an exact affinitative relation to the primary key, which itself will govern the particular light they throw upon the expression, and, in a manner, will lend them first their very [294]

capability of giving that light. (157) The chief-key, as the ground-tone of the emotion first struck, would reveal its own ur-kinship with all the other keys, and thus, in virtue of the intensified Expression, would display the dominant Emotion (*die bestimmte Empfindung*) in such a height and breadth, that only emotions *kindred to it* could dominate our Feeling, so long as its utterance lasted; that this one Emotion, in virtue of its intensity and its extension, would usurp our whole emotional faculty; and thus this unique emotion would be raised to an all-embracing one, an omni-human, an unfailingly intelligible.

If the poetico-musical '*period*' has thus been denoted, in accordance with its domination by one Chief-key, (158) then we may provisionally denote *that* artwork as the most perfect of Expression, in which many such periods present themselves in utmost fulness, for the realisation of a loftiest poetic Aim; and *so* present themselves that they condition each the other, and unfold themselves to a total breadth of utterance wherein the nature of Man, along one decisory Chief-line,—i.e. along a line competent to sum in itself Man's total essence (just as a Chief-key is able to sum in itself all other keys)—wherein this nature is displayed to Feeling in the surest and most seizable of fashions. This artwork is the Perfected Drama, wherein that comprehensive line of human nature will manifest itself to the Feeling in a continuous, a mutually conditioning (*sich wohl bedingenden*) chain of moments of feeling: a chain of such strength and force of conviction, that *the Action*,—as the necessary, the most definite utterance of the emotional-content of 'moments' intensified into a comprehensive joint-motive,—that that *Action* may issue from this wealth of conditions as their last instinctively demanded, and thus completely intelligible moment

[295]

Before we proceed to argue from the character of the poetico-musical '*period*' to the Drama which has to grow from amid the reciprocally-conditioning evolution of many such needful periods, we must first, however, exactly define *that other* 'moment' which conditions the emotional expression even of the unit melodic-period: that power which lies within the realm of Music proper, (159) and which is to place at our disposal the incomparably 'binding' organ through whose peculiar aid we first can bring about the Perfected Drama. In the *vertical* dimension of Harmony—as I have already called it, where it moves upwards from its base,—will this organ arise for us, if we allot to Harmony itself the possibility of taking a fully sympathetic share in the total Artwork.

[296]

#### IV.

UP to the present, we have shewn the condition for a melodic advance from one tone-variety to another as lying in the Poetic Aim, in so far as the latter itself had already revealed its emotional-content; and by this shewing we have *proved* (160) that the instigating *ground* for melodic motion, to be justified even in the eyes of Feeling, can be supplied by nothing but that Aim. Yet what *enables* this advance, so necessary to the Poet, naturally does not lie in the domain of Word-speech, but quite definitely in that of Music alone. This own-est element of music, *Harmony* to wit, is merely in *so* far still governed by the poetic-aim, as it is the other, the womanly element into which this aim pours itself for its own realisation, for its redemption. For this is the *bearing* element, which takes up the poetic-aim solely as a begetting seed, to shape it into finished semblance by the prescripts of its own, its womanly organism. This organism is a specific, an individual one, and *no* begetter, but a bearer: it has received from the poet the fertilising seed, but the fruit it forms and ripens by its own individual powers.

That Melody which we have seen appearing on the *surface* of Harmony, is conditioned as to its distinctive, its purely-musical expression by Harmony's upward-working depths alone:

as it manifests itself as a horizontal chain, so is it connected by a plumbline with those depths. This plumbline is the harmonic Chord, a vertical chain of tones in closest kinship, mounting from the ground-tone (161) to the [297] surface. The chiming (*Mitklingen*) of this chord first gives to the melodic note the peculiar significance wherein it, and it alone, has been employed to mark a distinctive moment of the Expression. Now, just as the ground-tone, with the chord determined by it, first gives to the melody's unit note a particular expression—seeing that the selfsame tone upon another of its kindred ground-tones acquires a quite other significance,—so each melodic progress from one Key to another is likewise governed by the changing ground-tone, which of itself prescribes the harmony's leading-tone, as such. The presence of that ground-tone, and of the harmonic chord thereby determined, is indispensable in the eyes of Feeling, if this latter is to seize the melody in all its characteristic expression. But the presence of the ground-harmony means—its *concurrent sounding out* (*Miterklingen*). The sounding-out of the harmony to a melody, is the first thing that fully persuades the Feeling as to the emotional-content of that melody, which otherwise would leave to it something undetermined. But only amid the fullest determination of every 'moment' of expression, is the Feeling itself determined to a swift, direct and instinctive interest; and a full determination of the Expression, again, can only mean *the completest impartial to the Senses, of all its necessary moments*.

So, the ear imperiously demands the concurrent sounding of the harmony to a melody, because thereby it first obtains an entire fulfilling—and thus a satisfying—of its sensory faculty, and thereafter it can devote itself with the necessary composure to [an appreciation of] the melody's apt emotional expression. The concurrent sounding of the harmony to a melody is therefore no impediment, but the sole facilitation, to the Hearing's understanding. Only if the harmony were unable to utter itself as Melody,—i.e. if its melody had neither a dance-rhythm nor a word-verse to vindicate it and assure its recognition by the Feeling, but were to shew itself as a mere chance apparition on the surface of chords capriciously built-up on a shifting bass,—only such a naked show of Harmony, as this, would disquiet [298] the unassisted Feeling; for it would bring it merely incitations, but no satisfaction of the mood incited.

Our Modern Music, in a sense, has evolved from naked Harmony. She has wilfully committed herself to the endless fill of possibilities which offered themselves in the shifting of the ground-tones, and of the chords derived therefrom. Insofar as she has remained faithful to this her origin, she has only worked bewilderingly and benumbingly upon the Feeling, and her motleyest manifestments, in this sense, have merely offered a relish to a kind of intellectual gluttony on the part of our artists themselves, but no pleasure to the non-music-understanding laity. Wherefore the layman, provided he did not *affect* an understanding of music, held only by the shallowest surface of the melody, such as was presented him in the purely sensuous (162) charm of the singing-organ; while to the absolute musician he cried: "I don't *understand* your music; it's too learned for me."—In opposition to all this, *that* Harmony which is to sound out as the purely-musical basis of the poet's melody, has nothing at all to do with an understanding, in the sense in which it is understood at present by the learned class-musician, and *not* understood by the layman: in the delivery of that melody it has rightdown *not* to draw the attention of the Feeling to its agency, *as* Harmony; but, as even though *silent* it would condition the melody's characteristic expression, albeit its silence would infinitely hinder any understanding of this expression,—nay, could only consign it to the music-pedant to think out for himself,—so the concurrent sounding of the harmony has to render needless all abstract excursions of the musical Art-understanding, and to conduct before the Feeling the musical emotional-content of the melody, as a thing

instinctively knowable, a thing to be seized without any distracting toil, and easily and swiftly comprehensible.

Whereas, then, the Musician has hitherto constructed his [299] music out of its harmony, so to say, the Tone-poet now will add to a melody conditioned by its speaking-verse the other necessary, purely-musical condition, already implicit in that melody: he will add the concurrent Harmony, as though merely for its making obvious. Within the poet's melody the harmony is already contained as well, though as it were unspoken-out: quite without his heeding, it has conditioned the expressional significance of the tones which the poet appointed for the melody. This expressional significance (*ausdrucksvolle Bedeutung*), which the poet had unconsciously in ear, was already the fulfilled condition, the plainest utterance of the harmony; but for him it was merely a thing of thought, and not yet physically discernible. Yet it is to the Senses, the directly recipient organs of the Feeling, that he imparts himself for his redemption, and to them must he therefore bring the melodic utterance of the harmony *together with* the stipulations for that utterance; for an *organic* artwork is only such as includes within itself, and imparts the most discernibly to others, alike the conditioned and the conditioner. Up to now, our Absolute Music has given us Harmonic conditionments; in his Melody the poet would merely impart the thing conditioned, and would therefore remain as unintelligible as she,—unless he fully made known to the ear the Harmonic stipulations of a Melody already warranted by the word-verse.



The *harmony*, however, only the *musician* can invent, and not the poet. Wherefore the melody which we have seen the poet inventing from out the word-verse, was more a *discovered* one—as being conditioned by Harmony—than one *invented* by him. The conditions for this Musical melody must first have been to hand, before the poet could find it as already validly conditioned. Before the poet could find this melody, to his redemption, the musician had already conditioned it by his own-est powers: he now [300] brings it to the poet as a melody warranted by its harmony; *and only Melody such as has been made possible by the very essence of our Modern Music, is the melody that can redeem the poet,—that can alike arouse and satisfy his stress.*

Poet and Musician herein are like two travellers who have started from *one* departure-point, from thence to journey straight ahead in opposite directions. Arrived at the opposite point of the Earth, they meet again; each has wandered round one half the planet. They fall a-questioning one another, and each tells each what he has seen and found. The Poet describes the plains, the mountains, valleys, fields, the men and beasts, which he has met upon his distant journey through the mainland. The Musician has voyaged across the seas, and recounts the wonders of the ocean: on its breast he has often been nigh to sinking, and its deeps and strange-shaped monsters have filled him half with terror, half with joy. Roused by each other's stories, and irresistibly impelled to learn for themselves the Other which each has not yet seen,—so as to make into an actual experience impressions merely taken up in fancy,— they part again, each to complete his journey round the Earth. At their first starting-point they meet at last once more; the Poet now has battled through the seas, the Musician has stridden through the continents. Now they part no more, for both now *know* the Earth: what they earlier had imagined in their boding dreams, as fashioned thus and thus, has now been witnessed by them in its actuality. They are One; for each knows and feels what the other feels and knows. The Poet has become musician, the Musician poet: now they are *both* an entire Artistic Man.



At the point where their roads first met, after wandering round the first half of the Earth, the mutual discourse of the Poet and Musician was *that melody* which we now have in eye,—the melody whose utterance the Poet had shaped from out his inmost longing, but whose manifestment the [301] Musician conditioned from amid his own experiences. When they pressed their hands in fresh farewell, each had in mind what he himself had not as yet experienced, and to gain this crowning experience they quitted each other anew.—Let us take the Poet first, in his mastering the experiences of the Musician. These he now reaps for himself, albeit guided by the counsel of the Musician, who had already sailed the open seas upon his sturdy ship, had found the course to firm-set land, and now has accurately mapped out for him the chart. On this new voyage we shall see the Poet become the selfsame man as the Musician upon his own new journey across the other Earth-half, as traced-out for him by the Poet; so that we now may look on both these jourmeyings as one and the same thing.

When the Poet now commits himself to the vast expanse of Harmony, as it were to prove the truth of that [other] melody the Musician had "told of," he no longer finds the wayless tone-wastes which the Musician had first encountered on his earlier voyage; to his delight he meets with the wondrous bold, the passing new, the infinitely delicate, yet giant-bolted framework of the ship that first sea-wanderer had built; the Poet mounts on board it, to safely make the passage of the waves. The Musician had taught him the handling of the helm, the trimming of the sails, and all the cunningly devised expedients for breasting storms and tempests. Sailing the wide seas at the helm of this glorious ship, the Poet, who before had toiled to measure hill and valley step by step, now rejoices at his consciousness of Man's all-conquering might; let the billows rear them never so proudly, from *its* high deck they seem to him the willing, faithful bearers of his lofty fortune, that fortune of the Poetic Aim. This ship is the strong, enabling implement of his widest and his mightiest will ; with fervent love his thanks go forth to the Musician, who invented it in direst stress of weather, and now has made it over to his hands: for this trusty ship is the conqueror of the endless floods of Harmony,—*the Orchestra*.



[302]

Harmony is in itself a mere thing *of thought*: to the Senses it becomes first actually discernible as *polyphony*, or, to define it still more closely, as *polyphonic symphony*.

The first, the natural symphony is afforded by the harmonious sounding-together of a polyphonic tone-mass of like constituents. The most natural tone-mass is the Human Voice, which shows itself in wide diversity of range and timbre (*Klangfarbe*,—lit. clang-tint) according to the sex, age, and idiosyncrasy of the vocally-gifted individual; through the harmonious cooperation of these individualities, it becomes the most natural revealer of Polyphonic symphony. The *Christian religious* Lyric invented this symphony: in it Man's plurality (*die Vielmenschlichkeit*) seemed united into an emotional-expression whose subject was not the individual longing, as the utterance of a severed personality, but the individual longing as infinitely strengthened through the utterance of precisely the same longing by an altogether like-needing community; and this longing was the yearning for dissolution into God, into the conceptual personification of the highest 'power' (164) of the longing individual personality itself. To this 'raising the power' of a personality which he felt to be null and void in itself, the Individual as it were encouraged himself by the similar longing of a Community, and through his intimate harmonic blending with that Community,—as though to draw from a like-attuned faculty in common the force which he felt was lacking to the unit personality. But

in the course of Christian manhood's evolution, the secret of this longing was destined to be laid bare; and indeed, as its purely-individual Personal Content. As a purely-individual personality, however, man no longer fastens his longing on God, on a merely conceptual being, but he materialises (*verwirklicht*) the object of his longing into a real (*Realen*), a physically present thing, whose attainment and enjoyment are practically achievable by him. With the extinction of the purely religious spirit of [303] Christianity there also vanished all necessary significance of the polyphonic church-song, and together with it, its idiomatic form of manifestment. Counterpoint, as the first stirring of a sheer Individualism intent on ever clearer utterance of self, began with sharp and acrid tooth to eat into the simple symphonic vocal-tissue, and turned it more and more visibly into an artificial consonance of inwardly-discordant individual utterances—often only toilsomely to be upheld.—In Opera at last the Individual loosed himself completely from the vocal union, to display himself as an unchecked Personality, alone and self-dependent. Where dramatic personages unbent themselves to part-song, this happened—in the specific Operatic style—for mere sake of physically reinforcing the individual expression; or—in the true Dramatic style—as a simultaneous display, effected through the utmost art, of individualities continuing to assert their several characteristics.

If we now picture to ourselves the Drama of the Future, in its realisation of the Poetic Aim defined by us above, we shall find therein no room at all for the exhibition of individualities so subsidiary in their reference to the drama that they may be employed for the purpose of giving a polyphonic rendering to the harmony, through their merely symphonising share in the melody of the main personages. With its compression and strengthening both of motives and actions, we can conceive no sharers in the plot but such as at all times exert a decisive influence on it through their necessary individual doings (*Kundgebungen*),—therefore none but personages who themselves require a symphonic support for the musical enunciation of their individuality, that is to say, a many-voiced *elucidation* (*Verdeutlichung*) of their melody; but never such as may serve for the mere harmonic vindication of the melody of another person,—excepting in the rarest of events, and those entirely warranted and necessary to a higher understanding of the thing.—Even the *Chorus*, as hitherto employed in Opera, and according to the significance there assigned it in even the most favourable cases, will have to [304] vanish from *our* drama (165); *it*, too, can have a vital and convincing effect, in Drama, only when its sheer pronouncements *en masse* are completely taken from it. A Mass can never interest, but only dumbfound us: none but accurately distinguishable individualities can lead our interest captive. It is the necessary care of the poet who strives throughout for plainest understandableness, to give to a more numerous Surrounding—wherever such be needful—the character of individually sharing in the motives and actions of his drama: nothing does he wish to cover up, but to disclose All. To the Feeling, which he addresses, he wants to open the whole living organism of a human action; and this he attains only when he presents each several portion of that organism in the warmest, most spontaneous play. The human Surrounding of a dramatic action must appear to us as though that particular action, and the persons involved therein, loomed large above this Surrounding merely by reason that they and it were shewn from precisely the one side turned towards the spectator, and in the illumination of precisely this one now-falling light. But our Feeling must be so decided in respect of this Surrounding, that we cannot be assailed by the supposition that an action, and the persons involved therein, would rouse our interest just as strongly if they were shewn beneath a different light, and [305] if we were watching the show-place from another side. (166) In other words, the Surrounding must so display itself to our Feeling, that we can attribute to each of its members the capability of motives and actions which, under other circumstances than the precise ones set before us, would captivate our interest to an equal degree. What the poet places in the background, is thus withdrawn solely



out of regard for the necessary sight-point of the spectator, who would not be able to cast his eye across a too profusely distributed action, and to whom the poet therefore only turns the one easily-grasped physiognomy of the object he wishes to display.

To make the Surrounding exclusively into a lyric 'moment,' must unconditionally degrade it in the drama, and would at the same time assign to the Lyric itself an altogether false position in Drama. In the Drama of the Future—the work of the poet who imparts himself from out the Understanding to the Feeling—the lyric outpour must be a necessary outcome of motives pressed together before our very eyes, not stream forth all unmotivated from the start. The poet of this Drama will not proceed from the feeling to its [later] vindication, but will give us the feeling itself [as already] vindicated by the Understanding. This vindication goes on in the presence of our own Feeling, and takes place through the conversion of the 'will' of the transactors into an instinctively necessary 'must,' i.e. 'can'; the moment of realisation of this will, through instinctive must to can, is the Lyric Outpour in its utmost strength, as the overflowing into Deed. The 'lyric moment' has therefore to grow out of the drama itself, to appear as necessarily conditioned by its course. So that the dramatic [306] Surrounding cannot un-conditionally appear in the garb of Lyric, as has been the case in our Opera, but it, too, has first to *mount* to Lyric, and that through sharing in the Action; wherefore it has not to convince us as a lyric *mass*, but as a well-distinguished membership of self-set individualities.

Not the so-called *Chorus*, then, nor the main characters themselves, are to be used by the poet as a symphonic body of musical tones for bringing to light the Harmonic stipulations of the melody. Only in the full tide of lyric outpour, when all the Characters and their Surrounding have been strictly led-up to a joint expression of feeling, is there offered to the tone-poet a polyphonic mass of voices to which he may make over the declaration of the Harmony. Yet even here it will remain the tone-poet's necessary task, not to give out the dramatic unit's share in the emotional-outpour as a sheer harmonic bolstering of the melody, but—precisely amid this harmonic concord—to allow the individuality of the personage concerned (*des Betheiligten*) to make itself known in a definite, and withal a melodic utterance; and just in *this*, will have to be avouched his highest faculty, as lent him by the standpoint of our Musical art. But the standpoint of our independently developed art of Music supplies him also with the immeasurably puissant organ for making plain the Harmony; an organ which, besides the satisfaction of this positive Need, possesses the further power of characterising the Melody in a way completely barred to the symphonic Vocal-mass: and this organ is the Orchestra.



We have now to consider the *Orchestra* not merely, as I termed it above, as the conqueror of the waves of Harmony, but as itself those conquered waves. In it the Harmonic element, that conditions the melody, is turned from a 'moment' of sheer declaration of those conditions, into an [307] at all times characteristic accessory-organ for realising the Poetic Aim. From being merely a thing imagined by the poet, and never to be realised in Drama by the same tone-mass in which the vocal melody appears,—the naked harmony becomes in the Orchestra an altogether real and special agent; a factor through whose help the Perfected Drama is first truly placeable within the power of the poet.

The Orchestra is Harmony's realised Thought, in its highest, living-est mobility. It is the condensement of the members of the vertical Chord to a self-dependent display of their affinitative inclinations, in a *horizontal* direction along which they may expand themselves

with freest power of motion,—with a motive power that has been lent the Orchestra by its first creator, Dance-rhythm.—

We have to notice first of all the important point, that the instrumental orchestra is something quite different from the vocal tone-mass, not only in its power of expression, but also, and quite definitely, in its *colour* (klangfarbe). In a manner, the musical instrument is an echo of the human voice, but so constituted that we can only detect in it the Vowel resolved into the musical Tone, and no longer the word-determining Consonant. In this loosening from the Word, the instrumental tone is like that *Ur-tone* of all human speech, which only with the advent of the consonant condensed itself into the genuine vowel; and in its bindings— parallel with those of modern word-speech—it becomes a specific tongue, which retains alone an emotional, and not an intellectual kinship with actual human Speech. Now, this pure Tone-speech completely loosened from the Word, or remaining a stranger to the consonantal evolution of *our* speech, in turn has won a specific individual property from the individuality of the instruments, through which alone it was utterable; and this property is determined by the *consonant-like* character of the instruments, in much the same way as Word-speech is determined through its consonantal [308] articulations. In its determinant influence on the quality of the tone entrusted to it, one might term a musical instrument the consonantal *onset of the Root*, (167) displaying itself as a *Stabreim binding together* all the tones executable upon it. The kinship of the instruments to one another might thus be easily decided by the likeness of this initial sound, according as it shewed itself as a softer or harsher delivery, so to say, of the consonant they originally shared in common. As a matter of fact, we possess families of instruments that own an originally like initial, which merely shades off according to the respective character of the offspring, in a similar way to e.g. the consonants *P*, *B* and *W* in word-speech; and just as with *W* we stumble across a resemblance to *F*, so the pedigree of the instrumental families might easily be discovered to embrace a very complex ramification, whose exact tracing, and a characteristic employment of its members in groups arranged according to their likeness or diversity, could not but present us with an Orchestra endowed with far more *individual powers of speech* than have even yet appeared,—seeing that the Orchestra is at present a long way from being known enough in its interpreting capacity (168) But this knowledge can only come to us, in any event, when we shall assign to the Orchestra a more intimate share in Drama than has hitherto been the case, where it is mostly employed as a mere luxurious piece of finery.

The *particularity* of the Orchestra's faculty of speech—which must necessarily result from its idiosyncrasy of sound — we reserve for a concluding inquiry into its [309] functions. In order to be properly equipped for that inquiry, we must in the first place settle one thing: *the complete difference in the purely sensuous utterance of the Orchestra, from the likewise purely sensuous utterance of the Vocal tone-mass*. The Orchestra is as different from that Vocal-tone-mass as the above-named Instrumental consonant from the consonant of Speech, and consequently, as are the 'open sounds' which are respectively conditioned or determined by the one and the other. The instrumental-consonant governs once and for all *each* tone producible upon that instrument: whereas the vocal tone of Speech, by the very play of its initial sounds, is always coming-by an other, an infinitely varied tint. It is this that makes the tone-organ of the human voice the richest and completest, to wit the most organically-conditioned, of them all. Compared with *it*, the most complex blend of orchestral tone-colours conceivable must needs seem poverty-stricken,—an experience which certainly cannot be made by those people who hear the human voice employed by our modern singers in imitation of the orchestral instrument, with a total omission of the consonants and retention of one solitary favoured vowel; and who stralghtway go themselves and handle that human

voice as an instrument, by writing, for instance, duets between a soprano and a clarinet, a tenor and a French horn.

Were we entirely to neglect the fact that the Singer, whom *we* mean, is a human being artistically representing human beings, and that the artistic outpours of his Feeling are ordered by the highest necessity of transforming a thought into a Man: yet even the purely sensuous aspect of his articulate voice (*Sprachgesangston*), in the infinite variety that comes from its characteristic play of vowels and consonants, would prove it not only a far *richer* tone-organ than the orchestral instrument, but also one entirely *distinct* therefrom; and this distinction of the physical organ of tone determines also, once for all, the whole attitude which the Orchestra has to take towards the Acting Singer.

[310]

The orchestra, in the first place, has to assure us that the tone, the melody, and the characteristic phrasing (*Vortrag*) of the singer, are validly conditioned and vindicated by the inner sphere of Musical Harmony. This faculty the orchestra wins as a tone-body set loose from the song-tone and the singer's melody: a body voluntarily, and—for sake of justifying its own independence--sympathetically subordinating itself to the singer; but it never wins it by attempting to actually mingle in the song-tone. If we allow a melody sung by the human voice to be accompanied by instruments in such a fashion, that that integral factor of the whole harmony which lies in the notes (*Intervallen*) of the melody shall be left out of the harmonic body of the accompaniment, and kept, as it were, for the singing voice to make good: then we shall become aware at once that the harmony is absolutely incomplete, and the melody has *not* been harmonically vindicated; precisely because our ear, detecting the great distinction between the sensuous tone-colour of the instruments and that of the human voice, instinctively *severs* the one from the other, and thus receives the mere impression of two diverse 'moments'—a melody not adequately vindicated by its harmony, and a defective harmonic accompaniment. This uncommonly weighty experience, which has never yet been properly followed up, may explain a large share of the ineffectiveness of our opera-*melodik* of hitherto, and teach us about the countless errors into which we have fallen in our handling of vocal melody, when coupled with the orchestra. And this is the very spot, to provide ourselves with that instruction.



Absolute Melody, such as we have employed in Opera hitherto, and such as our purely musical good-pleasure has reconstructed by ringing the changes on our old acquaintances, Volkslied and Dance-melody—in the absence of a Word-verse that should necessarily shape *itself* into a melody,—this Absolute Melody, looked at closely, was [311] ever a thing translated from the instruments into the human voice. By an involuntary error we have always thought of the human voice as a, merely to be specially courted, orchestral instrument; and as such we have woven it also into the orchestral accompaniment. This interweaving sometimes happened in the manner I have already instanced, namely the human voice was employed as an integral factor of the instrumental harmony,—but sometimes it was effected by the accompaniment reduplicating the melody, in addition to its own harmonic duties; whereby the orchestra at any rate was rounded into an intelligible whole, but by that very finish it exposed the melody's character as belonging exclusively to instrumental music. Through the complete adoption of the melody into the orchestra, as thus found needful, the musician confessed that this melody was one which, completely vindicated in its harmony by nothing but the *whole like mass* of tone, could also be intelligibly delivered by that mass alone. The human voice's delivery of the melody, on top of this harmonically and melodically completed body of tone, seemed utterly superfluous and like a second, disfiguring head unnaturally planted on its

shoulders. The hearer quite instinctively perceived this incongruity: he never understood the singer's melody, until it came to him rid of the play of vowels and consonants—obstructive to *this* melody—which disturbed his comprehension of its Absolute self; until he heard it delivered by the instruments alone. That not until they have been played to the public by the Orchestra, in concerts or at the change of guard,—or on some harmonic instrument,—that not till then, have our most favourite operatic melodies been really understood by the public; and that they have first gained currency with it, when it could hum them without words,—this notorious fact might have long since enlightened us as to Opera's entirely false conception of vocal melody. This melody was Vocal only inasmuch as it was assigned to the human voice, to deliver in its purely instrumental capacity,—a capacity in whose unfoldment the voice felt terribly [312] hampered by the vowels and consonants of the words, and for whose sake Vocal-art has also quite logically taken a development such as we may see to-day arrived at its most *ingêné* pitch of wordlessness, amongst our modern opera-singers.

But this disparity between the tone-colour of the Orchestra and that of the Human Voice has come the most startlingly to light, where serious tone-masters (169) have striven for a characteristic garment for dramatic melody. Since they involuntarily had in ear that aforesaid "instrumental-melody," as their motives' only bond of purely-musical comprehensibility, they sought to give it a suggestive and exact expression by means of an uncommonly ingenious instrumental accompaniment, harmonically and rhythmically accenting note by note, and word for word; and thus they arrived at turning out musical periods in which, the more carefully that instrumental accompaniment was interwoven with the motives of the human voice, yet the ear instinctively took up two separate things—an unseizable voice-part whose conditionments and explanation had been transferred to the accompaniment, and an accompaniment which in itself remained an inexplicable chaos, through its instinctive severance from the voice. The fault at bottom of this practice was thus a twofold one. Firstly: an ignoring of the determinative nature of Poetic Song-melody, for which there was substituted an Absolute Melody, drawn from instrumental music; and secondly: an ignoring of the thorough difference in tone-colour (170) between the Human [313] Voice and the Orchestral Instruments, with which one had intermingled the voice for purely musical ends.



If we turn aside a moment, to denote the peculiar character of Song-melody, it is with the object of once more calling plainly to mind the fact that, not only in sense but also in sound, it has sprung from, and is conditioned by, the Word-verse. As touching its sense, its source lies in the nature of the Poetic Aim, in its struggle for an understanding through the Feeling,—as touching its physical semblance, in the organ of the Understanding, namely Word-speech. Starting from this conditioning source, it develops into an enunciation of the purely emotional Content of the verse, through a dissolution of the vowel into the musical tone; and here it turns its purely musical side towards the element of Music proper, from which alone this side obtains the enablement for its appearance, whereas it keeps the other side of its total aspect (*gesammterscheinung*) turned unswervingly towards the significative (*sinnvollen*) element of word-speech, from whence it took its first conditions. In this attitude the Verse-melody becomes the uniting bond and messenger between Word-speech and Tone-speech, as the offspring of the marriage of Poetry with Music, the embodied love-moment of both arts. But it thus is more withal, and stands on a higher level, than Poetry's verse or Music's absolute melody; and its appearance—alike conditioned by, and redeeming either side—becomes only possible in the event of their *each* supporting its plastic, independent message. This must be *upheld* by both conditioning elements, but well *distinguished* from them; and, for the welfare of both arts, they must continuously vindicate it, but never swamp it by admixture of their individualities with its own. (171)

If we want to figure to ourselves this melody's correct [314] relation to the orchestra, we may do it in the following image.

A little while back we compared the Orchestra, as the *conqueror* (172) of the waves of Harmony, to an ocean-ship: this was in the sense wherein we take "sea-voyage" ("*Seefahrt*") as synonymous with "a voyage aboard ("*Schiffahrt*"). For sake of a fresh and independent simile, (173) we must now consider the Orchestra, in its capacity of "conquered Harmony"—as we were bound to call it later,—no longer as the ocean, but as a limpid mountain-lake, lit by the sun-rays to its very bottom; a lake whose whole surrounding shores are plainly visible from every point upon it.—From tree-stems reared upon the rocky soil of hills rolled down from everlasting, a *boat* has now been built; bound fast with iron clamps, well-found with oars and rudder, it has been shaped and fitted closely to the Aim of its carrying by the waters, of ploughing its way athwart them. This boat, now launched upon the lake, urged forward by the pulsing oars, and guided by its helm, is the *verse-melody* of the Dramatic Singer, when borne upon the sounding surges of the Orchestra. The boat is a thing quite other than the mirror of the lake, and yet it has been carpentered and fitted with sole regard to the water and exact adjustment to its qualities; on land the boat is of no use at all, or at most for breaking into common firewood, to feed the burgher's kitchen hearth. Only on the lake, does it become a joyous thing of life; carried and yet self-moving, moved and yet ever at rest; drawing ever back to it our gaze, when it sweeps across the lake; like the human-shewing Aim of the whole existence of that throbbing sheet of waters, which before had seemed to us with out a purpose.—Yet, the pinnacle does not float upon the surface of the water-mirror: the lake can carry it in one [315] steady track, only on condition that it plunges in the water the one full portion of its fronting body. A flimsy plank, that merely grazed the surface of the lake, would be tossed hither and thither by the waves, whichever way their waters streamed; whereas a lumpish stone, again, must be drowned at once beneath them. But not only with one full side of its body does the boat embed itself within the lake, but the helm which governs its direction, and the oar which gives its motion, both gain alike that governing and moving force from nothing but their contact with the water, which first empowers the effective pressure of the guiding hand. With every forward thrust, the oar cuts deep into the ringing reach of waters; raised out, it lets the clinging drip flow back again in drops of Melody.

There is no need to underline this likeness, to make clear my meaning as to the relation involved in the contact of the word-tone-melody of the human voice with the orchestra; for this relation is completely set forth therein,—as will be still more obvious to us if we call our old friend, the Opera-melody proper, the fruitless attempt of the Musician to condense into a seaworthy boat the waters of the lake themselves.

It only remains for us to consider the Orchestra in its capacity of an independent (*selbständiges*) element, in itself distinct from that Verse-melody; and to assure ourselves of its aptitude for carrying that melody, not only through making manifest the harmony conditioning it [*sie*, i.e. the melody] from a purely musical standpoint, but also through its own peculiar, its endlessly expressive faculty of speech: for carrying it, as the lake the pinnacle.

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[316]

V.



THE ORCHESTRA indisputably possesses a *faculty of speech*, and the creations of modern Instrumental-music have disclosed it to us. In the Symphonies of Beethoven we have seen this faculty develop to a height whence it felt thrust on to speak out That which, by its very nature, it can not speak out. Now that in the Word-verse melody we have brought it That which *it* could not speak out, and have assigned to it, as carrier of this kindred melody, the office in which—completely eased in mind—it is to speak out nothing but what its nature fits it alone to speak: now, we have plainly to denote this Speaking-faculty of the Orchestra as the faculty of uttering the *unspeakable*.

This definition, however, is not to convey the idea of a merely imaginary thing, but of a thing quite real and palpable.

We have seen that the Orchestra is no mere compost of washy tone-ingredients, but consists of a rich association of instruments—with unbounded power of adding to its numbers; whilst each of these is a definite individuality, and invests the tone produced by it with an equally individual garment. A tone-mass without some such individual distinction between its members is nowhere to be found, and can at best be thought, but never realised. But what determines the Individuality, in the present case, is—as we have seen—the particular idiosyncrasy of the unit instrument, whose consonant-like timbre converts into a thing apart, as it were, the vowel of the tone produced. Whereas, however, this consonantal timbre can never lift itself to the suggestiveness of the Wordspeech-consonant's appeal to Feeling's understanding, nor is it capable of that consonant's change and consequent play of influence upon the vowel, [317] so neither can the Tone-speech of an instrument ever condense itself to an expression such as that attainable solely by the organ of the Understanding, namely Word-speech; yet, as pure organ of the Feeling, it speaks out the very thing which Word-speech in itself can *not* speak out,—without further ado, then: That which, looked at from the standpoint of our human intellect, is *the Unspeakable*. That this Unspeakable is not a thing unutterable *per se*, but merely unutterable through the organ of our Understanding; thus, not a mere fancy, but a reality,—this is shewn plainly enough by the Instruments of the orchestra themselves, whereof each for itself, and infinitely more richly in its changeful union with other instruments, speaks out quite clearly and intelligibly. (174)

Let us first take into view that Unspeakable which the Orchestra can express with greatest definition, and indeed, in union with another thing unspeakable,—*with Gesture*.

The bodily Gesture, as determined by an inner emotion which proclaims itself in the significant movements of certain members most capable of expression, and finally in the features of the face,—this bodily Gesture is insofar a thing unutterable, as Speech can only hint-at or describe it, whereas those members or those features were the only channels for its actual utterance. Something that Word-speech can fully impart, i.e. an object communicable *by* the Understanding *to* the Understanding, has no need at all of accompaniment or reinforcement by Gesture; nay, unneedful gestures could only mar the message. With such a message, however, as we have seen above, neither is the sensory organ of the recipient Hearing roused, but merely serves as an uninterested go-between. But a message [318] which Word-speech cannot fully and convincingly convey to *Feeling*—which here has also to be roused,—thus an expression which borders on Passion (*Affekt*), imperatively needs strengthening through a concomitant gesture. We thus see that where the Hearing is to be roused to greater 'sensuous' interest, the messenger involuntarily has to address the eye as well: Eye and Ear must mutually assure each other of a higher-pitched message, before they can transmit it convincingly to the Feeling.

Now, the gesture, in its needful message to the eye, delivered precisely That which word-speech was incompetent to express,—had the latter been able to do so, the gesture would have been superfluous and disturbing. The eye was thus aroused by the gesture in a way which still lacked its fitting counterpart, of a message to the ear: but this counterpart is



needful, for rounding the expression into one completely understandable by Feeling. True that the word-verse, roused into melody, at last dissolves the intellectual-content of the original verbal message into an emotional-content: but in this melody there is not as yet contained that 'moment' of the message to the ear which shall completely answer to the gesture; for precisely in this [verse-]melody, as the *most highly roused* expression of the words, lay the first *incitement* to intensify the gesture,—namely, to supply the corroborative 'moment' which the melody still needed, and needed just because it could not as yet bring anything of its own to exactly correspond thereto. The verse-melody, then, has contained only the antecedent condition for the gesture. That, however, which is to vindicate the gesture before the judgment-seat of Feeling, in the same way as the speaking-verse was to be vindicated through the melody, or the melody to be vindicated—or better: *elucidated*—through the harmony,—That lies beyond the power of *this* melody which arose from out the *speaking-verse*, and which with one essential aspect of its body remains strictly conditioned by Word-speech; for it was Word-speech, that could not deliver the particular tale of Gesture, and therefore called the latter to [319] her aid; and now, she positively cannot find a completely fitting vehicle for conveying it to the longing Ear.—But now there comes the language of the Orchestra, completely sundered from this Word-speech; and that tale of Gesture's, which was unutterable in Word-Tone speech, the Orchestra is just as able to impart to the Ear as the gesture itself imparts it to the Eye.

This faculty the Orchestra has won from its accompaniment of the most physical of all gestures, the *Dance-gesture*, to which such an accompaniment was a necessity dictated by its very essence, to make its message understandable since the gestures of Dance, like Gesture in general, bear much the same relation to the orchestral melody as the word-verse bears to the vocal melody thereby conditioned. So that Gesture *and* Orchestral-melody, together, first form such a whole, a thing so intelligible in itself, as Word-Tone-melody forms for *its* part.—Their most physical point of contact, i.e. the point where both—the one in Space, the other in Time: the one to the eye, the other to the ear—displayed themselves as altogether like and mutually conditioned,—Dance-gesture and Orchestra had this common point in *Rhythm*; and after each departure from it, to this point they must perforce return in order to stay or to become intelligible, for it is *it* that lays bare their prime affinity. But from this point both Gesture and Orchestra expand, in equal measure, to their respective idiosyncrasies of speaking-power. Just as Gesture reveals to the eye a thing which *she alone* can utter, so the Orchestra conveys to the ear a something exactly answering to that revelation, precisely in the same way as Musical Rhythm, at the starting-point of their kinship, explained to the *ear* the thing revealed to the *eye* in the most palpable moments of the dance. The setting down of the uplifted foot was the same thing to the eye, as to the ear was the accentuated downbeat of the bar; and thus also the mobile instrumental tone-figure, melodically uniting the down-beats of the bar, is altogether the same thing to the ear, as to the eye is the movement of the feet, or other expressive members of the body, in the intervals between their exchange.

[320]

Now, the farther Gesture departs from her definite, but at like time her most straitened basis,—that of the dance; the more sparingly she distributes her sharpest accents, in the most manifold and delicate expressional nuances to attain an endless aptitude for speech: so much the more manifold and delicate become the tone-figures of Instrumental speech, which, to convincingly impart the Unspeakable of Gesture, now wins a melodic Expression immeasurable in its wealth of idiom. Nor can either its content or its form be characterised in Word-speech, for very reason that they are already *completely* made known to the ear through the Orchestral-melody, and only further wait adoption by the eye; and that, as the content and form of the gesture answering to this melody.

That this idiomatic language of the Orchestra is a long way from having evolved in Opera

to the fulness of which it is capable, is to be explained by the fact—already mentioned in its proper place—that, with its utter lack of a genuine dramatic basis, the Opera has always drawn its by-play directly from the pantomimic dance. These Ballet-mimetics had the very narrowest range of movement and gesture, and at last were stereotyped into settled make-believes, because they altogether lacked the necessary conditions that might have prescribed, and alike explained, a greater multiplicity. Such conditions are contained in Word-speech; and indeed, no word-speech *dragged-on* to help, but one that *summons* Gesture to lend *her* help. As though instinctively aware of its potentiality, the Orchestra sought in absolute Instrumental-music, set loose from pantomime, for that heightened power of speech which it thus could not gain in Pantomime or Opera; and we have seen that this effort, when put forth in its highest force and sincerity, must lead to the longing for a justification through the Word, and through Gesture prompted by the Word. We now have only to learn, from the other side, how the complete realisation of the Poetic Aim is in turn to be effected by nothing but the highest, the most lucid vindication of the Word-verse-melody through the [321] perfected language of the Orchestra, in its alliance with Gesture.

In its will to realise itself in Drama, the Poetic Aim stipulates for the highest and most manifold expression that Gesture owns yes, it demands from her a force, diversity, a finesse and mobility, such as nowhere but in Drama can come to 'necessary' show, and which are therefore to be *invented* of a quite specific character; for the Dramatic Action, with all its motives, is an action lifted high above life, and intensified to the point of Wonder. The compact moments and motives of action were only to be made intelligible to Feeling by means of an equally concise expression, which was to rise from the word-verse to a melody immediately determining the Feeling. Now, just as this utterance intensifies itself to Melody, so it necessarily requires an intensifying of the gestures which it prompts, a lifting of them above the measure of those of ordinary Talk (*Redegebärde*). Moreover this Gesture, in keeping with the character of Drama, is no mere monologue of a solitary individual, but intensifies itself to utmost manifoldness,—so to say, to a "many-voiced" gesture, — through the characteristic reaction of the mutual encounter of *many* individuals. The dramatic-aim not only draws within its sphere the inner emotion *per se*, but, for sake of its own realising, it specifically demands that this emotion shall be proclaimed in the outer, bodily appearance of the performers. Pantomime contented itself with typical masks, for the stature, bearing, and dress of the performers: the all-enabled Drama tears away these typical masks—since it possesses the warranty therefor, in its faculty of Speech,—and shews the performers as specific Individualities, proclaiming themselves precisely *thus* and not otherwise. Wherefore the dramatic-aim prescribes the stature, mien, bearing, motion and dress of the performer, down to their tiniest detail, so that at every instant he may appear as this one, this swiftly and definitely knowable Individuality, in full distinction from its fellows. This drastic distinction of the [322] one individuality is only to be achieved, however, when all its fellows, when all the individualities in touch with it, display themselves with an equally sure and drastic definition.

Let us now picture to ourselves such sharp-cut individualities as these, appearing in the endless change of correlations from whence evolve the divers moments and motives of the Action; and let us figure the infinitely enkindling impression which their aspect must produce on our captive eye: then we shall comprehend alike the Hearing's need of an impression intelligible to *it*, in turn, and completely answering to this impression on the Sight,—an impression through which the latter shall appear supplemented, vindicated, or elucidated; for "At the mouth of two witnesses shall the (whole) matter be (first) established."

What the ear is longing to distinguish, however, is precisely the Unspeakable of the impression received by the eye,—That whose self and motion the poetic-aim merely summoned through its nearest organ, Word-speech, yet cannot now convincingly impart to

Hearing. Were this show not present to the eye, then poetic Speech might feel warranted in imparting to Phantasy a description of the thing imagined; but now that at bidding of the highest Poetic-aim it offers itself directly to the eye, a verbal description not only is entirely superfluous, but would stay quite unimpressive to the ear. That which Poetry could not speak out, however, is imparted to the ear by precisely the language of the Orchestra; and just from the longing of the Ear, incited by her sister Eye, does this language win a new immeasurable power: a power forever slumbering, *without* this incitation, or—if woken by its own initiative—proclaiming itself un-understandably.



Even for this enhancement of its task, the Orchestra's power-of-speech relies in the first place on a kinship with [323] the language of Gesture, such as we have seen it displaying in the dance. In tone-figures peculiar to the individual character of specially appropriate instruments, and shaping themselves into the specific Orchestral-melody (175) through an equally appropriate blending of these characteristics, it speaks out That which is now revealing itself to the eye in physical Show and by means of Gesture; and speaks it out *so far* as there has been no need for any third party—to wit, for intermeddling Word-speech—to explain the Show and Gesture, for their understanding by the eye, or to interpret their meaning to the directly-seizing ear.

Let us come to closer terms about this matter.—We commonly say: "I read it in thine eye's; which means: "In a way intelligible to *it* alone, my eye perceives in the look of thine an instinctive feeling indwelling in thee, which I instinctively, in turn, now feel with thee."—Now, if we extend the eye's receptivity to a faculty for taking in the whole outward stature of the man it looks on, his appearance, bearing and gestures, then we have to admit that the eye can grasp and understand the utterance (176) of this man, past all mistake: provided only, he manifests himself in *full instinctiveness*, is entirely at one with himself within, and utters his inner promptings with undisguised sincerity. But the moments in which man declares himself thus plainly, are solely those of most perfect repose or highest agitation: what lie between these extremes, are transitions which only partake of the character of genuine passion in direct ratio as they either approach their state of highest agitation, or return therefrom, appeased, to a harmonious repose. These transitions consist of a mixture of arbitrary, [324] reflective Will (*reflektirter Willensthätigkeit*) with non-conscious, necessary Emotion (*Empfindung*): their guidance along the necessary channel of instinctive feeling,—with an unflagging flow towards, and final disembouchment into true Emotion, no longer hemmed and conditioned by the reflective Understanding,—this is the substance of the Dramatic poet's Aim, (177) and for this he finds the sole empowering expression in just the Wordverse-Melody, the blossom of that organic speech of Word-and-Tone which turns its one side to the reflective Understanding, but its other to the instinctive Feeling. Gesture (meaning thereby the whole message of man's outward semblance to the eye) takes but a conditional share in this transition, since she has only *one* aspect, and that, the emotional side wherewith she fronts the eye: whereas the side which she conceals from the eye is the very same as that which Word-Tone-speech turns toward the Understanding, and would therefore stay entirely hidden from the Feeling, were it not that *both* sides of Word-Tone-speech address the ear,—albeit one of them less forcibly—and that the ear may thus acquire an added faculty of intelligibly conveying to the Feeling even this side averted from the eye.

This faculty the ear acquires through the language of the Orchestra, which is able to attach itself just as intimately to the verse-melody as earlier to the gesture, and thus to develop into a

messenger of the very *Thought* itself, transmitting it to Feeling: and, indeed, of that Thought which the present (178) verse-melody—as the utterance of a mixed emotion, not yet fully at one with itself—neither can nor will speak out; but which can still less be imparted by the gesture to the eye, since Gesture is the most present thing [325] of all, being conditioned by the emotion given out in the verse-melody, and therefore in this instance is as indefinite as itself, or expresses alone this indefiniteness without being able to clearly illustrate the genuine emotion.

In the Verse-melody not only is Word-speech combined with Tone-speech, but also the thing which both these organs express: to wit, the absent with the present, the thought with the emotion. The *present* part of it is the instinctive feeling, in its necessary pour into the musical expression of the melody; the non-present part is the abstract thought, in its bondage to the word-phrase, as an arbitrary moment of reflection.—Let us define more closely what we have to understand by this "thought."



Here, also, we shall soon arrive at a clear idea, if we take the thing from an artistic standpoint, and go back to its 'sensuous' derivation.

A thing we cannot utter through any single medium, nor through them all combined, even if we *would*—such a thing is naught and nothing. On the other hand, everything for which we find an expression is also something real, and we may recognise its reality if we take the trouble to decipher the expression which we *instinctively* employ for the thing. The expression: Thought, is very easily explainable, if only we go back to its sensuous speech-root. A "thought" (179) is the "thin" image in our mind, of a non-present, but yet a real "thing." (180) By its [of the word "thought"] origin, this Non-present is a real, a physically [326] apprehended object, which has made a definite impression on us in another place, or at another time: this *impression* has lain hold upon our feeling, (181) and, to impart the latter to our fellows, we have been forced to invent an *expression* which shall convey the object's generic impression in terms of the sentience of mankind at large. We thus could only take the object up into us according to the impression which it made upon our senses; and this impression, regulated in its turn by our sensory *faculty*, is the image that appears to be (*dünkt*) the object itself, when we *think of it* (*im Gedenken*). 'Thinking-of' and 'remembering,' then, are really one and the same thing; and a 'thought' is the image impressed upon our sensory faculty by an object, yet moulded by that faculty itself and now brought [327] back by musing Memory—that witness to both the force of the impression and the lasting power of its receiver,—brought back to re-arouse the Feeling, itself, into an after-sense of the impression. We here have nothing to do with Thought's development to the power of combination, i.e. of binding together all self-won or transmitted images of objects passed away from 'presence,' but whose impressions are treasured-up in memory,—with Thinking, such as we meet it in philosophic Science,—for the Poet's path leads out of Philosophy and into Art-work, into a *realisation of the thought* in physical presence.

Only one point more, have we to determine. A thing which has not made an impression on our feelings (*Empfindung*) at the first, neither can we *think* it; and the antecedent emotional-phase (*Empfindungserscheinung*) is the conditioner of the shape in which the thought shall be enounced. So that even Thought is roused by the emotion, and must necessarily flow back again into Emotion; for *a thought is the bond between an absent and a present emotion, each struggling for enouncement*.

Now, as it were before our eyes, the poet's Verse-Melody materialises (182) the thought,—i.e. the non-present emotion recalled by memory,—converting it into a present, an actually observable emotion. In its sheer words this Verse-Melody contains the non-present but *conditioning* emotion, as described from memory and thought; in its purely musical



melody it contains the *conditioned*, the new, the 'present' emotion into which that instigating thought resolves itself; as into its kindred new embodiment. Evolved and vindicated, before our eyes, by the recollection of an earlier emotion; directly moving, and surely influencing the sympathetic Feeling, by its sound: the emotion [328] manifested in this melody is a thing which now belongs as much to us, to whom it has been imparted, as to him who has imparted it; and just as it comes back to him hereafter as a thought,—i.e. a remembrance,—so can *we*, also, preserve it as a thought.—Pondering on this last emotional-phase, and driven by its memory, in turn, to the enunciation of yet a new, of yet another 'present' emotion, our informant now takes up this reminiscence as a mere non-present 'moment,' briefly shadowing or hinting it to the Understanding's recollection; exactly as in the previous verse—wherein it came to a definite melodic show, now handed over to the memory—he employed the reminiscence of an earlier emotion, no longer actively within our mind, for the *thought* engendering a fresh emotion. But *we*, we who receive the new message, are able, through our Hearing, to hold fast that now merely-thought-of emotion *in all its pure-melodic record*: it has become the property of pure Music, and, when brought again to physical show by the Orchestra's appropriate expression, to us it appears as *the presentment, the realisation*, of what the actor has just told us as a mere *thing of thought*. Such a melody, once imparted to us by the actor as the outpour of an emotion, and now expressively delivered by the orchestra at an instant when the person represented merely nurses that emotion in his memory,—such a melody materialises for us this personage's Thought. Nay, even where the present speaker appears no longer conscious of that emotion, its characteristic sounding by the orchestra is able to stir within us an emotion which—in its filling-out of a conjuncture, its clearing-up of a situation, through suggesting motives that are well enough contained therein but cannot come to vivid light within its representable moments—for us becomes a *thought*, yet in itself is *more* than Thought, for it is the thought's *Emotional-content brought to presence*.

Here, when employed for the highest realisation of the poetic-aim, the musician's power is rendered boundless, through the Orchestra—Without. the stipulations of such an aim, the absolute musician has heretofore imagined that he [329] had really to do with thoughts and combinations of thoughts. Yet; when musical themes were point-blank christened "thoughts," this was either a thoughtless misnomer, or the token of an illusion on the part of the musician; he gave the name of "thought" to a theme in whose conception he had certainly thought something himself; but which no one understood, except at utmost those he told in sober words what he had thought, thereby inviting them to think this something into the theme for themselves as well. Music cannot think: but she can materialise thoughts, i.e. she can give forth their emotional-contents as no longer merely recollected, but made present. This she can only do, however, when her own manifestment is conditioned by a Poetic Aim, and when this latter, again, reveals itself as no mere thing of thought, but a thing expounded in the first place by the organ of the Understanding, namely Word-speech. A musical motive (*Motiv*) can produce a definite impression on the Feeling, inciting it to a function akin to Thought, only when the emotion uttered in that motive has been definitely conditioned by a definite object, and proclaimed by a definite individual before our very eyes. The omission of these conditionments sets a musical motive before the Feeling in a most indefinite light; and an indefinite thing may return in the same garment as often as one pleases, yet it will remain a mere recurrence of the Indefinite, and we shall neither be in a position to justify it by any felt necessity of its appearance, nor, therefore, to associate it with anything else.—But a musical motive into which the thought-filled Wordverse of a dramatic performer has poured itself—so to say, before our eyes—is a thing conditioned by Necessity: with its return a *definite* emotion is discernibly conveyed to us, and conveyed to *us* through the physical agency of the Orchestra, albeit now unspoken by the performer; for the latter *now* feels driven to give voice to a fresh emotion, derived in turn from that earlier one. Wherefore the concurrent sounding

of such a motive unites for us the conditioning, the non-present emotion with the emotion [330] conditioned thereby and coming at this instant into voice; and inasmuch as we thus make our Feeling a living witness to the organic growth of one definite emotion from out another, we give to it the faculty of thinking: nay, we here give it a faculty of higher rank than Thinking, to wit, the instinctive *knowledge* of a thought made real in Emotion.



Before we proceed to a discussion of the results which follow from the Orchestra's above-suggested faculty of speech, for the shaping of the Drama, we must determine another of its salient capabilities, so as to take that faculty's full compass. — The capability to which we here refer, comes to the Orchestra from a union of those aptitudes which have accrued to it from its alliance with Gesture, on the one hand, and its remembrance of the Verse-melody on the other. Just as Gesture, originating in the most physical of Dance's postures, has evolved to the most intellectual *Mimik*; just as Verse-melody, from a mere thinking of an emotion, has advanced to the most 'present' enunciation of an emotion: so the speaking-faculty of the Orchestra— which has won from both its shaping force, and fed and flourished on their utmost ripening—so does it grow from out this double source to a highest special capability, wherein we see the two divided arms of the orchestral river, now richly tinged by tributary brooks and streams, as though unite again into one common flow. To wit: where gesture lapses into rest, and the melodic discourse of the actor hushes,—thus where the drama prepares its future course in inner moods as yet unuttered,—there may these still unspoken moods be spoken by the Orchestra in such a way, that their utterance shall bear the character of a *foreboding* necessitated by the poet's Aim.

A Foreboding is the herald of an emotion as yet unspoken-out,—because as yet unspeakable, in the sense of our customary word-speech. Unspeakable, is any emotion which is not as yet defined; and it is undefined, so long as [331] it has not been yet determined through a fitting *object*. The first thrill of this emotion, the Foreboding, is thus its instinctive longing for definement through an object; through an object which it predetermines, in its turn, by the force of its own need; moreover, an object which must answer to it, and for which it therefore waits. In its manifestment as a foreboding, I might compare the emotional-fund to a well-tuned harp, whose strings are sounding to the touch of passing winds, and wait the player who shall grasp them into shapely chords.

Such a presentiment as this, has the poet to wake within us, *in order, through its longing, to make us necessary sharers in the creation of his artwork*. By calling forth this longing, he provides himself with the conditioning force, in our aroused receptiveness, which alone can make it possible for him to shape the creatures of his fancy in accordance with his settled Aim. In the evocation of moods such as the poet needs must wake in us, if he is to procure our indispensable assistance, absolute Instrumental-speech has already proved itself all-powerful; since precisely the arousing of indefinite, of presaging emotions, has been its most characteristic effect; but this aptitude could only become a weakness, wherever it wanted to give a definite shape, withal, to the emotions it had roused. Now, if we apply to the 'moments' of the Drama this extraordinary, this unique enabling aptitude of Instrumental-speech; if we entrust it to the poet, to be set in motion for the furtherance of a definite aim: then we must come to terms as to *whence* this language has to take the sensuous moments-of-expression in which it is to clothe itself; to accord with the Poetic Aim.

We have already seen that our Absolute Instrumental-music was obliged to borrow the sensuous 'moments' for its expression, either from a Dance-rhythm familiar to our ear of yore, and from the thence-sprung Tune—or from the melos of the Folk-song, to which our ear had been equally brought up. The absolute Instrumental-composer endeavoured to raise the everlasting indefiniteness of these [332] 'moments' into a definite Expression, by fitting them



together according to their kinship or contrast; by increasing or diminishing the strength, and hastening or slackening the speed, of their delivery; and finally by an idiomatic characterisation, which he sought among the manifold individualities of the tone-instruments themselves. In virtue of all this, he presented an image to the Phantasy; and eventually he could but feel compelled to explain the object of his description, by giving it an exact, an extra-musical label. So-called "Tone-painting" has been the manifest last stage (*Ausgang*) of our absolute Instrumental-music's evolution; in it this art has sensibly chilled down its own expression, no longer addressing itself to the Feeling, but to the Phantasy: an experience which anyone may make for himself; by hearing a Mendelssohnian, or still more (*gar*) a Berliozian orchestral composition, on top of a tone-piece by Beethoven. Nevertheless it is not to be denied, that this evolutionary course was a 'necessary' one, and the definite veering-off into tone-painting was prompted by more upright motives than, for instance, the return to the fugal style of Bach. Above all must it not be forgotten, that the sensuous power (*das sinnliche Vermögen*) of Instrumental-speech has been uncommonly enriched and heightened through this same Tone-painting.

We have now to recognise that not only can this power be heightened beyond all measure, but its expression be at the same time rid of its chillingness, if the tone-painter may but address himself again to Feeling, in place of Phantasy. This opportunity is offered him, when the subject of his mere describings to Thought is revealed in actual presence, to the Senses; and indeed, as no mere help towards an understanding of his tone-picture, but as conditioned by a highest Poetic Aim, for whose realisation the tone-picture is itself to be the helper. The subject of the tone-picture could be nothing but a moment from the life of Nature, or of Man himself. But it is precisely such moments from natural or human life, to whose delineation the Musician has hitherto felt drawn, [333] that the Poet now needs in preparation for weighty dramatic crises (*Entwickelungen*), and it has been to the utmost detriment of his intended artwork, that the whilom Absolute Playwright must abjure these moments in advance—because, the more completely were they to impress the eye, yet without the supplementary aid of an emotion-guiding music their stage-effect was bound to be held unjustified, disturbing and detractive, not furthersome and helping.

Those indefinite presentiments, which the poet must necessarily arouse in us, will always have to be allied with some sort of Show (*Erscheinung*) that presents itself to the eye. This will be a 'moment' of the Natural Surrounding, or, in fact, of the Human centrepiece of that Surrounding: in any case, a 'moment' whose motion is not as yet determined by any *definitely* revealed emotion; for the latter can only be expressed by Word-speech, in its aforesaid alliance with gesture and music,—by that very Word-speech whose definite announcement we have here to pave the way for, through its evocation by our longing. No language is capable of so *movingly* (*bewegungsvoll*) expressing a preparatory Repose, as that of the Orchestra: to develop this repose into an impatient longing, is its most peculiar office. What is offered our eye by a scene of Nature or a still and silent human figure, and through that eye attunes our feelings into placid contemplation, this same thing Music can present to our emotions in such a way that, starting from the 'moment' of Repose, she moves them to a state of strained Expectancy, (183) and thus awakes the longing which the poet needs on our part to assist him in the revelation of his aim. Nay, for this stirring of our Feeling towards a definite object, the poet needs to prepare our eye for the determinant (*bestimmende*) Show itself;—to wit, he must not even present us with the scene from Nature, nor with his human characters, until our roused expectancy [334] demands their presence and sanctions their behaviour, as fulfilling the necessities prefigured by it.—

In the exercise of this uttermost faculty, musical Expression will remain quite vague and non-determinant, till it takes into it the poetic Aim above-denoted. For the physical 'moments' of the preparatory tone-piece, however, this Aim is able so to draw upon the definite

phenomenon about to be realised, that they shall answer just as closely to that phenomenon as its eventual appearance answers to the expectations woken in us by the premonitory music. Thus heralded, the actual phenomenon steps before us as a fulfilled longing, a justified foreboding; and, bearing in mind that the poet must lead his drama's shows before the Feeling as towering over those of wonted life—in fact, as Wondrous,—we now have to admit that these shows would not display themselves as such, or would appear outrageous and unintelligible, if their eventual naked revelation could not be so conditioned by our preparatory feeling of their necessity, as to make us downright demand them in fulfilment of an expectation. But only to an Orchestral-language thus inspired by the Poet, is it possible to rouse in us this necessary expectancy; wherefore without the Orchestra's artistic aid the Drama of Wonders (*das wundervolle Drama*) can neither be planned nor carried out.

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[335]

## VI.

WE now have gathered all the connecting ties for our drama's single (184) Expression, and have only still to come to terms as to *how* they are to be knit with one another, in order to answer as a single *Form* to the single Substance; for only through the possibility of this oneness of Form, can the Substance also shape itself as *one*.—

The life-giving focus of dramatic Expression is the verse-melody of the performer: toward it leads-on the absolute orchestral-melody, as a *foreboding*; from it is led the instrumental-motive's "thought," as a *remembrance*. The Foreboding is the ray of light which, falling on an object; brings out to vivid truth of show the tint peculiar to that object, and conditioned by its substance; the Remembrance is the garnered tint itself; which the painter borrows from the object, to bestow it on others akin thereto. What greets the eye, is the ever 'present' show and motion of the imparter of the verse-melody, the dramatic gesture of the performer; to the ear this is elucidated by the orchestra, which plays its original, its most necessary part as the harmonic carrier of the verse-melody.—In the total expression of the performer's every message, to the ear alike as to the eye, the *orchestra* thus takes an unbroken share, supporting and elucidating on every hand: it is the moving matrix of the music, from whence there thrives the uniting bond of all Expression.—*The Chorus of Greek Tragedy* has bequeathed to us its emotional (*gefühlsthwendige*) significance for the drama *in the modern Orchestra alone*, and therein, free from any hampering, has evolved to an immeasurable wealth of utterance; its physical (*reale*), its individual human semblance, however, has been lifted from the ##### and placed upon the stage,—there to unfold the germ of human Individuality, indwelling in the Greek Chorus, to the topmost flower of self-dependence as the immediate doer or sufferer in the drama itself.

Let us now consider how the poet, from amid that Orchestra in which he has become entirely a musician, turns back to face the Aim which led him thither; and, indeed, to completely realise it through the boundless amplitude of means of Expression, which now he has acquired.

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The Poetic Aim was to be realised, in the first place, in the Verse-melody; in the Harmonic Orchestra we have learnt to recognise the carrier and elucidator of *pure* Melody. It now remains for us to ascertain how that Verse-melody comports itself towards the drama, and what furtherance the Orchestra can bring to this relation.

We have already gained from the Orchestra the capability of awaking forebodings and remembrances. The Foreboding we have taken as the herald of the matter that finally proclaims itself in the gesture and verse-melody,— the Remembrance, on the other hand, as a derivative from that matter. We now must settle What it is, that has to fill the general body of the drama, and fill it in such a way as to make these forebodings and remembrances a real dramatic necessity, an accessory to its thorough understanding.

The moments in which the orchestra might speak out thus independently, must in any case be such as do not yet permit the full ascension of the spoken thought into the musical emotion, on the part of the dramatis personæ. [337] Just as we have watched the growth of the musical melody from out the speaking-verse, and have recognised that growth as conditioned by the very nature of this verse; just as we have had to conceive the vindication of the melody—i.e. the understanding given it by the conditioning word-verse—not merely as a something to be thought or worked out by the artist (*künstlerisch Auszuführendes*), but as something necessarily to be brought organically to pass before our very Feeling, an act of birth to be carried on (*Vorzuführendes*) in its presence: so have we to picture the dramatic Situation as growing from conditionments which mount, before our eyes, to a height whereon the Verse-Melody appears the only fit, the necessary expression of a definitely proclaimed emotion.

A ready-made melody—so we have seen—remained unintelligible to us, because open to arbitrary interpretations; a ready-made Situation must remain just as unintelligible, even as Nature herself remained unintelligible to us so long as we looked on her as something *made*—whereas she is intelligible enough, now that we know her as the Be-ing, i.e. the forever Becom-ing: a Being (*ein Seiendes*) whose Becoming is ever present to us, alike in farthest as in highest spheres. By leading forth his Artwork in continuous organic growth, and making our selves organic helpers in that growth, the poet frees his creation from all traces of his handiwork; whereas, should he leave those traces unexpunged, he would set us in that chill of feelingless amazement which takes us when we look upon a masterpiece of mechanism.—Plastic art can display alone the Finished, i.e. the Motionless; wherefore it can never make of the beholder a confident witness to the becoming of a thing. In his farthest strayings, the Absolute Musician fell into the error of copying plastic art in this, and giving the Finished in place of the Becoming. The Drama, alone, is the artwork that so addresses itself in Space and Time to our eye and ear, that we take an active share in its becoming, and therefore can grasp the *Become* as a necessity, as a thing which our Feeling clearly understands.

[338]

Now, the poet who wishes to make of us the active witnesses and sole enablers of his artwork's Becoming (*Werdens*), has to guard himself from taking even the smallest step that might break the bond of this organic growth (*Werdens*) and thus affront our captivated Feeling by an arbitrary demand: his most important ally would be made disloyal to him at once. Organic growth, however, means a growing from below upwards, an advance from lower to higher forms of organism, a binding of needy moments into one satisfying moment. (185) Wherefore, just as the Poetic Aim was to gather up the moments of the Action and their motives, collecting them from such as were actually to hand in daily life, albeit infinitely scattered there, and ramified past any survey; just as it was to compress these moments and motives, for sake of their intelligible display, and to strengthen them in such cohesion: so for their *realisement* the poet has to go to work in exactly the same way as with their composition *in his thought*; for his Aim can only be realised through its making our Feeling a partner in its thinking work of composition (*an ihrer gedachten Dichtung*).

The thing the Feeling grasps the surest, is our ordinary view of daily life, in which we deal from need or inclination precisely as we have been accustomed to. If, then, the poet has

gathered his motives from this life and its wonted vie wings, he must also bring us the shapings of his fancy, in the first place, with an exterior (*Äusserung*) which shall not be *so* foreign to this life as to be completely unintelligible to men involved therein. He has therefore to shew his characters at first in predicaments (*Lebenslagen*) having a recognisable likeness with such as we have found, or at least might have found, ourselves in; only from such a foundation, can he mount step by step to situations whose force and wondrousness remove us from the life of every-day, [339] and shew us Man in the highest fulness of his power. Just as, through the removal of everything which might savour of the Accidental, (186) in the encounter of strongly pronounced individualities, these situations grow to a height on which they appear lifted above the wonted human measure,—so has the *Expression* of the doers and the done-by to necessarily lift itself by well-found stages, from one that is still in touch with customary life, to one raised high above it: in fact, to such an one as we have already indicated in the Musical Verse-melody.

But we now must fix our lowest point for both the Situation and the Expression, the point from which we are to start on that upward journey. If we look a little closer, we shall see that this point is precisely the same as that on which we must place ourselves in order to impart, and thus to realise, the Poetic Aim at all; and that lies where this Aim parts compammy with the daily life from which it sprang, to hold up to it its poetical image. Upon this point the poet sets himself aface to those involved in daily life, with an announcement of his aim, (187) and calls aloud for their attention. He cannot be rightly heard until this attention is *willingly* yielded him, — until our feelings, distracted by the affairs of daily life, just as much collect themselves to a feeling of intent expectancy as the poet, in his Aim, has already collected from that same life the moments and motives of his Dramatic Action. The willing expectation, or expectant Will of the hearer, is thus the first enabler for the artwork; and it determines the manner of Expression which the poet must bring to meet it,—not merely so as to be understood, but to be understood in the measure demanded by the hearer's strained expectance of something out of the common.

[340]

From the very first, the poet has to make use of this expectancy for the enunciation of his Aim, and that, by guiding this indeterminate feeling in the direction of that Aim. No language is more competent for this, as we have seen, than the indefinitely determining language (*die unbestimmt bestimmende*) of pure Music, of the Orchestra. The Orchestra gives voice to the very expectancy that possesses us before the appearing of the artwork; according to the particular bent demanded by the poetic-aim it guides our general feeling of suspense, and works it into a Foreboding, which necessarily calls for a definite phenomenon to finally fulfil it. (188) When the poet leads the object of this expectancy upon the scene, as a dramatic personage, it is obvious that he would only affront and disillusion the awakened Feeling, were he to allow that person to express himself in a tongue recalling suddenly the most habitual utterance of the life from whence we have just been transported. (189) This personage, too, must pronounce himself in that tongue which has already aroused our emotion, if he is to correspond at all with what this emotion has been led to expect. In this Tone-speech must the dramatic person speak, if we are to understand him with our kindled Feeling: but, he must also speak in such a way as to *determine* the emotions roused in us; and our vaguely roused emotions can only be determined by their being given a fixed point round which they may gather as human Fellow-feeling, [341] and whereat they may condense themselves to a specific sympathy for this one man, involved in this particular plight, influenced by this surrounding, ensouled by this will, and engaged in this project. These necessary conditions for

displaying an individuality to the Feeling, can be convincingly set forth in nothing but Word-speech,—in that language which is instinctively intelligible to ordinary life, and wherein we mutually impart a plight or Will such as must be resembled by those laid bare by the dramatic person, if these latter are to be *understood* by us at all. As our kindled mood, however, has already claimed that this word-speech shall not be one at total variance with that tone-speech which has so lately moved us, but one already (190) welded with it—as it were the interpreter, but alike the partner, of the roused emotion—, so by this very fact, the Content (*Inhalt*) to be set forth by the dramatis personae is prescribed as one as much uplifted above the matters of our daily life, as the Expression itself is raised above the language of that life. And the poet has only to hold by the characteristics of this Expression,—he has only to take care to fill it with a Content such as shall justify it,—to become fully conscious of the heightened standpoint which the sheer Means of Expression has provided for the reaching of his Aim.

This standpoint is already so lofty a one, that the poet *can*—because he positively *must*—allow the Unwonted and Wondrous, as needed for the realisation of his aim, to take their development immediately from here. The Wondrous of his dramatic individualities and situations he will develop in exact degree as its fit Expression stands at his behest,—namely, as the language of the impersonator, after accurately laying down the basis of the Situation as one borrowed from Man's Life and intelligible thereto, can lift itself from the already tonal Word-speech into actual Tone-speech; from which there blooms at last the Melody, in answer to the sure and settled Feeling, in utterance of the [342] purely human kernel of the sure and settled Individuality and Situation. (191)



A Situation arising from this basis, and waxing to such a climax, forms in itself a plainly differentiated member of the drama. While this Drama, both in content and in form, consists of a chain of such organic members, conditioning, supplementing and supporting one another: exactly as the organic members of the human body,—which then alone is a complete and living body, when it consists of all the members whose mutual conditionings and supplementings make up its whole; when none are lacking to it; but, also, when none are too many.

But the Drama is an ever new, an ever newly-shaping body; and it has only *this* in common with its human prototype,—that it is living, and draws its life from inner life-needs. This Life-need of the drama, however, is a diverse one; for it does not shape itself from an always like-remaining Stuff, but takes this Stuff from the endless varieties of a measurelessly complex life, of divers men in divers circumstances; while the latter, again, have only one thing in common,—namely, that they just are Men and *human* circumstances. The never equal individuality of men and circumstances obtains through mutual reagent an ever novel physiognomy, which brings to the poetic-aim a constantly fresh series of Necessities, for it to realise. From out these Necessities the drama has ever to shape itself afresh and other-wise, in answer to those changing individualities; and nothing, therefore, has borne stronger witness to the incapacity of past and present art-periods, for shaping the genuine Drama, than when Poet and Musician have sought in advance for Forms, and set [343] up Forms, which were to make the Drama possible to them so soon as they should pour into these Forms any Stuff they chose to dramatise. No Form was more balking and unfit for achievement of the genuine Drama, however, than the Opera-form with its once-for-all division into vocal numbers, quite heedless of the dramatic matter: however much our opera-composers might toil and moil to stretch them out and multiply them, the unyielding, disconnected botch-work could only fall to rags and tatters in the long run,— as we have seen in its own place.

Against this, let us take a hasty glance at the Form of our supposed drama, so as to assure



ourselves that—for all its necessary and fundamental, its ever newly-shaping change—it is a Form essentially, nay, uniquely *one*. But let us also consider *what* it is, that makes this unity possible.

*Unity of artistic Form* is only thinkable as the emanation (*Kundgebung*) of a united Content: a united Content, however, we can only recognise by its being couched in an artistic *Expression* (192) through which it can announce itself *entirely* to the Feeling. A Content which should prescribe a twofold Expression, i.e. an expression which obliged the messenger to address himself alternately to the Understanding and the Feeling,—such a content could only be itself a dual, a discordant (*uneiniger*) one.—Every artistic aim makes primarily for a united Shape, for only in degree as an announcement approaches such a shape, does it become at all an artistic one: but it necessarily begins to cleave in two, from the instant when it can no longer be entirely imparted through the Expression placed at its disposal. Since it is the instinctive Will of every artistic Aim, to impart itself to Feeling, it follows that the cloven Expression is incompetent to entirely rouse the Feeling: but an Expression must entirely rouse the Feeling, if it would entirely impart thereto its Content. This entire arousing of the Feeling was impossible to the sheer Word-poet, through *his* expressional organ; therefore what he [344] could not impart through that to Feeling, he was obliged to announce to Understanding, so as to compass the full utterance of the content of his Aim: he must hand over to Understanding, to be thought out, what he could not give to be perceived by Feeling; and, when it came to the decisive point, he could only speak out his 'tendence' as a mere 'sentence,' (193) i.e. as a naked, unrealised aim; whereby he was compelled to degrade the Content of his aim, itself, to a non-artistic one.'

Now, if the work of the sheer Word-poet appears as a non-realised poetic Aim, on the other hand the work of the Absolute Musician is only to be described as altogether bare of such an Aim; for the Feeling may well have been entirely roused by the purely-musical expression, but it could not be *directed*. By reason of his inadequate means of Expression, the poet was obliged to split the Content into an emotional and an intellectual one, and thus to leave the kindled Feeling in a state of restless discontent,—fitly matched by the unallayable brooding on this restlessness of the Feeling, into which he plunged the Understanding. The musician no less constrained the Understanding to seek for some lurking Content, in this Expression of his which so completely stirred the Feeling, yet brought it no appeasement of its utmost stir. The poet gave this Content as a 'sentence': the musician—in order to make some show of an Aim, in truth not extant,—as a title to his composition. Both, in the long run, had to turn away from Feeling, to the Understanding; the poet—so as to fix a feeling, incompletely roused: the musician—to exculpate himself in the eyes of a feeling roused in vain.

If, then, we wish to accurately denote that Means of Expression which, in virtue of its own unity, shall make possible a Unity of Content, let us define it as one which can the most fittingly convey to Feeling a widest-reaching Aim of the poetic Understanding. Such an Expression [345] must *contain the poet's Aim in each of its separate 'moments,' albeit in each of them concealing that aim from the Feeling,—to wit, by realising it.* (194) —Even to Word-Tone-speech this entire cloaking of the poetic Aim would be impossible, were it not that a second, a concurrent organ of Tone-speech could be allied therewith; so that wherever Word-Tone-speech—as the directest harbourer of the poet's Aim, and for sake of keeping it in touch with the moods of ordinary life—is obliged to so thin down its own Expression, that it can only clothe that Aim with an almost diaphanous veil of Tone, there this second organ is able to maintain an even balance of the one Emotional-expression.

The Orchestra, as we have seen, is this compensatory organ for preserving the Unity of Expression. Wherever, for a plainer definement of the dramatic Situation, the Word-Tone



language of the *dramatis personae* abates itself in such a way as to expose its closest kinship with the language of daily life,—with the organ of the Understanding,—there the Orchestra makes good this sunk expression, through its power of musically conveying a Foreboding or Remembrance; so that the awakened Feeling remains in its uplifted mood, and never has to follow on that downward path by transforming itself into a purely intellectual function. This constant height of Feeling—never to be diminished, but only still further augmented—is governed by the constant height of the Expression, and the latter by the constancy, i.e. the unity, of the Content.

Let us not forget, however, that the Orchestra's equalising moments-of-expression are never to be determined *by the caprice of the musician*, as a random tricking-out of sound, but *only by the poet's Aim*. Should these 'moments' utter anything not connected with the Situation of the *dramatis personae*, anything superfluous thereto, then the Unity of Expression is itself disturbed by this departure from the [346] Content. A mere absolute-musical embellishment of drooping or inchoate situations—a favourite Operatic device for the self-glorification of Music, in so-called "ritornelles" and interludes, and even in the song-accompaniments,—such a trick upheaves at once the Unity of Expression, and casts the interest of the ear on Music no longer as an expression, but, in a manner, as herself the thing expressed. No: those 'moments,' too, must be governed by nothing but the poetic-aim, and in such a way that, as either a Foreboding or a Remembrance, they shall always direct our Feeling solely to the dramatic personage and whatever hangs-together therewith, or outgoes therefrom. We ought never to hear these prophetic or reminiscent melodic-moments, except when we can feel that they are complementary to the utterance of the character upon the stage, who either will not or cannot just now expose to us his full emotion.

These Melodic Moments, in themselves adapted to maintain our Feeling at an even height, will be made by the orchestra into a kind of guides-to-Feeling (*Gefühlswegweisern*) through the whole labyrinthine (*vielgewundenen*) building of the drama. At their hand we become the constant fellow-knowers of the profoundest secret of the poet's Aim, the immediate partners in its realisation. Between them, as Foreboding and Remembrance, there stands the Verse-melody as the borne and bearing individuality, conditioned by an emotional-surrounding consisting of moments of utterance drawn alike from its own promptings and from those of others, already experienced or yet to be experienced. These referential moments, for rounding-off the emotional-expression, withdraw into the background so soon as ever the individual comes to oneness with himself, and thus advances to the fullest expression of the Verse-melody: *then* the orchestra will merely support this melody in its elucidatory function (195); but when the full colours of [347] the Verse-melody fade down again to a merely tonal Word-speech, then the Orchestra resumes its function of making good the joint emotional-expression through prophetic reminiscences, and of basing necessary transitions of feeling, as it were, upon our own, our ever vigilant sympathy.



These Melodic Moments—in which we remember a Foreboding, whilst they turn our Remembrance into a prophecy—will necessarily have blossomed only from *the weightiest motives* of the drama, and the weightiest *of them*, in turn, will correspond in number to those motives which the poet has taken as the concentrated, the strengthened root-motives of a strengthened and concentrated Action, and has planted as the *pillars* of his dramatic edifice; which pillars he employs, on principle, in no bewildering plurality, but plasticly disposes in a number small enough to allow of easy survey. In these root-motives, which are no mere

'sentences' but plastic moments-of-Feeling, the poet's Aim comes out the clearest, as realised through its adoption into Feeling; wherefore the musician, as the realiser of the poet's aim, has to take these motives, already condensed to melodic moments, and order them so deftly *and in fullest accordance with the poetic aim*, that their necessary play of repetition will furnish him quite of itself with the highest unity of musical Form,—a Form which the musician has hitherto put together at his own caprice, but through the poet's aim can for the first time shape itself into a necessary, a truly unitarian, i.e. an *understandable* one.

In Opera, hitherto, the musician has not so much as attempted to devise a unitarian Form for the whole artwork: each several vocal piece was a form filled-out for itself, and merely hung-together with the other tone-pieces of the opera through a similarity of outward structure,—by no means through any true conditionment by an inner Content. The Disconnected was so peculiarly the character [348] of operatic music. Only the separate tone-piece, had a Form coherent in itself; and this was derived from absolute-musical good pleasure, maintained by custom, and imposed upon the poet as an iron yoke. The connecting principle, within these forms, consisted in a ready-made theme making place for a second, a middle-theme, and repeating itself according to the dictates of musical caprice. In the larger work of absolute Instrumental-music—the Symphony,— alternation, repetition, augmentation and diminution of the themes made out the movement of its separate section, which strove to vindicate itself before the Feeling by establishing the utmost possible Unity of Form, through the co-ordination (*Zusammenhang*) and recurrence of its themes. The vindication of their recurrence, however, rested on a merely imagined, but never realised assumption; and nothing but the Poetic Aim can really bring about this vindication, because it downright demands the latter as a necessary condition for its being understood.

In their suggestive, their ever warranted return, analogous to that of the *Stabreim*, these Chief-motives of the Dramatic Action—having become distinguishable Melodic Moments which fully materialise their Content — now mould themselves into a continuous artistic Form, which stretches not merely over narrower fragments of the drama, but over the whole drama's self. (196) And in this binding alliance not only do these Melodic-moments appear mutually explanatory, and thus at-one, but also the motives of Feeling or Show embodied in them—as the strongest motives of the Action, and including within themselves the weaker ones—reveal themselves to the *Feeling* as mutually conditioned, as at-one by their generic nature. In this alliance is reached at last a realisation of the perfect unitarian Form, and through this Form the utterance of a unitarian Content; and thus this Content is itself first truly rendered possible.

Let us once more sum up this whole matter in one [349] exhaustive definition, and denote the most perfect Unity of artistic Form as that in which a widest conjuncture of the phenomena of Human Life—as Content—can impart itself to the Feeling in so completely intelligible an Expression, that in all its 'moments' this Content shall completely stir, and alike' completely satisfy, the Feeling. *The Content, then, has to be one that is ever present in the Expression, and therefore the Expression one that ever presents the Content in its fullest compass; for only Thought can grasp the absent, but only the present can be grasped by Feeling.*



In this unity of the *Expression*, ever making present, and ever embracing the full compass of the Content, there is at like time solved, and solved in the only decisive way, the whilom problem of the *unity of Time and Space*. (197)

Time and Space, as abstractions from the real living attributes of the Action, could only chain the attention of our drama-*constructing* poets because a single, a completely reahising Expression did not stand at their service for the poetic Content planned by them. Time and

Space are thought-out attributes of actual physical phenomena; and so soon as the latter are thought about, they have in truth already lost their force of manifestment: the body of these abstractions is the Real, the Sense-appealing, of an action which displays itself in a definite spacial surrounding, and in a period of motion conditioned thereby. To set the unity of the Drama in the unity of Space and Time, means to set it at *naught* (in *Nichts* setzen); for Time and Space are nothing in themselves, and only become some-thing through their being *annulled* by something *real* by a Human Action and its Natural Surrounding. This Human Action must be the thing united in itself, i.e. the thing that hangs-together; by the possibility of making its connexion a [350] surveyable one, is conditioned the assumption of its time-length, and by the possibility of a completely adequate representment of the Scene is conditioned its extension in Space; for it wills but one thing,—to make itself intelligible to Feeling.

In the singlest Space and the most compact Time one may spread out an Action as completely discordant and disconnected as you please,—as we may see to our heart's content in our Unity-pieces. On the contrary, the Unity of an Action consists in its intelligible connexion; and only through *one* thing can this reveal itself intelligibly,—which thing is neither Time nor Space, but *the Expression*. If in the preceding pages we have ascertained *what* is this unitarian, i.e. this continuous Expression, which at all times keeps the Continuity in presence; and if we have shewn it as a thing by all means possible: then in this Expression we have also won back the severed by the necessity of Space and Time (198) as a thing once more united, and a thing made ever present where needful for an understanding; for its 'necessary' Presence lies not in Time or Space, but in the *impression* which is made on us within them. The limitations of Space and Time, which arose from lack of this Expression, are upheaved at once by its acquirement; both Time and Space are annihilated, through the actuality of the Drama.

The genuine Drama, then, is influenced no longer by aught that lies outside it; but it is an *organic Be-ing and Becom-ing*, evolving and shaping itself by those inner conditions which itself lays down for its only contact with outside—in turn conditioning *it*,—namely by the Necessity of making its message understandable, and understandable *as the thing it is and becomes*; whilst it wins its intelligible Shape by bearing from its own, its inmost Need, the all-empowering Expression for its Content.



[351]

## VII.

IN the argument just ended I have indicated possibilities of Expression such as a poetic Aim *can* press into its service, and such as the highest Poetic Aim *must needs* employ for its realisation. The verification of those possibilities of Expression depends solely on the highest poetic Aim: but this latter cannot be taken in hand, till the Poet becomes conscious of those possibilities.—

Whoever, on the other hand, may have understood me to be occupied with setting up an arbitrarily concocted System, according to which all poets and musicians should construct their work in future,—he has wilfully mis-understood me. Moreover, he who chooses to believe that the New, which I haply have said, reposes on an absolute assumption and is not identical with Experience and the nature of the object dealt with,—he will not be *able* to understand me, even though he wished it.—The New that I may have said, is nothing other than the Unconscious in the nature of the thing, and has become conscious to me, as a thinking artist, merely because I have grasped in its continuity a thing which artists heretofore

have taken only in its severance. I thus have *invented* nothing new, but merely *found* that continuity.—



It only remains for me to denote *the relation between poet and musician* which follows from the argument above. To do this briefly, let us first ask ourselves the question: "Has the poet to *restrict* himself in presence of the musician, and the musician in presence of the poet?"

Freedom of the Individual has hitherto seemed possible through nothing but a—wise—restriction from without: [352] moderation of his impulses, and thus of the force of his abilities, was the first thing required of the unit by the State-community. The full effectuation of an Individuality had to be looked on as synonymous with an infringement of the individuality of others, whereas the individual's self-restraint was reckoned as his highest wisdom and virtue.— Taken strictly, this virtue, preached by sages, besung by didactists, and finally claimed by the State as the duty of subservience, by Religion as the duty of humility,—this virtue was a virtue never coming forth; willed, but not practised; imagined, but not realised: and so long as a virtue is demanded, it will never in truth be exercised. Either the exercise of this virtue was an act despotically imposed—and thus without that merit of virtue imagined for it; or it was a necessary, an unreflective act of free-will, and then its enabling force was not the self-restricting Will,—but *Love* .

Those same sages and lawgivers who claimed the practice of self-restraint through reflection, never reflected for an instant that they had thralls and slaves beneath them, from whom they cut off every possibility of practising that virtue; and yet these latter were in fact the only ones who really restrained themselves for another's sake,— because they were compelled to. Among that ruling and 'reflecting' aristocracy the self-restraint of its members, toward one another, consisted in nothing but the prudence of Egoism, which counselled them to segregate themselves, to take no thought for others; and this policy of *laisser aller* (Gehenlassen)—clever enough at giving itself a quite agreeable outward show, in forms it borrowed from those of reverence and friendship—yet was only possible to these gentry on condition that other men, mere slaves and chattels, should stand ready to maintain the hedged-off self-dependence of their masters. In the terrible demoralisation of our present social system, revolting to the heart of every veritable Man, we may see the necessary consequence of asking for an impossible virtue, and a virtue which eventually is held in currency by a barbarous [353] Police. Only the total vanishing of this demand, and of the grounds on which it has been based,—only the upheaval of the most un-human inequality of men, in their stationings toward Life, can bring about the *fancied* issue of that claim of self-restriction: and that, by making possible *free Love*. But Love will bring about that fancied issue in a measurelessly heightened measure, for it is not at all a *self-restraint*, but something infinitely greater,—to wit, *the highest evolution of our individual powers—together with the most necessitated thrust towards our own self-offering for sake of a beloved object.*—

Now, if we apply this criterion to the case above, we shall see that *self-restriction* of either the Poet or the Musician, in its ultimate consequences, would only bring about the drama's death, or rather, would withstand its ever being brought to life. So soon as poet and musician restricted one another, they could have no other end in view, than each to let his own particular talent shine out for itself; and seeing that the object, on which they were bringing these lights of theirs to shine, was just the Drama, the latter would naturally fare like the sick man betwixt two doctors, each endeavouring to display his special scientific skill in an opposite direction: with the strongest constitution in the world, the invalid would go to the ground.—If Poet and Musician, however, do not restrict each other, but rouse each other's powers into highest might, by Love; if in this Love they are all that ever they can be; if they *mutually go under* (199) in the offering that each brings each,—the offering of his very

highest potency,— then the Drama in its highest plenitude is born.—

If the *poet's Aim*—as such—is still at hand and visible, then it has not as yet gone under into the Musical Expression; but if the *musician's Expression*—as such—is still apparent, then it, in turn, has not yet been inspired by the Poetic Aim. Only when the Expression, as a marked and [354] special thing, goes under in the realisation of this Aim, only *then* is neither Aim nor Expression any longer at hand, but the reality which each had *willed* is *can-ned*. And this reality is the Drama; in whose presentment we must be reminded no more of Aim or Expression, but its Content must instinctively engross us, as a Human Action vindicated 'necessarily' before our Feeling. (200)

Let us tell the *Musician* then that every, even the tiniest moment of his Expression *in which the poetic-aim is not contained*, and which is not conditioned 'necessarily' by that Aim and its realisation,—that every such moment is superfluous, disturbing, bad; that each utterance of his is unimpressive if it stays unintelligible, and that it becomes intelligible only by taking into it the Poet's aim; that he himself, however, as realiser of the poetic-aim, stands infinitely higher than in his arbitrary dealings without that aim,—for, as a conditioned, a 'satisfying' message, his own is an even higher one than that of the conditioning, the 'needy' Aim in itself, albeit the latter is the highest aim man has; that, finally, in the conditionment of his message by this Aim, he will be incited to a far richer exhibition of his powers than ever he was while at his lonely post, where—for sake of utmost understandableness—he was obliged to *restrain himself* i.e. to hold himself to a function not belonging to him as Musician: whereas he now is necessarily challenged to the most unrestrained unfoldment of his powers, precisely because he needs and must be *nothing but musician*.

To the *poet* let us say, that if his Aim—in so far as it is to be displayed to the ear—*cannot be entirely realised in the Expression of his musician ally*, then neither is it a highest Poetic Aim at all; that wherever his Aim is still discernible, he has not completely poetised it; and therefore, that he can only measure *the height of poetry* to which his Aim has reached, by *the completeness* wherewith it is realisable in the *musical Expression*.

[355]

So, let us finally denote the measure of poetic worth as follows :—as Voltaire said of the Opera: "What is too silly to be said, one gets it sung," so let us reverse that maxim for the Drama which we have in view, and say: *What is not worth the being sung, neither is it worth the poet's pains of telling*.



After what has been said above, it might seem almost superfluous to ask the further question: Whether we ought to think of the Poet and Musician. as *two persons*, or as *one*?

The Poet and Musician, whom we mean, are very well thinkable as two persons. In fact the Musician, in his practical intermediation between the poetic aim and its final bodily realisation through an actual scenic representation, might necessarily be conditioned by the Poet as a separate person, and indeed, a *younger* than himself—if not necessarily in point of years, yet at least in point of character. This younger person, through standing closer to Life's instinctive utterance—especially (*auch*) in its lyric moments,—might well appear to the more experienced, more reflecting Poet, as more fitted to *realise* his aim than he himself is; and from this his natural inclination towards the younger, the more buoyant man—so soon as the latter took up with willing enthusiasm the poetic-aim imparted to him by the older—there would bloom that fairest, noblest Love, which we have learnt to recognise as the enabling force of Art-work. By the very fact that the Poet saw his—here necessarily merely hinted—aim completely comprehended by the younger man, and that this younger man was competent to understand it, there would be knit that bond of Love in which the Musician



becomes the 'necessary' bearer; for the latter's share in the conception is the bent to spread abroad, with warm and flowing heart, the boon received. Through this bent, incited in another, the Poet himself would win an ever waxing warmth toward his begetting, which must needs determine him to the helpfulest [356] interest in the birth itself. Just the twofold energy of this Love must needs exert an infinite artistic force, inciting, enkindling, and empowering on every hand.

Yet if we consider the present attitude assumed by Poet and Musician toward one another, and if we find it ordered by the same maxims of self-restriction and egoistic severance, as those which govern all the factors of our modern social State: then we cannot but feel that, in an unworthy public system where every man is bent on shining for himself alone, *there* none but the individual Unit can take into himself the spirit of Community, and cherish and develop it according to his powers—how inadequate soe'er they be. Not to *two*, at the hour that is, can come the thought of jointly making possible the Perfected Drama; for, in parleying on this thought, the two must necessarily and candidly avow the impossibility of its realisation in face of Public Life, and that avowal would nip their undertaking in the bud. Only the lonely one, in the thick of his endeavour, can transmute the bitterness of such a self-avowal into an intoxicating joy which drives him on, with all the courage of a drunkard, to undertake the making possible the Impossible for he, *alone*, is thrust forward by *two* artistic forces which he cannot withstand,—by forces which he willingly lets drive him to self-offering.— (201)

[357]

Let us further take a glance at the present *public* aspect of our musico-dramatic art, so as to make plain to ourselves why the Drama, such as we have dealt with, cannot possibly come to an appearance just now; and, were it *ventured* notwithstanding, how it could not evoke an understanding, but only the utmost bewilderment.



We have had to recognise *Speech* itself as the indispensable basis of a perfect Artistic Expression. That we have lost all emotional comprehension of our spoken language, we have had to regard as an irreplaceable loss for any artistic message to the Feeling. Therefore, if we have pointed out the possibility of a re-livening of Speech, for the purpose of artistic expression, and have deduced the perfected Musical Expression from a language thus brought again within the Feeling's understanding,—then we most certainly have taken our foothold upon a supposition which can only be realised through Life itself, not through the unaided Artistic Will. If we may assume, however, that the artist, upon whom there had dawned the *necessity* of Life's evolution, would also have to advance with fashioning Consciousness to meet that evolution,—then we must surely deem him justified in the endeavour to lift his prophetic Boding to the level of an artistic Deed; and in any case it would be to his credit, to have henceforth moved along a more reasonable (*vernünftigen*) artistic path.

Now, if we cast our eye across the languages of those European nations which hitherto have borne an active and original share in the evolution of the Musical Drama, of Opera,—and these are but the Italians, French, and Germans—, we shall find that, of those three nations, the *German* alone possesses a language whose daily usage still hangs directly and conspicuously together with its Roots. [358] Italians and Frenchmen speak a tongue whose radical meaning can only be brought home to them by a study of older, so-called dead languages: one might say that their language—as the precipitate from a historic period of Folk-mingling, whose conditioning influence upon these races has altogether lapsed—that their language speaks for them, not *they* speak in their language. If, then, we grant that from a Life set free of all Historic pressure, and stepping into intimate communion with associate Nature, there may arise for these tongues, as well, quite new and hitherto undreamt conditions



for their emotional transformation,—and if we certainly may rest assured that Art, to be *all* that in this new life it *should* be, will exert an uncommonly weighty influence upon that transformation,—yet we can but recognise that such an influence would spring the most resultfully from that art which should ground its Expression upon a language whose hang-together with Nature is even now more obvious to the Feeling, than is the case with either the French, or the Italian tongue. That evolution of the Artistic Expression, with its prophetic influence upon that of daily Life, cannot take its start from artworks whose verbal basis lies within the French, or the Italian tongue; but, of all the modern operatic dialects, the German alone is fitted to re-liven Art's Expression in the manner we have recognised as needful: for very reason that it is the only one which in daily life has retained the accent on the root-syllable, whilst in those others an arbitrary convention abrogates the rule of Nature, and sets the accent on syllables of ' inflection '—altogether meaningless *per se*.

It is the chief and fundamental factor, then, the 'moment' of Speech, that points us to the German nation in the Drama's struggle for a completely warrantable, a highest artistic Expression; and were it possible for the unaided Artistic Will to call the perfect Dramatic Artwork to light of day, at present this could only happen in the German tongue. But what conditions the executability of this Artistic Will, lies firstly in the fellowship of *impersonating artists*. Let us therefore observe the doings of the latter upon our German stage.—



Italian and French singers are accustomed to render none but musical compositions expressly written for their mother-tongue: little as this speech may stand in a completely natural connection with the musical melody, yet one thing at least is undeniable in the performances of French and Italian singers—to wit, the attention paid to a right rendering of the *talk*, as such. Although this is more noticeable among the French than the Italians, yet everyone must be struck by the distinctness and energy wherewith the latter, too, speak out their words, more especially in the drastic phrases of the Recitative. But above all must this one thing be credited to both,—that a natural instinct prevents them from ever disfiguring the sense of the talk through a false delivery.

German singers on the contrary are accustomed, for by far the greater part, to sing in operas which have been merely translated into German from the French or Italian. Neither a poetic, nor a musical intelligence has ever been set in motion for these translations, but they have been put together by people who knew nothing of either music or poetry, and went to work in much the same commercial spirit as one transposes newspaper articles or business advertisements. Taken in the mass, these translators were before all else not musical; they rendered an Italian or French text-book, for itself as word-poem, into a so-called Iambic metre which they ignorantly took to represent the really quite unrhythmic measure of the original; and these verses they got written under the music by some poor hack of a music-copyist, with instructions to dribble out a syllable to every note. The poetical labours of the translator had consisted in furnishing the vulgarest prose with the absurdest end-rhymes; and since he had often had the most painful difficulty in finding these rhymes themselves,—all heedless that they would be almost inaudible in [360] the music,—his love toward them had made him distort the natural order of the words, past any hope of understanding. This hateful Verse, contemptible and muddled in itself, was now laid under a music whose distinctive Accents it nowhere fitted: on lengthy notes there came short syllables, on longer syllables the shorter notes; on the musical 'ridge' there came the verse's 'hollow,' and so the other way around. (202) From these grossest offences against the sound, the translation passed on to a complete distortion of the sense; and it really took such considerable pains to stamp the latter on the ear, by countless textual repetitions, that the ear instinctively turned away from the text and devoted its sole attention to the purely melodic utterance.—In such translations as these, were

the operas of Gluck presented to German Art-criticism: operas whose very essence consists in a faithful declamation of the words. Whoever has seen a Berlin score of a Gluckian opera, and has convinced his own eyes of the nature of the German textual lining wherewith these works have been set before the public, may get an inkling of the character of that Berlin school of art-æsthetics which has derived its standard for dramatic declamation from the operas of Gluck. From Paris one had heard so much about this dramatic declamation, through literary channels, and now one has been so astoundingly clever as to recognise it for oneself in performances given in those translations—which cast all proper declamation to the winds.—

But, far more important than their effect upon Prussian Æsthetics, has been the influence of these translations on our German *opera-singers*. They soon found themselves compelled to abandon the vain attempt to bring this textual lining into accordance with the notes of the melody; they accustomed themselves to paying less and less heed to the text, as conveying any *sense*; and through [361] this disregard of theirs they emboldened the translators to an ever more thorough slovenliness in the prosecution of their labours, which, in the form of printed textbooks, gradually came to be put into the hands of the public for exactly the same purpose as the explanatory programme of a pantomime. Under such conditions the dramatic singer at last relinquished even the useless trouble of pronouncing the vowels and consonants, seeing that they were only a hindrance and difficulty to the singing voice, which he now employed as a musical instrument pure and simple. Thus, both for himself and the public, there was nothing left of the drama beyond its Absolute Melody—whose methods, in such a state of affairs, he even transferred to the *Recitative*. Since in the mouth of the translated German singer its groundwork was no longer the *diction*, this Recitative—wherewith at first he hadn't at all known what to do—soon gained for him a quite peculiar worth: it was such a respite from the time-beat of the Melody, and, free from the annoyance of the conductor's baton, the singer here found a pleasing opportunity for production of his voice. To him the speechless Recitative was a chaos of disconnected notes, from which he might pick out the one or two that specially suited his register; upon such a tone, occurring about once in every four or five notes, his delighted vocal vanity now pounced, and held it till the breath gave out. Wherefore the singer had a great partiality for making his first appearance with a recitative; for it gave him the best opportunity of shewing himself—by no means as a dramatic elocutionist—but as the possessor of a good sound larynx and an excellent pair of lungs. This notwithstanding, the public held by its opinion that so-and-so was an eminently *dramatic* singer: one understood by the epithet precisely the same thing as what one praised in a violin-virtuoso, when he was clever enough to make his purely-musical execution both interesting and entertaining, by means of harmonics and double-stops. (203)

[362]

One can easily imagine the artistic results, if one were suddenly to set before these singers the Wordverse-Melody as to which we lately came to terms. They would the less be able to deliver it, as they have already habituated themselves to getting through operas composed to German texts with exactly the same practices as in the translated operas; and in this matter they have been backed by our modern German opera-composers themselves.—Time out of mind, the German language has been handled by German composers according to an arbitrary norm, which they borrowed from the treatment they had found applied to Speech in the operas of that foreign nation whence the Opera was first exported to us. The absolute Opera-melody—with those marked peculiarities of rhythm and melismus which it had evolved in Italy, in passable concordance with an arbitrarily accentuable tongue—had been the standard for our German opera-composers from the very first; this melody had been copied by them and varied on, and to *its* demands had the idiosyncrasies of our language and its accent to conform. From everlasting, the German tongue has been treated by our composers as a mere translated lining for this melody; and whoever wishes to convince

himself of the truth of what I say, he need only examine, for instance, Winter's "Unterbrochenes Opferfest." Beyond the purely arbitrary accent given to the sense of the phrase, even the 'sensuous' accent of the root-syllables is often completely subverted, in favour of the mehismus; moreover certain compound words, of double root-accent, are decried as downright un-composable, or—if they positively must be used—are set to an accent altogether foreign to the spirit of our speech. Even the else so conscientious Weber is often quite reckless of the words, to please the melody.—Nay, in the very latest days, German opera-composers have actually *copied* the speech-affronting tone-accent of those translations, maintaining it as an enlargement of the domain of operatic language,—so that singers [363] to whom one were suddenly to present a Word-verse-Melody, such as we mean, would be absolutely incapable of delivering it in *our* sense.

The characteristic of *this* melody consists in its musical-expression being definitely conditioned by the speaking-verse, in its qualities both of sense and sound: only from amid these conditions has it taken this one particular musical shape, and our ever present fellow-feeling of these conditions, again, is the necessary postulate for its understanding. Now, were this melody cut loose from its conditions,—as our singers most certainly would loose it from the speaking-verse,—it would stay quite unintelligible and unimpressive; if nevertheless it could work an impression through its purely musical factors, at least it would not work in the sense demanded by the Poetic Aim; for, even if that melody *per se* should please the ear, there still would be a complete annihilation of the dramatic aim which assigns to that particular melody the significance of a warning voice from memory, whenever it is referred-to later in the orchestra,—a significance which can belong to it only when it has been seized and treasured-up by us, not as Absolute Melody, but as answering to a definitely uttered sense. Wherefore a drama couched in the Word-Tone speech aforesaid, but executed by our speechless singers, could make nothing but a purely musical impression upon its hearers; and, the right conditions for its comprehension having fallen out of count, this impression would be pretty much as follows:—

The speech-less Song performe must prove indifferent and wearisome to us, wherever we did not find it chain our interest and captivate our ear through its promotion to the rank of Absolute Melody, cut loose from the word-verse both by giver and receivers. When recalled to mind by the orchestra, as a significant dramatic motive, this Melody would only wake our recollection of its naked self, and not of the motive erewhile proclaimed in it; therefore its recurrence at another stage of the drama would draw away our attention from the present moment, but not explain it for [364] us. Our ear not having roused our *inner* feeling, but merely been woken to a thirst for outward, i.e. un-motived change of pleasures,—this melody, now deprived of all significance, could wellnigh only weary it by its return; so that the very thing which really answered in the most sensitive fashion to a suggestive wealth of Thought, would take-on all the semblance of an importunate poverty of utterance. Again the ear, when merely *musically* excited, demands a satisfaction in the sense of the close-trimmed musical structure to which it has been accustomed, and would be utterly bewildered by the broadening of this structure so as to cover *the whole drama* for that broad extension of the musical Form, withal, can only be taken-in and understood, in all its unity, by a Feeling attuned to the actual Drama. To a Feeling *not* thus attuned, but pinned down to purely sensuous Hearing, that broad and unitarian Form to which the petty, narrow, disconnected forms had been enlarged, would remain out-and-out unknowable; ergo, the whole musical edifice needs must make the impression of a ragged, piecemeal, unsurveyable chaos, whose being and existence we could account-for by nothing so much as the caprices of a fantastic, incompetent and puzzle-brained musician.

But what would still more strengthen this impression of ours, would be the haphazard freaks of a bridleless and rampant Orchestra; for the orchestra can never satisfy the Absolute

Hearing, unless it consistently emits its tale in firm-knit, melodiously accented dance-rhythms.

We have seen that the first thing to which the Orchestra has to devote its own peculiar faculty of expression, is the Action's *dramatic gesture*. Let us observe, then, what influence would be exerted upon the necessary gestures, by the circumstance that the singer is singing without any speech. The singer, who does not know that he is the representative of a definite dramatic Personality, primarily expressed by Speech; the singer, who consequently does not perceive the connection of his dramatic message with that of the personalities who come in [365] contact with him; the singer, who thus does not even know *what* he is expressing,—is certainly in no position to convey to the eye the gestures requisite for an understanding of the Action. Once that his delivery has become that of a wordless musical instrument, he will either not express himself at all by Gesture, or he will employ it in much the same way as the instrumental virtuoso who in certain places of his register, and certain moments of his execution, finds himself compelled to resort thereto as a physical help in need. These physically necessary moments of Gesture, however, have been instinctively present to the rational (*vernünftigen*) poet and musician: he knows well enough when they will occur; but he has at like time brought them into harmony with the sense of the dramatic-expression, and thus has robbed them of the quality of a mere physical expedient. For he has taken a gesture conditioned by the physical organism, for the production of this particular note and this particular musical-expression, and has set it in unison with *that* gesture which is to answer withal to the sense of the message delivered by the dramatic personality; and this he has done in such a way, that the Dramatic Gesture—which at any rate must have its ground in a physically conditioned one—shall vindicate this physical gesture from a higher standpoint, shall give it an import needful to the dramatic understanding of the thing, and thus shall cloak and cancel its purely physical aspect.

Now our theatrical singer, schooled by the rules of Absolute Vocalisation, has been taught a convention in accordance wherewith he is to accompany his delivery by certain stage-gestures. This convention has been borrowed from Dance-pantomime, and consists in nothing more or less than a genteel moderation of the gestures physically conditioned by the delivery of the notes,—gestures which degenerate with less tutored singers into grotesque exaggeration and vulgarity. This Conventional Gesture, in itself, results in nothing but an extirpation of the last vestige of verbal sense in the melody; moreover it only [366] applies to those places, in the Drama, where the performer really sings: so soon as he ceases to do this, he deems himself also absolved from any further concernment with Gesture. Our opera-composers, indeed, have used these pauses in the singing for their orchestral interludes, where either the individual instrumentists have had to display their special skill, or the composer himself has elected to draw the public's attention to his own art of instrumental weavery. These intervals, again, are filled by the singers according to certain rules of stage-decorum, provided they are not too busy with bowing their thanks for reaped applause: one goes to the other side of the proscenium, or passes to the back—as though to see whether anyone is coming,—then comes to the front again, and casts one's eyes toward heaven. It is considered less seemly in such pauses, albeit allowable and warranted in cases of dilemma, to lean over to one's partners, engage them in polite conversation, arrange the folds of one's dress, or finally, to do just nothing at all and patiently wait till the orchestral clouds of Fate roll by. (204)

Let one take this byplay of our opera-singers, which has been positively dictated to them by the spirit and form of those translated operas in which, almost exclusively, they have been wonted heretofore to sing; and let one hold up to it the necessary demands of the Drama such as *we* mean: then, from the utter non-compliance with these demands, we may argue to the bewildering impression which the Orchestra must make upon the hearer. It will be

remembered that, in its faculty of expressing the unspeakable, we have assigned to the orchestra the special task of supporting the dramatic gestures, of interpreting them, nay, in a sense, of making them first possible, through its language bringing to our thorough understanding the Unspeakable of Gesture. Wherefore it takes the most unresting interest in the Action, Motives and Expression, [367] at every instant; on principle, its enouncements *in themselves* must have no predetermined form, but gain their singleness of Form from nothing but its sharing in the drama's progress, from its becoming *one* with Drama. Conceive, then, an energetic gesture of passion, suddenly manifested by the performer, and as swiftly vanishing; conceive it accompanied and expressed by the orchestra, precisely as that gesture needed:—in the complete harmony between the two factors, such a collaboration cannot fail of an enthralling, a determinant effect. But behold! the conditioning gesture is absent from the stage, and we see the performer in some indifferent attitude or other: will not the sudden outburst, and as rapid vanishing of the orchestral tempest, appear to us an outbreak of insanity on the part of the composer?—We could name, if we chose, a thousand of such cases: let the following couple serve by way of instance.

A loving maid has just dismissed her lover. She moves to a point whence she can gaze after him, into the distance; her gesture involuntarily betrays that he is once more turning to face her, as he goes away; she waves him a last, a mute love-greeting. The orchestra accompanies and explains this graceful movement, bringing before us the full emotional-content of that dumb farewell, by musing on the melody which the representatrix had earlier made known to us in the actual words of greeting wherewith she welcomed her lover. But, if this melody has been sung on that first occasion by a *speechless* singeress, its mere return *per se* does not produce that speaking, memory-waking impression on us which it ought to do; to us it merely seems the repetition of a perhaps agreeable theme, which the composer brings on again because it had pleased himself and he feels warranted in coquetting with it. If the singeress goes still farther, however, and merely takes this postlude as an "orchestral ritornelle"; if she does not carry out that byplay at all, and remains standing indifferently in the foreground—just to wait till a ritornelle [368] is over: then nothing can be more tiresome to the hearer than just that interlude; for, reft of any sense or meaning, it is simply a retardation, and had better be cut out. (205)

Our second case is one where the gesture explained by the orchestra is of downright decisory importance.—A situation has just been rounded off; obstacles have been set aside; and the mood is one of satisfaction. The poet wishes, however, to deduce from this situation its 'necessary' successor, and this aim of his can only be realised by letting us feel that that mood is *not* completely satisfied, in truth, those obstacles are *not* entirely set aside. He is concerned to make us recognise that the seeming quietude of his dramatis personae is merely a self-illusion, on their part; and thus to so attune our Feeling, that we ourselves may frame the necessity of a further, an altered development of the situation, through our co-creative sympathy: to this end he brings before us the gesture of a mysterious personage whose motives, as hitherto divulged, have inspired us with anxiety as to a final satisfactory solution; and he makes this gesture *threaten* the chief character. This threat is meant to fill us with *foreboding*, while the orchestra is to elucidate the character of that foreboding,—and this it can only do by knitting it with a *remembrance*; wherefore he prescribes for this weighty moment the emphatic repetition of a melodic phrase which we have already heard as the musical expression of words referring to the threat, and which has the characteristic property



of recalling to us the image of an earlier situation; and now, in union with the threatening gesture, this phrase becomes for us a prophecy, engrossing and instinctively determining our Feeling. — But, *this threatening gesture is omitted*; the situation leaves on us the impression of complete appeasement; merely the orchestra, contrary to all expectation, suddenly strikes in with a musical phrase whose sense we have not been able [369] to catch from the earlier utterances of a speechless singer, and whose appearance at this juncture we therefore hold for a fantastic caprice on the part of the composer, to be severely frowned down.

Let this suffice to indicate the further humiliating consequences, for an understanding of our drama!—

To be sure, I here have dwelt upon the most preposterous offences; but that they *can* arise in every Operatic performance, even at theatres conducted in the very best spirit, no one will deny who has examined into the nature of such performances from the Dramatic standpoint; while their existence will give us a notion of the artistic demoralisation which has eaten into our stage-singers, and *chiefly* through the aforesaid circumstance, that they mostly sing nothing but translated works. For, as said above, one does not find these particular faults among the Italians and French, or at least in nothing like the same degree,—and, with the Italians for the simple reason, that their operas never make any claims upon them but such as they are perfectly able to fulfil in their own fashion.



Precisely on the German stage—that is to say in the very language in which, for the present, it could be the most completely brought to pass—the Drama we propose would call up nothing but the wildest confusion and most complete misunderstanding. Performers who cannot feel the Aim of Drama as a something present in their highest fundamental organ—that of Speech,—can neither conceive what this Aim really is; were they to attempt to do so from a purely musical standpoint—as customary,—they could not but misunderstand it, and in their embarrassment they would realise everything except that Aim.

To the *public*, (206) then, there would be left nothing but the [370] music, cut off from all dramatic aim; and this music would only make an impression on its hearers exactly *where* it seemed to depart from that aim in such a way as to offer, entirely for itself, a pleasant tingling to the ear. From the apparently unmelodic song of the Singer—that is to say, "unmelodic" in the sense of our wonted instrumental-melody transplanted to the voice—the public would have to look about for enjoyment in the playing of the Orchestra; and here it might perhaps be fascinated by one thing, namely the instinctive stimulus of an extremely changeable and variegated *instrumentation*.

To raise the strangely potent language of the Orchestra to such a height, that at every instant it may plainly manifest to Feeling the Unspeakable of the Dramatic Situation,—to do this, as we have already said, the musician inspired by the poet's Aim has not to haply practise self-restraint; no, he has to sharpen his inventiveness to the point of discovering the most varied orchestral idioms, to meet the necessity he feels of a pertinent, a most determinate Expression. So long as this language is incapable of a declaration as individual as is needed by the infinite variety of the Dramatic Motives themselves; so long as the message of the Orchestra is too monochrome to answer these motives' individuality,—so long may it prove a disturbing factor, because not yet completely satisfying: and [371] therefore in the Complete



Drama, like everything that is not *entirely* adequate, it would divert attention toward itself. To be true to our aim, however, such an attention is absolutely *not* to be devoted to it; but, through its everywhere adapting itself *with the utmost closeness* to the finest shade of individuality in the Dramatic Motive, the Orchestra is irresistibly to guide our whole attention *away from itself* as a *means of expression*, and direct it to the *subject expressed*. So that the very richest dialect of the Orchestra is to manifest itself with the artistic object of not being noticed, in a manner of speaking, of *not being heard at all*: to wit, not heard in its *mechanical*, but only in its *organic* capacity, wherein it is One with the Drama.

How must it discourage the poet musician, then, were he to see his drama received by the public with sole and marked attention to the mechanism of his Orchestra, and to find himself rewarded with just the praise of being a "very clever Instrumentalist"? How must he feel at heart—he whose every shaping was prompted by the Dramatic Aim,—if art-literarians should report on his drama, that they had read a textbook and had heard, to boot, a wondrous music-ing by flutes and fiddles and trumpets, all working in and out?—

But, could this Drama possibly produce any other effect, under the circumstances detailed above?—



And yet! are we to give up being Artists? Or are we to abandon all necessary insight into the nature of things, because we can draw no profit thence?—Were it no profit, then, to be not only an Artist, but a *Man* withal; and is an artificial know-nothingness, a womanish dismissal of knowledge, to bring us more profit than a sturdy consciousness, which, if only we put all seeking-of-self behind us, will give us cheerfulness, and hope, and courage above all [372] else, for deeds which needs must rejoice ourselves, how little soever they be crowned with an outward success?

For sure! Even now, it is only knowledge that can prosper us; whilst ignorance but holds us to a joyless, divided, hypochondriacal, scarcely will-ing and never can-ning make-believe of Art, whereby we stay unsatisfied within, unsatisfying without.

Look round you, and see where ye live, and for whom ye make your art!—That our artistic comrades for the representment of a dramatic artwork are not forthcoming, we must recognise at once, if we have eyes the least whit sharpened by Artistic Will. Yet how greatly we should err, if we pretended to explain this by a demoralisation of our opera-singers due entirely to their own fault; how we should deceive ourselves, if we thought necessary to regard this phenomenon as accidental, and not as conditioned by a broad, a general conjuncture!—Let us suppose for an instant, that in some way or other we acquired the power of so working upon performers and performance, from the standpoint of artistic intelligence, that a highest Dramatic-aim should be fully carried out,—then for the first time we should grow actively aware that we lacked the real enabler of the artwork, a Public to feel the need of it, and to make its Need the all-puissant fellow-shaper. The Public of our theatres has no *need* for Artwork; it wants to *distract* itself when it takes its seat before the stage, but not to *collect* itself; and the Need of the seeker after distraction is merely for artificial *details*, but not for an artistic *unity*. If we gave it a whole, the public would be blindly driven to tear that whole to disconnected fragments, or, in the most fortunate event, it would be called upon to understand a thing which it altogether *refuses* to understand; wherefore, in full consciousness, it turns its

back on any such artistic aim. From this result we should only gain a proof *why* such a performance is absolutely out of the question at present, and why our opera-singers are bound to be exactly what they are and what they cannot else be.

[373]

To account to ourselves for this attitude of the Public towards the performance, we must necessarily pass to a judgment on this Public itself. If we cast a look at earlier ages of our theatric history, we can only regard this Public as involved in an advancing degradation. The excellent work, the pre-eminently *fine* that has been done already in our art, we surely cannot consider it as dropped upon us from the skies; no, we must conclude that it was prompted withal by the *taste* of those before whom it was produced. We meet this Public of fine taste and feeling, at its most marked degree of active interest in art-production, in the period of the Renaissance. Here we see princes and nobles not only sheltering Art, but so engrossed with its finest and its boldest shapings, that the latter must be taken as downright summoned into being by their enthusiastic Need. This noble rank—nowhere attacked in its position; knowing nothing of the misery of the thralls whose life made that position possible; holding itself completely aloof from the industrial and commercial spirit of the burgher life; living away its life of pleasure in its palaces, of courage on the field of battle,—this nobility had trained its eyes and ears to discern the beautiful, the graceful, nay, even the characteristic and energetic; and at *its* commands arose those works of art which signal that epoch as the most favoured artistic period since the downfall of Greek Art. The infinite grace and delicacy in Mozart's tone-modellings—which seem so dull and tedious to a public bred to-day on the grotesque—were delighted-in by the descendants of that old nobility; and it was to Kaiser Joseph that Mozart appealed, from the mountebankish shamelessness of the singers of his "*Figaro*." Nor will we look askance at those young French cavaliers, whose enthusiastic applause at the Achilles-aria in Gluck's "*Iphigenia in Tauris*" turned the wavering balance in favour of that work;—and least of all will we forget that, whilst the greater courts of Europe had become the political camps of intriguing diplomats, in Weimar a German [374] royal family was listening with rapt attention to the loftiest and most graceful poets of the German nation.

But the rulership of public taste in Art has passed over to the person who now pays the artists' wages, in place of the nobility which erstwhile recompensed them; to the person who orders the artwork for his money, and insists on ever novel variations of his one beloved theme, but at no price a new theme itself: and this ruler and this order-giver is—*the Philistine*. As this Philistine is the most heartless and the basest offspring of our Civilisation, so is he the most domineering, the cruelest and foulest of Art's bread-givers. True, that everything comes aright to him: only, he will have nothing to do with aught that might remind him that he is to be a *man*,—either on the side of beauty, or on that of nerve. He *wills* to be base and common, and to this will of his has Art to fit herself: for the rest,—why! nothing comes to him amiss.—Let us turn our look from him as quickly as may be!—



Are we to make bargains with such a world?—No, no! For even the most humiliating terms would leave us sheer outside the pale.—

Hope, faith and courage can we only gain, when we recognise even the modern State-philistine not merely as a conditioning, but likewise as a conditioned factor of our Civilisation; when we search for the conditionments of this phenomenon, too, in a conjuncture such as that we have just examined in the case of Art. We shall not win hope and nerve until we bend our ear to the heart-beat of history, and catch the sound of that sempiternal vein of living waters which, however buried under the waste-heap of historic

civilisation, yet pulses on in all its pristine freshness. Who has not felt the leaden murk that hangs above us in the air, foretelling the near advent of an earth-upheaval? And we who hear the trickling of that well-spring, shall we take affright at the earthquake's sound? [375] Believe me, no! For we know that it will only tear aside the heap of refuse, and prepare for the stream that bed in which we soon shall even *see* its living waters flow.

Where now the statesman loses hope, the politician sinks his hands, the socialist beplagues his brain with fruitless systems, yea, even the philosopher can only hint, but not foretell,—since all that looms before us can only form a series of un-wilful happenings, whose physical show no mortal man may preconceive,—there it is the *artist*, whose clear eye can spy out shapes that reveal themselves to a yearning which longs for the only truth—the *human being*. The artist has the power of seeing beforehand a yet unshapen world, of tasting beforehand the joys of a world as yet unborn, through the stress of his desire for Growth. But his joy is in imparting, and— if only he turns his back on the senseless herds who browse upon the grassless waste-heap, and clasps the closer to his breast the cherished few who listen with him to the well-spring,—so finds he, too, the hearts, ay, finds the senses, to whom he can impart his message. We are *older* men and *younger*: let the elder not think of himself, but love the younger for sake of the bequest he sinks into his heart for new increasing,—the day will come when that heirloom shall be opened for the weal of brother Men throughout the world!



We have seen the Poet driven onward by his yearning for a perfect Emotional-expression, and seen him reach the point where he found his Verse reflected on the mirror of the sea of Harmony, as musical Melody: unto this sea was he compelled to thrust; only the mirror of this sea could shew him the image of his yearning; and this sea he could not create from his own Will, but it was the Other (207) of his being, That wherewith he needs must wed himself, but which he could not prescribe from out himself, [376] nor summon into being.—So neither can the artist prescribe from his own Will, nor summon into being, that Life of the Future which once shall redeem him: for it is the Other, the antithesis of himself, for which he yearns, toward which he is thrust; That which, when brought him from an opposite pole, is for the first time present for him, first takes his semblance up into it, and knowably reflects it back. Yet again, this living ocean of the Future cannot beget that mirror-image by its unaided self: it is a mother-element, which can bear alone what it has first received. This fecundating seed, which in *it* alone can thrive, is brought it by the Poet, i.e. the Artist of the Present; and this seed is the quintessence of all rarest life-sap, which the Past has gathered up therein, to bring it to the Future as its necessary, its fertihising germ: *for this Future is not thinkable, except as stipulated by the Past.*

Now, the *melody* which appears at last upon the water-mirror of the harmonic ocean of the Future, is the clear-seeing eye wherewith this Life gazes upwards from the depth of its sea-abyss to the radiant light of day. But the *verse*, whose mere mirror-image it is, is the own-est poem of the Artist of the Present, begotten by his most peculiar faculty, engendered by the fulness of his yearning. *And just as this verse, will the prophetic Artwork of the yearning Artist of the Present once wed itself with the ocean of the Life of the Future.*—In that Life of the Future, will this Artwork be what to-day it yearns for but cannot actually be as yet: for that Life of the Future will be entirely what it *can* be, only through its taking up into its womb this Artwork.

*The begetter of the Artwork of the Future is none other than the Artist of the Present, who presages that Life of the Future, and yearns to be contained therein. He who cherishes this*

*longing within the inmost chamber of his powers, he lives already in a better life;—but only  
One can do this thing:—  
the Artist.*



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## Notes

### Note 001 on page 17

Evidently the series of articles on "*German Art and German Politics*" that appeared in the *Süddeutsche Presse* in 1867, and were subsequently reprinted in Vol. VIII. Ges. Schr.—TR.

### Note 002 on page 18

Excepting where they involve mere alterations of grammar, punctuation, or altogether synonymous terms, these few Variants will be noted below the text in their proper places. For their discovery I have again to thank Vol. I. of Dr Hugo's '*Richard Wagner's geistige Entwicklung*,' mentioned in the first volume of the present series.—TR.

### Note 003 on page 24

Our author makes no pretence of entering upon a historical discussion of the first beginnings of Opera, the materials for which were certainly not accessible to him in Zurich; otherwise it would be necessary to qualify his present statement, in certain details, by reference to the later-written Histories of Music by Bitter and Naumann. That the pioneers of Opera (Bardi, Galilei, Peri and Monteverde) started with the assumption that they were reviving the *form* of the old Greek drama, however, makes little difference in the *spirit* of their attempt, which was admittedly dictated by a feeling of dissatisfaction with the contrapuntal music of their day. But, indeed, as is shewn by the rapidity with which he reaches Metastasio and "150 years ago," Wagner passes over the musico-dramatic efforts of the seventeenth century as of little real moment.—TR.

### Note 004 on page 31

The word "*Bereiter*" (preparer, or dresser) seems, by its second meaning, "rough-rider, or horse-breaker" (cf. the French "*dresseur*") to have suggested to Wagner the metaphor in the latter half of this paragraph.—TR.

### Note 005 on page 33

Both things are done by the author of the article on "Modern Opera" mentioned in the Introduction.—R. WAGNER.

### Note 006 on page 37

It should not be forgotten that Metternich, only two years before the writing of this sentence, had played an important part in suppressing the Austro-German revolutionary movement.—TR.

### Note 007 on page 40

Compare Vol. I. of this series, pages 42 and 311-2.—TR.

### Note 008 on page 40

The "blue floweret" of Novalis: that ideal bloom which, ever since his time, has been the synonyme for all the hidden mysteries of Art and Nature.— TR.



[Note 009 on page 41](#)

"Möchten wir in der weltverbreiteten Wirkung der Weber'schen Melodie das Wesen *deutschen* Geistes und seine vermeintliche Bestimmung besser erkennen, als wir in der Lüge von semen spezifischen Qualitäten es thun!—" I have thought it best to give the original of this sentence, as in the English rendering I have been obliged to add a few words, in order to make the meaning (as I take it) clear. It appears to refer back to the "national" question, as touched on by the author above, [page 50](#), and also in Vol. I. (*Art-work of the Future*) [pages 89-90](#).—TR.

[Note 010 on page 41](#)

As to what I here intend by "*sinnlich*," in distinction from the *Sinnlichkeit* (physicality) which I have claimed as the *realising* moment of the art-work, I may give an illustration from the shouts of an Italian audience, enraptured by the singing of a castrato: "God bless the knife!"—R. WAGNER.

[Note 011 on page 43](#)

*Masaniello*, or the Dumb Girl (*Stumme*) of Portici.—TR.

[Note 012 on page 44](#)

"Und genau in dem Grade reifte das Drama als Kunstwerk, als das verdeutlichende Urtheil des Chores in der Handlungen der Helden selbst sich so unwiderleglich ausdrückte, dass der Chor von der Scene ab ganz in das Volk zurücktreten, und dafür als belebender und verwirklichender Theilnehmer der Handlung—als solcher—selbst behülflich werd en konnte."—TR.

[Note 013 on page 47](#)

The reference to Meyerheer's 'Huguenots' and 'Prophète' is obvious.—TR.

[Note 014 on page 47](#)

It is not possible to convey in a word or two the antithesis between "*Sammlung*," a "collecting" of one's thoughts, and "*Zerstreuung*," their distracting or "dissipation."—TR.

[Note 015 on page 48](#)

The "of" is here to be understood in a transitive, not in a possessive sense.—TR.

[Note 016 on page 49](#)

We must already notice that vocal-melody, when *not* taking its vital conditions from the word-verse, but merely laid thereon, was in itself nothing but an instrumental melody; in a more appropriate place, however, we shall have to return to a closer consideration of the position of this melody towards the orchestra.—R. WAGNER.

[Note 017 on page 49](#)

I have already [compared Beethoven with Columbus](#), in my "*Art-work of the Future*," nevertheless I must here return to the comparison, because it further contains an important resemblance which I did not then touch on.—R. WAGNER.

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[Note 018 on page 53](#)

"Und sein eigenes, nach der Natur der Sache in Wahrheit eigentlich zum Gesetzgeben berechtigtes Vermögen unentwickelt lassen musste."

[Note 019 on page 62](#)

I may get for reply: "Your glorious Hero of the Folk we did not want: the whole conception of him is only a pernicious outcome of your private revolutionary fancy. On the contrary, we wanted to exhibit an unfortunate young man, who, embittered by unpleasant experiences and led astray by tricky agitators, lets himself be driven into crime, which he later expiates by a most sincere contrition." I go on to ask for the meaning of the sun-effect, and still I may be answered: "It is copied accurately from Nature. Why should the sun not rise in the early morning?" To be sure, that would be a very practical apology for an involuntary sunrise; yet I must still be obstinate, and maintain that You would never have allowed that sun to steal a march upon you, if you had not really been haunted by some such situation as that which I have sketched above: the situation, indeed, did not suit your taste, but all the same you intended its Effect.—R. WAGNER.—Our author might have gone farther, and said: "and you stole it from *Rienzi*."—TR.

[Note 020 on page 65](#)

We here have a curious hint of Wagner's subsequent attitude toward Vivisection.—TR.

[Note 021 on page 67](#)

The Opera-composer, who saw himself condemned in the Aria-form to an eternal barrenness, sought a field for freer movement of his musical-expression, and sought it in *Recitative*. Only, this also was a settled form; and if the musician quitted that sheer rhetorical expression which is proper to Recitative, in order to let bloom the flower of keener feeling, he found the admission of Melody driving him back into the Aria-form. If, therefore, he avoided the Aria-form on principle, he could only stay glued to the sheer rhetoric of Recitative, without ever soaring up to Melody; except—mark well!—where with noble self-oblivion he took into himself the Poet's fertilising seed.—R. WAGNER.

[Note 022 on page 68](#)

I may direct especial notice to the "Seid umschlungen Millionen!" and the union of that theme with the "Freude, schöner Götterfunken!", in order to make my meaning plain.—R. WAGNER.

[Note 023 on page 68](#)

Here again we have an interesting, and unconscious, coincidence with the philosophy of Schopenhauer.—TR.

[Note 024 on page 68](#)

"Dieser Wille, der sich gegen den Zwang auflehnt, ist die erste und mächtigste Regung der Individualität des geliebten Gegenstandes, die, durch das Empfängniss in das Weib gedrungen, es selbst mit Individualität und Willen begabt hat."

[Note 025 on page 69](#)

By "German" Opera I naturally do not mean the Opera of Weber, but that modern phantasm of which people speak the more, the less is it really forthcoming,—just like the "German Realm" (*das "deutsche Reich"*). The speciality of this Opera consists in its being a laboured fabrication of the modern German composers who do not arrive at setting French or Italian texts—the only thing that hinders them from writing French or Italian operas, but which affords them, in return, the proud consolation of bringing something quite specific and select to light, since they *understand Music so much better* than the Italians or the French.—R. WAGNER.

[Note 026 on page 69](#)

"Muckerei."—It will be remembered that Wagner was Music-director at the theatre of Königsberg (Prussia) in the year 1836. Now, it so happened that in 1835 there had been commenced a legal prosecution of the "Muckers," the trial continuing till 1842. This sect had been founded by J. W. Ebel, a follower of the theosophist, J. H. Schönherr, and included many dames of high degree. The "Muckers" (I believe the title was a nickname) were accused of immoral practices carried on under the cloak of religion, and the trial ended by Ebel's removal from his post. After his death in 1861, however—i.e. ten years after the writing of *Oper und Drama*—an independent examination of the evidence went to show that these accusations were unfounded, and that the trial had been conducted with gross injustice.—See *Meyer's Konversations-Lexikon*.—TR.

[Note 027 on page 72](#)

This is really how certain childish-clever litterateurs [orig. ed. "Court-litterateurs"] conceive what I have denoted "the united artwork," when they think necessary to regard it as a "chaotic jumbling" of all the arts. Moreover a Saxon critic sees good to treat my appeal to *Sinnlichkeit* as gross "sensualism," whereby he naturally wishes to convey the 'lusts of the belly.'—One can only explain the imbecility of these æsthetes, by their deliberate mendacity.—R. WAGNER.

[Note 028 on page 72](#)

A violin played to the pianoforte blends as little with the latter instrument, as would music played to a literary-drama.—R. WAGNER.—In this connection I have preferred, in the body of the text, the word "clavichord" (for "*Klavier*"), as the modern "pianoforte" would be an anachronism in the following paragraph; whereas the older term is general enough to cover the whole ground, both ancient and modern.—TR

[Note 029 on page 73](#)

Our author has here made a tiny variation from the original edition, by substituting "*Beachtung*" for "*Amusement*," evidently in his scrupulous care to avoid non-German words wherever possible.—TR.

[Note 030 on page 73](#)

To me it is truly not without significance, that the very pianoforte-player who in modern days has shewn us the highest summit of virtuosodom, in every aspect, that the wonder-worker of the pianoforte, *Liszt*, is at present turning with such momentous energy to the sounding (*tönende*) orchestra, and, as it were *through* this orchestra, to the living human voice itself.—R. WAGNER.

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[Note 031 on page 73](#)

This chapter, with the exception of its last paragraph but one, formed the first of the "three articles" mentioned in Wagner's letter of February '51 to Uhlig. It appeared in the March number of the *Deutsche Monatschrift* for that year, under the title "Ueber moderne dramatische Dichtkunst," and with a footnote to the effect that it was "from a larger work by the author, presently to appear."

[Note 032 on page 74](#)

We need only recall the genuine Christian poetry.—R. WAGNER.

[Note 033 on page 74](#)

"Aus der eigenen Anschauung." In this *Lebensanschauung*, which we shall meet often enough in the following pages, we have a good old German compound, current for God knows how long, and in "view of life" an equally ancient English term, both of which cover the whole ground—and more—of the much-vaunted "criticism of life" which Matthew Arnold and his disciples have run to death.—TR.

[Note 034 on page 74](#)

*Verdichtung* again, as the essence of *Dichtung* (poetry)—see [footnote to Vol. I., p. 92, &c.](#)—TR.

[Note 035 on page 75](#)

"Schauspieler"—to lay stress on the "*Schau*" (Show), as Wagner has done by this mode of printing the word, I can find no better term than "mummers," which at least conveys the idea in a negative fashion ("mum"). We have kept the idea in "Showman," but whereas the Germans have retained the old expression with a new meaning, we have borrowed our "actors" from the Latin. In this sentence our author also employs the compound "Folksschaubühne"; but "Folk's-*show*-stage" would be a little too cumbrous.—TR.

[Note 036 on page 76](#)

In the *Deutsche Monatschrift*, "auf das brutalste."—TR.

[Note 037 on page 76](#)

As I am writing no History of the Modern Drama, but, agreeably to my object, have only to point out in its twofold development the chief lines along which the root-difference between those two evolutionary paths is plainest visible, I have passed over the *Spanish Theatre*, since in it alone those diverse paths are characteristically crossed with one another. This makes it indeed of the highest significance in itself, but to us it affords no antitheses so marked as the two we find, with determinant influence upon all newer evolution of the Drama, in Shakespeare and the French *Tragédie*.—R. WAGNER.

This note does not occur in the original edition (1852); nor does our author appear to have made much acquaintance with the Spanish Drama till the end of 1857, as we may see by letters 250 and 255 of the "*Briefwechsel*," in the latter of which he gives Liszt a superb criticism, in the highest sense, of Calderon.—TR.

[Note 038 on page 77](#)

In the *D. M.* "Latin."—TR.

[Note 039 on page 77](#)

In the *D. M.* we find "and his nation's" (*seines Volkes und seiner Zeit*).—TR.

[Note 040 on page 77](#)

In the *D. M.* "under" (*unter*).—TR.

[Note 041 on page 77](#)

*Des musikalischen Drama's*;—this stood as "the musically-executed Drama" (*des musikalisch vorgetragenen Drama's*) in the *D. M.*—The point is interesting, as Wagner some twenty years later, in a little monograph "[Ueber die Benennung 'Musikdrama'](#)" gave his reasons for objecting alike to the terms "Music-drama" and "Musical drama."—TR.

[Note 042 on page 78](#)

"*Komödianten*"—perhaps "clowns" or "morris dancers" would be better here, as Wagner does not usually employ this term for actors.—TR.

[Note 043 on page 78](#)

*Zucht*,—in the *D. M.* "*pedantischen Zucht*."—TR.

[Note 044 on page 78](#)

In the *D. M.* "History and" did not occur here.—TR.

[Note 045 on page 79](#)

"Der bürgerliche Roman"= the *bourgeois*-, or citizen-romance; "the Romance of domestic life," as opposed to the classical, the historical, the legendary, or the political.—TR.

[Note 046 on page 79](#)

Footnote to the *D. M.* only: "This object is, to track (*aufsuchen*) the Artwork at every point where it emerges from Thought into realisation *to the Senses*."—TR.

[Note 047 on page 79](#)

Not quite *every* scene, however, as our many 'acting editions' will show.—After "battles," in the last clause of this sentence, the *D. M.* had: "merely suggested by conventional signs, on the older stage."—TR

[Note 048 on page 80](#)

In the *D. M.* "Drama," in place of "Tragödie."—TR

[Note 049 on page 80](#)

In the *D. M.* "die romanhafte Historie," i.e. "the Romance-like History." In this chapter Wagner has frequently used the term "Historie" as an equivalent of "Geschichte," the true German word for "History," albeit apparently with the purpose of conveying the idea of a certain amount of "traditional conventionality" in the former term; this shade of meaning it is

impossible to convey in English, as we have only one word, "History," for the thing *itself* and the thing *written about it*. To any one who wishes to pursue this matter farther, I can only recommend a study of the original; but I may add that six pages later, in referring to Schiller's abandonment of historic "Stuff," for his dramas, our author has substituted "Historie" for "Geschichte," seemingly to avoid the contrast originally offered, in the *D. M.*, by the juxtaposition of the two terms.—TR.

#### Note 050 on page 80

In the *D. M.* "vor der Oeffentlichkeit," i.e. "before the public."—TR.

#### Note 051 on page 81

In the *D. M.* "Kunstmusik," i.e. "Art-music."—TR.

#### Note 052 on page 81

In the *D. M.* and in the original edition of the book, this sentence was continued by "; already in 'Tasso' this Stuff was cooling markedly beneath his unitarian (*einheitlich gestaltenden*) hand,—in 'Eugenie' it froze at last to ice."—TR.

#### Note 053 on page 81

In the *D. M.* "verständliche," i.e. "intelligible," was here inserted.—TR.

#### Note 054 on page 82

In the *D. M.* "sogenannten," i.e. "so-called."—TR.

#### Note 055 on page 82

In the *D. M.* here occurred "in der Darstellung des historischen Thatbestandes auch," i.e. "in the portrayal of historic matters-of-fact, the Content also."—TR.

#### Note 056 on page 82

"Studien " in the *D. M.* Moreover, "fully" has been substituted for "to a certain extent."—TR.

#### Note 057 on page 82

The clause from "and yet" to "central-point" does not appear in the *D. M.*—TR.

#### Note 058 on page 83

In the *D. M.* "by no means" (*keinesweges*) occurs in place of "verhältnissmässig gar nicht."—TR.

#### Note 059 on page 83

"Historie"—this is the substitution of "Historie" for "Geschichte" (as it stood in the *D. M.*) referred to on page 139.—TR.

#### Note 060 on page 83

The portion of this sentence contained between the dashes, "at least so far" &c. was not



included in the *D. M.* article; whereas, in place of "nach ihrem mittelalterlichen Kostüm," we *there* find the pleonasm: "nach ihrem mittelalterlichen, dem Verständnisse unserer Zeit wiederum näher als die Antike liegenden, Tracht," i.e. "by its medieval garb, which, again, lay nearer to the comprehension of our times, than did the Antique."—TR.

[Note 061 on page 84](#)

The allusion is evidently to Gutzkow's "*Ritter vom Geiste*" (published 1850-51), a novel in the portentous form of *nine* volumes, averaging 450 pages apiece! Gutzkow was Director of Plays at Dresden during the last two or three years of Wagner's residence there. In "*Letters to Uhlig*," No. 86 (Oct. 14, '52) Wagner writes, "In spite of Schlurk, I will never become acquainted with the '*Ritter vom Geiste*.' In that matter I stick to a terribly severe diet! I have not even read Heine's '*Romanzero*.' I anticipate my complete ruin if I took to that sort of thing." Though the passage in the text, above, was written nearly two years before the letter from which I have quoted, most—if not, all—of the volumes of Gutzkow's extravagantly long work were then already published. Wagner would of course have known of their existence and been able to form a pretty good guess as to their contents, judging from earlier works of Gutzkow; with which, as a Dresdener, he would naturally have become acquainted.—It is curious, too,—but characteristic—to find the same association of ideas cropping up again in the letter; for the "literary-*Lyrics*," mentioned in the next paragraph of the book, are obviously those of Heine.—TR.

[Note 062 on page 84](#)

One has wellnigh to rub one's eyes, to convince oneself that this was written over forty years ago; yet it stands verbatim both in the *Deutsche Monatsschrift* and all the editions of the book. With that wonderful instinct which makes this whole volume almost a prophecy, our author here lays his finger on the beginnings of one of the most notable departures in the history of art, and one whose goal we apparently have not yet reached.—TR.

[Note 063 on page 84](#)

"Das literarisches Kunstwerk des Romanes selbst.." In the *D. M.* this stood simply as "den Roman selbst": i.e., in view of the commencement of the sentence, "the Romance employed itself,"—a form of expression which naturally required amendment.—It is more important to notice, however, that to "den Roman" Wagner appended in the *D. M.* a foot-note: "German poets employ the same tactics (*üben dieselbe Wirksamkeit*) even in the Literary-drama,—as witness Hebbel." Friedrich Hebbel (1813-63) was then in what is now called in Germany his 'second period,' and his works appear to have been considered much too cold and bitter in their 'analysis'; he is best known by those of his 'third period,' such as "*Agnes Bernauer*" (Vienna, 1855) and "*Gyges und sein Ring*" (ibid. 1856), the former work being still given, I believe, on the German stage. Singularly enough, Hebbel's masterpiece was a dramatic Trilogy, "*Die Nibelungen*" (Vienna, 1862) in which Kriemhild and Hagen form the central figures, the idea of the work being based on the conflict between Pagandom and Christendom.—See *Meyer's Konversationslexikon*.—TR.

[Note 064 on page 84](#)

The reference is, of course, to Friedrich Wilhelm IV. of Prussia (brother of the late German Emperor, Wilhelm I.) and the performances of old Greek dramas at Berlin and Potsdam (cf. the "*Communication*," Vol. I., p. 275, of this series). It will be remembered that Wagner had special reasons for keeping this monarch in his mind, as it was *he* who figured so largely in

the opposition to the movement which led to the Dresden revolt, and also in its suppression. The "musician" was Mendelssohn, to whom the "*anfertigen musste*"—which I have rendered "had to prepare"—is peculiarly applicable, seeing how distasteful he found his duties at Berlin, chiefly owing to these orders for the Antique Drama. The "tragedy" was the *Antigone*, as will be seen by the close of Chapter III.; although Mendelssohn (Oct. 21, 1841) writes enthusiastically about this his *first* task of the kind, yet he adds: "at the beginning I thought, on the contrary, that I would not mix myself up with the affair." The "poet" was Ludwig Tieck, the romancist, whom Bunsen (Apr. 28, 1844,—in the "*Mendelssohn Letters*") calls "the great Chorodidaskalos"; he was one of the group of talented men, including Friedrich Rückert, A. W. von Schlegel, Schelling and Mendelssohn, whom Friedrich Wilhelm IV. summoned to court soon after his accession in 1840. I may add that it was from Tieck's *almost solitary* dramatic poem, "Genoveva"—in combination with Hebbel's "Genoveva"—that Schumann took the chief materials for the text of his like-named opera, produced at Leipzig in June 1850.—TR

#### Note 065 on page 85

As mentioned earlier, this paragraph was omitted from the *Deutsche Monatsschrift*; without the First Part of *Opera and Drama* it would have been pointless.—With the succeeding paragraph the first "article" concluded.—TR.

#### Note 066 on page 86

The *immediate* source of this idea, in the writings of Feuerbach, will be found in my footnote to "*Art and Climate*," pages 260-1, Vol. I. of this series.—TR.

#### Note 067 on page 86

It would seem that our author here derives "Kunst" (art) from "kennen" (to know), whereas in the "Art-work of the Future" (Vol I., p. 100, Eng.) he derives it from "können" (to 'can').—TR.

#### Note 068 on page 88

"*Willkür*,"—in the edition of 1852 this stood as "*Unwillkür*" (Instinct). The same alteration has been made by our author a few pages farther on: Vol. IV., p. 54, line 6, of the *Gesammelte Schriften*. By reference to Volume I. of the present series, page 26, it would appear that he had actually commenced the substitution there alluded to, but abandoned it after this pair of fractional attempts.—TR.

#### Note 069 on page 88

"*Wirklichkeit*."—As the meaning of this term is somewhat less rigid than that of our "reality," I have had to render it occasionally by "actuality," "genuineness," or "truth," according to circumstances.—TR.

#### Note 070 on page 88

Here it is not necessary to go back to Feuerbach, for our author's idea. His own abandonment of his dramatic sketch of "*Jesus of Nazareth*" must have arisen from a feeling that in this form it was impossible; while, on the other hand, he had not yet developed for himself the broader basis which made possible his *Parsifal*.—TR.

#### Note 071 on page 89

"Die in der farbigen Zerflossenheit der Harmonie so erlosch, wie der Sterbende aus der Wirklichkeit des Lebens zerfließt."—It is impossible to pass over the prefigurement of Kundry's release, in *Parsifal*, and Isolde's "Liebestod."—TR.

[Note 072 on page 89](#)

Compare the brief preface to the original edition of the *Tannhäuser* text book, given in Mrs John P. Morgan's English version (Schott & Co.), and also translated in *The Meister*, No. XV.—Tr.

[Note 073 on page 90](#)

This sentence will be better understood on reference to "*Art and Climate*" (Vol. I., [page 256](#), of this series), where the idea of the *Eddas* being based on Christianity is rightly scouted. As Mons. Georges Noufflard has pointed out in his valuable work, "*Wagner d'après lui-meme*," this "*Opera and Drama*" seems to be written round the *Siegfried* drama (that is to say, its *incubating* germ), and the next sentence certainly confirms that view.—TR.

[Note 074 on page 90](#)

The Chivalresque Romance, such as the countless dragon-stories, among which may be instanced our own "St George."—TR.

[Note 075 on page 91](#)

"Willkür" substituted for "Unwillkür," as pointed out on [page 158](#).—TR.

[Note 076 on page 92](#)

It will be remembered (Vide Vol. 1. [page 359](#)) that Wagner, not long before writing these lines, had been engaged in collecting materials for a drama on the subject of *Barbarossa*,—simultaneously with his "Siegfried" researches,—and that at the end of 1849 he had published these materials under the title of "*Die Wibelungen*" That essay (*Ges. Schr.* Vol. II.) contains a longer exposition of the present thesis.—TR.

[Note 077 on page 92](#)

With this paragraph, begins the second of the three extracts from *Oper und Drama* which appeared in the *Deutsche Monatsschrift*. That second extract was contained in the number for May 1851, and included the succeeding pages, down to the first third of Chapter IV.; but with a considerable omission(?) from Chapter III., as will be pointed out *in loco*.—TR.

[Note 078 on page 93](#)

In the *D. M.* "a thousandfold" (*tausendfache*) was here repeated, in place of the later "millionenfache."—TR.

[Note 079 on page 94](#)

In Vol. VII., pages 163-4, of the *Ges. Schr.* (given in English in No. XVII. of *The Meister*, page 39), Wagner has shewn this to be the root-idea, preeminently, of his *Tristan und Isolde*. With regard to the text above,—this sentence: "The Drama," etc., was in the *D.M.* placed after the two succeeding ones.—TR.

[Note 080 on page 94](#)

Reference should here be made to [the foot-note on pages 276-7](#), Vol. I., containing a passage from Feuerbach's *Essence of Christianity*. In the *D.M.* this sentence stood: "Das Drama deckt uns den Organismus der Menschheit auf, indem die Individualität in die Gattung aufgeht,—der Roman aber den Mechanismus der Geschichte, nach welchem die Gattung dem Individuum zur Verzehrung vorgeworfen wird; und so ist" . . .; Anglice, "The Drama lays bare to us the Organism of mankind, inasmuch as the Individuality ascends into the Species,—but the Romance the Mechanism of history, according to which the Species is flung before the Individual, for his consumption; and thus also" . . . I cannot but think that the original, less Feuerbachian form was, in this case, the better of the two.—Moreover, the last sentence of this paragraph is an addition made since the *D.M.*, but appears in all the issues of the book.—TR.

[Note 081 on page 95](#)

"Herstellung"; in the *D.M.* this was "Darstellung," *i.e.*, "representment."—TR.

[Note 082 on page 95](#)

"Reinheit,"—in the *D.M.* this stood as "Einheit," *i.e.* "unity."—TR.

[Note 083 on page 95](#)

See [page 140](#).—TR.

[Note 084 on page 96](#)

In the *D. M.* "Uniform."—TR.

[Note 085 on page 96](#)

Just as we found the verb "dichten" used in a wider sense than "to make poetry," so we find our author here—and in fact, in many another passage—using the noun "Dichter" to cover a wider field than that of the "Poet" strictly so-called.—In the remainder of the paragraph we have the 'Ibsen question' put in a nutshell, a whole generation before it arose.—TR.

[Note 086 on page 97](#)

In the *Deutsche Monatsschrift* in place of "world" there appeared "Zeit,"—*i.e.* "time" or "era,"—while the "noch" (lit. "as yet") was absent from the clause which I have cited in brackets. These changes are only of importance as fixing the exact shade of meaning our author wished to convey; but that meaning has acquired additional significance owing to the half blundering, half malicious assertions of those members of the English and German press who have accepted Ferd. Praeger's *misquotations* as gospel.—TR.

[Note 087 on page 97](#)

In place of this parenthesis, the *D. M.* had "weil er sie der sittlichen Gewohnheit gegenüber endlich missverstanden," *i.e.* "because at last, in face of ethical habit (or 'use and wont'), he *misunderstood* it."—TR.

[Note 088 on page 97](#)

Here the corresponding passage in the *D. M.* continues thus: "This knowledge, however, could never be won by the givers and guarders of the Law, under whose hands Society,

feeling itself entitled to absolute authority (*absolut berechtigt*), at last hardened itself into the State, and from whom it was demanded that according to an imagined 'norm' they should make secure against the perceived imperfections of its actual existence that Society itself, which had been unsettled from its habit by the action of the Individual. Yet that these politicians retained the very imperfections which had come to light of day" &c.,—the sentence then dovetailing into one that occurs on page 82 of the *Ges. Schr.* Vol. IV. (the present being page 69 of that volume), and will be noticed hereafter. The whole of the account of the Œdipus and Antigone myth was thus omitted in that magazine,—or rather, appears to have been *added* for the first edition of this book. As this subject, however, is too complex for treatment in a Note, I have relegated it to the 'Translator's Preface' to the present volume.—TR.

#### Note 089 on page 99

"Gesellschaft,"—not to break our author's chain of argument by swerving from the one equivalent, I must beg readers to remember that the primary meaning both of "Society" and "*Gesellschaft*" is "a fellowship, or association."—TR.

#### Note 090 on page 99

"Instinkt," in the German; but Wagner so generally uses the word "Unwillkür" for our notion of "instinct," that the latter term would only prove confusing here.—TR.

#### Note 091 on page 100

The later *Democracy* was the open taking-over of the scapegoat's office by the united body of citizens; herewith they admitted that they had so far come to a knowledge of themselves, as to know that they were themselves the basis of the royal Caprice. Here, then, even Religion openly became an art, and the State a cockpit for the egoistic personality. In flight before the individual Instinct, the State fell into the hands of the individual Caprice of forceful personalities; after Athens had cheered an *Alcibiades* to the echo and deified a *Demetrius*, at last it licked, with ease and comfort, the spittle of a *Nero*.—RICHARD WAGNER.

#### Note 092 on page 102

From the 'stage-directions' of the penultimate scene of Goethe's "*Faust*."—TR.

#### Note 093 on page 103

Here we are brought back to the text as also contained in the *Deutsche Monatschrift*; except that "individual" there occurred before "Man," and the clause "i.e. one answering to the real Needs of men" was absent.—TR.

#### Note 094 on page 103

In the *D. M.* "aus der Unwillkür der menschlichen Individualität,"—i.e. "from the Instinct of that human individuality." Further, the immediately preceding sentence contained "the Individual (*Individuum*)," in place of "the human Individuality."—TR.

#### Note 095 on page 103

Our modern State-politicians twist this round: they call the following of State-edicts a *necessity*, whereas they derive their breaking from the *self-will* of the Individual. Thus *freedom* seems to them Caprice, and *constraint* Necessity. Whosoever employs these most

weighty words according to their natural sense, he expresses himself—as they write in the reviews—in "em barrassed language" ("*befangener Sprache*").—RICHARD WAGNER.—This note and its successor were contained in the original edition ('52) of the book alone; not in the *D. M.*, nor in later editions.—TR.

#### Note 096 on page 103

At any rate not in the sense of the Austrian Government, which at present—as it puts it—is also "organising" its State. Let us here understand the word in that same "embarrassed" sense of language: according to which it means, not a mechanical arranging from on high, but a letting-arise from the root itself.—RICHARD WAGNER.

#### Note 097 on page 104

The article in the *Deutsche Monatsschrift* running on without a break, except for the starting of a fresh paragraph, this clause—between the commas—did not appear.—TR.

#### Note 098 on page 104

"Durch Vorausbestimmung eines ungleichen Antheiles an den Mitteln zu sozialer Selbständigkeit." In the *D.M.* this read: "durch Vorausbestimmung des Antheiles an dem Leben der Gesellschaft," i.e. "by foreordaining his share in the life of Society."—TR.

#### Note 099 on page 105

"Jetzt,"—this word was absent from the *D. M.*, as was also the short bracketed clause of the next paragraph; the brackets, in this instance, occurring in the *German* text.—TR.

#### Note 100 on page 105

In "Egmont" *Goethe* had employed the whole course of the piece in loosening this purely-human Individuality, with toilsome wealth of detail, from the conditions of its State-historical Surrounding; in the solitude of the dungeon, and immediately before its death, he now wished to shew it to the *Feeling* as coming into oneness with itself: for this, he must reach out hands to Marvel and to Music. How characteristic it is, that it was the idealising Schiller, of all others, who could not understand this uncommonly significant feature of Goethes highest artistic truthfulness! But how mistaken, also, was it of Beethoven, not to reserve his music for this appearance of the Wondrous; instead of introducing it—at the wrong time—in the middle of the politico-prosaic exposition.—RICHARD WAGNER.—This Note did not appear in the *D. M.* It has a strong bearing upon the final scenes of the *Ring* and *Tristan und Isolde*.—TR.

#### Note 101 on page 105

The Folk must be something like that pair of children who were standing before a picture of Adam and Eve, and could not make out which was the man and which the woman, because they were unclothed. How characteristic of all our views is it not, again, that commonly our eye is pained and embarrassed by the sight of an undraped human figure, and we generally find it quite disgusting: our own body first becomes intelligible to us, by our pondering on it!—RICHARD WAGNER.—The illustration in the first sentence was also contained in "*The German's Fate in Paris*" (translated in *The Meister*, No. XX.), written in Paris ten years earlier. It would seem that there were more 'British Matrons' in Dresden, than in Paris.—TR.

#### Note 102 on page 106



"Aber aus umgekehrten Gründen";—*not* in the *D.M.*—TR.

[Note 103 on page 106](#)

To this sentence there was added In the *D.M.*: "this must be the object of our next inquiry." With this, "article II." came to a close; but It was followed (in the same issue) by the third article, to which a footnote was appended: "The accompanying third fragment of a larger work—in which he is already addressing himself to the life-conditions of the Drama of the Future—the author adds because he has therein endeavoured to shew, in their development from the Needs of our modern state of affairs, those life-conditions by many not felt as necessary at all, but by others deemed to entirely exclude all need of Art; and in this he has kept to the same standpoint, already taken up by him in dealing with the nature of modern dramatic poetry." This "third article" goes on, without a break, to the end of our present Chapter V.—TR.

[Note 104 on page 106](#)

"Wenn diese Religion aber nothwendig eine allgemeinsame sein muss, so kann sie nichts Anderes sein als die durch das Bewusstsein gerechtfertigte wirkliche Natur des Menschen,"—although this sentence bears a strong resemblance to the doctrines of Comte, it is really our author's own development of a Feuerbachian theme; there is not the slightest evidence of either Wagner or his passing model, Feuerbach, having ever come into any contact with the French Positivist or his writings.—TR.

[Note 105 on page](#)

In the *D.M.* "*hindered by nothing*" here appeared.—TR.

[Note 106 on page 107](#)

"Vorausbestimmung durch die staatlich ständische Norm."—The edition of 1852, but not the *D. M.* nor the later editions of the book, contained the following footnote: "The individuality which the State allows us, is certified to-day by our description in an official passport,—if we are State-faithful: or in a police-warrant,—if we are State-unfaithful. The State in this way takes upon it, through its police, the labour of the poet and character-sketcher."—In the *Wagner-Liszt Correspondence*, Letter 17 (May 29, 1849), there is an interesting autobiographic silhouette of how our author used the one "certificate" to obviate the consequences of the other.—TR.

[Note 107 on page 107](#)

"Hauptmomente,"—as the term "moment" is used by Wagner in a sense differing from that which we generally accord it, and similar to that given it by the French (more akin to "element," or "factor"), I have placed the word between single inverted commas wherever it might otherwise lead to misapprehension.—TR.

[Note 108 on page 108](#)

In the *D. M.* "der Natur, wie der höchsten Vernunft gemäss," i.e. "in keeping with Nature and the highest Reason."—TR.

[Note 109 on page 108](#)

It perhaps is scarcely necessary to point to the working out of this idea in the poem of *Die*

*Meistersinger*, especially the scene between Sachs and Walther in the first part of Act III.—TR.

[Note 110 on page](#)

In the *D. M.* there appeared: "oder in der bewussten liebevollen Anschauung des Erfahrenen überhaupt,"—" or in the conscious, loving 'view' of the experienced-one in general."—TR

[Note 111 on page 108](#)

This term "Vernunft" is so seldom used by Wagner, and has been endowed with so wide a range of meaning by its more frequent users, that I have thought best to retain it in its original form,—especially as it is constantly so employed in English. Carlyle has translated the word as "Reason," in opposition to the "Understanding"; but we must not forget that it connotes a higher intellectual faculty than that of "Logic," and is more akin to our loosely-rendered "Intuition."—TR.

[Note 112 on page 109](#)

In *Oper und Drama* this runs: "was er durch seine Mittheilung sich eben selbst erst gewinnen soll, und müsste unverstündlich bleiben"; the last three words having replaced "müsste somit unverstanden bleiben" of the *D. M.*, I have considered that a literal translation of the latter—which really only differs by a shade—will convey the meaning more clearly in English. But the crux here is, that the "er" (rendered by me as "it ") *may* either refer to the Verstand als Vernunft" or to the "man of passion."—TR.

[Note 113 on page 109](#)

"Im Drama müssen wir *Wissende* werden durch *das Gefühl*" Compare "Durch Mitleid wissend,"—*Parsifal*.—TR.

[Note 114 on page 110](#)

As a great deal will be said about this "aim" (*Absicht*) in Part III., the present pages should be borne in mind. Equivalents might be found in "intention," "object," or sometimes even "tendency"; but, with this explanation, I think the simpler word will answer best our author's meaning.—TR.

[Note 115 on page 111](#)

"*Das Wunder*,"—in the sense of "signs and wonders," i.e. the Marvellous.—In the *D. M.* there is no break here, but the article runs on throughout the following chapter.—TR.

[Note 116 on page 111](#)

In the *D. M.* and in the edition of 1852 there here appeared the predicate "verrufene," i.e. "notorious," or "discredited." It should be added that "Wunder" is the usual German term for "miracle"—TR.

[Note 117 on page 112](#)

Or "intensification, enhancement,"—the German original being "Steigerung."—TR.

[Note 118 on page 112](#)

In the *D. M.* there occurred: "and which alone made those moments appear worthy of regard."—TR.

[Note 119 on page 113](#)

"Objekt,"—for the English "object" our author always uses "*Gegenstand*" in the stricter sense of our term, or "*Zweck*" in its sense of "a goal."—TR.

[Note 120 on page 114](#)

What are a thousand of the finest Arabian stallions, to their purchasers who in English horse-marts prove their points and try their qualities of use, compared with what his horse *Xanthus* was to *Achilles*, when it forewarned him of his death? Honestly, I would not exchange that soothsaying horse of the godlike racer even for Alexander's highly-trained *Bucephalus* who, as is known, bestowed on Apelles' equine portrait the flattery of a neigh!—R. WAGNER—This note was not in the *D. M.*—TR.

[Note 121 on page 115](#)

From "we mean," to the end of this sentence, and also the subsidiary clause in the near, "excepting as a caricature," have been added since the article in the *D. M.*, but appear in all the editions of the book.—TR.

[Note 122 on page 116](#)

In the *Deutsche Monatschrift*—to which we may now bid farewell, as the last of its "three articles" ends with this chapter—there here appeared "unintelligible to the Feeling," as a predicate of "Word-Speech"—It may be as well to point out that the word "*Ausdruck*," which I have here, and in a few other passages, translated as "Utterance," is commonly rendered by "Expression." Neither equivalent is quite satisfactory, though the best we have; and particularly the latter has given rise to much confusion in the minds of musicians. "Utterance," of course, is more strictly allotted to the word of similar derivation, "*Äusserung*," but Wagner himself has often interchanged the two words in this Part II.—TR.

[Note 123 on page 117](#)

The wood-bird, the animal which expresses its emotion the most melodiously, lacks all power of accompanying its song by gestures.—RICHARD WAGNER.

[Note 124 on page 117](#)

I take the rise (*Entstehung*) of Speech from out of Melody, not as in a chronologic, but as in an architectonic order.—R. WAGNER.

[Note 125 on page 117](#)

"An= oder Ablaut,"—i.e. the initial or terminal inflection, given by the *mouth* to the simple vowel sound as it leaves the *larynx*; thus in "sound," "s" would be the *Anlaut*, "ou" the *tönender Laut*, and "nd" a double *Ablaut*.—TR.

[Note 126 on page 117](#)

"Erb' und eigen." "Immer und ewig."—RICHARD WAGNER.

[Note 127 on page 117](#)

"Ross und Reiter." "Froh und frei."—RICHARD WAGNER.

[Note 128 on page 118](#)

"Hand und Mund." "Recht und Pflicht."—RICHARD WAGNER.

[Note 129 on page 120](#)

"In der modernen Sprache kann nicht gedichtet werden."

[Note 130 on page 120](#)

In the German the antithesis is between "*verbindend*" ("binding together") and "*auflösend*" ("setting loose"). The obvious allusion is to "*gebundene Rede*"—poetry, or rather, verse—and "*ungebundene Rede*"—"loosened speech," i.e. *prose*.—TR.

[Note 131 on page 121](#)

In fact, this has formed a preponderantly weighty 'moment' of our modern Comic-art.—R. WAGNER.

[Note 132 on page 121](#)

In Volume I., p. 169, I pointed out the impossibility of rendering into English this prefix "*ur*" ("primeval," conf. "ere," "yore" &c.); I now can only throw myself on my reader's mercy, for employing the useful little syllable without further ado.—TR.

[Note 133 on page 121](#)

Would it be thought trivial of me, if I were to remind the reader—with reference to my exposition of that myth—of Ædipus who was born of Jocasta, and who begot with Jocasta the redemptrix, Antigone?—R. WAGNER.

[Note 134 on page 123](#)

Here, for sake of clearness, I have been obliged *both* to transpose some of the clauses of a sentence, and to divide its original body into two. I notice this, as it is one of the very few cases, in *Oper und Drama*, where Wagner's so-called "involved style" presents any really serious difficulties to the literal translator.—TR.

[Note 135 on page 125](#)

"Und erst in der Musik gewinnt dieser Accent von Sylben, die in der gewöhnlichen Sprache—als eine Kette rhythmisch ganz gleicher Momente— zum Hauptaccente sich wie ein steigender Auftakt verhalten, eine Bedeutung." I here give the German clause, since the "von"—meaning either "of" or "from"—gives rise to a little uncertainty, albeit not vitally affecting the *general* sense.—TR.

[Note 136 on page 127](#)

"Da es bei jeder Mittheilung doch nur auf *Verständniss* abgesehen ist, so geht auch die dichterische Absicht endlich nur auf eine Mittheilung an den Verstand hinaus: um aber zu diesem ganz sicheren Verständnisse zu gelangen, setzt sie ihn da, wohin sie sich mittheilt, nicht von vornherein voraus, sondern sie will ihn an ihrem Verständnisse sich gewissermassen erst erzeugen lassen, und das Gebärungsorgan dieser Zeugung ist, so zu

sagen, das Gefühlsvermögen des Menschen."—I have quoted this sentence in full, as it is the most difficult to interpret in all the book. Its *drift* is plain enough, from the context; but our author has here allowed himself the perilous pleasure of a word-play upon *Verstand* and *Verständniss* ("Understanding" in the abstract and the concrete) in the extremest manner of Feuerbach. An additional stumbling-block is presented to the translator, by the "sie" and the "ihn," as we have no *gender* for our "it"; I have therefore been forced to replace the "sie"—referring to the "poet's aim"—by "he" (i.e. "the poet") in the portion of the sentence *after* the colon, in order to avoid a conflict between the "it"s.—A reference to [page 207](#), in Chapter IV. of Part II. will prove of service.—TR.

[Note 137 on page 132](#)

"Hebung und Senkung,"—the technical equivalent is "arsis and thesis"; seeing that *Oper und Drama* was not written for a mere professional public, however, and that our author has avoided all academic labels wherever possible, I have preferred the common terms as applied to a wave, or undulation, since the equivalent which I have employed earlier, "liftings and lowerings," would be too cumbersome for protracted use.—TR.

[Note 138 on page 135](#)

"Eindruck,"—it should be pointed out that our author here uses "impression" from the point of view of the object that impresses, and thus sets it half way between "expression" and "sensation."—TR.

[Note 139 on page 137](#)

"Die Gleichheit der Physiognomie der durch den Sprachsinn accentuirten Wurzelwörter" &c.—This is one of a good many instances, in this region of the book, where Wagner has allowed his own acute "sense of language" to lead him into that "stubbornness of style" to which he alludes on page 6 (i.e. in the Dedication of the Second Edition, 1868), and which I take to be a desire, manifested from time to time, to work one particular word and its derivatives through every shade of meaning, in illustration of the matter in hand. This method naturally places unusual difficulties in the translator's path, seeing that hardly a word in this book can be dropped without detracting from the main argument. —TR.

[Note 140 on page 137](#)

"Der *Sinn* einer Wurzel ist die in ihr verkörperte Empfindung von einem Gegenstande."

[Note 141 on page 137](#)

"Eine Empfindung, die sich in ihrem Ausdrucke durch den *Stabreim* der unwillkürlich zu betonenden Wurzelwörter rechtfertigen kann," &c.

[Note 142 on page 138](#)

"Die Liebe bringt Lust und—Leid," ["Love brings delight and—Load "]. —R WAGNER.

[Note 143 on page 138](#)

The Singer, who has to get the full tone out of the vowel, is acutely sensitive to the difference between the effects of energetic consonants—such as K, R, P, T—, or indeed, strengthened ones—such as Sch, Sp, Pr—, and softer, weak ones—such as G, L, B, D, W,—upon the open sound. A strengthened terminal—nd, rt, st, ft—where it is radical—as in "

Hand," "hart," "Hast," "Kraft"—, so definitely lays down the nature and duration of the vowel's utterance, that it downright insists on the latter's sounding brief and brisk; and, being thus a characteristic token of the root, it fits itself for rhyme—as Assonance (as in "Hand und Mund").—R. WAGNER.

[Note 144 on page 138](#)

I may be allowed, perhaps, to add the explanation, that this "inner skin" is what is anatomically known as the *peritoneum*, *pleura*, &c.; while the outer portion of the eyeball, the lining of the mouth &c., and the chief *internal* apparatus of the ear, are all formed from embryonic doublings inward of the Outer integument. —TR.

[Note 145 on page 140](#)

"Die Wirkung des Gegenstandes auf den Gefühlskörper selbst giebt der Vokal durch unmittelbare Äusserung des Gefühles auf dem ihm nächsten Wege kund, indem er seine, von Aussen empfangene Individualität an der Universalität des reinen Gefühlsvermögens ausdehnt" &c. —

[Note 146 on page 140](#)

Reference should here be made to the "heart, breath, &c" simile on [page 272](#), and to its resumption as a metaphor, on [page 274](#). With regard to its immediate terms, this sentence is a singular proof of how *little* Wagner needed to borrow from Schopenhauer, when he wrote his *Tristan und Isolde* poem, and how close his own reflections had brought him to that Pantheism which forms the substantial basis of "*Die Welt als Wille und Varstellung*."—TR.

[Note 147 on page 140](#)

How admirably our language characterises in this rhyme the two most open-lying organs of reception, through the vowels likewise lying open toward without; it is as though these organs herein proclaimed themselves as turned, with the whole fill of their universal receptive-force, directly and nakedly from within outwards.—R. WAGNER.

[Note 148 on page 142](#)

"Ausdehnung in der Fläche," or "flat dimensions."—TR.

[Note 149 on page 143](#)

"Aus einem unendlich verfließenden Gefühlsvermögen drängten sich zuerst menschliche Empfindungen zu einem allmählich immer bestimmteren Inhalte zusammen," &c.—

[Note 150 on page 144](#)

"Die Melodie, wie wir sie bis jetzt nur bezeichneten" &c. —From the ambiguity of "nur," this clause *may* mean, "such as we have merely indicated hitherto"; but I incline to the belief that it is intended to distinguish the "verse-melody" from the "orchestral melody" to be dealt with in Chapter V.—TR.

[Note 151 on page 145](#)

*Siegfried*, last scene: "Wie end' ich die Furcht? wie fass' ich Muth?" et seq.—TR.

[Note 152 on page 145](#)



I append the German of this clause, as its most musical *Stabreim* is so obviously intentional: "Von dem aus er die Wogensäulen ordnet, die zum Sonnenlichte emporsteigen sollen, um an seinem Scheine in wonnigen Wellen dahinzuwallen, nach dem Säuseln des Westes sanft zu plätschern, oder nach den Stürmen des Nordes sich männlich zu bäumen."—TR.

[Note 153 on page 146](#)

"Diesen einheitlichen Ausdruck gewann der Dichter am vollständigsten endlich im Aufgehen des, nach Einheit nur ringenden Wortverses in die Gesangsmelodie, die ihren einheitlichen, das Gefühl unfehlbar bestimmenden Ausdruck aus der, den Sinnen unwillkürlich sich darstellenden Verwandtschaft der Töne gewinnt."—I here must confess myself beaten in the attempt to *readably* work-in the "nach Einheit nur ringenden" into the body of the text; and therefore note that this omitted subsidiary clause lays stress upon the fact that the "Word-verse" merely *strove* for unity of expression, whereas the "Song-melody" was naturally fitted to *attain* it.—TR.

[Note 154 on page 146](#)

"Zu schwelgerisch entzückender Kundgebung an das sinnliche Gefühl,"—the "entzückend" (enraving) is here employed as a half-contrast to Christianity's "Verzückung" (transport, or ecstasy).—TR.

[Note 155 on page 148](#)

"Love gives delight to living."—TR.

[Note 156 on page 148](#)

"But with her woe she weaves things winsome."—TR.

[Note 157 on page 149](#)

By way of illustration, I may point to the "Tristan's Ehre..." passage in the first Act of *Tristan und Isolde*.—TR.

[Note 158 on page 149](#)

"Ist hiermit die dichterisch-musikalische *Periode* bezeichnet worden, wie sie sich nach einer Haupttonart bestimmt" &c.—i.e. "if we have thus established the groundwork of that unit of poetry and music, combined, which we are to call by the name of a 'Period.'"—TR.

[Note 159 on page 149](#)

As I have had to slightly expand this portion of an extremely concentrated sentence, I append its German original:—"das Moment . . . welches auch die einzelne melodische Periode nach ihrem Gefühlsausdrucke aus dem Vermögen der reinen Musik heraus bedingt," &c.—TR.

[Note 160 on page 149](#)

"Und bei diesem Nachweis bewiesen [haben], dass der veranlassende *Grund* zur melodischen Bewegung, als ein auch vor dem Gefühle gerechtfertigter, nur aus dieser Absicht entstehen könne."—TR.

[Note 161 on page 150](#)

"Grundton," i.e. the "fundamental note," or "bass."—TR.

[Note 162 on page 150](#)

I may call to mind the "castrato-knifelet."—R. WAGNER.

[Note 163 on page](#)

That is to say, by modern Harmony, as appears from the two preceding paragraphs.—TR.

[Note 164 on page 152](#)

"Potenz," i.e. "power" in the mathematical sense.—TR.

[Note 165 on page 153](#)

I add the German of this clause, and of the last clause of the preceding sentence, since a *misreading* thereof has often been cast in the teeth of *Die Meistersinger* and *Parsifal*: "keinesweges aber—ausser in nur selten erscheinenden, vollkommen gerechtfertigten und zum höchsten Verständnisse nothwendigen Fällen—zur bloss harmonischen Rechtfertigung der Melodie einer anderen Person dienen können.—Selbst der bisher in der Oper verwendete Chor wird nach der Bedeutung, die ihm in den noch günstigsten Fällen dort beigelegt ward, in *unserem* Drama zu verschwinden haben;"—I would draw particular attention to the "*nach der Bedeutung dort.*" Further, in *Letters to Uhlig*, No. 16, dated Sep. 20, 1850 (i.e. only four months, at the outside, before writing the above), Wagner speaks of composing his Siegfried—the *Siegfried's Tod*—as "the accomplishment of the conscious mission of my life," and, among his projects for the contemplated production of that work in Zurich, he says: "I would try to form a *chorus* here, consisting, for the most part, of amateurs."—TR.

[Note 166 on page 153](#)

There is some ambiguity in the opening of this sentence: "Unser Gefühl muss in dieser Umgebung aber so bestimmt sein, dass wir durch die Annahme nicht verletzt werden können." This might possibly be rendered: "that we might not be *hurt* by the idea that," &c., i.e. "we should not resent the supposition, were it to occur to us"; I fancy, however, that in that case our author would have used the subjunctive "könnten," instead of "können." Precisely the same difficulty crops up, at times, with every writer who deals with hypothetical contingencies.—TR.

[Note 167 on page 155](#)

"Den konsonirenden *wurzelhaften Anlaut*" &c.—

[Note 168 on page 155](#)

"Nach seiner sinnvollen Eigenthümlichkeit."—For "sinnvoll" I can neither find nor concoct a suitable equivalent. The nearest approach would be "meaning," as used adjectivally, or rather, "full of meaning"; but the full idea would be: "that appears to be thinking for itself," and therefore a term somewhat akin to "significative" or "suggestive."—In the succeeding paragraph, I must explain that "sinnlich" presents one with the usual difficulties attendant upon the utter confusion of almost all our English adjectives derived from "sense"; for the

most part I have preferred to translate this word as "physical," but *here* it was obviously necessary to employ "sensuous," albeit with a caution against its being taken in a derogatory significance.—TR.

[Note 169 on page 157](#)

"Ernste Tonmeister,"—from the expression "characteristic," it is evident that the reference is to Meyerbeer.—TR.

[Note 170 on page 157](#)

The abstract musician did not even detect the complete immiscibility of the timbres, for instance, of the pianoforte and the violin. A major portion of his artistic life's-joy consisted in playing pianoforte sonatas with violin, &c., without becoming aware that he was only bringing an imaginary music to light, not bringing to the ear a real one. Thus his hearing was swamped by his sight; for what he heard, was nothing but a group of harmonic abstractions, to which alone his sense of hearing still was sensitive, whereas the living flesh of musical expression was bound to stay entirely unheeded by him.—R. WAGNER.

[Note 171 on page 157](#)

I have been obliged here to sort out the constituents of one sentence, and arrange them into two.—TR.

[Note 172 on page 158](#)

"Bewältiger,"—"ruler," or "tamer"; we all know the allegorical lady who "rules the waves."—TR.

[Note 173 on page 158](#)

Never can an object be completely like the thing with which it is compared, but only assert its likeness in one direction, not in all; completely alike, are never the objects of organic, but only those of mechanical formation.—R. WAGNER.

[Note 174 on page 159](#)

This easy explanation of the "Unspeakable" one might extend, perhaps not altogether wrongly, to the whole matter of Religious Philosophy; for although that matter is given out as *absolutely* unutterable, from the standpoint of the *speaker*, yet mayhap it is utterable enough if only the fitting organ be employed.—R. WAGNER.

This note should be remembered by those who aver that Wagner's "metaphysical" view of Music, in the *Beethoven* essay, was *merely* derived from Schopenhauer.—TR.

[Note 175 on page 162](#)

"Zur eigenthümlichen Orchestermelodie,"—i.e. as distinguished from the "remembrances and forebodings" which the Orchestra borrows from the "verse-melody," in its capacity immediately to be discussed.—This paragraph presented some difficulty until I realised that the "so far" (*so weit*), *italicised* in the German, naturally implies "but no farther," and thus constitutes a link between the present and the preceding section.—TR.

[Note 176 on page 162](#)

"Äusserung,"—I may remind the reader that "utterance" does not necessarily imply "speech," but merely "a giving, or shewing, *out*."—TR.

[Note 177 on page 162](#)

Literally "the Content of the poetic Aim in Drama" (*der Inhalt der dichterischen Absicht im Drama*). Although I have been obliged to employ "substance" instead of "content," in this particular sentence, I wish to lay stress upon the latter term, as a connecting bond with earlier chapters; whilst the "Aim" itself should be taken in the light of pages 102 and 208-10.—TR.

[Note 178 on page 163](#)

"Gegenwärtige,"—it is rather amusing to find that our English dictionaries are compelled to clear up their definitions 'of "present" by negatives such as "not past or future."—TR.

[Note 179 on page 163](#)

"Ein Gedanke ist das im 'Gedenken' uns 'dünkende' Bild eines Wirklichen, aber Ungegenwärtigen."—Of course it is impossible to fit this derivation with current English words, but it is probable that "thing" is derived from the same root as "think," while Ogilvie tells us that in Icelandic "thanki" is the term for "mind." To these derivations one might add "than" and "then," each of which implies either absence or distance.—TR.

[Note 180 on page 163](#)

In a similar way we may prettily explain "Geist" (ghost, or spirit) by its kindred root "giessen" (to pour out): its natural meaning is "that which *pours itself out*" from us, just as the perfume is that which spreads itself, which pours itself, from the flower.—R. WAGNER.—This note was continued in the first edition, by: "The 'Spirit' of Theology, on the other hand, is based upon a reversal of this natural process; for there—in keeping with the Christian mythos—it has become the thing poured out *upon* us from above."—TR.

[Note 181 on page 163](#)

"Empfindung" is one of those words which we never can render exactly, in English, as will be seen from the interpretations given in *Flügel's Dictionary*, viz: "sensation; sense; perception; feeling; sentiment"; to which I may add "emotion." Strictly speaking, it is "something which we have *found* outside us, and taken *into* us." From the translator's point of view, it is much to be regretted that our author should have so religiously adhered to the *one* term here, seeing that his own "memory" was one of the most remarkable of his mental features, and therefore a more varied exposition of the nature of that faculty—even at the cost of a digression—would have been of the greatest value. As I have been compelled to make an arbitrary selection of the equivalents for "Empfindung," I append the original: "Dieses Ungegenwärtige ist seinem Ursprünge nach ein wirklicher, sinnlich wahrgenommener Gegenstand, der auf uns an einem anderen Orte oder zu einer anderen Zeit einen bestimmten Eindruck gemacht hat: dieser Eindruck hat sich unserer Empfindung bemächtigt, für die wir, um sie mitzuthellen, einen Ausdruck erfinden mussten, der dem Eindrücke des Gegenstandes nach dem allgemein menschlichen Gattungsempfindungsvermögen entsprach. Den Gegenstand konnten wir somit nur nach dem Eindrücke in uns aufnehmen, den er auf unsere Empfindung machte, und dieser von unserem Empfindungsvermögen wiederum bestimmte Eindruck ist das Bild, das uns im *Gedenken* der Gegenstand selbst dünkt. Gedenken und Erinnerung ist somit dasselbe, und in Wahrheit ist der Gedanke das in der Erinnerung wiederkehrende Bild, welches—als Eindruck von einem Gegenstande auf unsere

Empfindung—von dieser Empfindung selbst gestaltet, und von der gedenkenden Erinnerung, diesem Zeugnisse von dem dauernden Vermögen der Empfindung und der Kraft des auf sie gemachten Eindruckes, der Empfindung selbst zu lebhafter Erregung, zum Nachempfinden des Eindruckes, wieder vorgeführt wird."—TR.

[Note 182 on page 163](#)

"Verwirklicht,"—lit. "realises"; but the meaning is so obviously that of: "makes palpable to the senses," that perhaps "materialises"—in the sense given it by the Spiritualists—will best convey the idea. This whole paragraph is one of the hardest to *translate* in all the book, owing to the play with "Gedenken" (recollection) and "Gedanke" (thought), and also to an exceptionally complex construction, apparently the fruit of over-haste. I must therefore beg for a little extra indulgence here.—TR.

[Note 183 on page 166](#)

Wagner's dramas present so many examples of this, that I need only instance Tannhäuser's posture in the change from the first to the second 'set' of *Tannhäuser*, Act I.—TR.

[Note 184 on page 167](#)

"Einig,"—this derivative of "ein" (one) was rendered by the *Musical World* translator (1855-6) as "oneful," and I have felt half tempted to improve upon that eccentric coinage by inventing another word, "onefold"—analogous to our "twofold" or the German "einfältig"; but perhaps "single" will be sufficiently explicit, if the reader will only bear in mind the text: "If therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light."—TR.

[Note 185 on page 168](#)

"Die Verbindung bedürftiger Momente zu einem befriedigenden Momente." For this sentence we must recall the Feuerbachian formula of [Vol. I, page 80](#) (*Art-work of the Future*), where "need and satisfaction" are dealt with.—TR.

[Note 186 on page 169](#)

"Zufällig,"—reference should here be made to [pp. 219-22](#) *antea*, and their "Hazard" (Zufall) &c. To myself it seems probable that this portion of the text was drafted contemporaneously with that earlier chapter. —TR.

[Note 187 on page 169](#)

"Mit dem lauten Bekenntnisse seiner Absicht,"—it is evident, from the context, that our author means us to understand: "with the announcement that he has a living story to tell us." This volume contains many similar instances—some of which I have already noted—of a quasi-poetical 'ellipsis.'—TR.

[Note 188 on page 169](#)

In this place I need but cursorily mention, that I do not allude to the modern Operatic Overture. Every man of common sense must know that these tone-pieces—provided there was aught to understand in them at all— should have been performed *after* the drama, instead of *before* it, if they were meant to be understood. Vanity has betrayed the musician—even in the most favourable cases—into wanting to fulfil the Foreboding in the very Overture itself, and that, with an absolute-musical certainty about the whole plot of the drama.—R.

WAGNER.—That our author was perfectly aware that he was condemning his own *Tannhäuser*-overture (in its earlier form) as an Overture, is proved by a letter to Uhlig dated March 20, 1852. On the other hand, his *Rheingold* Introduction (then unwritten) is the completest fulfilment of the above suggestions.—TR.

[Note 189 on page 169](#)

The everlasting tradition of entr'acte-music in our plays is an eloquent witness to the lack of any art-ideas on the part of our playwrights and stage-managers.—R. WAGNER.

[Note 190 on page 170](#)

"Bereits," here used as "schon,"—ie. "from the first articulate word and onward."—TR.

[Note 191 on page 170](#)

"Als deren Blüthe die Melodie erscheint, wie sie von dem bestimmten, versicherten Gefühle als Kundgebung des rein menschlichen Empfindungsinhaltes der bestimmten und versicherten Individualität und Situation gefordert wird."

[Note 192 on page 171](#)

"Ausdruck,"—"means of expression" would be a clearer rendering, but too long-winded for such frequent use.—TR.

[Note 193 on page 171](#)

"Seine Tendenz nur als Sentenz."—TR.

[Note 194 on page 171](#)

"This apparently paradoxical sentence (in fact, this whole short paragraph) is by no means easy to render into English; yet the editor of the *Musical World*, of March 1, 1856, might have spared his gibes, had he chosen to remember the old Latin maxim: "ars est celare artem."—TR.

[Note 195 on page 172](#)

"Nach seinem verdeutlichenden Vermögen,"—i. e. as what our author has called the "harmonic vindicator of the melody"; see pages [303](#), [306](#), [310](#), [313](#), [315](#) and [318](#).—TR.

[Note 196 on page 173](#)

The unitarian grouping of themes, which the musician endeavoured to establish in the *overture*, must be given in the *drama itself*.—R. WAGNER.

[Note 197 on page 173](#)

"Einheit des Raumes und der Zeit,"—it is interesting to compare this passage with: "zum Raum wird hier die Zeit," *Parsifal*, Act I.—TR.

[Note 198 on page 174](#)

"Das in Zeit und Raum nothwendig Getrennte."—TR.

[Note 199 on page 175](#)



"*Gehen sie . . . gegenseitig in sich unter*,"—this somewhat quaint expression is evidently an allusion to that "Going-under of the State," dealt with on [page 201](#) et seq.—TR.

[Note 200 on page 176](#)

For the pendants to this paradox the reader should refer to pages [233](#) and [345](#); all three passages will gain vastly in comprehensibility, by the comparison.—TR.

[Note 201 on page 177](#)

I here am obliged to make express mention of myself, and, indeed, with a single eye to removing from the reader's mind any suspicion that with the above account of the Perfected Drama I had attempted an explanation of my own artistic works, in any sense as though I had fulfilled my present demands in my own operas, and had thus already brought to pass this hypothetic Drama. No one can be better aware than myself, that the realisation of this Drama depends on conditions which do not lie within the will, nay, not even within the capability (*Fähigkeit*) of the Unit,—were this capability an infinitely greater than my own,—but only in Community, and in a mutual co-operation made possible thereby: of both which factors, nothing but the direct antithesis is now to hand. Nevertheless I will admit that my artistic works have been of the greatest weight to me; for alas! so far as I can see around me, they must be my only witnesses to the existence of an endeavour from whose results alone, small as they are, that thing was to be learnt which—striving from unconsciousness to consciousness—I now have learnt; and which—let us hope, for the welfare of Art—I now can speak aloud with full conviction. Not of my achievements, but of That which they have brought within my consciousness, of That which I now can utter with conviction, am I proud.—R. WAGNER.

[Note 202 on page 178](#)

I lay stress upon these grossest offences, not that they have *invariably* occurred in our translations, but since it has been possible for them to happen over and over again—without disturbing either singers or audience. I make use of the superlative, merely so as to betoken the most obvious physiognomy of the thing.—R. WAGNER.

[Note 203 on page 179](#)

"*Abstufungen und Übergänge*,"—I will not pledge myself that this is the correct translation; for the ordinary use of these words would mean "gradations and transitions," which, however, would not have much point here.—TR.

[Note 204 on page 181](#)

Is there any need for me to notice the exceptions, whose very lack of influence has proved the power of the general rule?—R. WAGNER.

[Note 205 on page 182](#)

The allusion, of course, is to Act II. of *Tannhäuser*, while the following illustration refers to the close of Act II. of *Lohengrin*.—TR.

[Note 206 on page 183](#)

By this term, "the public," I can never think of those units who employ their abstract Art-intelligence to make themselves familiar with things which are never realised upon the

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stage. By "the public" I mean that assemblage of spectators without any specifically cultivated Art-understanding, to whom the represented drama should come for their complete, their *entirely toilless Emotional-understanding*; spectators, therefore, whose interest should never be led to the mere art-media employed, but solely to the artistic object realised thereby, to the drama *as a represented Action, intelligible to everyone* Since the public, then, is to *enjoy* without the slightest effort of an Art-intelligence, its claims are grievously slighted when the performance—for the reasons given above—does not realise the dramatic-aim; and it is completely within its rights, if it turns its back on such a representment. On the other hand the connoisseur who, in defiance of the performance, takes pains to think out the unrealised dramatic-aim for himself, by aid of the text-book and a critical interpretation of the music—which generally receives good treatment at the hands of our *orchestras*,—from this connoisseur such a mental strain is exacted, as must rob him of all *enjoyment* of the artwork, and convert into a toilsome labour the very thing which was meant to instinctively delight and enthrall him.—R. WAGNER.

[Note 207 on page 186](#)

"Das Andre, das ich ersehne," *Walküre*, act ii; "Ein anderer ist's,—ein anderer, ach!" *Parsifal*, act ii.—TR.

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# *Art and Climate*

By Richard Wagner

Translated by William Ashton Ellis



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## Contents

About this Title .....	4
Translator's Note .....	4
Art and Climate .....	7
Notes .....	15

## About this Title

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[250]

## Translator's Note

In a letter to Uhlig, dated February 8th, 1850, Wagner writes: "To the March number of the *Deutsche Monatsschrift* (Stuttgart) I have promised to contribute an article, 'Art and Climate.' The good friend in the *Allgemeine Zeitung* has determined me to expose the lazy, cowardly, preposterous objection of 'climate,' in all its emptiness." A nervous illness intervened between this letter and the following, undated but apparently written towards the end of the month, where he says: "Since yesterday I have been writing away at the article for the March number of the *Monatsschrift*." In the succeeding letter (March 13th, 1850), in which he also refers to "Wieland" as previously cited, Wagner says: "*Kunst und Klima* appears in the Stuttgart *Deutsche Monatsschrift*, in the March, or, at latest, in the April number. The article is important."—In the April number of that review (edited by Adolph Kolatschek) the article accordingly appeared.—

Upon referring to the *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, we find in the issue for Jan. 15, 1850 a criticism of *Art and Revolution* containing the remarks here referred to by our author. They run as follows: "Whence, beneath *our Northern skies*, shall we derive that rapt intoxication of



the sense of beauty, which even upon the Ionic horizon did not loom so pure as we are wont to conceive when we sum up the æsthetic life of olden times in the principle of Hellenism? . . . These wailings are fantastic, unfruitful, and can be answered by no kind of Revolution, excepting by that of the whole *Earth-rind*, and a new cycle of the world."—



[251]

## Art and Climate

THE author's publicly expressed views on the future of Art, in step with the advance of the human race to perfect Freedom, have been met with this objection, among others: that he has failed to take account of the *influence of Climate upon man's capacity for Art*, and has, for instance, presupposed of the modern Northern-European nations a future imaginative and constructive art-faculty to which the natural characteristics of their native skies are entirely opposed.

It may therefore be deemed of some importance to lay bare the lack of understanding which lies at the bottom of this objection, by a general survey of the actual relations between Art and Climate; leaving, for the present, the kindly reader to complete the individual details by their further consequences.



Just as we know that there are heavenly bodies which have not as yet, or never will have, attained the birth of those conditions fundamentally necessary to the existence of human beings: so do we know that at one time our own Earth, also, had not as yet evolved such attributes. The present physiognomy of our planet shows us that, even now, the life of Man is by no means permitted on every portion of its surface: where its climatic mood proclaims itself in unbroken exclusiveness, as on the fiery plains of the Sahara, or mid the Northern ice-steppes, there Man is an impossibility. Only where this 'Climate' resolves the fixed and all-dominating uniformity of its influence into a [252] pliant chain of broken contrasts, do we see arise that infinitely manifold series of organic creations whose highest grade is conscience-gifted Man.

Yet where Climatic Nature draws Man beneath the all-sheltering influence of her rankest prodigality, and rocks him in her bosom as a mother rocks her child,—where we must therefore place the cradle of newborn mankind—there has Man remained a child forever—as in the Tropics,—with all an infant's good and evil qualities. First where she drew this all-conditioning, over-tender influence back, when she handed Man, like a prudent mother her adult son, to himself and his own free self-devisings,—where Man, then, mid the waning warmth of the directly fostering care of Climate, was forced to cater for himself,—do we see him ripening to the full unfoldment of his being. Only through the force of such a Need as surrounding Nature did not, like an over-careful mother, both listen for and still at once ere it had scarcely risen, but for whose appeasement he must himself provide, did he gain consciousness not only of that need but also of his *power*. This consciousness he reached through learning *the distinction between himself and Nature*; and thus it was that she, who no more *offered* him the stilling of his need, but from whom he now must *wrest* it, became the object of his observation, inquiry, and dominion.

The progress of the human race in the development of its innate capabilities of winning from Nature the contentment of those needs that waxed with its ever-waxing powers, is the *history of Culture*. In it Man evolves his own qualities in *counterpoise* to Nature, and thus acquires *independence* of her. Only man become independent of Nature by his personal energy, is the *historical* Man and only the historical Man has summoned *Art* to life, but not the primitive Man in Nature's leading-strings.

Art is the highest common life-expression of the man who, after self-fought-out contentment of his natural needs, displays himself to Nature in all the flush of triumph. His art-works as though fill up the gaps which she had [253] left for Man's free personal activity;

they form the closing harmony of her majestic whole, in which self-conscious, independent Man is thus included as her highest factor. Wherefore, where *Nature* in her overfill was All, we neither light upon free Man nor genuine *Art*; but where—as we have phrased it—she left those empty gaps, where she thus made room for the free self-evolution of Man and of his need-grown energy, was *Art* first born.

Granted, that *Nature* has also had her share in the birth of *Art*, just as the highest expression of the latter is the brilliant 'close,' the conscious reunion of *Nature* with Man, effected by his understanding of her. Her share, however, was this: that she abandoned Man, the creator of *Art*, to the conditions which must necessarily spur him on to self-gained consciousness,—inasmuch as she retreated before him and merely exerted a conditional influence over him, in place of holding him a prisoner in the bosom of her full and unconditional sway. From the over-tender mother, she became to him a bashful bride, whom he now must win by vigour and love-worthiness for his—endlessly enhanced—fruition; a bride who, vanquished thus by mind and valour, made offering of herself to Love's embraces. Not, therefore, in the teeming Tropics, not in the sensuous flower-land of India, was born *true Art*; but on the naked, sea-plashed rocks of Hellas, upon the stony soil and beneath the scanty shadows of the olive-trees of Attica, was set her cradle:—*for here, amid privations, strove Hercules and suffered*—here was the first *true Man* begotten.— —

When we survey the history of Hellenic culture, we are above all struck by *those* circumstances which favoured the development of Man to his highest energy, and thereby to independence of *Nature* and finally of those cramping human relationships which sprang directly from his natural surroundings. We certainly shall find these circumstances markedly involved in the characteristics of the 'scene of action' of Hellenic history; but the decisive feature of these characteristics lies herein, that *Nature* did [254] not *pamper* (*v e r wöhnte*) the Hellenes by her influence, but *weaned* (*e n t wöhnte*) them from her care; that she *be-schooled* (*e r zog*), and not *be-lapped* (*v e r zog*) them like the softer Asiatics. Every other determining factor in the Hellenic evolution may be referred to the individual manysidedness of the numerous racial stems which crowded close together in rich variety. The natural characteristics of their respective dwelling-places had, sure enough, an essential effect upon their individuality, and therefore upon that of the whole nation, but only in the sense of spurring them to free activity; so that the work of forming and developing these diverse individualities must be ascribed far more to History than to *Nature*.

The motive force of Hellenic history is thus the *vigorous* (*thätige*) *Man*; and its fairest fruit, the crown of Hellenic self-consciousness, is the *purely human Art*, i.e. that art which found its stuff and object in actual Man, man self-acknowledged as *Nature's* highest product. The later *Plastic art* was the luxury and superfluity of Hellenic *Art*: in it the flower of Greece shed down on its surroundings the overfill of its rich sap, secreted by the fibres of the humanistic art-work, and erstwhile kept close-locked within its maiden chalice: it is the squandered seed of bursting, over-ripe Hellenic *Art*. This seed glanced off from Man, fell back upon surrounding *Nature*, and on her soil twixt trees and bushes, from mountain, brook and meadow, brought forth those teeming pictures of man's art which signal for us, to this very day, the tidings of the overfill of human faculty.

In the plastic arts, Man undoubtedly brought himself once more into direct relationship with surrounding climatic *Nature*; but only herein, that he weighed his needs and forces against hers, and set his purely human will and pleasure in unison with the Necessity of her demeanour. *Only the free and full-fledged man*, however, such as he had evolved himself by combat with the parsimony of *Nature*, could throughly understand her, and wist at last to spend the overfill of his own being on that harmonic complement [255] of *Nature* which should answer to his power of enjoyment. The creative faculty lay therefore ever grounded on Man's *independence of Nature*—yea, on the overfill of that quality—and not in any directly

productive *operation of natural Climate*.

But the voiding of that overflow was also the death-knell of this art-creative man: the more he strewed his seed beyond the confines of his Hellenic motherland, the farther he shed this overflow toward Asia, and led back thence its lavish stream into the pragmatic-prosaic and grossly sensual world of Rome: so much the more visibly did his creative force die out; to make place, at his eventual death, for the worship of an *abstract God* who, in melancholy joy of immortality, wandered aimlessly between the splendid works of statuary and architecture which decked the burying-place of this departed Man. Thenceforth God *ruled* the world,—God, who had *made* all Nature for the glory of his name. From that time forward, man's affairs are governed by the '*incomprehensible will*' of God; no longer by the instinct and necessity of Nature,—and it is therefore a highly unchristian action, on the part of our modern Christian art-producers, to appeal to "Climate" and "Natural soil" as hindering or favouring conditions for the birth of Art.—Let us consider what has become of art-fit Man, under the dispensation of Jehova!

The first thing that strikes us, in glancing at the evolution of our modern nations, is this: that it has only most conditionally been governed by the influence of *Nature*, but quite unconditionally by the confounding and distorting operation of an alien Civilisation; that, as a matter of fact, our Culture and Civilisation have not sprung upwards from the nether soil of Nature, but have been poured down upon us from above, from the Heaven of the priests and the *Corpus Juris* of Justinian.

With its entrance upon history, the natural stock of each new European nation was grafted with a cutting from the tree of Roman-dom and Christendom, and the fruit of the thus-engendered artificial shoot, which bushed out on [256] every hand in cripple-like monstrosity, we are now tasting in our barbaric civilisation. Hindered from the first in their self-unfolding, we can form no estimate of the shape which the original characteristics and climatic idiosyncracies of those nations might perchance have evolved. Even though we should set down the degree of artistic culture, which they might be trusted to have attained on the path of self-unfolding, at ever so little (an assumption, however, which would be thoroughly onesided and unjust!), yet we have here no need to vex ourselves with that question; but simply to confess that such an undisturbed self-development has actually had no chance of taking place. Whosoever may choose to reply, that at all events our native idiosyncrasy has had a well-marked influence on the shaping of imported elements of culture, is completely in the right when, for example, he asserts that the Christianity of Nicæa was a different matter from that of Berlin; but he would only make himself ridiculous, if he should attempt—as has already occurred to certain pious persons—to prove an innate predisposition of the Germanic races toward Christianity from the contents of the Eddas.

True, that into the evolutionary channel of the modern nations their 'climatic' origin poured its waters too, (1) and that from the perennial torrent of the Folk, with its own peculiar strain of poetry and intuition; only—it was but in an incomplete and spasmodic, a fragmentary and unsubstantial manner, that the true Folk-spirit could ever manifest itself, beneath the 'influences' that pressed upon it from outside and above. Our spiritual development has [257] therefore been a mass of tangled contradictions: *not* the product of Nature and Climate, nor of a cycle of culture that had shaped itself in strict conformity therewith; but the result of a violent counter-thrust against this Nature, of a wilful disregard of both Nature and Climate, of the frenzied strife twixt soul and body, "will" and "can." The desolate battlefield, across which this crazy fight swept howling, is the plain of the Middle Ages. Undecided, as of its very nature it could not but remain, the battle wavered to and fro; until the Turks came to our help, and hunted over to us, in the Occident, the last professors of Hellenic art.

Art's *renaissance*—mark well! not any *birth*—now set in with full force: the last remains of Greek art-beauty were *taught* to us. The tombstones from the burial-place of long-deceased

Greek art, those weather-beaten forms of bronze and marble, denuded of their living garb of colour,—were unriddled for us by these learned men, so well as their own scant stock of understanding still permitted. And just as those monuments were, as we said, the merest gravestones of the once living Hellenic artist-man,—the last ghostlike, pallid death-abstraction from his onetime warmly-feeling, nobly-doing life,—so have we learnt from them to regard *Art* itself as an *abstract notion*, which we fancy we must pour down from above—as we had erstwhile done with the immaterial god of Heaven—into the mould of actual Life. From this abstract notion has our Modern Art been *constructed*: meaning thereby our *plastic* art, i.e. that art which, of our need of Luxury, we have *imitated* from the plastic art of Greece, itself the mere luxurious appanage of Grecian Art; and, in troth, have not imitated in the fulness wherewith it once took rise from Life and stood erect in living bloom,—but according to the sorrowful disfigurement in which alone it offered itself to us, beaten by the storms of time, torn from its natural bearings, and scattered in capricious fragments here a little and there a little. And thus we take these monuments—robbed of their warming and protecting deckery of tint— [258] drag them naked and frostbitten through the Christian-German sand of "Mark" Brandenburg, set them up amidst the windy firs of "Sans-Souci," and chatter from between our teeth a learned sigh anent the *unfavourableness of our climate*. But that, midst this "unfavourableness," our Berlin art-pedants have not yet gone completely crazy, we ascribe with justice to the undeserved grace of God!

By all means these learned men are right, when, beholding the work of their own luxurious caprice, they find that in that work we are merely bunglers, prompted by neither necessity nor self-dependence; that in our "climate" the imitated plastic art of Greece can only be a hothouse growth, and not a natural plant. This verdict, however, can but open the eyes of any man of common sense, to the fact that our whole art is good for nothing *because* it has had no origin in our actual being, nor in any harmonic supplementing of the "climatic" Nature which surrounds us. But this in nowise proves that, in our climate, an art could not unfold itself in answer to our veritable human needs; for we have never yet reached the point of developing our artistic powers, without let or hindrance, according to *our own* associate need.

A survey of our modern art thus teaches us that we absolutely do *not* stand under the influence of climatic *Nature*, but of a *History* at entire variance with that Nature. We must, therefore, first realise that our history of to-day is made by the selfsame *men* who once brought forth the Grecian art-work, and, that done, ask ourselves: *what* is it, that has changed these men so utterly, that Those created works of Art whilst We but turn-out costly wares of Industry? Then shall we also recognise that, as our essence is at bottom one and the same, so, however wide apart our starting-points, our termini must one day light upon each other, though approached on different paths. The Greek, proceeding from the bosom of Nature, attained to Art when he had made himself independent of the immediate influence of Nature: *we*, violently debarred from Nature, and proceeding from the drillground of a [259] heaven-rid and juristic Civilisation, shall first reach Art when we completely turn our backs on such a civilisation and once more cast ourselves, with conscious bent, into the arms of Nature.

We have not, therefore, to turn to the consideration of Climatic Nature, but of *Man*, the only creator of Art, in order to discover what has made this modern European man art-impotent. Then shall we perceive with full distinctness, that this evil influence is none other than our present *Civilisation*, with its complete indifference to Climate. It is not our atmosphere, that has reduced the proud warriors of the North, who shattered once the Roman world, to servile, crass, weak-nerved, dim-eyed, deformed and slovenly cripples;—not it, that has turned the blithesome, action-lusting, dauntless sons of heroes, whom we cannot now conceive aright, into our hypochondriacal, cowardly and cringing citizens;—not it, that has brought forth from the hale and hearty Teutons our scrofulous linen-weavers, weaved



themselves from skin and bones; from the Siegfried of olden days a "Gottlieb"; from spear-throwers our logic-choppers, our counsellors and sermon-spinners. No, the glory of this splendid work belongs to our clergy-ridden *Pandect-civilisation*, with all its fine results; among which, beside our Industry, our worthless, heart-and-soul-confounding *art* fills out its seat of honour. For the whole posse must be set down to this Civilisation, in its entire variance with our nature, and not to any Nature-born *necessity*.

Wherefore, not from that Civilisation, but from the future true and genuine *Culture*, which shall bear a right relation to our climatic Nature, will one day also bloom that Artwork which is now denied both breath and air to breathe in, and as to whose peculiar properties we shall never be able to form a notion until *we Men*, the creators of that artwork, can conceive ourselves as developed to a rational concord *with this Nature*.

From the kernel of our history therefore, have *we*, for now, to draw conclusions on our Future; from the character [260] of Man, such as our history shows us working-out himself to free self-destination, under the merest conditional influence of Nature, have we to enquire how the free and veritable Men of the Future will take their stand twixt Art and Nature.

What then is the kernel of this history?

We shall surely not go far astray, if we describe it briefly thus:—

In Greekdom, we find Man evolving to full and conscious self-discrimination from Nature: the artistic monument in which this conscious man objectified himself, is the tintless marble statue,—the idea, expressed in stone, of the pure human form; which idea Philosophy, again, dissolved from out the stone and resolved into a pure 'abstraction' of the human essence. Into this solitary man, existing at last in naught but the idea,—this man in whom, amid the physical lack of all community of the species, the essence of the sheer personality was represented as the essence of the species,—the People's Christianity instilled the lifebreath of passionate heart's-desire. The error of the philosopher became the madness of the masses. This frenzy's scene of action is the Middle Ages: on it we see the Nature-sundered man—taking his personal, egoistic, and therefore impotent being for the essence of the human species—with greed and haste, by physical and moral mutilation, (2) hunt after his redemption into *God*; under whose image, by an instinctive error, he expressed the idea of the in truth con summate essence of the human race and Nature. (3)

[261]

As the only possible, true, therefore unconsciously and at last consciously striven-for, redemption from this state of misery, we then see loom before us the ascension of the *egoistic* essence of the individual into the *communistic* essence of the human race; the concretion of the abstract idea of Man into the actual, true and blissful common-being of *Mankind*. If, therefore the kernel of the world's history, from the Asiatic down to the close of the Grecian period, was the emanation of the *unit Man* from Nature: so is the kernel of the newer European history the resolution of this idea into the actuality of *Men*.

But to men who know themselves united in one all-capable species, the natural character of this or that particular Climate can no longer set up cramping bounds: to them, as a species at one with itself, the total like-united Nature of this Earth alone can form a confine. To this whole Earth-Nature, in measure as she is known to them in all her wide connexion with the World-All, will the Men and Brothers of the Future turn; yet no longer turn as to a barrier—such as the Egoist deemed the circle of his natural surroundings—but as the prime condition of their existence, their life and handiwork.

In this vast and blest conjunction, shall we first attain the artist's true creative-force; when first *the Artists* are to hand, then will *Art* herself be present. But these Artists are *human beings*; not trees, nor waves, nor skies. This brotherhood of artist-men will mould its works of art in unison with, in complement and rounding-off of Mother Nature; accenting every quality and individual trait evoked by special need, in answer to the special call of Nature's individual

features, but marching forward from the base of [262] this particularity towards a common pact with common Nature—as toward the utmost fulness of man's being.

Before, however, men shall once more shape their artworks by their Need, and not as now by Luxury and Caprice, they will neither have the wit to bring their works to needful unison with Nature. But if they shape from Need—and the true need of Art can only be one felt in common—then no Climate upon earth, that allows at all of man's existence, can hinder them from Art-work; the rather will the niggardness of outward Nature but whet the more their purely human artist-zeal.

As for the objection that, even for the generation of the *art-need*, peculiar favouring conditions of Climate—such as Ionic skies—are indispensable: it is, in the sense in which it is nowadays brought forward, either bigoted or hypocritical, and in its very gist unmanly. Wherever Climate does not forbid men living *free* and *healthy* lives, neither will it hinder them from bodily beauty and the feeling of the need of art. Climate can only pronounce its fatal veto where, through the invincibility of its influence, it stays true Men from being bred, and merely lets the human *animal* vegetate. Yet even these men-beasts will one day vanish before the march of truer culture; just as so many of their like have already vanished, or through exchange of climate and intermingling of varieties, have thriven into normal men. But, as we have said above, where men attain to mastery of their dependence on climatic Nature, they will necessarily—in their ever broader *historical* contact with all those men who have reached like independence—stride onward also to the mastery of each dependence on those oppressive tenets which have clung to them as the result of erroneous conceptions harboured in the time of that war-of-emancipation with Nature, and have ruled both the religious and political conscience of mankind with equal cramping dictates of authority. The common creed of those Men of the Future must therefore necessarily take this form:—

[263]

There exists no higher *Power* than *Man's Community*; there is naught so *worthy Love* as the *Brotherhood of Man*.

But only through the *highest power of Love* can we attain to *perfect Freedom*; for there exists no genuine Freedom but that in which *each Man hath share*.

The mediator between Power and Freedom, the redeemer without whom Power remains but violence, and Freedom but caprice, is therefore—Love; yet not that revelation from above, imposed on us by precept and command,—and therefore never realised,—like the Christian's: but *that Love* which issues from the Power of true and undistorted human nature; which in its origin is nothing other than the liveliest utterance of this nature, that proclaims itself in pure delight at physical existence and, starting from marital love, strides forward through the love for children, friends and brothers, right on to *love for Universal Man*.

This Love is thus the wellspring of all true Art, for through it alone can the natural flower of *Beauty* bloom from Life. Yet Beauty, too, is now only one of our abstract notions, and verily no notion deduced from actual Life, but from the *lesson-ed* Grecian art. That which can only be perceived and felt in the full warm joy of all the senses, has become the object of æsthetic speculation; and, confronted with the axioms of the Metaphysician, our modern art-professor sighs again for Ionic skies, beneath which alone (in his opinion) can Beauty ever thrive. But here, again, he keeps his eyes involuntarily fixed on the only remaining, dull and faded link that connects the art of Greece with our own time, the *plastic* art and notably the natural Material from which it fashioned forms. He thus forgets entirely that the fashioner of those statues was first and foremost an artist Man, and that he only *copied* in those works the actual artwork he had *carried out* upon and with his own warm, living body. The Beauty to which the artist at last erected marble statues, he had *felt* before, and *tasted*, with the highest joy of sense; to him this tasting had been a true instinctive *need*, and this need was none other

than—Love. How high this love-need could mount [264] within the exclusive circle of the Grecian nation, we learn from the course of their historical evolution. Because it was no more than the need of a peculiar people, it remained hedged about with Egoism; and could therefore only squander, so to speak, its force on wantonness at last, and, after all this prodigality, die out in philosophical abstractions, renewed by not one spark of counter-love. If, on the other hand, we weigh the instinctive impulse of the men of present history,—if we recognise that they can only reach redemption by the realisation of God in the physical verity of the Human Race,—that their most burning need can only still itself in Universal Human Love, and that, by an infallible necessity, it must one day attain this stilling,—then we can but look with full assurance to a future element of life in which this Love, extending its own need into the widest circles of broad humanity, must needs give birth to works undreamt as yet; works which, moulded by unheard-of manysidedness of *felt and living* sense of Beauty, shall turn those mouldering remains of Grecian art to unregarded playthings for peevish children.

Let us therefore conclude thus:—

That which a man loves, that *deems* he beautiful; that which strong, free Men—who in community are all that of their essence they can be—that which *they* love in common, that *is* in very surety beautiful. No other natural standard exists for true, not inculcated, Beauty. In their joy at this beauty, will the Freemen of the Future fashion works of Art such as they needs *must* fashion to content their measurelessly heightened need. Everywhere, in every Climate, will these works be suchwise fashioned as to answer to the purely human need inspired by native skies: they will be beautiful alike and perfect, for reason that in them the highest need of Man is *satisfied*. But in the boundless intercourse of Future Men, the thousand individual qualities that shall have sprung from human Need, in answer to the divers idiosyncracies of Climate,—so *soon as ever they have raised themselves to the height of the universal Human, and therefore universally Intelligible*,—will mutually react on one [265] another in fertilising interchange, and blossom forth to joint 'all-human' artworks, of whose amplitude and splendour our art-sense of to-day, with its eternal clinging to the fetters of the old and dead, can conceive no jot or tittle.

To clear the ground for such a Work of the Future, must the Earth, then, take the human race once more into her womb, and bear herself and it anew?

In troth, she'd play us thus a sorry trick!—for then would Mother Earth destroy at one fell swoop all those conditions whose actual presence, just as they are, now shows us—rightly understood—the Necessity of such a framing of the human Future as we have here but barely hinted. For we can gain no hope, no courage, no confident assurance of the Future, till we convince ourselves that the fulfilment of our soul's best wish hangs not upon the old erroneous supposition that men must needs be what our wilful notions, abstracted from the Past, dictate that they *should* be; but on the certain knowledge, that they require alone to be what by their very nature they *can* be, and *therefore shall and will be*. Not *Angels*; but precisely *Men*!

The *Climate* about which alone we can talk, in any reasonable fashion, as fundamentally conditioning Art, is therefore:

*The actual—and not the fancied—essence of the Human Race.*



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## Notes

### Note 1 on page 9

The original text runs: "Wohl ist im Entwicklungsgange der modernen Nationen ihre klimatische Originalität ebenfalls mit eingeflossen, und zwar aus dem unversiegbaren Strome des Volkes,..." The author has here indulged in a rhetorical play of words, quite impossible to reproduce in another tongue; taking the word "influence" from the mouths of his opponents, he has, in this sentence, restored it to its primitive meaning, viz., "to flow into" (cf. *influx*), a sense still preserved in the German verb "einfließen." To complete his metaphor, he has further employed the "gang" of "Entwicklungsgang" (course of evolution) in its sense of "conduit," a meaning retained in the English "water-course."—TR.

### Note 2 on page 11

Compare *Parsifal*, Act i. "an sich legt er die Frevelhand," where Gurnemanz refers to Klingsor's egoistic endeavours to force his way to the *Gral*.—TR.

### Note 3 on page 11

"Unter welchem er das in Wahrheit vollkommene Wesen der menschlichen Gattung und der Natur nach unwillkürlichem Irrthume begriff."—The meaning of this passage, and of that which follows, will become clearer by reference to Ludwig Feuerbach's *Essence of Christianity* (for Wagner's partial thought-indebtedness whereto, see the Preface to the present volume and also p. 25), in the first chapter of which we find: "Religion is nothing else than the consciousness which man has of his own, not finite and limited, but infinite nature"; again: "The antithesis of divine and human is nothing else than the antithesis between human nature in general and the individual"; and later: "God is the concept of the species as an individual: the idea, or rather the essence of the species, that, while a universal being, the epitome of all perfections, of all attributes set free from the limits existing in the mind and feeling of the individual, is withal an individual *personal* being.....Man supplies the absence of the idea of the species by the idea of God,—as of a Being who is free from the limits and wants which oppress the individual, and, in his judgment (since he identifies the species with the individual), the species itself."—TR.

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# *Judaism in Music*

By Richard Wagner

Translated by William Ashton Ellis



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## Contents

About this Title .....	4
Judaism in Music. ....	5
Notes .....	15

## About this Title

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[79]

## Judaism in Music.

(01)

IN THE 'NEUE ZEITSCHRIFT FÜR MUSIK' not long ago, mention was made of an "Hebraic art-taste": an attack and a defence of that expression neither did, nor could, stay lacking. Now it seems to myself not unimportant, to clear up the matter lying at bottom of all this—a matter either glossed over by our critics hitherto, or touched with a certain outburst of excitement. (02) It will not be a question, however, of saying something new, but of explaining that unconscious feeling which proclaims itself among the people as a rooted dislike of the Jewish nature; thus, of speaking out a something really existent, and by no means of attempting to artfully breathe life into an unreality through the force of any sort of fancy. Criticism goes against its very essence, if, in attack or defence, it tries for anything else.

Since it here is merely in respect of Art, and specially of Music, that we want to explain to ourselves the popular dislike of the Jewish nature, even at the present day, we may completely pass over any dealing with this same phenomenon in the field of Religion and Politics. In [80] Religion the Jews have long ceased to be our hated foes,—thanks to all those who within the Christian religion itself have drawn upon themselves the people's hatred. (03) In pure Politics we have never come to actual conflict with the Jews; we have even granted them the erection of a Jerusalemic realm, and in this respect we have rather had to regret that Herr v. Rothschild was too keen-witted to make himself King of the Jews, preferring, as is well known, to remain "the Jew of the Kings." It is another matter, where politics become a question of Society: here the isolation of the Jews has been held by us a challenge to the exercise of human justice, for just so long as in ourselves the thrust toward social liberation has woken into plainer consciousness. When we strove for emancipation of the Jews, however, we virtually were more the champions of an abstract principle, than of a concrete case: just as all our Liberalism was a not very lucid mental sport (04)—since we went for freedom of the Folk without knowledge of that Folk itself, nay, with a dislike of any genuine contact with it—so our eagerness to level up the rights of Jews was far rather stimulated by a general idea, than by any real sympathy; for, with all our speaking and writing in favour of the Jews' emancipation, we always felt instinctively repelled by any actual, operative contact with them.

Here, then, we touch the point that brings us closer to our main inquiry: we have to explain to ourselves the *involuntary repulsion* possessed for us by the nature and personality of the Jews, so as to vindicate that instinctive dislike which we plainly recognise as stronger and more overpowering than our conscious zeal to rid ourselves thereof. Even to-day we only purposely belie ourselves, in this regard, when we think necessary to hold immoral [81] and taboo all open proclamation of our natural repugnance against the Jewish nature. Only in quite the latest times do we seem to have reached an insight, that it is more rational (*vernünftiger*) to rid ourselves of that strenuous self-deception, (05) so as quite soberly instead to view the object of our violent sympathy and bring ourselves to understand a repugnance still abiding with us in spite of all our Liberal bedazzlements. (06) To our astonishment, we perceive that in our Liberal battles (07) we have been floating in the air and fighting clouds, whereas the whole fair soil of material reality has found an appropriator whom our aerial flights have very much amused, no doubt, yet who holds us far too foolish to reward us by relaxing one iota of his usurpation of that material soil. Quite imperceptibly the "Creditor of Kings" has become the King of Creeds, and we really cannot take this monarch's pleading for emancipation as otherwise than uncommonly naïve, seeing that it is much rather *we* who are

shifted into the necessity of fighting for emancipation from the Jews. According to the present constitution of this world, the Jew in truth is already more than emancipated: he rules, and will rule, so long as Money remains the power before which all our doings and our dealings lose their force. That the historical adversity (08) of the Jews and the rapacious ravenness of Christian-German potentates have brought this power within the hands of Israel's sons—this needs no argument of ours to prove. That the impossibility of carrying farther any natural, any 'necessary' and truly beautiful thing, upon the basis of that stage whereat the evolution of our arts has now arrived, and without a total alteration of that basis—that this has also brought the public Art-taste of our time between the busy fingers of the Jew, however, is the matter whose grounds we here [82] have to consider somewhat closer. What their thralls had toiled and moiled to pay the liege-lords of the Roman and the Medieval world, to-day is turned to money by the Jew: who thinks of noticing that the guileless-looking scrap of paper is slimy with the blood of countless generations? What the heroes of the arts, with untold strain consuming life and life, have wrested from the art-fiend of two millennia of misery, to-day the Jew converts into an art-bazaar (*Kunstwaarenwechsel*): who sees it in the mannered bricabrac, that it is glued together by the hallowed brow-sweat of the Genius of two thousand years?—

We have no need to first substantiate the be-Jeweing of modern art; it springs to the eye, and thrusts upon the senses, of itself. Much too far afield, again, should we have to fare, did we undertake to explain this phenomenon by a demonstration of the character of our art-history itself. But if emancipation from the yoke of Judaism appears to us the greatest of necessities, we must hold it weighty above all to prove our forces for this war of liberation. Now we shall never win these forces from an abstract definition of that phenomenon *per se*, but only from an accurate acquaintance with the nature of that involuntary feeling of ours which utters itself as an instinctive repugnance against the Jew's prime essence. Through it, through this unconquerable feeling—if we avow it quite without ado—must there become plain to us *what* we hate in that essence; what we then know definitely, we can make head against; nay, through his very laying bare, may we even hope to rout the demon from the field, whereon he has only been able to maintain his stand beneath the shelter of a twilight darkness—a darkness we good-natured Humanists ourselves have cast upon him, to make his look less loathly.



The Jew—who, as everyone knows, has a God all to himself—in ordinary life strikes us primarily by his outward [83] appearance, which, no matter to what European nationality we belong, has something disagreeably (09) foreign to that nationality: instinctively we wish to have nothing in common with a man who looks like that. This must heretofore have passed as a misfortune for the Jew: in more recent times, however, we perceive that in the midst of this misfortune he feels entirely well; after all his successes, he needs must deem his difference from us a pure distinction. Passing over the moral side, in the effect of this in itself unpleasant freak of Nature, and coming to its bearings upon Art, we here will merely observe that to us this exterior can never be thinkable as a subject for the art of re-presentation: if plastic art wants to present us with a Jew, it mostly takes its model from sheer phantasy, with a prudent ennobling, or entire omission, of just everything that characterises for us in common life the Jew's appearance. But the Jew never wanders on to the theatric boards: the exceptions are so rare and special, that they only confirm the general rule. We can conceive no representation of an antique or modern stage-character by a Jew, be it as hero or lover, without feeling instinctively the incongruity of such a notion. (10) This is of great weight: a man whose

appearance we must hold unfitted for artistic treatment—not merely in this or that personality, but according to his kind in general—neither can we hold him [84] capable of any sort of artistic utterance of his (11) [inner] essence.

By far more weighty, nay, of quite decisive weight for our inquiry, is the effect the Jew produces on us through his *speech*; and this is the essential point at which to sound the Jewish influence upon Music. (12) —The Jew speaks the language of the nation in whose midst he dwells from generation to generation, but he speaks it always as an alien. As it lies beyond our present scope to occupy ourselves with the cause of this phenomenon, too, we may equally abstain from an arraignment of Christian Civilisation for having kept the Jew in violent severance from it, as on the other hand, in touching the sequelae of that severance we can scarcely propose to make the Jews the answerable party. (13) Our only object, here, is to throw light on the aesthetic character of the said results.—In the first place, then, the general circumstance that the Jew talks the modern European languages merely as learnt, and not as mother tongues, must necessarily debar him from all capability of therein expressing himself idiomatically, independently, and conformably to his nature. (14) A language, with its expression and its evolution, is not the work of scattered units, but of an historical community: only he who has unconsciously grown up within the bond of this community, takes also any share in its creations. But the Jew has stood outside the pale of any such community, stood solitarily with his Jehova in a splintered, soilless stock, to which all self-sprung evolution must stay denied, just as even the peculiar (Hebraic) language of that stock has been preserved for him merely as a thing defunct. Now, to make poetry in a foreign tongue has hitherto been impossible, even to geniuses of highest rank. Our whole European art and civilisation, however, have remained to the Jew a foreign tongue; for, just as he has taken no part in the evolution [85] of the one, so has he taken none in that of the other; but at most the homeless wight has been a cold, nay more, a hostile looker-on. In this Speech, this Art, the Jew can only after-speak and after-patch—not truly make a poem of his words, an artwork of his doings.

In particular does the purely physical aspect of the Jewish mode of speech repel us. Throughout an intercourse of two millennia with European nations, Culture has not succeeded in breaking the remarkable stubbornness of the Jewish *naturel* as regards the peculiarities of Semitic pronunciation. The first thing that strikes our ear as quite outlandish and unpleasant, in the Jew's production of the voice-sounds, is a creaking, squeaking, buzzing snuffle (15) : add thereto an employment of words in a sense quite foreign to our nation's tongue, and an arbitrary twisting of the structure of our phrases—and this mode of speaking acquires at once the character of an intolerably jumbled blabber (*eines unertraglich verwirrten Geplappers*); so that when we hear this Jewish talk, our attention dwells involuntarily on its repulsive *how*, rather than on any meaning of its intrinsic *what*. How exceptionally weighty is this circumstance, particularly for explaining the impression made on us by the music-works of modern Jews, must be recognised and borne in mind before all else. If we hear a Jew speak, we are unconsciously offended by the entire want of purely-human expression in his discourse: the cold indifference of its peculiar "blubber" ("*Gelabber*") never by any chance rises to the ardour of a higher, heartfelt passion. If, on the other hand, we find *ourselves* driven to this more heated expression, in converse with a Jew, he will always shuffle off, since he is incapable of replying in kind. Never does the Jew excite himself in mutual interchange of feelings with us, but—so far as we are concerned—only in the altogether special egoistic interest of his vanity or profit; a thing which, coupled with the wry expression of his daily mode of speech, always gives to such excitement a tinge of the ridiculous, and may rouse [86] anything you please in us, only not sympathy with the interests of the speaker. Though we well may deem it thinkable that in intercourse with one another, and particularly where domestic life brings purely-human feelings to an outburst, even the Jews may be able



to give expression to their emotions in a manner effective enough among themselves: yet this cannot come within our present purview, since we here are listening to the Jew who, in the intercourse of life and art, expressly speaks *to us*.

Now, if the aforesaid qualities of his dialect make the Jew almost (16) incapable of giving artistic enunciation to his feelings and beholdings through *talk*, for such an enunciation through *song* his aptitude must needs be infinitely smaller. Song is just Talk aroused to highest passion: Music is the speech of Passion. All that worked repellently upon us in his outward appearance and his speech, makes us take to our heels at last in his Song, providing we are not held prisoners by the very ridicule of this phenomenon. Very naturally, in Song—the vividest and most indisputable expression of the personal emotional-being—the peculiarity of the Jewish nature attains for us its climax of distastefulness; and on any natural hypothesis, we might hold the Jew adapted for every sphere of art, excepting that whose basis lies in Song.

The Jews' sense of Beholding has never been of such a kind as to let *plastic* artists arise among them: from ever have their eyes been busied with far more practical affairs, than beauty and the spiritual substance of the world of forms. We know nothing of a Jewish architect or sculptor in our times, (17) so far as I am aware: whether recent painters of Jewish descent have really created (*wirklich geschaffen haben*) in their art, I must leave to connoisseurs to judge; presumably, however, these artists occupy no other standing toward their art, than that of modern [87] Jewish composers toward Music—to whose plainer investigation we now will turn.

The Jew, who is innately incapable of enouncing himself to us artistically through either his outward appearance or his speech, and least of all through his singing. has nevertheless been able in the widest-spread of modern art-varieties, to wit in Music, to reach the rulership of public taste.—To explain to ourselves this phenomenon, let us first consider *how* it grew possible to the Jew to become a musician.—

From that turning-point in our social evolution where Money, with less and less disguise, was raised to the virtual patent of nobility, the Jews—to whom money-making without actual labour, i.e. Usury, had been left as their only trade—the Jews not merely could no longer be denied the diploma of a new society that needed naught but gold, but they brought it with them in their pockets. Wherefore our modern Culture, accessible to no one but the well-to-do, remained the less a closed book to them, as it had sunk into a venal article of Luxury. Henceforward, then, the *cultured Jew* appears in our Society; his distinction from the uncultured, the common Jew, we now have closely to observe. The cultured Jew has taken the most indicable pains to strip off all the obvious tokens of his lower co-religionists: in many a case he has even held it wise to make a Christian baptism wash away the traces of his origin. This zeal, however, has never got so far as to let him reap the hoped-for fruits: it has conducted only to his utter isolation, and to making him the most heartless of all human beings; to such a pitch, that we have been bound to lose even our earlier sympathy for the tragic history of his stock. His connexion with the former comrades in his suffering, which he

arrogantly tore asunder, it has stayed impossible for him to replace by a new connexion with that society whereto he has soared up. He stands in correlation with none but those who need his [88] money: and never yet has money thriven to the point of knitting a goodly bond 'twixt man and man. Alien and apathetic stands the educated Jew in midst of a society he does not understand, with whose tastes and aspirations he does not sympathise, whose history and evolution have always been indifferent to him. In such a situation have we seen the Jews give birth to Thinkers: the Thinker is the backward-looking poet; but the true Poet is the foretelling Prophet. For such a prophet-charge can naught equip, save the deepest, the most heartfelt sympathy with a great, a like-endeavouring Community—to whose unconscious thoughts the Poet gives exponent voice. Completely shut from this community, by the very nature of his situation; entirely torn from all connexion with his native stock—to the genteeler Jew his learnt and payed-for culture could only seem a luxury, since at bottom he knew not what to be about with it.

Now, our modern arts had likewise become a portion of this culture, and among them more particularly that art which is just the very easiest to learn—the art of *music*, and indeed *that Music* which, severed from her sister arts, had been lifted by the force and stress of grandest geniuses to a stage in her universal faculty of Expression where either, in new conjunction with the other arts, she might speak aloud the most sublime, or, in persistent separation from them, she could also speak at will the deepest bathos of the trivial. Naturally, *what* the cultured Jew had to speak, in his aforesaid situation, could be nothing but the trivial and indifferent, because his whole artistic bent was in sooth a mere luxurious, needless thing. Exactly as his whim inspired, or some interest lying outside Art, could he utter himself now thus, and now otherwise; for never was he driven to speak out a definite, a real and necessary thing, but he just merely wanted to speak, no matter what (18); so that, naturally, the *how* was the only 'moment' [89] left for him to care for. At present no art affords such plenteous possibility of talking in it without saying any real thing, as that of Music, since the greatest geniuses have already said whatever there was to say in it as an absolute separate-art. (19) When this had once been spoken out, there was nothing left but to babble after; and indeed with quite distressing accuracy and deceptive likeness, just as parrots reel off human words and phrases, but also with just as little real feeling and expression as these foolish birds. Only, in the case of our Jewish music-makers this mimicked speech presents one marked peculiarity—that of the Jewish style of talk in general, which we have more minutely characterised above.

Although the peculiarities of the Jewish mode of speaking and singing come out the most glaringly in the commoner class of Jew, who has remained faithful to his fathers' stock, and though the cultured son of Jewry takes untold pains to strip them off, nevertheless they shew an impertinent obstinacy in cleaving to him. Explain this mishap by physiology as we may, yet it also has its reason in the aforesaid social situation of the educated Jew. However much our Luxury-art may float in wellnigh nothing but the aether of our self-willed Phantasy, still it keeps below one fibre of connexion with its natural soil, with the genuine spirit of the Folk. The true poet, no matter in what branch of art, still gains his stimulus from nothing but a faithful, loving contemplation of instinctive Life, of that life which only greets his sight amid the Folk. Now, where is the cultured Jew to find this Folk? Not, surely, on the soil of that Society in which he plays his artist-rôle? If he has any connexion at all with this Society, it [90] is merely with that offshoot of it, entirely loosened from the real, the healthy stem; but this connexion is an entirely loveless, and this lovelessness must ever become more obvious to him, if for sake of food-stuff for his art he clambers down to that Society's foundations: not only does he here find everything more strange and unintelligible, but the instinctive ill-will

of the Folk confronts him here in all its wounding nakedness, since—unlike its fellow in the richer classes—it here is neither weakened down nor broken by reckonings of advantage and regard for certain mutual interests. Thrust back with contumely from any contact with this Folk, and in any case completely powerless to seize its spirit, the cultured Jew sees himself driven to the taproot of his native stem, where at least an understanding would come by all means easier to him. Willy-nilly he must draw his water from this well; yet only a *How*, and not a *What*, rewards his pains. The Jew has never had an Art of his own, hence never a Life of art-enabling import (*ein Leben von kunstfähigem Gehalte*): an import, a universally applicable, a human import, not even to-day does it offer to the searcher, but merely a peculiar method of expression—and that, the method we have characterised above. Now the only musical expression offered to the Jew tone-setter by his native Folk, is the ceremonial music of their Jehova-rites: the Synagogue is the solitary fountain whence the Jew can draw art-motives at once popular and *intelligible to himself*. However sublime and noble we may be minded to picture to ourselves this musical Service of God in its pristine purity, all the more plainly must we perceive that that purity has been most terribly sullied before it came down to us: here for thousands of years has nothing unfolded itself through an inner life-fill, but, just as with Judaism at large, everything has kept its fixity of form and substance. But a form which is never quickened through renewal of its substance, must fall to pieces in the end; an expression whose content has long-since ceased to be the breath of Feeling, grows senseless and distorted. Who has not had occasion [91] to convince himself of the travesty of a divine service of song, presented in a real Folk-synagogue? Who has not been seized with a feeling of the greatest revulsion, of horror mingled with the absurd, at hearing that sense-and-sound-confounding gurgle, jodel and cackle, which no intentional caricature can make more repugnant than as offered here in full, in naïve seriousness? In latter days, indeed, the spirit of reform has shewn its stir within this singing, too, by an attempted restoration of the older purity: but, of its very nature, what here has happened on the part of the higher, the reflective Jewish intellect, is just a fruitless effort from Above, which can never strike Below to such a point that the cultured Jew—who precisely for his art-needs seeks the genuine fount of Life amid the Folk— may be greeted by the mirror of his intellectual efforts in that fount itself. He seeks for the Instinctive, and not the Reflected, since the latter is *his* product; and all the Instinctive he can light on, is just that out-of-joint expression.

If this going back to the Folk-source is as unpurposed with the cultured Jew, as unconsciously enjoined upon him by Necessity and the nature of the thing, as with every artist: with just as little conscious aim, and therefore with an insuperable domination of his whole field of view, does the hence-derived impression carry itself across into his art - productions. Those (20) rhythms and melismi of the Synagogue-song usurp his musical fancy in exactly the same way as the instinctive possession of the strains and rhythms of our Folksong and Folkdance made out the virtual (21) shaping-force of the creators of our art-music, both vocal and instrumental. To the musical perceptive-faculty (22) of the cultured Jew there is therefore nothing seizable in all the ample circle of our music, either popular or artistic, but that which flatters his general sense of the intelligible: intelligible, however, and so intelligible that he may use it for his art, is merely That which in any degree approaches [92] a resemblance to the said peculiarity of Jewish music. In listening to either our naïve or our consciously artistic musical doings, however, were the Jew to try to probe their heart and living sinews, he would find here really not one whit of likeness to *his* musical nature; and the utter strangeness of this phenomenon must scare him back so far, that he could never pluck up nerve again to mingle in our art-creating. Yet his whole position in our midst never tempts the Jew to so intimate a glimpse into our essence: wherefore, either intentionally (provided he recognises this position of his towards us) or instinctively (if he is incapable of understanding us at all), he merely listens to the barest surface of our art, but not to its life-bestowing inner

organism; and through this apathetic listening alone, can he trace external similarities with the only thing intelligible to his power of view, peculiar to his special nature. To him, therefore, the most external accidents on our domain of musical life and art must pass for its very essence; and therefore, when as artist he reflects them back upon us, his adaptations needs must seem to us outlandish, odd, indifferent, cold, unnatural and awry; so that Judaic works of music often produce on us the impression as though a poem of Goethe's, for instance, were being rendered in the Jewish jargon.

Just as words and constructions are hurled together in this jargon with wondrous inexpressiveness, so does the Jew musician hurl together the diverse forms and styles of every age and every master. Packed side by side, we find the formal idiosyncrasies of all the schools, in motleyest chaos. As in these productions the sole concern is Talking at all hazards, and not the Object which might make that talk worth doing, so this clatter can only be made at all inciting to the ear by its offering at each instant a new summons to attention, through a change of outer expressional means. Inner agitation, genuine passion, each finds its own peculiar language at the instant when, struggling for an understanding, it girds itself for utterance: the Jew, [93] already characterised by us in this regard, has no true passion (*Leidenschaft*), and least of all a passion that might thrust him on to art-creation. But where this passion is not forthcoming, *there* neither is any calm (*Ruhe*): true, noble Calm is nothing else than Passion mollified through Resignation. (23) Where the calm has not been ushered in by passion, we perceive naught but sluggishness (*Trägheit*): the opposite of sluggishness, however, is nothing but that prickling unrest which we observe in Jewish music-works from one end to the other, saving where it makes place for that soulless, feelingless inertia. What issues from the Jews' attempts at making Art, must necessarily therefore bear the attributes of coldness and indifference, even to triviality and absurdity; and in the history of Modern Music we can but class the Judaic period as that of final unproductivity, of stability gone to ruin.

By what example will this all grow clearer to us—ay, wellnigh what other single case could make us so alive to it, as the works of a musician of Jewish birth whom Nature had endowed with specific musical gifts as very few before him? All that offered itself to our gaze, in the inquiry into our antipathy against the Jewish nature; all the contradictoriness of this nature, both in itself and as touching us; all its inability, while outside our footing, to have intercourse with us upon that footing, nay, even to form a wish to further develop the things which had sprung from out our soil: all these are intensified to a positively tragic conflict in the nature, life, and art-career of the early-taken FELIX MENDELSSOHN BARTHOLDY. He has shewn us that a Jew may have the amplest store of specific talents, may own the finest and most varied culture, the highest and the tenderest sense of honour—yet without all these pre-eminences helping him, were it but one single time, to call [94] forth in us that deep, that heart-searching effect which we await from Art (24) because we know her capable thereof, because we have felt it many a time and oft, so soon as once a hero of our art has, so to say, but opened his mouth to speak to us. To professional critics, who haply have reached a like consciousness with ourselves hereon, it may be left to prove by specimens of Mendelssohn's art-products our statement of this indubitably certain thing; by way of illustrating our general impression, let us here be content with the fact that, in hearing a tone-piece of this composer's, we have only been able to feel engrossed where nothing beyond our more or less amusement-craving Phantasy was roused through the presentment, stringing-together and entanglement of the most elegant, the smoothest and most polished figures—as in the

kaleidoscope's changeful play of form and colour (25) —but never where those figures were meant to take the shape of deep and stalwart feelings of the human heart. (26) In this latter event Mendelssohn lost even all *formal* productive-faculty; wherefore in particular where he made for Drama, as in the Oratorio, he was obliged quite openly to snatch at every formal detail that had served as characteristic token of the individuality of this or that forerunner whom he chose out for his model. It is further significant of this procedure, that he gave the preference to our old master BACH, as special pattern for his inexpressive modern tongue to copy. Bach's musical speech was formed at a period of our history when Music's universal tongue was still striving for the faculty of more individual, more unequivocal Expression: pure formalism and pedantry still clung so strongly to her, that it was first through the [95] gigantic force of Bach's own genius that her purely human accents (*Ausdruck*) broke themselves a vent. The speech of Bach stands toward that of Mozart, and finally of Beethoven, in the relation of the Egyptian Sphinx to the Greek statue of a Man: as the human visage of the Sphinx is in the act of striving outward from the animal body, so strives Bach's noble human head from out the periwig. It is only another evidence of the inconceivably witless confusion of our luxurious music-taste of nowadays, that we can let Bach's language be spoken to us at the selfsame time as that of Beethoven, and flatter ourselves that there is merely an individual difference of form between them, but nowise a real historic distinction, marking off a period in our culture. The reason, however, is not so far to seek: the speech of Beethoven can be spoken only by a whole, entire, warm-breathed human being; since it was just the speech of a music-man so perfect, that with the force of Necessity he thrust beyond Absolute Music—whose dominion he had measured and fulfilled unto its utmost frontiers—and shewed to us the pathway to the fecundation of every art through Music, as her only salutary broadening. (27) On the other hand, Bach's language can be mimicked, at a pinch, by any musician who thoroughly understands his business, though scarcely in the sense of Bach; because the Formal has still therein the upper hand, and the purely human Expression is not as yet a factor so definitely preponderant that its *What* either can, or must be uttered without conditions, for it still is fully occupied with shaping out the *How*. The washiness and whimsicality of our present musical style has been, if not exactly brought about, yet pushed to its utmost pitch by Mendelssohn's endeavour to speak out a vague, an almost nugatory Content as interestingly and spiritedly as possible. Whereas Beethoven, the last in the chain of our true music-heroes, [96] strove with highest longing, and wonder-working faculty, (28) for the clearest, certainest Expression of an unsayable Content through a sharp-cut, plastic shaping of his tone-pictures: Mendelssohn, on the contrary, reduces these achievements to vague, fantastic shadow-forms, midst whose indefinite shimmer our freakish fancy is indeed aroused, but our inner, purely-human yearning for distinct artistic sight is hardly touched with even the merest hope of a fulfilment. Only where an oppressive feeling of this incapacity seems to master the composer's mood, and drive him to express a soft and mournful resignation, has Mendelssohn the power to shew himself characteristic—characteristic in the subjective sense of a gentle (29) individuality that confesses an impossibility in view of its own powerlessness. This, as we have said, is the tragic trait in Mendelssohn's life-history; and if in the domain of Art we are to give our sympathy to the sheer personality, we can scarcely deny a large measure thereof to Mendelssohn, even though the force of that sympathy be weakened by the reflection that the Tragic, in Mendelssohn's situation, hung rather over him than came to actual, sore and cleansing consciousness.

A like sympathy, however, can no other Jew composer rouse in us. A far-famed Jewish tone-setter of our day has addressed himself and products to a section of our public whose



total confusion of musical taste was less to be first caused by him, than worked out to his profit. The public of our Opera-theatre of nowadays has for long been gradually led aside from those claims which rightly should be addressed, not only to the Dramatic Artwork, but in general to every work of healthy taste. (30) The places in our halls of entertainment are mostly filled by nothing but that section of our citizen society whose only ground for change of occupation is utter 'boredom' (*Langeweile*): the [97] disease of boredom, however, is not remediable by sips of Art; for it can never be distracted of set purpose, but merely duped into another form of boredom. Now, the catering for this deception that famous opera-composer has made the task of his artistic life. (31) There is no object in more closely designating the artistic means he has expended on the reaching of this life's-aim: enough that, as we may see by the result, he knew completely how to dupe; and more particularly by taking that jargon which we have already characterised, and palming it upon his ennuyed audience as the modern-piquant utterance of all the trivialities which so often had been set before them in all their natural foolishness. That this composer took also thought for thrilling situations (*Erschütterungen*) and the effective weaving of emotional catastrophes (*Gefühlskatastrophen*), need astonish none who know how necessarily this sort of thing is wished by those whose time hangs heavily upon their hands; nor need any wonder that in *this* his aim succeeded too, if they but will ponder well the reasons why, in such conditions, (32) the whole was bound to prosper with him. In fact, this composer pushes his deception so far, that he ends by deceiving himself, and perchance as purposely as he deceives his bored admirers. We believe, indeed, that he honestly would like to turn out artworks, and yet is well aware he cannot: to extricate himself from this painful conflict between Will and Can, he writes operas for Paris, and sends them touring round the world—the surest means, to-day, of earning oneself an art-renown albeit not an artist. Under the burden of this self-deception, which may not be so toilless [98] as one might think, (33) he, too, appears to us wellnigh in a tragic light: yet the purely personal element of wounded vanity turns the thing into a tragi-comedy, just as in general the un-inspiring, the truly laughable, is the characteristic mark whereby this famed composer shews his Jewhood in his music.—

From a closer survey of the instances adduced above—which we have learnt to grasp by getting to the bottom of our indomitable objection to the Jewish nature—there more especially results for us a proof of the *ineptitude of the present musical epoch*. Had the two aforesaid Jew composers (34) in truth helped Music into riper bloom, then we should merely have had to admit that our tarrying behind them rested on some organic debility that had taken sudden hold of us: but not so is the case; on the contrary, as compared with bygone epochs, the specific musical powers of nowadays have rather increased than diminished. The incapacity lies in the spirit of our Art itself, which is longing for another life than the artificial one now toilsomely upheld for it. The incapacity of the musical art-*variety*, itself, is exposed for us in the art-doings of Mendelssohn, the uncommonly-gifted specific musician; but the nullity of our whole public system, its utterly un-artistic claims [99] and nature, in the successes of that famous Jewish opera-composer grow clear for any one to see. These are the weighty points that have now to draw towards themselves the whole attention of everyone who means honestly by Art: here is what we have to ask ourselves, to scrutinise, to bring to plainest understanding. Whoever shirks this toil, whoever turns his back upon this scrutiny—either since no Need impels him to it, or because he waives a lesson that possibly might drive him from the lazy groove of mindless, feelingless routine—even him we now include in that same category, of "Judaism in Music." (35) The Jews could never take possession of this art, until *that* was to be exposed in it which they now demonstrably have brought to light—its inner incapacity for life. So long as the separate art of Music had a real organic life-need in it, down to the epochs of Mozart and Beethoven, there was nowhere to be found a Jew composer: it was impossible for an element entirely foreign to that living



organism to take part in the formative stages of that life. Only when a body's inner death is manifest, do outside elements win the power of lodgment in it—yet merely to destroy it. Then indeed that body's flesh dissolves into a swarming colony of insect-life: but who, in looking on that body's self would hold it still for living? The spirit, that is: the *life*, has fled from out that body, has sped to kindred other bodies; and this is all that makes out Life. In genuine Life alone can we, too, find again the ghost of Art, and not within its worm-befretted carcase.—

I said above, the Jews had brought forth no true poet. We here must give a moment's mention, then, to HEINRICH HEINE. At the time when Goethe and Schiller sang among us, we certainly know nothing of a poetising Jew: at the time, however, when our poetry became a lie, when every possible thing might flourish from the wholly unpoetic [100] element of our life, but no true poet—then was it the office of a highly-gifted poet-Jew to bare with fascinating taunts that lie, that bottomless aridity and jesuitical hypocrisy of our Versifying which still would give itself the airs of true poesis. His famous musical congeners, too, he mercilessly lashed for their pretence to pass as artists; no make-believe could hold its ground before him: by the remorseless demon of denial of all that seemed worth denying was he driven on without a rest, (36) through all the mirage of our modern self-deception, till he reached the point where in turn he duped himself into a poet, and was rewarded by his versified lies being set to music by our own composers.—He was the conscience of Judaism, just as Judaism is the evil conscience of our modern Civilisation.

Yet another Jew have we to name, who appeared among us as a writer. From out his isolation as a Jew, he came among us seeking for redemption: he found it not, and had to learn that only *with our redemption, too, into genuine Manhood*, would he ever find it. To become Man at once with us, however, means firstly for the Jew as much as ceasing to be Jew. And this had BÖRNE done. Yet Börne, of all others, teaches us that this redemption can not be reached in ease and cold, indifferent complacence, but costs—as cost it must for us—sweat, anguish, want, and all the dregs of suffering and sorrow. Without once looking back, take ye your part in this regenerative work of deliverance through self-annulment (37); then are we one and un-dissevered! But bethink ye, that one only thing can redeem you from the burden of your curse: the redemption of Ahasuerus—*Going under!*

K. Freigedank

## Notes

### Note 01 on page 5

To the opening of this article the editor of the *Neue Zeitschrift* appended the following footnote: "However faulty her outward conformation, we have always considered it a pre-eminence of Germany's, a result of her great learning, that at least in the scientific sphere she possesses intellectual freedom. This freedom we now lay claim to and rely on, in printing the above essay, desirous that our readers may accept it in this sense. Whether one shares the views expressed therein, or not, the author's breadth of grasp (*Genialität der Anschauung*) will be disputed by no one."—TR.

### Note 02 on page 5

"Erregtheit"—in the *N.Z.* this stood as "Leidenschaftlichkeit," i.e. "passion."—Tr.

### Note 03 on page 5

In the *N.Z.* this clause ran: "thanks to our pietists and Jesuits, who have led the Folk's entire religious hatred toward themselves, so that with *their* eventual downfall Religion, in its present meaning (which has been rather that of Hate, than Love), will presumably have also come to naught!"—TR.

### Note 04 on page 5

"Nicht sehr hellsehendes (in the *N.Z.* "luxuriöses") Geistesspiel."—TR.

### Note 05 on page 5

"Selbsttäuschung"; in the *N.Z.* "Lüge," i.e. "lie."—TR.

### Note 06 on page 5

"Vorspiegelungen"; in the *N.Z.* "Utopien."—TR.

### Note 07 on page 5

In the *N.Z.* "auf gut christlich," i.e. "like good Christians."—TR.

### Note 08 on page 6

"Elend" may also mean "exile." In this sentence the *N.Z.* had "Romo-Christian Germans," in place of "Christian-Germanic potentates."—TR.

### Note 09 on page 6

This adverb (*unangenehm*) was preceded in the *N.Z.* by another, "unüberwindlich," i.e. "unconquerably"; whereas "instinctively" (*unwillkürlich*) was absent from the next clause.—TR.

### Note 10 on page 6

Note to the 1869, and later editions:—"To be sure, our later experiences of the work done

by Jewish actors would afford food for many a dissertation, as to which I here can only give a passing hint. Since the above was written not only have the Jews succeeded in capturing the Stage itself, but even in kidnapping the poet's dramatic progeny; a famous Jewish "character-player" not merely has done away with any representation of the poetic figures bred by Shakespeare, Schiller, and so forth, but substitutes the offspring of his own effect-full and not quite un-tendentiose fancy—a thing which gives one the impression as though the Saviour had been cut out from a painting of the crucifixion, and a demagogic Jew stuck-in instead. On the stage the falsification of our Art has thriven to complete deception; for which reason, also, Shakespeare & Co. are now spoken of merely in the light of their qualified adaptability for the stage. —The Editor" (i.e. Richard Wagner).

[Note 11 on page 7](#)

In the *N.Z.* "purely human" stood in the place of "his."—TR.

[Note 12 on page 7](#)

The clause after the semicolon did not exist in the *N. Z.*

[Note 13 on page 7](#)

This sentence occurred as a footnote in the *N. Z.*, and the next sentence was absent.—TR.

[Note 14 on page 7](#)

In the *N.Z.*, "in any higher sense."—TR.

[Note 15 on page 7](#)

"Ein zischender, schrillender, summsender und murksender Lautausdruck."

[Note 16 on page 8](#)

In the *N.Z.* "durchaus," i.e. "altogether."—TR.

[Note 17 on page 8](#)

"In our times" did not appear in the *N.Z.* article.—TR.

[Note 18 on page 9](#)

In the *N.Z.* "but he just merely wanted to speak" appears to have been skipped by the printer, leaving a hiatus in the sense; moreover, after "no matter what," there occurred: "sheerly to make his existence noticeable."—TR.

[Note 19 on page 9](#)

In the *N.Z.* this sentence was continued by:—"and this was just the proclamation of its perfect *faculty* for the most manifold Expression, but not an *object* of expression in itself (*nicht aber ein Ausdruckswerthes selbst*). When this had happened, and *if one did not propose to express thereby a definite thing*, there was nothing left but to senselessly repeat the talk; and indeed" &c.—Perhaps I may be forgiven for again recalling Wagner's own parrot, from the *Letters to Uhlig* (see Preface to Vol. ii. of the present series).—TR.

[Note 20 on page 10](#)

In the *N.Z.* "wondrous";

[Note 21 on page 10](#)

"unconsciously";

[Note 22 on page 10](#)

"capacity," as also in the preceding sentence where now stands "fancy."—TR.

[Note 23 on page 11](#)

"Die durch Resignation beschwichtigte Leidenschaft." In the *N. Z.* this ran: "der Genuss der Sättigung wahrer und edler Leidenschaft," i.e. "the after-taste of true and noble passion satisfied." The change, or rather advance, of view-point is highly significant.—TR.

[Note 24 on page 11](#)

In the *N.Z.* "from Music."—TR.

[Note 25 on page 12](#)

A slight change has been made by our author in the construction of this sentence, since the time of the *Neue Zeitschrift* article; but, while improving the general 'run,' it has given rise to almost the sole instance of a "false relation" in all his prose.—TR.

[Note 26 on page 12](#)

Note to the 1869, and subsequent editions: "Of the Neo-Judaic system, which has been erected on this attribute of Mendelssohnian music as though in vindication of such artistic falling-off, we shall speak later!"

[Note 27 on page 12](#)

In the *N.Z.* this stood: "he yearned to pass beyond Absolute Music and mount up to a union with her human sister arts, just as the full and finished Man desires to mount to wide Humanity."—TR.

[Note 28 on page 12](#)

"Wunderwirkenden Vermögen" and "eines unsäglichen Inhaltes" did not occur in the *N.Z.*—TR.

[Note 29 on page 12](#)

"Zartsinnigen"—in the *N.Z.* "edlen," i.e. "noble."—TR.

[Note 30 on page 13](#)

The last clause, "but in general" &c., was absent from the *N.Z.* article.—TR.

[Note 31 on page 13](#)

Whoever has observed the shameful indifference and absent-mindedness of a Jewish congregation, throughout the musical performance of Divine Service in the Synagogue, may understand why a Jewish opera-composer feels not at all offended by encountering the same

thing in a theatre-audience, and how he cheerfully can go on labouring for it; for this behaviour, here, must really seem to him less unbecoming than in the house of God.—R. WAGNER.

[Note 32 on page 13](#)

To the *N.Z.* article there here was added a foot-note: "Man so thun!" sagt der Berliner," i.e. "It's to be done!" as they say in Berlin,"—TR.

[Note 33 on page 13](#)

This subsidiary clause did not exist in the *N.Z.*—TR.

[Note 34 on page 13](#)

Characteristic enough is the attitude adopted by the remaining Jew musicians, nay, by the whole of cultured Jewry, toward their two most renowned composers. To the adherents of Mendelssohn, that famous opera-composer is an atrocity: with a keen sense of honour, they feel how much he compromises Jewdom in the eyes of better-trained musicians, and therefore shew no mercy in their judgment. By far more cautiously do that composer's retainers express themselves concerning Mendelssohn, regarding more with envy, than with manifest ill-will, the success he has made in the "more solid" music-world. To a third faction, that of the composition-at-any-price Jews, it is their visible object to avoid all internecine scandal, all self-exposure in general, so that their music-producing may take its even course without occasioning any painful fuss: the by all means undeniable successes of the great opera-composer they let pass as worth some slight attention, allowing there is something in them albeit one can't approve of much or dub it "solid." In sooth, the Jews are far too clever, not to know how their own goods are lined!—R. WAGNER.—In the *Neue Zeitschrift* this note formed part of the body of the text.—TR.

[Note 35 on page 13](#)

In the *N.Z.* this ran: "of Judaism in *Art*, whereto the actual Jews have merely given its most obvious physiognomy, but in nowise its intrinsic meaning. The Jews could never take possession of our art" &c. —TR.

[Note 36 on page 14](#)

In the *N.Z.* there appeared: "in cold, contemptuous complacency," and the sentence ended at the "self-deception"—a footnote being added, as follows: "What he lied himself, our Jews laid bare again by setting it to music." Moreover in place of "seemed" there stood "is," and in the next sentence the predicate "evil" did not occur.—TR.

[Note 37 on page 14](#)

In the *N.Z.* "an diesem selbstvernichtenden, blutigen Kampfe."—TR.

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# *A Communication to my Friends*

By Richard Wagner

Translated by William Ashton Ellis



The Wagner Library

Edition 1.0

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## Contents

About this Title .....	4
Translator's Note .....	5
A Communication to my Friends .....	7
Notes .....	65
Appendix .....	75

## About this Title

### Source

*A Communication to my Friends*  
By Richard Wagner  
Translated by William Ashton Ellis

*The Art-Work of the Future*  
Richard Wagner's Prose Works  
Volume 1  
Pages 269-392  
Published in 1895

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Pages 230-344

### Reading Information

This title contains 46641 words.  
Estimated reading time between 133 and 233 minutes.

Notes are indicated using parenthesis, like (1).  
Page numbers of the original source are indicated  
using square-bracketed parentheses, like [62].

[268]

## Translator's Note

From among the many references to the *Mittheilung*, in the *Correspondence of Wagner and Liszt* and the *Letters to Uhlig, Fischer and Heine*, I select the following:—

To Liszt, Nov. 25, 1850, "When I have finished *Opera and Drama*, I intend, provided I can find a publisher, to bring out my three romantic opera-poems with a Preface introducing them and explaining their genesis."—To Uhlig, (undated; but apparently written in August '51), "My *Mittheilung* was ready soon after you left. The part you do *not* know is actually the most important. This is a decisive work!—The copying took me over a week."—To Uhlig, Nov. 1, '51, "Well!—Härtels have only just read the *Vorwort*, and will not venture to publish it."—To Liszt, Nov. 20, '51, "The timidity of Messrs Härtel, the proposed publishers of the book, has taken exception to certain passages in that Preface to which I did not wish to have any demonstrative intention attributed, and which I might have expressed just as well in a different way; and the appearance of the book has in consequence been much retarded, to my great annoyance...But, although the Preface, written at the beginning of last August, appears in the present circumstances too late, the aforesaid declaration" (as to the intended destiny of *Siegfried*) "will be given to the public without any change."—To Liszt, Dec. 14, '51 "The three operatic poems, with a Communication to my Friends, will appear at the end of this month... The conclusion I have recently altered a little, but in such a manner that everything referring to Weimar remains unchanged"—To Uhlig, Jan. 1, '52, "Yesterday I received the book: 'Three opera poems.'... This Preface was really the most important message I had to deliver, for it was absolutely necessary in completion of *Opera and Drama*... What can I still say, if now my friends do not clearly understand?"—



[269]

## A Communication to my Friends

My motive for this detailed "Communication" took rise in the necessity I felt of explaining the apparent, or real, contradiction offered by the character and form of my hitherto published opera-poems, and of the musical compositions which had sprung therefrom, to the views and principles which I have recently set down at considerable length and laid before the public under the title: "*Opera and Drama*."

This explanation I propose to address to my *Friends*, because I can only hope to be understood (01) by those who feel a need and inclination to understand me; and these, again, can only be my Friends.

As such, however, I cannot consider those who pretend to love me as *artist*, yet deem themselves bound to deny [270] me their sympathy as *man*. (02) If the severance of the Artist from the Man is as brainless an attempt as the divorce of soul from body, and if it be a stable truth that never was an Artist loved nor his art comprehended, unless he was also loved—at least unwittingly—as Man, and with his art his life was also understood: then at the present moment less than ever, and amid the hopeless desolation of our public art-affairs, can an artist of my endeavour be loved, and thus his art be understood, if this understanding and that love which makes it possible be not above all grounded upon sympathy, *i.e.* upon a fellow-pain and fellow-feeling with the veriest human aspect of his life.

Least of all, however, can I deem those to be my friends who, led by impressions gathered from an incomplete acquaintance with my artistic doings, transfer the nebulous uncertainty of this their understanding to the artistic object itself, and ascribe to a peculiarity of the latter that which finds its only origin in their own confusion of mind. The position which these gentry take up against the artist, and seek to fortify by all the aids of toilsome cunning, they dub "impartial criticism," seizing on every opportunity of posing as the only "true Friends" of the artist,—whose actual Foes are therefore those who take their stand beside him in full sympathy.—Our language is so rich in synonymes that, having lost our intuitive understanding of their meaning, we fancy we may use them at our pleasure and draw private lines of demarcation between them. Thus do we employ and separate [271] "Love" and "Friendship." For my own part, with the attainment of years of discretion I have host the power of imagining a Friendship without Love, to say nothing of experiencing such a feeling; and still harder should I find it, to conceive how modern Art-Criticism and Friendship for the artist criticised could possibly be terms of like significance.

The Artist addresses himself to the Feeling, and not to the Understanding. If he be answered in terms of the Understanding, then it is as good as said that he has not been *understood*; and our Criticism is nothing else than the avowal of the misunderstanding (*Geständniss des Unverständniss*) of the artwork, which can only be really understood by the Feeling—admitted, by the formed, and withal not mis-formed feeling. Whosoever feels impelled, then, to bear witness to his lack of understanding of an artwork, should take the precaution to ask himself one simple question, namely: what were the reasons for this lack? True, that he would come back at last to the qualities of the artwork itself; but only after he had cleared up the immediate problem of the physical garb in which it had addressed itself to his feelings. Was this outward garb unable to arouse or pacify his feelings, then he would have, before all else, to endeavour to procure himself an insight into a manifest imperfection of the artwork; namely, into the grounds of a failure of harmony between the purpose of the artist and the nature of those means by which he sought to impart it to the hearer's Feeling. Only two issues could then lie open for his inquiry, namely: whether the means of presentation to the senses were in keeping with the artistic aim, or whether this aim itself was



indeed an artistic one?

We are not here speaking of the works of plastic art, in which the technical execution is part and parcel of the creation of the artist himself; but of the Drama, whose physical garb is merely planned-out by the technique of the poet, but not—as in the case of the plastic artist—realised also by him; since it first gains this realisation [272] at the hands of a specific art, the art of dramatic portrayal. Now if the Feeling of our critical friend has not received a sure and definite impression from the physical show (*sinnliche Erscheinung*), in the present case the province of the art of dramatic portrayal, he ought before all things to perceive that the execution was at any rate inadequate; for the very essence of physical portrayal consists in this, that it should exert a sure and definite impression upon the Feeling. The shortcoming of the means once recognised, it then would only remain for him to inquire, on what the disproportion between aim and means was grounded: whether the aim was of such a character that it was either unworthy of realisation, or generally unfit for realisation by the means of Art,—or whether the disproportion simply rested on the mischaracter of the means which, at a given time and place, and under given circumstances, had proved themselves insufficient to realise a given artistic aim. In the latter case, it would be a question of distinctly understanding an artistic aim which had been only so far realised as the limited technical means of the dramatic poet allowed of. But, from the nature of every *artistic* aim, this understanding cannot be compassed by the sheer unaided Intellect (*mit dem reinen Verstande*), but only by the Feeling; and indeed by that more or less *artistically* cultured feeling which can only be the property of those who find themselves in a predicament more or less akin to that of the artist, who have developed amid conditions of life like his, and who in their inmost being so heartily sympathise with him that they are prepared, under certain circumstances, to adopt that aim as their very own, and are able to take an intimate and weighty share in the struggle for its realisation.

Manifestly these can only be the artist's actual loving Friends, and not the Critics who place themselves at an intentional distance from him. When the 'absolute' Critic looks out upon the Artist from his private peephole, he as good as sees *nothing*; for the only thing he [273] can spy, namely his own likeness on the mirror of his vanity, is—take it reasonably—naught. The imperfection of the artwork's semblance (*Erscheinung*) he by no means traces to its actual source; he discerns it, at the utmost, in the felt imperfection of his impression, and endeavours to vindicate the latter by defects in the artist's aim, which he is the very last person to be in a position to understand. In fact he has already so thoroughly practised himself in this procedure, that he finally gives up the attempt to let himself be influenced by the physical appearance of the artwork; but fancies that, with his acquired professional aptness, he may make shift with the written or printed pages on which the poet or musician—so far as his technical powers permitted—had set down his aim as such transferring to this aim itself so much of his discontent—unconsciously developed in advance—as he desires to base especially thereon. Though this position is that least fitted for the understanding of any work of art, particularly in the Present, yet it is the only one which enables our modern art-critics to maintain their eternal paper life. But even with this my Communication—alas! likewise on paper—I do not address myself to them, so proud in their exalted station: I decline to accept one iota of their critical Friendship. What I might have to tell them, even *about* myself and my artistic doings, they would not deign to understand; for the very good reason that they make it a point of honour to know everything in the world already.

By thus explaining—to whom I do *not* address myself I have *ipso facto* defined those to whom I do. They are those who so far sympathise with me both as man and artist, that they are able to understand my *aims*, even though I cannot bring these before them in the perfect realisation of a fitting physical embodiment because the conditions prior thereto are lacking in

the public art-life of the Present, and I can therefore only appeal to those who think and feel with me,—in short: *to my Friends, who love me.*

Only those Friends, however, who above all feel an [274] interest in the Man within the Artist, are capable of understanding him; and that not only in the Present, which forbids the realisation of any high poetic aim, but at all times and in all places.—The *absolute artwork*, i.e. the artwork which shall neither be bound by time and place, nor portrayed by given men in given circumstances, for the understanding of equally definite human beings,—is an utter nothing, a chimera of æsthetic phantasy. Its sponsors have distilled the idea of Art from the actuality of the artworks of diverse epochs: to give this idea an imagined reality again, since one otherwise could not have kept it handy even in the imagination, they have clothed it around with a conceptual body which, under the firma of the 'absolute artwork,' avowedly or unavowedly makes out the brain-spook of our æsthetic critics. Moreover, as this hypothetical body has taken all the features of its imaginary physical form from the actual attributes of the artworks of the Past, so also is the æsthetic belief therein essentially conservative; and therefore the reduction of this creed to practice, the completest artistic infertility.

Only in a truly inartistic era, could the belief in such an artwork arise within the heads—naturally, not within the hearts—of men. We descry its first historical traces in the era of the Alexandrians, after the demise of Grecian art. To the dogmatic character, however, which this conception has taken-on in our own time,—to the rigour, obstinacy, and persecuting savagery with which it mounts the tribune of our journalistic criticism, it could only grow in an era when Life itself began to face it with fresh-budding germs of the genuine artwork, whose qualities every man of healthy feeling could recognise—though not, for obvious reasons, our art-criticism that lives upon the refuse of the old and outlived. That the new germs, especially in the teeth of such a criticism, cannot as yet reach full unfoldment into flowers, it is, that brings to its speculative energy a constant store of fresh apparent vindication; for, amongst its other abstractions from the artworks of the Past, it has also bottled-off the notion of the actuality of physical show [275] being indispensable to the artwork. Now it observes that this condition, with whose fulfilment itself must certainly cease to exist, is as yet unfulfilled by the germs of a new and living art, and for that very reason it denies them the right to life, or in other words, the right to that impulse which spurs them onward to the blossom of physical manifestment. Herewith the Science of Æsthetics assumes a truly art-murderous activity, and carries it to the pitch of fanatical barbarity; inasmuch as it hugs to its breast the conservative phantasm of an 'absolute art-work' which it can never see realised, for the simple reason that its realisation lies already far behind us in the realm of History, and with reactionary zeal would sacrifice to that the reality of natural beginnings of fresh works of art. That which alone can bring those beginnings to completion, alone those germs to blossom,—That which must consequently throw the æsthetic phantasm of the absolute artwork for ever on the dustheap of the ages, is this: the winning of the *conditions* for the complete and full appearance of the physical artwork amid and from our actual Life.

The absolute, i.e. the *unconditioned* artwork, existing but in Thought, is naturally bound to neither time nor place, nor yet to definite circumstance. It can, for instance, be indited two thousand years ago for the democracy of Athens, and performed to-day before the Prussian Court at Potsdam. In the conception of our aesthetists it must bear exactly the same value, possess exactly the same essential features, no matter whether here or there, to-day or in the days of old; nay, they go farther, and imagine that, like certain sorts of wine, it gains by being cellared, and can to-day and here be first entirely understood aright, because they now forsooth can think into it the democratic public of Athens, and gain an endlessly augmented store of knowledge from the criticism of both this phantom public and the to-be-assumed impression once exercised upon it by the artwork. (03)

[276]

Now however elevating all this may be to the modern intellect, yet for one thing it forms a sorry outlook, namely the factor of artistic enjoyment; that factor naturally not coming into play, since such an enjoyment can only be won through the Feeling, and not through antiquarian Research. Wherefore if, in contradistinction to this arid, critical enjoyment of the ghost of art, we are ever to come to a genuine enjoyment; and if the latter, in keeping with the nature of Art, can only be approached through Feeling: then nothing remains for us but to turn to that Art-work whose attributes present as great a contrast to the fancied monumental artwork as the living Man to the marble Statue. But these attributes consist herein, that it proclaims itself in sharpest definition by Time, by Place, by Circumstance; therefore that it can never come to living and effective show, if it come not to show at a given time, in a given place, and amid given circumstances; in a word, that it strips off every vestige of the *monumental*.

We shall never gain a clear perception of the necessity of these attributes, nor shall we ever advance that claim for the genuine Art-work which such perception must engender, if we do not first arrive at a proper understanding of what we are to connote by the term "Universal-human." Until we come to recognise, and on every hand to demonstrate in practice, that the very essence of the human species consists in the diversity of human Individuality,—instead of placing the essence of the individuality in its conformity to the general characteristics of the species, and consequently sacrificing it to the latter, as Religion and State have hitherto done, (04) —neither shall we comprehend that the fully and wholly Present must once and for [277] all supplant the half or wholly Absent, *the monumental*. In truth, our entire ideas on Art are now so bound up in the "monumental," that we fancy we may only assign a value to works of art in measure as we are justified in imputing to them a monumental character. Though this view may be right as applied to the offspring of frivolous *Mode*, which never can content a human need, still we cannot but see that it is at bottom but a mere reaction of man's nobler feeling of natural shame against the motley utterances of *Mode*, and with the ceasing of the reign of *Mode* itself, must stand confessed of no more right, because of no more reason. An absolute respect for the Monumental is entirely unthinkable: at best, it can only bolster itself upon aesthetic revulsion against an uncontenting Present. But this feeling of revulsion has not the needful strength to take victorious arms against such a Present, so long as it merely shows itself as a passion for the monumental. The utmost which that passion can eventually effect, is the perversion of the Monumental itself into another *Mode*,—such as, to tell the truth, is the case to-day. And thus we never leave the vicious circle from which the noblest impulse of the 'monumental' craze itself is striving to withdraw, regardless that no rational exit is so much as thinkable except by violent withdrawal of their life-conditions both from *Mode* and *Monument*; for even the *Mode* has its full justification in face of the Monumental, to wit as the reaction of the immediate [278] vital impulse of the Present from the coldness of that unfelt sense of beauty which proclaims itself in the passion for the monumental. But the annihilation of the Monumental together with the *Mode* is, in other terms: the entry upon life of the ever freshly present, ever new-related and warm-appealing Art-work; which, again, is as much as to say: the winning of the conditions for this artwork *from Life itself*.

To map out the character of this Art-work: that it could not be the work of our plastic art of nowadays—in so far as that art is compelled to proclaim itself as monumental, and owes its bare existence to our monumental craze,—but could only be *the Drama*; further, that this *Drama* could only find its proper attitude toward Life, when in its every moment it should be completely present with that Life, in its remotest relations so bound therewith and issuing therefrom, in its individuality of time and place and circumstance so characteristic thereof, that for its understanding (*Verständniss*), i.e., for its enjoyment, there should be no longer need of the reflecting Intellect (*Verstand*) but only of the directly seizing Feeling; in fine, that

this understanding could only be brought about when the contents, in themselves strictly emotional, should be presented to the senses in their own most fitting form, to wit, by man's universal-artistic faculty of expression to man's universal-artistic faculty of reception, and not by one severed attribute of that one faculty to another fenced-off attribute of this:—to show all this in general terms, was the object of my essay "The Art-work of the Future." The nature of the difference between this art-work and that *monumental* artwork which hovers in the mist before our critical Æsthetes, lies there exposed for any one who will trouble himself to understand me; and to assert that the thing I there demanded is already extant, could only occur to those for whom true art itself is absolutely non-extant.

Only *one* situation, in which I necessarily found myself herewith, could give to even less prejudiced persons a colour for the cry of "contradictions." It is this: I place *Life* as [279] the first and foremost condition for the appearance of the Artwork, and not indeed its wilful reflection in the thought of the philosopher, but the most real and sentient Life of all, the freest fount of natural Will (*den freiesten Quell der Unwillkürlichkeit*); yet from my standpoint of artist of the Present, I sketch the outlines of the "art-work of the future," and this with reference to a form which only the artistic instinct of that future Life itself can ever shape aright. Against this reproach I not merely advance the plea that I have only suggested the barest *general* features of the Art-work, but I go farther and observe—not alone for my justification, but as essential to the understanding of my aim—that the Artist of the Present must certainly have an influence, determinative in every respect, upon the Art-work of the Future, and that he may well count up this influence in advance, for the very reason that he must grow conscious of it even now. Amid his noblest striving, this consciousness waxes in him from his inward feeling of deepest discontent with the life of the Present: he sees himself pointed to the life of the Future alone, for the realisation of possibilities whose existence has come to his consciousness from the promptings of his own artistic powers.

Now he who cherishes the fatalistic view anent this Life of the Future, that we can conceive absolutely nothing of it, thereby confesses that he has not got so far with his human development as to possess a *reasonable Will* (*vernünftigen Willen*): for the reasonable Will is the willing of the recognised Spontaneous and Natural, and only he who has reached the point of grasping its substance for himself can presuppose this Will as fashioning the Life of the Future. Whosoever does not conceive this fashioning of the Future as a necessary consequence of the reasonable will of the Present, neither has he the shadow of a reasonable conception of the Present or the Past: whosoever possesses no initiative in his own character, neither can he perceive in the Present any initiative for the Future. But the initiative for the Art-work of the Future must come [280] from the Artist of the Present who is in the position to grasp this Present, who takes up its powers and its necessary Will into himself, and withal remains no slave to the Present but shows himself as its moving, willing, and fashioning organ, as a consciously-operating portion of that vital impulse which urges it to reach forth from out itself.

To recognise the Life-stress (*Lebenstrieb*) of the Present, is to be impelled to put it into action. But, with *our* Present, such a setting-in-action cannot possibly proclaim itself in any other way than as a foreshadowing of the Future; and, indeed, of such a Future as shall not depend upon the mechanism of the Past, but, in all its movements free and self-dependent, shall shape from out itself, i.e., from out of Life. This setting-in-action is the annihilation of the Monumental, and, in the case of Art, must take that path which brings it into most immediate contact with ever-present Life; this path is that of *Drama*. The recognition of the necessity of Art's taking this direction, to set it in an ever fruitful interaction with Life, and lift it from the Monumental rut, must naturally also lead the artist to recognise the inability of present public life either to further such an artistic tendency or itself to fall in therewith; for our public life, so far as it comes into any contact with the phenomena of Art, has shaped



itself under the exclusive influence of the Monumental and its counterpoise, the Mode. Wherefore only such artists can work in harmony with present public life as either imitate the monuments of the past, or stamp themselves as servants of the mode: but both are, in very truth, no artists at all. The genuine artist, on the other hand, who moves along the said true path of Drama, cannot but show himself at variance with the spirit of present public life. But just as he recognises the true Artwork to be *that* which can unveil to Life its meaning in fullest physical show, so must he necessarily throw forward to the Future the realisation of his highest artistic wish, as to a life enfranchised from the tyranny of both Monument and Mode; he thus must turn his artist Will straight toward the Art-work of the Future, no matter [281] whether it shall be himself or others to whom it first is granted to set foot upon the soil of that Life of the Future which shall bring both means and consummation.

It is certainly not the professional thinker or critic, who can ever reach this Will; but only the actual artist, to whom, from his artistic standpoint in the life of the Present, thought and criticism have become an indispensable attribute of his general artistic activity. This attribute is necessarily developed in him through the survey of his position towards our public life, which he cannot look on with the cold indifference of a sheer critical experimentalist, but with the warm desire to address himself intelligibly thereto. What this artist most perceives, when he looks upon the public life of the Present, is the utter impossibility of thus addressing himself by means of the mechanical implements of prevailing monumental, or modish art. As I am here dealing with the genuine dramatic poet alone, I allude to the absence of *that* theatric art, and *that* dramatic platform, which would be equal to the task of realising his aim. Our modern theatres are either the tools of monumental criticism—as witness, the Berlin Sophocles, Shakespeare &c.—or of absolute fashion. The possibility of entirely dispensing with these theatres he can only embrace by an abandonment of every, even the remotest, attempt to realise his specific purpose: in other words, he must write dramas for the reading-desk. But since the Drama is just that thing which only in its fullest physical manifestment can ever become a work of Art, he is forced at last to content himself with an *incomplete* realisation of his purpose, so as not to bid entire farewell to his main endeavour.

But the poet's purpose would first be fully realised, when he not only saw it adequately expressed upon the stage, but when this should happen withal at a definite time, under definite conditions, and before a gathering of spectators connected by a definite measure of affinity with himself. A poetic aim which I have conceived with a view to certain relations and surroundings, can only expend its [282] full effect when I impart it amid the same relations and to the same surroundings: then alone can this aim be understood apart from the critic's art, and its human purport be perceived; but not when all these vital conditions shall have vanished, and the relations changed. When, for instance, before the first French Revolution, there existed amongst an entire class of frivolous pleasure-seekers that mood (*Stimmung*) in which a *Don Juan* could be deemed an entirely comprehensible phenomenon, the true expression of that mood; when this type was seized by artists and, in its last process of realisation, embodied by an actor whose whole temperament was as fitted to this personality as was the Italian tongue to give this personality an adequate expression,—the emotional effect of such an exhibition, at such a time, was certainly most definite and unmistakable. But what is the complexion of affairs when, to-day, before the entirely altered Public of the Present composed of members of the Bourse or State-officialdom the same *Don Juan* is played again, by a performer who treats his leisure to beer and skittles and thus escapes all temptation to be unfaithful to his wife; a *Don Juan* transposed, to boot, to the German tongue, and disguised in a translation from which every trace of the Italian linguistic character has been washed completely out? Will not this *Don Juan* be understood at least *quite otherwise* than as the poet meant; and is not this quite other understanding—at best depending on the critic's aid—in truth *no* understanding of the real *Don Juan*? Or can ye, perchance, enjoy a

lovely landscape, when ye look on it in darkest midnight?—

In the haphazard and piecemeal fashion in which the artist now attains the public's ear, he must become the less intelligible, the more the artistic aim from which his work took rise has an actual connexion with Life; for such an aim can never be an accidental, abstract one, conceived amid the generalisms of aesthetic caprice, but only ripens to the force requisite for artistic manifestment when it has borrowed from time and circumstance an individual shape. If the [283] realisation of such an aim can only have its full effect when it comes to manifestment while the relations which awoke it in the poet are still warm with life, and when it is brought before those who were included, consciously or unconsciously, amongst those relations: then the artist who sees his work treated as a monumental one, which may indifferently be given at any convenient time or before any audience one pleases, must be exposed to every conceivable peril of misunderstanding. Then can he cleave alone to those who, by reason of their general sympathy with him, *can understand this situation also, and through their sharing in his endeavour*—which they find made infinitely more difficult by this his situation—make *good to him* in self-creative generosity *the fulness of those furthering conditions* which are denied his artwork by the actual times.—It is therefore to these fellow-feeling and fellow-creating Friends alone, that I feel impelled to here address myself.

To them, whom I have never been able to address in that fashion which alone could satisfy my wish, I have thus, in order to make myself completely understood, to explain the contradictions presented by my hitherto enacted opera-poems to my recently expressed views upon the operatic *genre* in general. I speak chiefly of the *poems*, not only because the bond between my art and my life lies plainest shown in them, but also because I have to call on them to witness that my musical working-out, my method of operatic composition, was conditioned by the very nature of those poems.

The contradictions to which I here allude, do not at all events exist for any one who has accustomed himself to regard a phenomenon with due allowance for its development *in time*. Whosoever in his verdict on a phenomenon takes this development also into consideration, can only light on contradictions when the phenomenon is one divorced from time and place, unnatural, or illogical. But to leave the evolutionary factor completely out of count, to jumble phases separated by time and well-marked [284] difference into one conglomerate mass, is certainly itself an unnatural or illogical mode of viewing things, and such as can only belong to our monumental-historic criticism, not to the healthy criticism of the sympathetic, feeling heart. This uncritical demeanour of our modern Criticism is due, among other things, to the standpoint from which she applies to each and every object the monumental foot-rule. For her, the artists and masterpieces of all ages and nations stand piled beside and on each other, and their differences she treats as merely art-historical, to be computed by the abstract date, not felt as warm and living; for with any truth of feeling, their simultaneous exhibition must needs be utterly insupportable,—about as painful as when we hear Sebastian Bach performed at a concert by side of Beethoven. In my own case, also, certain critics, who pretend to judge my art-doings as a connected whole, have set about their task with this same uncritical heedlessness and lack of Feeling: views on the nature of Art, that I have proclaimed from a standpoint which it took me years of evolution step-by-step to gain, they seize-on for the standard of their verdict, and point them back upon those very compositions from which I started on the natural path of evolution that led me to this standpoint. When, for instance—not from the standpoint of abstract aesthetics, but from that of practical artistic *experience*—I denote the Christian principle as hostile to or incapable of Art (*kunstunfähig*), these critics point me out the contradiction in which I stand towards my *earlier* dramatic works, which undoubtedly are filled with a certain tincture of this principle, so inextricably blended with our modern evolution. But it never occurs to them that, if they would only compare the new-won standpoint with that abandoned, the two are certainly distinct enough yet the one is



organically connected with the other, and that far rather were the new standpoint to be *explained* from the old, than were this relinquished to be judged by that adopted. No,—thinking fit to take my older works as planned and carried out in the light of the newer standpoint, they find in them [285] an inconsequence with, a contradiction to my present views, and derive the clearest proof of the erroneous nature of those views from my own contradiction of them in the practice of my art; and thus, in the most easy-going fashion in the world, they kill two birds with one stone, inasmuch as they brand both my artistic and my theoretic labours as the acts of a critically untrained, confused, and extravagant person. But the product of their own acumen they call true "Criticism," forsooth, and criticism of the "historical" school!—

I have here touched on one essential point of the above-mentioned contradictions. Since I now wish to address my friends alone, I might perhaps have left it wholly unregarded; for in truth no one can be my friend who is not able to detect for himself the phantom nature of this 'contradiction.' This insight, however, is immeasurably hindered by the incomplete and fragmentary fashion in which alone I am able to impart my purpose even to my Friends. One has witnessed a performance of this, another of that, of my dramatic works, as chance might hap; his inclination towards me has sprung from his acquaintance with just this one work; even this one work has come before him in a halting fashion, at the best; he has had to fill up many a gap, by drawing on the store of his own feelings and endeavours, and to gain himself at last a full enjoyment by importing a perchance preponderating share of himself and his hobbies into the object of enjoyment. But here comes the point where we must clearly understand each other: my friends must see the *whole* of me, in order to decide whether they can be *wholly* my friends. I can no longer content myself with half arrangements; I cannot consent that things which were necessities in my development should appear to good natured people as accidentals, which they may twist to my advantage according to their degree of inclination toward me. Thus I face towards *my Friends*, to render them a clear account of my path of evolution, in course of which those apparent contradictions, also, must be thoroughly unriddled.

[286]

I will not, however, attempt to reach this end by the paths of abstract criticism; but will point out my evolutionary career, as faithfully as I can now survey it, by reviewing my works, and the moods of life which called them forth, in series—not tossing everything upon one heap of generalities.



Of my earliest efforts I shall have but a brief report to make: they were the usual attempts of an as yet undeveloped individuality, to find, with advancing adolescence, its bearings toward those general impressions of art which affect us from our youth up. The first artistic Will is nothing else than the contentment of the instinctive impulse to imitate what most attracts us.—

If I seek to gain myself a fairly satisfactory explanation of the artistic faculty, I can only do so by attributing it chiefly to the *force of the receptive faculty* (die Kraft des Empfängnisvermögens). The un-artistic, political temperament may be characterised thus: that from youth up it sets a check upon impressions from outside, which, in the course of the man's development, mounts even to a calculation of the personal profit that his withstanding of the outer world will bring him, to a talent for referring this outer world to himself and never himself to it. On the other hand, the un-political, artistic temperament is marked by this one feature: that its owner gives himself up without reserve to the impressions which move his emotional being (*Empfindungswesen*) to sympathy. The motive power of these

impressions, again, is in direct ratio to the force of the receptive faculty, which latter only gains the strength of an *impulse to impart* (*Mittheilungsdrang*) when they fill it to an ecstatic excess (*entzückenden Übermaase*). (05) The [287] artistic force is conditioned by the measure of this excess, for it is nothing else than the need to make away to others the over-swelling store (*Empfängniss*). This force may operate in either of two directions, according as it has been set in motion by *exclusively* artistic impressions, or finally by impressions *also* harvested from Life itself. That which first decides the *Artist*, as such, is certainly the purely artistic impression; if his receptive force be completely absorbed thereby, so that the impressions to be later received from Life find his faculty already exhausted, then he will develop as an *absolute* artist along the path which we must designate the feminine, i.e. that which embraces alone the feminine element of art. On this we meet all those artists of the day whose deeds make out the catalogue of modern art; it is the world of art close fenced from Life, in which Art plays with herself, drawing sensitively back from every brush with actuality—not merely the actuality of the modern Present, but of Life in general—and treats it as her *absolute* foe; believing that Life in every age and every land is waging war against herself; and therefore that any toil to fashion Life is labour lost, and consequently unbeseeming to the artist. In this class we find above all Painting and, pre-eminently, Music. The case is otherwise, where the previously developed artistic receptive-force has merely formed and focussed the faculty for receiving Life's impressions; where in place of weakening, it has the rather strengthened it—in the highest sense of the term. On the path along which this force evolves, Life itself is at last surveyed in the light of artistic impressions, and the impulse towards imparting which gathers from the overflow of these impressions is the only true *poetic force*. This divorces not itself from Life, but from the standpoint of Art it strives to tender Life a fashioning hand. Let us denote this as the masculine, the generative path of Art.—

[288]

Whosoever may choose to think that with my present Communication I propose to make out for myself a title to the halo of a "Genius," I flatly and distinctly contradict him in advance. On the contrary, I feel prepared to prove that it is a piece of uncommonly vapid and superficial criticism, to ascribe, as we customarily do, the definitive operation of a particular artistic force to a gift (*Befähigung*) which we fancy we have fathomed when we briefly call it "Genius." In other words, we treat this Genius as a pure and absolute windfall, which God or Nature casts hither and thither at pleasure, often without the favoured bounty falling even to the right man: for how frequently we hear, that "So-and-so does not know what to be about with his genius."—I attribute the force which we commonly call Genius solely to the faculty which I have just described at length. That which operates so mightily upon this force that it must finally come forth to full productiveness, we have in truth to regard as the real fashioner and former, as the only furthering condition for that force's efficacy, and this is the Art already evolved outside that separate force, the Art which from the artworks of the ancient and the modern world has shaped itself into a universal Substance, and hand in hand with actual Life, reacts upon the individual with the character of the force that I have elsewhere named the *communistic*. Amid these all-filling and all-fashioning influences of Art and Life, there thus remains to the Individual but one chief thing as his own: namely Force, vital force, force to assimilate the kindred and the needful; and this is precisely that receptive-force which I have denoted above, and which—so soon as it opens its arms in love without reserve—must necessarily, with the attainment of its perfect strength, become at last productive-force.

In epochs when this force, like the force of Individuality in general, has been entirely crushed out by state-discipline, or by the complete fossilisation of the outward forms of Life and Art—as in China, or in Europe towards the end of the Roman world-dominion—neither have those phenomena [289] which we christen by the name of "Genius" ever come to light: a plain proof that they are not cast upon life by the caprice of God or Nature. On the other hand,

these phenomena were just as little known in those ages when both creative forces, the individualistic and the communistic, reacted on each other with all the freedom of unfettered Nature, forever fresh-begetting and ever giving birth anew. These are the so-called prehistoric times, the times when Speech, and Myth, and Art were really born. Then, too, the thing we call Genius was unknown: no one man was a Genius, since all men were it. Only in times like ours, does one know or name these "Geniuses"; the sole name that we can find for those artistic forces which withdraw themselves from the drillground of the State and ruling Dogma, or from the sluggard bolstering-up of tottering forms of Art, to open out new pathways and fill them with their innate life. Yet if we look a little closer, we shall find that these new openings are in no wise arbitrary and private paths, but continuations of a long-since-hewn main causeway; down which, before and with these solitary units, a joint and many-membered force of diverse individualities has poured itself, whose conscious or unconscious instinct has urged it to the abrogation of those forms by fashioning newer moulds of Life and Art. Here, then, we see again a common force, which includes within its coefficients that individual force we have erstwhile foolishly dismissed with the appellation "Genius," and, according to our modern notions thereof, utterly annuls it. By all means, that associate, communistic force is only brought into play through the medium of the individual force; for it is, in truth, naught other than the force of sheer human Individuality in general. The form, however, that comes eventually to manifestment is nowise, as we superficially opine, the work of the solitary individual; but the latter takes his share in the common work—namely that of most palpably revealing, by its realisation, an existing potentiality—only by virtue of that one quality which I have already denoted above, and whose prime energy I wish [290] now to express still more distinctly. An ancient myth which I will now relate—despite the comminations of the historico-political school—shall serve me in the stead of definition.

The fair sea-wife Wachilde had born a son to good King Viking: the three Norns came to greet the child, and dower it with gifts. The first Norn gave it strength of body, the second wisdom; and the grateful father bade them take their seat beside his throne. But the third bestowed upon the child "the ne'er-contented mind that ever broods the New." Viking, aghast at such a gift, refused the youngest Norn his thanks; indignant, she recalled her gift, to punish his ingratitude. The son grew up to strength and mighty stature; and whate'er there was to know, he mastered it betimes. But never did he feel the spur to change or venture; with every turning of his life he was content, and found his home in all. He never loved, and neither did he hate: but, since he hit by chance upon a wife, he, too, begat a son, and sent him to take schooling from the Dwarves, that he might learn what's fit;—this son was that Wieland whom Want was once to teach to forge himself his wings. But the Ancient soon became the sport of fools and children, since every one might plague him, without it moving him to ire; for he was so wise that he knew that fools and children love to scoff and tease. Only when they said light words about his mother, did he kindle into wrath; about *her*, he would bear no jesting. When he came upon the Sound, it never dawned on him to build a boat and ship across it, but he waded plump into the waters, shoulder-high; so the people called him "Wate." One day he wished to get him news about his son, if the child was well-behaved and making progress with his lessons; he found the gateway closed, that led into the cavern of the Dwarves, for they were planning mischief against the child and wished to balk the father's visit. But he felt no care, for he was always satisfied: he laid him down beside the entrance, and fell asleep. His mighty snoring shook [291] a boulder that hung above his head; it hurtled down on him and killed him. Such was the life of the sage and sturdy giant Wate: thereto had Viking's father-care brought up the son of the sweet sea-wife Wachilde; and thus art thou brought up,

to this very day, my German Folk!

That one rejected gift: "the ne'er contented mind, that ever broods the New," the youngest Norn holds out to all of us when we are born, and through it alone might we each, one day, become a "Genius;" (06) but now, in our craze for education, 'tis Chance alone that brings this gift within our grasp,—the accident of *not becoming educated* (erzogen). Secure against the refusal of a father who died beside my cradle, perchance the Norn, so often chased away, stole gently to it, and there bestowed on me her gift; which never left poor untrained me, and made Life and Art and mine own self my only, quite anarchic, educators.—

I may pass over the endless variety of impressions which exercised a lively effect upon me in my earliest youth; they were as diverse in their operation as in their source. Whether, under their influence, I ever appeared to any one an "Infant prodigy" ("*Wunderkind*"), I very much doubt: mechanical dexterities were never drubbed into me, nor did I ever show the slightest bent towards them. To play-acting I felt an inclination, and indulged it in the quiet of my chamber; this was naturally aroused in me by the close connection of my family with the stage. The only remarkable thing about it all, was my repugnance against going to the theatre itself; childish impressions which I had imbibed from the earnestness of classical antiquity, so far as I had made its acquaintance in the 'Gymnasium,' may have inspired me with a certain contempt, nay, an abhorrence of the rouge-and-powdered ways of the Comedian. [292] But my passion for imitation (*Nachahmungseifer*) threw itself with greatest zest into the making of poetry and music,— perhaps because my stepfather, a portrait-painter, died be-times, and thus the pictorial element vanished early from among my nearer models; otherwise I should probably have begun to paint too, although I cannot but remember that the learning of the technique of the pencil soon went against my grain. First I wrote plays; but the acquaintance with Beethoven's Symphonies, which I only made in my fifteenth year, eventually inflamed me with a passion for music also, albeit it had long before this exercised a powerful effect upon me, chiefly through Weber's "*Freischütz*." Amidst my study of music, the poetic 'imitative-impulse' never quite forsook me; it subordinated itself, however, to the musical, for whose contentment I only called it in as aid. Thus I recollect that, incited by the Pastoral Symphony, I set to work on a shepherd-play, its dramatic material being prompted by Goethe's "Lovers' Fancies" ("*Laune der Verliebten*"). I here made no attempt at a preliminary poetic sketch, but wrote verses and music together, thus leaving the situations to take their rise from the music and the verses as I made them.

After many a digression to this side and to that, toward the commencement of my eighteenth year I was confronted by the Revolution of July 1830. The effect upon me was both violent and stimulating; especially keen was my enthusiasm for the struggling, my sorrow for the vanquished, Poles. But these impressions were not as yet of any perceptible formative influence upon my artistic evolution; in that respect they were stimulators only in a general sense. Indeed, so much were my receptive and imitative faculties still under the sole dominion of artistic impressions, that it was precisely at this time that I occupied myself the most exclusively with music, wrote Sonatas, Overtures, and a Symphony, and in fact declined a proffered opera-text on the subject of "Kosziusko." (07) [293] My passion for reproduction, however, soon turned towards the drama—at least, towards the opera. On the model of one of Gozzi's fairy-tales, (08) I wrote for myself an opera-text in verse, "*Die Feen*" ("The Fairies"); the then predominant "Romantic"-Opera of Weber, and also of Marschner—who about this time made his first appearance on the scene, and that at my place of sojourn, Leipzig—determined me to follow in their footsteps. What I turned out for myself was nothing more than barely what I wanted, namely an opera-text; this I set to music according to the impressions made upon me by Weber, Beethoven, and Marschner. (09) However, what took my fancy in the tale of Gozzi, was not merely its adaptability for an opera-text, but the fascination of the 'stuff' itself.—A Fairy, who renounces immortality for the sake of a human



lover, can only become a mortal through the fulfilment of certain hard conditions, the non-compliance wherewith on the part of her earthly swain threatens her with the direst penalties; her lover fails in the test, which consists in this, that however evil and repulsive she may appear to him (in an obligatory metamorphosis) he shall not reject her in his unbelief. In Gozzi's tale the Fairy is now changed into a snake; the remorseful lover frees her from the spell, by kissing the snake: thus he wins her for his wife. I altered this denouement by changing the Fairy into a stone, and then releasing her from the spell by her lover's passionate song; while the lover — instead of being allowed to carry off his bride into his own country—is himself admitted by the Fairy-King to the immortal bliss of Fairyland, together with his fairy wife.—At the present time, this feature seems to me of some importance: though it was only the music and the ordinary traditions of opera, [294] that gave me then the notion, yet there lay already here the germ of a weighty factor in my whole development.—

I had now attained that age when the mind of man, if ever it is to do so, throws itself with greater directness upon the immediate surroundings of life. The fantastic looseness of German student-life, after a turbulent bout or two, had quickly filled me with disgust: *Woman* had begun to dawn on my horizon. The longing which could nowhere still itself in life found an ideal food in the reading of Heinse's "*Ardinghello*," as also the works of Heine, and other members of the then "Young-German" school of literature. The effect of the impressions thus received, expressed itself in my actual life in the only way wherein Nature can utter herself under the pressure of the moral bigotry of our social system. On the other hand, my artistic 'impulse-to-impart' unburdened itself of these life-impressions along the line of the artistic impressions which I received at the like time; among these, the most vivid were those derived from the newer French, and even Italian, operas. As this genre had, in effect, gained the upper hand on the German operatic stage, and figured in its repertoire almost exclusively, so was its influence inevitable upon one who found himself in a life-mood such as that I have referred to as mine at that period; there spoke out in this music, at least for me, all that which I then felt: the joyous throb of life, imprisoned in the makeshift garment of frivolity.—But it was a living personality, that kindled this inclination of mine into an enthusiasm of nobler intent: this was the *Schröder-Devrient*, in a 'star' engagement (*Gastspiel*) on the Leipzig stage. The remotest contact with this extraordinary woman electrified me; for many a long year, down even to the present day, I saw, I heard, I felt her near me, whenever the impulse to artistic production seized me.

The fruit of all these impressions, and all these moods, was an opera: the "*Liebesverbot, or the Novice of Palermo*." I took its subject from Shakespeare's "Measure for [295] Measure." It was Isabella that inspired me: she who leaves her novitiate in the cloister, to plead with a hardhearted Stateholder for mercy to her brother, who, in pursuance of a draconic edict, has been condemned to death for entering on a forbidden, yet Nature-hallowed love-bond with a maiden. Isabella's chaste soul urges on the stony judge such cogent reasons for pardoning the offence, her agitation helps her to paint these reasons in such entrancing warmth of colour, that the stern protector of morals is himself seized with passionate love for the superb woman. This sudden-flaming passion proclaims itself by his promising the pardon of the brother as the price of the lovely sister's favours. Aghast at this proposal, Isabella takes refuge in artifice, to unmask the hypocrite and save her brother. The Stateholder, whom she has vouchsafed a fictitious indulgence, still thinks good to withhold the stipulated pardon, so not to sacrifice his stern judicial conscience to a passing lapse from virtue.—Shakespeare disentangles the resulting situation by means of the public return of the Duke, who had hitherto observed events from under a disguise: his decision is an earnest one, and grounded on the judge's maxim, "measure for measure." I, on the other hand, unloosed the knot without the Prince's aid, by means of a revolution. The scene of action I transferred to the capital of Sicily, in order to bring in the southern heat of blood to help me with my scheme; I also made the

Stateholder, a puritanical German, forbid a projected carnival; while a madcap youngster, in love with Isabella, incites the populace to mask, and keep their weapons ready: "Who will not dance at our behest, Your steel shall pierce him through the breast!" The Stateholder, himself induced by Isabella to come disguised to their rendezvous, is discovered, unmasked, and hooted;—the brother, in the nick of time, is freed by force from the executioner's hands; Isabella renounces her novitiate, and gives her hand to that young leader of the carnival. In full procession, the maskers go forth to meet their home-returning [296] Prince, assured that he will at least not govern them so crookedly as had his deputy. (10)

If one compares this subject with that of the *Feen*, one will see that there was a possibility of my developing along two diametrically opposite lines: to the reverent earnestness (*heiligen Ernste*) of my original promptings there here opposed itself, implanted by impressions gained from Life, a pert fancy for the wild turmoil of the senses, a defiant exuberance of glee which seemed to offer to the former mood a crying contrast. This becomes obvious to myself, when I compare the musical working-out of the two operas. Music always exercised a decisive influence upon my emotional fund (*Empfindungsvermögen*); and indeed this could not well be otherwise, at a period of my evolution when the impressions of Life had not as yet made so sharp and definite an effect upon me, that they could lend me the imperious force of individuality to hold that receptive power to a definite field of outward action. The effect of the impressions produced on me by Life was still of general, and not of individual sort; therefore 'general' music as yet must dominate my individual powers of artistic fashioning. Even in the case of the *Liebesverbot*, the music had exercised a prior sway upon the fashioning and arranging of the subject-matter; and this music was nothing else than the reflex of the influence of modern French and (as concerns the melody) Italian Opera upon my physically-excited receptive faculties. Whosoever should take the pains to compare this composition with that of the *Feen*, would scarcely be able to understand how in so short a time so surprising a reverse of front could have been brought about: the balancing of the two tendencies was to be the work of my further course of evolution as an artist.—

[297]

My path led first to utter frivolity in my views of art; this coincides with my earliest practical contact with the theatre, as Musical-director. (11) The rehearsing and conducting of those loose-limbed French operas which were then the mode, the piquant prurience of their orchestral effects, gave me many a childish thrill of joy when I could set the stew a-frothing right and left from my conductor's desk. In Life, which henceforth meant for me the motley life of the stage, I sought by distraction to content an impulse which, as regards the things of everyday, took the form of a chase after pleasure, and as regards music, of a prickling, sputtering unrest. My *Feen*-composition became utterly indifferent to me, until at last I gave up all idea of getting that work produced. A performance of the *Liebesverbot*, carried out with headstrong obstinacy under the most unfavourable conditions, and completely unintelligibly rendered, caused me much vexation; yet this experience was quite insufficient to cure me of the hightmindedness with which I then set about everything.—The modern requital of modern levity, however, soon knocked at my unready door. I fell in love; married in feverish haste; distressed myself and others with the trials of a poverty-stricken home; and thus fell into that misery whose nature it is to bring thousands upon thousands to the ground.

One strong desire then arose in me, and developed into an all-consuming passion: to force my way out from the paltry squalor of my situation. This desire, however, was busied only in the second line with actual Life; its front rank made towards a brilliant course as Artist. To extricate myself from the petty commerce of the German stage, and straightway try my luck in Paris: this, in a word, was the goal I set before me.—A romance by H. König, "*die Hohe Braut*," had fallen into my hands; everything which I read [298] had only an interest for me when viewed in the light of its adaptability for an operatic subject: in my mood of then, the



reading of this novel attracted me the more, as it soon conjured up in my eyes the vision of a grand-opera in five acts, for Paris. I drafted a complete sketch, and sent it direct to Scribe in Paris, with the prayer that he would work it up for the Grand Opera there, and get me appointed for its composition. Naturally this project ended in smoke.

My home troubles increased; the desire to wrest myself from a humiliating plight now grew into an eager longing to begin something on a grand and inspiring scale, even though it should involve the temporary abandonment of any practical aim. This mood was fed and fostered by my reading Bulwer's "Rienzi." From the misery of modern private-life, whence I could nowhere glean the scantiest stuff for artistic treatment, I was borne away by the picture of a great historico-political event, in lingering on which I needs must find a salutary distraction from cares and conditions that appeared to me as nothing else than absolutely fatal to art. In accordance with my particular artistic bent, however, I still kept more or less to the purely musical, or rather: operatic standpoint. This Rienzi with great thoughts in his head, great feelings in his heart, amid an entourage of coarseness and vulgarity, set all my nerves a-quivering with sympathy and love; yet my plan for an artwork based thereon sprang first from the perception of a purely lyric element in the hero's atmosphere. The "Messengers of Peace," the Church's summons to awake, the Battle-hymns,—these were what impelled me to an *opera*: "Rienzi."

Before I set about the prosecution of my plan, however, much thrust itself into my outward life that distracted me from my inner resolve. I went to Riga, to take up the post of Musical director to a stage-company just formed there. The somewhat more orderly state of affairs, and the manifest desire of the directorate to give at least good performances, prompted me once more to write something for the forces at my disposal. So I began the composition [299] of a comic opera, the libretto for which I had founded on a droll story in the "Thousand and one Nights," although with a complete modernisation of the subject.—Even here, however, my relations with the theatre soon proved a thorn in my side. The thing we understand by the term, "the traffic of the stage" (*Komödiantenwirthschaft*), took no length of time in showing me the depth and breadth of its economy; and my composition, begun with a view to this "traffic," suddenly so revolted me that I threw the whole thing on one side and, as regards the theatre, confined myself more and more to the bare fulfilment of my conducting duties. I thus stood more and more completely aloof from intercourse with the stage *personnel*, and with drew into that inner fortress of my being where the yearning to tear myself loose from everyday relations found both its nurture and its goad.—At this period I made my first acquaintance with the legend of the "Flying Dutchman"; Heine takes occasion to relate it, in speaking of the representation of a play, founded thereon, which he had witnessed—as I believe—at Amsterdam. (12) This subject fascinated me, and made an indelible impression upon my fancy: still, it did not as yet acquire the force needful for its rebirth within me.

To do something grand, to write an opera for whose production only the most exceptional means should suffice—a work, therefore, which I should never feel tempted to bring before the public amid such cramping relations as those which then oppressed me, and the hope of whose eventual production should thus incite me to make every sacrifice in order to extricate myself from those relations,—this is what resolved me to resume and carry out with all my might my former plan for "Rienzi." In the preparation of this text, also, I took no thought for anything but the writing of an effective operatic libretto. The "Grand Opera" with all its scenic and musical display, its sensationalism and massive vehemence, loomed large before [300] me; and not merely to copy it, but with reckless extravagance to outbid it in its every detail, became the object of my artistic ambition.—However, I should be unjust to myself, did I represent this ambition as my only motive for the conception and execution of my *Rienzi*. The stuff really aroused my enthusiasm, and I put nothing into my sketch which had not a direct bearing on the grounds of this enthusiasm. My chief concern was my Rienzi himself;

and only when I felt quite contented with him, did I give rein to the notion of a "grand opera." Nevertheless, from a purely artistic point of view, this "grand opera" was the pair of spectacles through which I unconsciously regarded my *Rienzi*-stuff; nothing in that stuff did I find enthral me, but what could be looked at through these spectacles. True, that I always fixed my gaze upon the stuff itself, and did not keep one eye open for certain ready-made musical effects which I might wish to father on it by hook or crook; only, I saw it in no other light than that of a "five-act-opera," with five brilliant "finales," and filled with hymns, processions, and musical clash of arms. Thus I bestowed no greater care upon the verse and diction than seemed needful for turning out a good, and not a trivial, *opera-text*. I did not set out with the object of writing Duets, Trios, &c.; but they found their own way in, here and there, because I looked upon my subject exclusively through the medium of "Opera." For instance, I by no means hunted about in my stuff for a pretext for a Ballet; but with the eyes of the opera-composer, I perceived in it a self-evident festival that *Rienzi* must give to the People, and at which he would have to exhibit to them, in dumbshow, a drastic scene from their ancient history: this scene being the story of Lucretia and the consequent expulsion of the Tarquins from Rome. (13) Thus in every department of my plan I was certainly ruled [301] by the stuff alone; but on the other hand, I ruled this stuff according to my only chosen pattern, the form of the Grand Opera. My artistic individuality, in its dealings with the impressions of Life, was still entirely under the influence of purely artistic, or rather art-formalistic, mechanically-operating impressions.

I had scarcely finished the composition of the first two Acts of this opera, when my outward affairs at last compelled me to break entirely with my former surroundings. Without being provided with anything like sufficient means, without the smallest prospect, nay, without even the expectation of meeting so much as an acquaintance there, I set out from Riga for Paris. I passed through four weeks of the severest hardship upon the sea, in the course of which we were driven upon the coast of Norway. Here the "flying Dutchman" once more arose before me. From my own plight he won a psychic force; from the storms, the billows, the sailors' shouts and the rock-bound Northern shore, a physiognomy and colour.

Paris, however, washed out this figure for a time.—It is unnecessary to give a detailed account of the impressions which Paris, with its art-life and art-doings, was bound to make upon a man in my condition; their influence will be best recognised in the character of my immediate plans and undertakings.—The half-finished *Rienzi* I laid at first upon one side, and busied myself in every way to make myself known in the world's metropolis. But, for this I lacked the necessary personal qualifications; I had scarcely even learnt the French tongue, instinctively distasteful to me, sufficiently for the most ordinary needs of everyday. Not in the remotest degree did I feel tempted to assimilate the Frenchman's nature, though I flattered myself with the hope that I could appeal to it *in my own way*; I confided in Music, as a cosmopolitan language, to fill up that gulf between my own and the Parisian character which my inner feeling could not be blind to.—When I attended the dazzling performances of the Grand Opera—a thing which did not happen very often—a pleasurable warmth would [302] steal into my brain and kindle the desire, the hope, aye, even the certainty, that I, also, could one day triumph there. This splendour of means, once animated by the fire of an artistic aim, appeared to me the highest summit of Art; and I felt myself nowise incapable of reaching that summit. Beyond this, I call to mind a readiness to warm myself at any of that artworld's *ignes fatui* which showed the least resemblance to my goal: their sickly unsubstantiality was mantled with a glittering show, such as never had I seen before. It was only later, that I became conscious how greatly I deceived myself in this respect, through an almost artificial state of nervous excitement. This gratuitous excitement, mounting glibly to the verge of transport, was nourished, all unawares to myself, by the feeling of my outward lot; which I must have recognised as *completely hopeless*, if I had suddenly acknowledged to myself that

all this artistic tinsel, that made up the world in which I was striving to press forward, was inwardly an object of my deepest loathing. But my outward Want compelled me to hold this admission aloof; and I was able to do it with the ready placability of a man and artist whom an instinctive need of love allows to see in every smiling semblance the object of his search.

In this mood and situation, I was prompted to revert to standpoints I had already travelled past. Prospects were held out to me of getting an opera of lighter genre produced at a theatre of minor rank; I therefore harked back to my *Liebesverbot*, and its translation was commenced. I felt all the more humiliated inwardly by this transaction, as I was forced to put on the outward mask of hope for its success.—In order to gain the graces of the Parisian salon-world through its favourite singers, I composed several French 'romances,' which, after all my efforts to the contrary, were considered too out-of-the-way and difficult to be actually sung.—Out of the depth of my inner discontent, I armed myself against the crushing reaction of this outward art-activity by the hasty sketch, and as hasty composition, of an orchestral piece, which I called an [303] "Overture to Goethe's Faust," but which was in reality intended for the first section of a grand Faust-Symphony.

Owing to the complete failure of all my outer efforts, financial straits at last compelled me to a still deeper degradation of the character of my artistic activity: I declared my willingness to concoct the music for a slangy *vaudeville* at a Boulevard-theatre. But even this step was frustrated by the jealousy of a musical money-grubber. So I had to look on it almost as my salvation, that I obtained the chance of doing violence to myself with the arrangement of melodies from "favourite" operas for the cornet-à-pistons. The time which these arrangements left upon my hands I expended on the completion of the second half of my *Rienzi*, for which I gave up all thoughts of a French translation, looking only toward its adoption by some German Court-Theatre. The last three Acts of this opera were finished, amid the circumstances I have mentioned, in a proportionately brief space of time.

After completing *Rienzi*, and while each day was still occupied by hack-work for the music-publishers, I hit upon a new vent for my pent-up energy. With the Faust-Overture, I had sought this before in 'absolute' music; with the musical completion of an older dramatic plan, the *Rienzi*, I had endeavoured to give due artistic effect, and at the same time bid farewell, to the tendency which first led my steps to Paris, and ahead of which I now saw every opening blocked. That opera once finished, I stood entirely outside the territory of my recent past. I was entering upon a new path, *that of Revolution against our modern Public Art*, with whose traffic I had erstwhile sought to familiarise myself when I rushed to Paris, there to seek its glittering crest.—It was the feeling of the *necessity* of my revolt, that turned me first into a writer. The publisher of the *Gazette Musicale* commissioned me, besides arranging melodies for my daily bread, to write him articles for his paper. To him, it was a matter of indifference *which* I sent: to me, not. Just as I found my deepest humiliation in the one task, I greedily snatched at the [304] other to revenge myself for that humiliation. After a few general articles upon music, I wrote a kind of art-novelette, "*A Pilgrimage to Beethoven*," and followed it up by a sequel, "*The End of a Musician in Paris*." In these I described, in a fictitious garb and with a dash of humour, my personal fate, especially in Paris; excepting in so far as touched the actual death by hunger, which, at any rate, I had been lucky enough to escape. Every line that I wrote was a cry of revolt against the conditions of our modern art: I have been told that this caused much amusement To the handful of true friends, however, who gathered cheerily around me of an evening in the triste retirement of my home, I had herewith passed the word that I had completely broken with every wish and every expectation of success in Paris, and that the young man who had come there with such wishes and expectations in his head was virtually dead and buried. (14)

It was a sorrowful mirth—the mood to which I then was tuned; it bore me the long-since brooding *Flying Dutchman*.—All the irony, all the bitter or humoristic sarcasm which, in a

kindred plight, is all that remains to our literary poets to spur them on to work, I first unburdened in the above-named, and in certain directly subsequent literary effusions; (15) and thus put it so far behind me, for a while, that I was again in a position to follow my inner bent toward real artistic fashioning (*Gestalten*). Seemingly—after what I had gone through, and from the standpoint on which my experiences of life [305] had set me—I should not have been able to do this, if I had devoted myself from youth up to the acquirement of a knack for literary poetry; mayhap I should have trodden in the footsteps of our modern scribes and playwrights, who, under the petty influences of our stereotyped social system, take the field, with every stroke of their prose- or rhyme-trimmed quills, against the mere formal surface of that system, and thus conduct a war like that which General Willisen and his volunteers have lately waged against the Danes; (16) to express myself in the vernacular, I should probably have followed the example of the donkey-driver who beats the bundle in place of the beast :—had I not been blessed with Something higher. This Something was my preoccupation with *music*.

I have recently said quite enough about the nature of music; I will here refer to it simply as the good angel which preserved me as an artist, nay, which really first made me an artist when my inner feeling commenced to revolt, with ever greater resolution, against the whole condition of our modern art. That this revolt did not find its sphere of action outside the realm of Art, did not take the coign of vantage either of the criticising man of letters or the art-denying, socialistically calculating, political mathematician of our day; but that my revolutionary ardour itself awoke in me the stress and power for artistic deeds,—this, as I have said, I owe to Music alone. I have just called it my good angel: this angel was not sent down to me from Heaven; it came to me from out the sweat of centuries of human "Genius." It did not, forsooth, lay the feather-light touch of a sun-steeped [306] hand upon my brow; in the blood-warm night of my stifling heart, it girt itself for action in the world outside.

I cannot conceive the spirit of Music as aught but *Love*. Filled with its hallowed might, and with waxing power of insight into human life, I saw set before me no mere formalism to criticise; but, clean through the formal semblance, the force of sympathy displayed to me its background, the Need-of-Love downtrodden by that loveless formalism. Only he who feels the need of Love, can recognise that need in others: my art-receptive faculty, possessed with Music, gave me the power to recognise this need on every hand, even in that art-world from the shock of contact with whose outer formalism my own capacity for love drew smarting back, and in which I felt my hove-need roused to action by that very smart. Thus I revolted out of sheer love, not out of spite or envy; and thus did I become an *artist*, and not a carping man of letters.

The influence which my sense of music (*musikalisches Empfindungswesen*) exerted on the trend of my artistic labours, especially upon the choice and moulding of the poetic material, I will specify after I have first cleared the way for its understanding by an account of the origin and character of those works to which I gave birth under that influence. I shall therefore pass at once to the said account.—

To the path which I struck with the conception of the *Flying Dutchman* belong the two succeeding dramatic poems, *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin*. I have been reproached as falling *back*, in all three works, upon a path already trodden bald—as the opinion goes—by Meyerbeer in his *Robert the Devil*, and already forsaken by myself in my *Rienzi*: the path, to wit, of "romantic opera." Those who level this charge against me are naturally more concerned with the classification, *Romantic Opera*, than with the *operas* thus conventionally classified as "romantic." Whether I set about my task with the formal intention of [307] constructing "romantic" operas, or did nothing of the kind, will become apparent if I relate in detail the history of the origin of these three works.

The mood in which I adopted the legend of the "Flying Dutchman," I have already stated



in general terms: the adoption (*Empfängniss*) was exactly as old as the mood itself which, at first merely brooding within me and battling against more seductive impressions, at last attained the power of outwardly expressing itself in a cognate work of art.—The figure of the "Flying Dutchman" is a mythical creation of the Folk: a primal trait of human nature speaks out from it with heart-enthraling force. This trait, in its most universal meaning, is the longing after rest from amid the storms of life. In the blithe world of Greece we meet with it in the wanderings of Ulysses and his longing after home, house, hearth and—wife: the attainable, and at last attained reward of the city-loving son of ancient Hellas. The Christian; without a home on earth, embodied this trait in the figure of the "Wandering Jew": for that wanderer, forever doomed to a long-since outlived life, without an aim, without a joy, there bloomed no earthly ransom; death was the sole remaining goal of all his strivings; his only hope, the laying-down of being. At the close of the Middle Ages a new, more active impulse led the nations to fresh *life*: in the world-historical direction its most important result was the bent to voyages of discovery. The sea, in its turn, became the soil of Life; yet no longer the narrow land-locked sea of the Grecian world, but the great ocean that engirdles all the earth. The fetters of the older world were broken; the longing of Ulysses, back to home and hearth and wedded wife, after feeding on the sufferings of the "never-dying Jew" until it became a yearning for Death, had mounted to the craving for a new, an unknown home, invisible as yet, but dimly boded. This vast-spread feature fronts us in the mythos of the "Flying Dutchman"; that seaman's poem from the world-historical age of journeys of discovery. Here we light upon a remarkable mixture, a [308] blend, effected by the spirit of the Folk, of the character of Ulysses with that of the Wandering Jew. The Hollandic mariner, in punishment for his temerity, is condemned by the Devil (here, obviously, the element of Flood and Storm (17)) to do battle with the unresting waves, to all eternity. Like Ahasuerus, he yearns for his sufferings to be ended by Death; the Dutchman, however, may gain this redemption, denied to the undying Jew, at the hands of—a *Woman* who, of very love, shall sacrifice herself for him. The yearning for death thus spurs him on to seek this *Woman*; but she is no longer the home-tending Penelope of Ulysses, as courted in the days of old, but the quintessence of womankind; and yet the still unmanifest, the longed-for, the dreamt-of, the infinitely womanly *Woman*,—let me out with it in one word: *the Woman of the Future*.

This was that "Flying Dutchman" who arose so often from the swamps and billows of my life, and drew me to him with such resistless might; this was the first *Folk-poem* that forced its way into my heart, and called on me as man and artist to point its meaning, and mould it in a work of art.

From here begins my career as *poet*, and my farewell to the mere concoctor of opera-texts. And yet I took no sudden leap. In no wise was I influenced by reflection; for reflection comes only from the mental combination of existing models: whereas I nowhere found the specimens which might have served as beacons on my road. My course was new; it was bidden me by my inner mood (*Stimmung*), and forced upon me by the pressing need to impart this mood to others. In order to enfranchise myself from within outwards, i.e. to address myself to the understanding of like-feeling men, I was driven to strike out for myself as artist, a path as yet not pointed me by any outward [309] experience; and that which drives a man hereto is Necessity deeply felt, incognisable by the practical reason, but overmastering Necessity.

In thus introducing myself to my Friends, as a poet, I almost ought to hesitate before making my bow with a work like the *Flying Dutchman*. In it there is so much as yet inchoate, the joinery of the situations is for the most part so imperfect, the verse and diction so often bare of individual stamp, that our modern playwrights—who construct everything according to a prescribed formula, and, boastful of their formal aptitude, start out to glean that matter which shall best lend itself to handling in the lesson-ed form—will be the first to count my denomination of this "poem" as a piece of impudence that calls for strenuous castigation. My dread of such prospective punishment would weigh less with me than my own scruples as to the poetical form of the *Dutchman*, were it my intention to pose therewith as a fixed and finished entity; on the contrary, I find a private relish in here showing my friends myself in process of 'becoming' (*in meinem Werden*). The form of the poem of the *Flying Dutchman*, however, as that of all my later poems, down even to the minutiae of their musical setting, was dictated to me by the subject-matter alone, insomuch as that had become absorbed into a definite colouring of my life, and in so far as I had gained by practice and experience on my own adopted path any general aptitude for artistic construction.—To the characteristics of such construction I purpose, as said above, to return later on. For the present, having satisfied my wish to indicate the decisive turning-point of my evolutionary career, alike in its formal as in its material bearings, I will return to the history of the origin of my dramatic poems.—

Amid outward circumstances which I have already described elsewhere, (18) I rapidly composed the verse and music for my *Flying Dutchman*. I had withdrawn from [310] Paris into the country, and it was there that I was once more brought into contact with my German home. My *Rienzi* had been at last accepted for production in Dresden. This acceptance, broadly speaking, meant for me an almost amazingly encouraging omen, and withal a friendly greeting from Germany that made my feelings all the warmer for my native home as the worldly blast of Paris was daily freezing me the more. Already, with all my hopes and all my thoughts, I lived in Germany alone. An ardent, yearning patriotism awoke within me, such as I had never dreamt before. This patriotism was free from any political tinge; for I was alive, at any rate, to the fact that political Germany had not the slightest attraction to offer me, as compared with, say, political France. It was the feeling of utter homelessness in Paris, that aroused my yearning for the German home-land; yet this longing was not directed to any old familiar haunt that I must win my way *back* to, but onward to a country pictured in my dreams, an unknown and still-to-be-discovered haven, of which I knew this thing alone: that I should certainly *never* find it here in Paris. It was the longing of my Flying Dutchman for "*das Weib*,"—not, as I have said before, for the wife who waited for Ulysses, but for the redeeming Woman, whose features had never presented themselves to me in any clear-marked outline, but who hovered before my vision as the element of Womanhood in its widest sense. This element here found expression in the idea: one's *Native Home*, i.e. the encirclement by a wide community of kindred and familiar souls; by a community, however, which as yet I knew not in the flesh, which I only learnt to yearn for after I had realised what is generally meant by "home" (19) whereas in my [311] former straitened lot it was the remote and alien that had hovered before me as the redeeming element, and the stress to find it had driven me to Paris. Just as I had been undeceived in Paris, so was I doomed to disappointment in Germany. My Flying Dutchman, sure enough, had not as yet unveiled the *newer* world: *his* Wife could only redeem him by plunging together with him beneath the waves of life.—But to proceed!

After completing the *Flying Dutchman*, although entirely pre-occupied with my return to Germany and with getting together the necessary wherewithal, I was obliged, for very sake of the latter, to betake myself once more to hack-work for the music-sellers. I made



arrangements from Halévy's operas. Yet a new-won pride already saved me from the bitterness with which this humiliation had erstwhile filled me. I kept of good cheer, and corresponded with the home-hand about the advancing preparations for the production of *Rienzi*; while I was further encouraged by the news that my *Flying Dutchman* itself had been accepted for Berlin. Already I lived entirely in the longed-for, now soon to be entered world of Home.—

In this mood, the German Folk's-book (20) of "Tannhäuser" fell into my hands. This wonderful creation of the Folk at once usurped my liveliest emotions: indeed it was now that it first *could* do so. Tannhäuser, however, was by no means a figure completely new to me: I had early made his acquaintance through Tieck's narration. He had then aroused my interest in the same fantastically mystic manner in which Hoffmann's stories had worked upon my young imagination; but this domain of romance had never exercised any influence upon my art-productive powers. I now read through again the utterly modern poem of Tieck, and understood at once why his coquettish [312] mysticism and catholic frivolity had not appealed in any definite way to my sympathy; the Folk's-book and the homely *Tannhäuserlied* explained this point to me, as they showed me the simple genuine inspiration of the Tannhäuser-legend in such swiftly-seizable and undisfigured traits.—But what most irresistibly attracted me was the connection, however loose, between Tannhäuser and the "Singers'-Tourney in the Wartburg," which I found established in that Folk's-book. With this second poetic subject also I had already made an earlier acquaintance, in a tale of Hoffmann's; but, as with Tieck's Tannhäuser, it had left me without the slightest incitation to dramatic treatment. I now decided to trace this Singers'-Tourney, whose whole entourage breathed on me the air of home, to its simplest and most genuine source; this led me to the study of the *mittelhochdeutsch* (21) (middle-high-German) poem of the "*Sängerkrieg*," into which one of my friends, a German philologist who happened to possess a copy, was fortunately able to induct me.—This poem, as is well known, is set in direct connection with a larger epos, that of "*Lohengrin*." That also I studied, and thus with one blow a whole new world of poetic stuff was opened out to me; a world of which in my previous search, mostly for ready-made material adapted to the genre of Opera, I had not had the slightest conception.—I must describe a little more minutely the impressions I derived therefrom.

[313]

To many a hanger-on of the historico-poetical school it will appear of some weight that, between the completion of the *Flying Dutchman* and the conception of *Tannhäuser*, I had busied myself with the sketch for a *historical* opera-text; but it will be a disappointment for him, and another proof of my incapacity, when I inform him that I discarded this sketch in favour of that for *Tannhäuser*. For the present I will merely narrate the incident, since I shall have occasion to treat more fully the aesthetical question therein involved when I come to discuss a later mental conflict of like kind.

I have said that my yearning for home had nothing of the character of political patriotism in it; yet I should be untruthful, did I not admit that a political interpretation of the German Home was among the objects of my indefinite longing. This I naturally could not find in the Present, and any justification of the wish for such a rendering I—like our whole historical school—could only seek-out in the Past. In order to assure myself of what it was, in particular, that I held dear in the German Home for which I was yearning, I recalled the image of the impressions of my youth, and, to conjure up a clearer vision, I turned the pages of the book of History. I also took advantage of this opportunity to *seek* again for an operatic subject: but nowhere in the ample outlines of the old German Kaiser-world could I find one; and, although without distinctly realising it, I felt that the features of this epoch were unfitted for a faithful and intelligible dramatisation in exact measure as they presented a dearth of seizable motive to my musical conception.—At last I fastened on *one* episode, since it seemed

to offer me the chance of giving a freer rein to my poetic fancy. This was a moment from the last days of the Hohenstaufian era. Manfred, the son of Friedrich II., tears himself from his lethargy and abandonment to lyric luxury, and, pressed by hot need, throws himself upon Luceria; which city, in the heart of the realms of Holy Church, had been assigned by his father to the Saracens, after their dislodgement [314] from Sicily. Chiefly by aid of these warlike and lightly kindled Sons of Araby, he wins back from the Pope and ruling Guelphs the whole of the disputed realm of Sicily and Apuleia; the dramatic sketch concluding with his coronation. Into this purely historical plot I wove an imaginary female figure: I now recall the fact that her form had taken shape in my mind from the memory of an engraving which I had seen long previously; this picture represented Friedrich II. surrounded by his almost exclusively Arabian court, amongst which my fancy was principally attracted by the oriental forms of singing and dancing women. The spirit of this Friedrich, my favourite hero, I now embodied in the person of a Saracen maiden, the fruit of the embraces of Friedrich and a daughter of Araby, during the Kaiser's peaceful sojourn in Palestine. Tidings of the downfall of the Ghibelline house had come to the girl in her native home; fired with that same Arabian enthusiasm which not long since gave the East its songs of ardent love for Bonaparte, she made her way to Apuleia. There, in the court of the dispirited Manfred, she appears as a prophetess, inspires him with fresh courage, and spurs him on to action; she kindles the hearts of the Arabs in Luceria, and, instilling enthusiasm whithersoever she goes, she leads the Emperor's son through victory on victory to throne. Her descent she has kept enwrapped in mystery, the better to work on Manfred's mind, by the riddle of her apparition; he loves her passionately, and fain would break the secret's seal: she waves him back with an oracular saying. His life being attempted, she receives the death - thrust in her own breast: dying, she confesses herself as Manfred's sister, and unveils the fulness of her love to him. Manfred, crowned, takes leave of happiness for ever.

This picture which my homesick phantasy had painted, not without some warmth of colour, in the departing light of a historical sunset, completely faded from my sight so soon as ever the figure of Tannhäuser revealed itself [315] to my inner eye. That picture was conjured from outside: this figure sprang from my inmost heart. In its infinitely simple traits, it was to me more wide-embracing, and alike more definite and plain, than the richly-coloured, shimmering tissue—half historical and half poetic—which like a showy cloak of many folds concealed the true, the supple human form my inner wish desired to look on, and which stepped at once before me in the new-found Tannhäuser. Here was the very essence of the *Folk's*-poem, that ever seizes on the *kernel* of the matter (*Erscheinung*), and brings it again to show (*Erscheinung*) in simple plastic outlines; whilst there, in the history—i.e. the event not such as it was, but such alone as it comes within *our* ken—this matter shows itself in endless trickery of outer facings, and never attains that fine plasticity of form until the eye of the Folk has plunged into its inner *soul*, and given it the artistic mould of Myth.

This Tannhäuser was infinitely more than Manfred; for he was the spirit of the whole Ghibelline race for every age, embraced within one only, clearly cut and infinitely moving form; but in this form a *human being*, right down to our own day, right into the heart of a poor artist all athirst for life. But more of that anon!

For the moment I merely note that, in the choice of the Tannhäuser-stuff also, I acted entirely without reflection; and thus simply emphasise the fact that I had hitherto proceeded without any critical consciousness, following absolutely the dictates of instinctive feeling. My

recital alone will have shown how completely without an axiom I had commenced, in the *Flying Dutchman*, to strike out my new pathway. With the "*Sarazenin*" I was on the point of harking back, more or less, to the road of my *Rienzi*, and again writing a "historical Grand Opera in five acts"; only the overpowering subject of *Tannhäuser*, grappling my individual nature with far more energetic hold, kept my footsteps firm upon the path which Necessity had bid me strike. This happened, [316] as I will now relate, amid an active combat—not yet over—with accidental outer influences, which were destined to gradually enlighten my consciousness, also, as to the inner nature of that path itself.— —

At last, after a stay of well-nigh three years, I left Paris, nine-and-twenty years of age. The direct route to Dresden took me through the Thuringian valley from which one sees the Wartburg towering above. How unspeakably homelike and inspiring was the effect upon me of this castle, already hallowed to me, but which—strangely enough!—I was not to actually visit until seven years later when, already proscribed, I cast therefrom my last look upon that Germany which I had once entered with such warm affection: only to leave it in contumely, an exile fleeing from his native land!— —

I arrived in Dresden, to hasten forward the promised production of my *Rienzi*. Before the actual commencement of the rehearsals, I made an excursion into the Bohemian mountains; there I jotted down the complete dramatic sketch of *Tannhäuser*. Before I could proceed to its working out, however, I was doomed to be interrupted in a hundred ways. Preceded by many a trimming and paring of that excessively protracted composition, the practical study of my *Rienzi* began. Concernment with the long-awaited production of one of my operas, under conditions so sufficient as those the Dresden Court-theatre afforded me, was an entirely new element for me, and proved a source of active distraction from my inner thoughts. At this time, I felt myself so buoyantly lifted from out my fundamental nature, and attracted toward the practical, that I even took up again an earlier, long-since forgotten sketch for an opera founded on Königs romance "*die hohe Braut*," and cast it into racy opera-verse for my future colleague (22) in the office of Dresden *Hofkapellmeister*, who just then thought himself in need of an [317] opera-text, and whom I thus endeavoured to win over. (23) — The growing goodwill of the singers towards my *Rienzi*, and especially the amiable expressions of enthusiasm elicited from the pre-eminently gifted singer of the title-rôle, (24) affected me to an uncommonly pleasant degree. After long battling amid the paltriest surroundings, after severest struggles, sufferings and privations in the loveless commerce of Paris art and Paris life, I suddenly found myself surrounded by an appreciative, inspiring, and often quite affectionate group. How pardonable, if I began to yield to illusions from which, however, I was doomed to wake with poignant pain! But if one thing was more calculated than another to deceive me as to my true position towards the existing state of affairs, it was the remarkable success of the production of my *Rienzi* in Dresden:—I, a lonely, homeless waif, found myself suddenly beloved, admired, nay, by many looked on with amazement; and, according to our general notion of things, this success was to win me for my whole span of life a solid basis of social and artistic well-being,—for, to cap it all, I was nominated to the post of *Kapellmeister* of the Royal Saxon Court-band.

It was here that a great self-delusion, forced upon me by circumstances, though not completely unawares to myself; became the cause of a fresh development, painful but decisive, of my character both as artist and as man. My earliest experiences, then those of Paris, and lastly those already made in Dresden, had not left me in the dark as to the real nature of our entire public art, especially as regards its practice in our official institutions. My repugnance to any concernment with it, farther than what was absolutely called-for by the production of my operas, had already [318] developed to a considerable pitch. It had been brought plainly enough before my own eyes that it was not Art such as I had learnt to know it, but a completely different set of interests, which only cloaked themselves with an artistic

semblance, that was ministered-to in the daily traffic of our public art-affairs. But I had not as yet thrust down to the fundamental cause of this phenomenon, and therefore rather held it as a mere accident, remediable by a little pains. It was now that I was first to gradually and sorrowfully discover the cause itself.

To a few more intimate friends I openly declared my inner aversion, and consequent hesitation, to take up the proffered post of *Hofkapellmeister* (Conductor of the Royal orchestra). They could not understand me; and this was natural, for I myself could only express my inner distaste, without being able to assign any reasons in terms of the practical understanding. A glance back to my quondam troublous and disjointed outer circumstances, which henceforth promised to take on a surer ordering; and further, the assumption that, in the favourable mood of my surroundings, and especially considering the brilliant nature of the artistic forces at my disposal, I should at any rate be able to do many a good stroke of work for art, soon conquered my avowed disinclination: a result explicable enough, in view of my still scanty stock of experience in the last regard. My recognition of the high opinion that is customarily held of such a post; (25) and finally the signal honour which my selection appeared to represent in the eyes of all the rest of you, ended by dazzling me also, and making me behold an unwonted piece of good fortune in what was but too soon to be for me the source of gnawing pain. I became—in highest spirits!—a Royal Kapellmeister.—

[319]

The sense of physical comfort, which stole over me in consequence of the rebound in my outward lot, and grew into a pleasurable feeling of self-content through my first taste of a settled position in life—and especially of public favour and admiration—soon betrayed me into a more and more complete repudiation and abuse of my inner nature, such as it had hitherto evolved in necessary consecution. I was chiefly deceived by the not altogether unreasonable assumption of a speedy—or, if more tardy, yet bound to come at last—pecuniary success of my operas through their gaining themselves a footing on the wider German stage. While this obstinate belief betrayed me, in the long run, into ever-increasing sacrifices and undertakings, which were destined, in the absence of success, to dislocate afresh my outward circumstances: its mainspring, a more or less impatient quest for pleasure, for a long time led my steps astray from the artistic path I had already struck out. This episode seems worth narrating, as it affords a not unweighty contribution to the developmental history of an artist's individuality.

Immediately after the success of *Rienzi* at the Dresden Court-theatre, the management determined to bring out at once my *Flying Dutchman*. The acceptance of this opera by the Berlin Court-theatre directorate had been nothing more nor less than a cheap compliment, devoid of any serious meaning. The Dresden directorate being in earnest, I willingly accepted their proposal and rehearsed the opera as quickly as possible, without any special care about the material for its production; the work seemed to me so immeasurably simpler for performance than its predecessor *Rienzi*, its scenic arrangements so much easier to grasp. The chief male rôle I almost forced upon a singer who had sufficient experience and self-knowledge to declare himself unfitted for the part.—The main point of the representation was completely missed. This performance the public felt all the less inclined to applaud as it was disappointed in the *genre* of the work itself; having expected and desired something akin to *Rienzi*, not something [320] directly opposite in style. My friends were crestfallen at the result; almost all they could think about, was to wipe out its impression upon themselves and the public, and that by an eager resumption of *Rienzi*. I myself was so disconcerted, that I held my peace and left the *Dutchman* undefended. In the mood described above, it was natural that I should prefer the sweets of immediate success, and benumb my conscience with the hopes held out by that earlier successful path. Under the influence of these outward impressions I again began to vacillate, and my unrest was largely increased by my intercourse with the



*Schröder-Devrient.*—

I have already alluded to the extraordinary and lasting impression which the artistic genius of this in every respect exceptional woman had made upon me in my youth. Now, after an interval of eight years, I came into personal contact with her, a contact prompted and governed by the deep significance of her art to me. I found this gifted nature involved in the most manifold contradictions, which were as disquieting to myself as in her they took the form of passionate unrest. The motley hollowness of our modern theatrical life had the less remained without influence on this artist as, neither as artist nor woman, did she possess that cold and egoistic composure with which, for example, a Jenny Lind can place herself entirely outside the frame of the modern stage and keep free from any compromising intercourse therewith. The Schröder-Devrient was neither in life nor art an embodiment of that virtuosodom which flourishes alone in isolation, in it alone can shine: here as there, she was dramatic through and through, in the fullest meaning of the word. She was born for intercourse, for blending with the Whole; and yet this Whole was, both in life and art, *our* social life, and *our* theatric art. I have never seen a greater-hearted human being, nor one in battle with more trivial conceptions, than this woman with those ideas which she had imbibed from her contact, necessary as her nature made it, with her surroundings. Upon myself the effect of my deep [321] sympathy with this artistic woman was less stimulating than tormenting; and tormenting because it roused, without contenting me. She studied the "Senta" of my *Flying Dutchman*, and gave this rôle with such creative perfection of finish, that her performance alone saved the opera from being completely misunderstood by the public, and even evoked the liveliest enthusiasm. This inspired me with the wish to write a piece expressly for her, and with this object I reached back to my abandoned sketch for the "*Sarazenin*," the scenic draft of which I now hastily completed. But this poem, when submitted, had but little attraction for her; chiefly on account of certain references which, in her situation at that time, she would not allow to pass current. One typical feature of my heroine was expressed in the sentence: "the *Prophetess* can never more become a *woman*." This artist, however—without putting it in so many words—would not completely throw aside the woman; and it is only at the present that I have learnt to rightly value her instinctive judgment, now that those circumstances which brought that instinct into play have faded from my sight; whereas at that time their utter triviality jarred on me to such a degree that, looking from them to the artist herself; I could not help regarding her as caught in the toils of a desire unworthy of her. (26)

Under such impressions, I fell into a conflict with myself; a conflict peculiar to our modern evolution, and only not experienced, or regarded as already out of date, by those who have not a vestige of evolutionary force within them and, for their philosophy of life, content themselves with borrowed plumes—however new—of theory. I will attempt to describe, in brief; this conflict, and the mode in which it expressed itself in my relations to the outer world.

[322]

Through the happy change in the aspect of my outward lot; through the hopes I cherished, of its even still more favourable development in the future; and finally through my personal and, in a sense, intoxicating contact with a new and well-inclined surrounding, a passion for enjoyment had sprung up within me, that led my inner nature, formed amid the struggles and impressions of a painful past, astray from its own peculiar path. A general instinct that urges every man to take life as he finds it, now pointed me, in my particular relations as Artist, to a path which, on the other hand, must soon and bitterly disgust me. This instinct could only have been appeased in Life on condition of my seeking, as artist, to wrest myself renown and pleasure by a complete subordination of my true nature to the demands of the public taste in Art. I should have had to submit myself to the Mode, and to speculation on its weaknesses;

and here, on this point at least, my feeling showed me clearly that, with an actual entry on that path, I must inevitably be engulfed in my own loathing. Thus the pleasures of life presented themselves to my feeling in the shape alone of what *our modern world* can offer to the senses; and this again appeared attainable by me, as artist, solely along the direction which I had already learnt to recognise as the exploitation of our public art-morass. In actual life I was at like time confronted—in the person of a woman for whom I had a sincere admiration—with the phenomenon that a longing akin to my own could only imagine itself contented with the paltriest return of trivial love; a delusion so completely threadbare, that it could never really mask its nature from the inner need.

If at last I turned impatiently away, and owed the strength of my repugnance to the independence already developed in my nature, both as artist and as man: so did that double revolt, of man and artist, inevitably take-on the form of a yearning for appeasement in a higher, nobler element; an element which, in its contrast to the only pleasures that the material Present spreads in modern Life and modern Art, could but appear to me in the guise of [323] a pure, chaste, virginal, unseizable and unapproachable ideal of Love. What, in fine, could this love-yearning, the noblest thing my heart could feel—what other could it be than a longing for release from the Present, for absorption into an element of endless Love, a love denied to earth and reachable through the gates of Death alone? (27) And what, again, at bottom, could such a longing be, but the yearning of Love; aye, of a real love seeded in the soil of fullest sentience (*Sinnlichkeit*),—yet a love that could *never* come to fruition on the loathsome soil of *modern* sentience?—How absurd, then, must those critics seem to me, who, drawing all their wit from modern wantonness, insist on reading into my "Tannhäuser" a specifically Christian and impotently pietistic drift! They recognise nothing but the fable of their own incompetence, in the story of a man whom they are utterly unable to comprehend.—

The above is an exact account of the mood in which I was, when the unladen ghost of Tannhäuser returned again, and urged me to complete his poem. When I reached the sketch and working-out of the *Tannhäuser* music, it was in a state of burning exaltation (*verzehrend üppige Erregtheit*) that held my blood and every nerve in fevered throbbing. My true nature—which, in my loathing of the modern world and ardour to discover something nobler and beyond-all noblest, had quite returned to me—now seized, as in a passionate embrace, the opposing channels of my being, and disembouched them both into *one* stream: a longing for the highest form of Love.—With this work I penned my death-warrant: before the world of Modern Art, I now could hope no more for life. This I *felt*; but as yet I *knew* it not with full distinctness:—that knowledge I was not to gain till later.

I have meanwhile to relate how I was confirmed in my tendency by further experiences from outside.—My hopes of a rapid success, through the circulation of my operas on the German stage, remained entirely unfulfilled; my scores [324] were returned to me by the principal Theatrical Directors, unaccepted—often with even their wrappers unopened. It was only the patient toil of personal friendship, that brought *Rienzi* to a production in Hamburg: an utterly unsuitable singer played havoc with the title-role, and the Director found his hopes and all his persevering efforts demolished by the inadequate result. I then saw, to my astonishment, that even this "Rienzi" was above folk's heads. Yet, however coldly I may now look back upon this earlier work of mine, I cannot shut my eyes to the youthful, heroic strain of enthusiasm that breathes throughout it. Our public, however, nourished on the masterpieces of modern operatic manufacture, has accustomed itself to seek the object of its stage-enthusiasm in something very different to the dominant mood of a dramatic work. In Dresden I was succoured by something quite aloof from this; to wit, the purely physical *verve* of the whole thing, which there, under circumstances favourable in this respect, and especially by reason of the brilliance of the stage-material and the personal characteristics of the chief singer, worked in an intoxicating fashion on the public.



On the other hand, I had quite a different experience with my *Flying Dutchman*. The old master *Spohr* had already produced this opera at Cassel, almost immediately after its original appearance. This happened without any overtures on my side; nevertheless I feared that I must remain a stranger to *Spohr*, since I could not see how my novel bent could fall in with his taste. What, then, was my astonishment and glad surprise, when this grey-haired master, although wrapt in a cold but honourable seclusion from the world of modern music, expressed to me by letter his unqualified approval, and explained it simply by his heart-felt joy at meeting with a young artist who plainly showed that he was taking art in earnest! *Spohr*, the aged *Spohr*, remained the only German Kapellmeister who received me with any warmth of affection, who nursed my works as far as he was able, and who, [325] amid all changes, preserved for me a true and faithful friendship.

At Berlin, also, the *Flying Dutchman* was placed upon the boards; I had no grounds for absolute discontent with this affair. My experience of the effect upon the public, however, was here most significant: the mistrustful Berlin chill, only too prone to fault-finding, lasted throughout the whole First Act, but gave way in the course of the Second to the fullest warmth of emotion; in fact, I could not but regard the result as completely favourable. Yet the opera very soon disappeared from the repertory. A keen instinct for matters theatrical must have prompted the management, when, even though this opera pleased, they looked upon it as unfitted for the regular routine. I recognise today how correct a verdict upon the general nature of our theatric art was herewith expressed. A piece intended for the operatic repertoire, to be played before the public throughout a long season, perhaps for ever, in alternation with other pieces of its like, must have no *Stimmung*, (28) and require for its understanding no *Stimmung*, that is of any markedly individual character. To this end, one must provide pieces which are either of a generally-current *Stimmung* or, in fact, of none at all, and therefore which do not pretend to arouse the feeling of the public to any particular mood, but afford a pleasurable distraction by the brilliance of their 'mounting' and the more or less personal interest taken in the performing virtuosi. The revival of earlier so-called "classical" works, which certainly cannot attain a real understanding without awaking such an individual *Stimmung*, is never due to the convictions of the Theatre-directors themselves, but both laborious revival and success are the artificial outcome of compliance with the demands of our æsthetical [326] critics. The 'stimmung,' however, which my *Flying Dutchman* was at times so fortunate as to arouse, was so pregnant, so unaccustomed, and so searching, that it was highly improbable that those who had experienced it most fully would place themselves in the way of its recurrence at frequent and brief intervals. An audience, in its every member, demands that such impressions shall take it *unawares*: the sudden *shock* of this surprise, and its lasting after-effects—which form the object of the artwork—constitute the elevating factor in any dramatic performance. But the same feeling of surprise either does not recur at all, or only after a considerable period has been allowed to intervene, and the events of daily life have gradually effaced the vividness of the first impression; whereas the deliberate attempt to galvanise oneself into this feeling, is one of the pathological symptoms of our modern art-debauchery. With men who follow in their lives the natural course of evolution, the same effect is—strictly speaking—never to be obtained from the performance of one and the same dramatic work; their renewed demand can be met alone by a fresh work of art, a work proceeding in its turn from a new developmental phase in the mind of the artist.—Here I touch on what I have said in the Introduction, with regard to the Monumental and its manifestments in our art-doings: for I adduce the logical result of investigation into the above phenomena as witness to the need of an ever fresh-born Artwork of the Future, springing directly from, and belonging only to the Present; an Artwork which shall not be fettered by the Monumental, but, mirroring the face of Life itself in all its countless traits, shall proclaim itself in infinitely changeful multiformity, and thus be understood.

Though I did not clearly formulate the notion at this time, yet it began to thrust itself upon my inner observation the more especially through my perception of the uncommonly strong impression which my *Flying Dutchman* had made on *individuals*. In Berlin, where for the rest I was entirely unknown, I received from two persons [327] —a gentleman and a lady, previously total strangers to me, whom the impressions produced by the *Flying Dutchman* had made my instant friends—the first definite expression of satisfaction at the new path which I had struck out, and the first exhortation to continue thereon. From that time forward I lost more and more the so-called "Public" from my view: the judgment of definite, individual human beings usurped, for me, the place of the never to be accurately gauged opinion of the Mass, which hitherto—without my own full consciousness—had floated before me, in vague outlines, as the object to which I should address myself as poet. The *understanding* of my aim became each day more clearly the chief thing to be striven for, and, to ensure myself this understanding, involuntarily I turned no longer to the stranger *Mass*, but to the individual persons whose moods and ways of thought were familiar to me.

Again, this better defined position toward those whom I wished to address, exercised a most weighty influence upon the future bent of my constructive faculties (*künstlerisches Gestaltungswesen*). If the impulse to *intelligibly* impart his aim be the true constructive standard of the artist, its exercise will necessarily be governed by the character of those *by whom* he wishes that aim to be understood. If he picture them as an indefinite, never plainly cognisable mass, whose tastes are never to be accurately gauged and whose character it is therefore impossible *for himself* to understand, in fact as the medley that constitutes our modern theatrical public : then, in his efforts to expound his aim, the artist must inevitably be driven to a hazy mode of treatment which often strays aside into purposeless generalities, nay—for the matter of that—to a choice of subject-matter dictated by naught else than its peculiar fitness for this washy treatment. The artistic defects resulting from such a position were now apparent to me, upon re-examining my earlier operas. As compared with the products of modern theatric art, I recognised, it is true, the greater significance of the subjects of my own [328] creations, but at like time the undecided, often unclear nature of the treatment of those subjects, which therefore still were lacking in the necessary features of a sharply-chiselled individuality. Thenceforward, by addressing myself instinctively to definite individuals allied to me by community of feeling, I at the same time won the power of casting my subjects in a more distinct and stable mould. Without going to work with any deliberate purpose, I divested myself more and more of the customary method of treating my characters in the gross; I drew a sharper line of demarcation between the surroundings and the main figure, which erewhile had frequently been swamped by them; I raised it into bolder relief, and thus attained the power of rescuing these surroundings themselves from their operative diffuseness, and condensing them into plastic forms.

It was under influences such as these, and proceeding as just stated, that I worked away at my *Tannhäuser*, and, after many and varied interruptions, completed it.—

With this work, I had passed another stage in the new evolutionary path that I had opened with the *Flying Dutchman*. My whole being had been so consumed with ardour for my task that, as I cannot but call to mind, the nearer I approached its completion the more was I haunted by the fancy that a sudden death would stay my hand from finishing it; so that, when at last I wrote its closing chord, I felt as joyful as though I had escaped some mortal danger.—

Immediately after the conclusion of this task, I obtained leave to visit a Bohemian wateringplace, for the benefit of my health. Here, as whenever I could snatch myself away from the footlights and my "duties" in their dense atmosphere, I soon felt light of heart and gay; and, for the first time in my life, the strain of cheerfulness (*Heiterkeit*) inherent in my disposition took visible shape in an artistic plan. Almost with wilful premeditation, I had already of late resolved to write a *comic* opera, so soon as I could set about it; I remember that

this determination had been [329] assisted by the well-meant advice of certain good friends of mine, who wished me to compose an opera of "lighter genre," since they believed that such a work would open the doors of most German theatres to me and thus effect a beneficial change in my outward circumstances, which had certainly begun to take on a threatening aspect owing to the obstinate default of that success. Just as a jovial Satyr-play was wont at Athens to follow on the Tragedy, so on that pleasure-trip there suddenly occurred to me the picture of a comic piece which well might form a Satyr-play as pendant to my "*Sängerkrieg auf Wartburg*" (i.e. Tannhäuser). This was "The Meistersingers of Nuremberg," with Hans Sachs at their head. I took Hans Sachs as the last manifestation of the art-productive spirit of the Folk (*Volksgeist*), and set him, in this sense, in contrast to the pettyfogging bombast of the other Meistersingers; to whose absurd pedanticism, of *tabulatur* and prosody, I gave a concrete personal expression in the figure of the "Marker." This "Marker," as is well-known (or as perhaps is *not* known to our critics), was the examiner appointed by the Singers' Guild to "mark" each breach of rule in the effusions of the members, and particularly of fresh candidates, noting them down with crosses: whosoever was adjudged a certain number of these crosses, had "out-sung" himself.—In my story, the oldest member of the guild offered the hand of his young daughter to that "Meister" who should win the prize at a forthcoming public singing-contest. The Marker himself had already paid his court to the damsel, but is now confronted by a rival in the person of a young nobleman who, inspired by the *Heldenbuch* and the songs of the ancient Minnesingers, forsakes the ruined castle of his ancestors to learn the Meistersingers' art at Nuremberg. He applies for admission into the guild, determined chiefly by a swiftly-kindled passion for the prize-maiden, "whom none but a Master of the Guild may win." Put to the test, he sings an enthusiastic song in praise of Woman; but from the first his verse offends the Marker's ear, so that when [330] the aspirant has got but halfway through his song, he is "plucked." Hans Sachs, who has taken a fancy to the young man, now frustrates—in the latter's best interest—his despairing attempt to elope with the damsel; Hans finds occasion, at like time, to mightily annoy the Marker. For the latter, who had before this made a savage attack upon Sachs on account of a never-finished pair of shoes, with the sole object of humiliating him, stations himself below the maiden's window at night, in order to serenade her with a foretaste of the song by which he hopes next day to win her; since he is most anxious to make sure of her casting-vote in the decision of the prize. At the first note of the Marker's lay, Sachs, whose cobbler's-stall lies opposite the house be-sung, begins in his turn to sing aloud, explaining to the indignant wooer that this is necessary to keep himself awake when he works so late at night; while no one can know better that the job is pressing than the Marker, who had rated him so roundly for the non-delivery of his shoes. At last Sachs promises the unhappy wretch to hold his peace, provided only that he be allowed to mark according to *his* mode—as cobbler—the faults which, according to *his* feeling, he may detect in the Marker's song: namely, to signal each by a hammer-stroke upon the lasted shoes. The Marker now sings on; Sachs strikes repeatedly upon the last. Out of all patience, the Marker makes a rush at him; the Cobbler calmly asks, Whether the song is done then? "Not by a long way yet," shouts the other. Sachs lays down the shoes upon the board, with a roar of laughter, and tells him that they have just been finished by the "Marker's-crosses." Of the rest of his song, which he bawls out without a pause, the Marker makes an utter bungle, in his despair at the violent head-shakings of the female figure at the window, In deepest dudgeon, he next day begs of Sachs a new song wherewith to woo the bridal prize; the Cobbler gives him a poem of the young noble's, pretending not to know how he has come thereby: only he warns him to be very careful in the selection of a fitting "tune" to which to sing [331] it. As to that, the conceited Marker is perfectly confident in himself, and proceeds to sing the poem before the full assembly of Meisters and Folk; but he chooses such an ill-suited and sense-confounding tune, that again

he comes to grief, and this time decisively. Boiling over with rage, he accuses Sachs of fraud, in having foisted upon him an infamous poem; the latter declares that the verse is good enough, but it must be sung to a becoming tune. It is then decided that whoever can fit it with the right tune, shall be the victor. The young noble performs this feat, and wins the bride; but he scorns admission to the Guild, now that it is proffered him. Sachs champions the Meistersingerhood in a humorous address, concluding with the couplet:

"Tho'                    Holy                    Roman                    Empire's                    pride                    depart,

We'll hold on high our holy German Art."—

Such was my swiftly planned, and swiftly traced design. But scarcely had I written it down, when peace forsook me until I had sketched-out the more detailed plan for *Lohengrin*. This was during the same brief visit to the baths, and despite the doctor's warnings against my engaging in any work of the kind. There is something strange in the fact that, at the very time when I made that refreshing little excursion into the realms of mirth, I was driven back so quickly to the earnest, yearning mood which impelled me to the absorbing task of *Lohengrin*. The reason now is clear to me, why the cheerful mood which sought to vent itself in the conception of the *Meistersinger* could make no lasting stay with me. At that time it took alone the shape of *Irony*, and, as such, was busied more with the purely formal side of my artistic views and aims, than with that core of Art whereof the roots lie hid in Life itself.

The only form of Mirth (*Heiterkeit*) which our public of today can understand, and thus the only form in which an underlying truth can appeal thereto, is that of Irony. It seizes the formal aspect of our public offences against Nature, and is in so far effective, as Form, being directly [332] cognisable by the senses, is the thing most patent to the ordinary understanding; whereas the Content of this form is that hidden mystery at which we fumble all perplexed, and wherefrom we are involuntarily thrust back again to utterance in that very form at which we jeer. Thus Irony is *that* form of Mirth through which the latter can never break to open revelation of its inner essence, to vivid, individual exposition as a vital force. But the core that lies beneath the unnatural semblance of our public intercourse, that kernel which all Irony must needs leave unexplored, is at like time unseizable by the power of Mirth, in the latter's purest, most specific manifestment; it is only to be seized by *that* power which expresses itself as resistance to an element of life whose very pressure suffocates the pure breath of Mirth. Thus when we feel this pressure, we are driven by the primal force of Mirth itself, and in our endeavour to regain its pristine purity, to a withstanding whose utterance, in face of modern life, can only proclaim itself in tones of yearning and finally of revolt, and therefore in a tragic mood.

My whole nature instantly reacted against the incomplete attempt to unburden myself of the contents of a mirthful mood by means of irony; and I must now consider the attempt itself as the last expression of that desire for enjoyment which fain would reconcile itself with the triviality of its surroundings, and from which I had already escaped, by a painful exercise of energy, in my *Tannhäuser*.—

If it is now clear to me, after reflection upon my then-prevailing frame of mind, why I so suddenly relinquished this attempt, and threw myself with such consuming passion upon the shaping of the *Lohengrin*- 'stuff': on the other hand, the peculiarity of that subject itself makes plain to me why it was that *it*, of all others, so irresistibly attracted and enthralled me. It was not the mere memory, how this stuff was first brought before me in intimate connection with *Tannhäuser*; least of all was it a frugal husbandry, which might forsooth have bidden me to make the most of gathered stores: for it is obvious, from the account of my artistic labours, that, if anything, I was [333] in this regard inclined to prodigality. On the contrary, I must here attest that at the time when I first learnt the story of *Lohengrin*, in connection with that of *Tannhäuser*, the tale indeed affected me, but in no wise prompted me to store the 'stuff' for



future working-up. Not only because I was then completely saturated with Tannhäuser, but also because the form in which Lohengrin first stepped before me made an almost disagreeable impression upon my feeling, did I not at that time keep a sharper eye upon him. The medieval poem presented Lohengrin in a mystic twilight, that filled me with suspicion and that haunting feeling of repugnance with which we look upon the carved and painted saints and martyrs on the highways, or in the churches, of Catholic lands. Only when the immediate impression of this reading had faded, did the shape of Lohengrin rise repeatedly, and with growing power of attraction, before my soul; and this power gathered fresh force to itself from outside, chiefly by reason that I learnt to know the myth of Lohengrin in its simpler traits, and alike its deeper meaning, as the genuine poem of the Folk, such as it has been laid bare to us by the discoveries of the newer searchers into Saga lore. After I had thus seen it as a noble poem of man's yearning and his longing—by no means merely seeded from the Christian's bent toward supernaturalism, but from the truest depths of universal human nature,—this figure became ever more endeared to me, and ever stronger grew the urgency to adopt it and thus give utterance to my own internal longing; so that, at the time of completing my *Tannhäuser*, it positively became a dominating need, which thrust back each alien effort to withdraw myself from its despotic mastery.

This "Lohengrin" is no mere outcome of Christian meditation (*Anschauung*), but one of man's earliest poetic ideals; just as, for the matter of that, it is a fundamental error of our modern superficialism, to consider the specific Christian legends as by any means original creations. Not one of the most affecting, not one of the most distinctive [334] Christian myths belongs by right of generation to the Christian spirit, such as we commonly understand it: it has inherited them all from the purely human intuitions (*Anschauungen*) of earlier times, and merely moulded them to fit its own peculiar tenets. To purge them of this heterogeneous influence, and thus enable us to look straight into the pure humanity of the eternal poem: such was the task of the more recent inquirer, (29) a task which it must necessarily remain for the poet to complete.

Just as the main feature of the mythos of the "Flying Dutchman" may be clearly traced to an earlier setting in the Hellenic Odyssey; just as this same Ulysses in his wrench from the arms of Calypso, in his flight from the charms of Circe, and in his yearning for the earthly wife of cherished home, embodied the Hellenic prototype of a longing such as we find in "Tannhäuser" immeasurably enhanced and widened in its meaning: so do we already meet in the Grecian mythos—nor is even this by any means its oldest form—the outlines of the myth of "Lohengrin." Who does not know the story of "Zeus and Semele"? The god loves a mortal woman, and for sake of this love, approaches her in human shape; but the mortal learns that she does not know her lover in his true estate, and, urged by Love's own ardour, demands that her spouse shall show himself to physical sense in the full substance of his being. Zeus knows that she can never grasp him, that the unveiling of his godhead must destroy her; him self, he suffers by this knowledge, beneath the stern compulsion to fulfill his loved one's dreaded wish: he signs his own death-warrant, when the fatal splendour of his godlike presence strikes Semele dead.—Was it, forsooth, some priestly fraud that shaped this myth? How insensate, to attempt to argue from the selfish state-religious, caste-like exploitation of the noblest human longing, back to the origin and the genuine meaning of ideals which [335] blossomed from a human fancy that stamped man first as Man! 'Twas no *God* that sang the meeting of Zeus and Semele; but *Man*, in his humanest of yearnings. Who had taught Man that a God could burn with love toward earthly Woman? For certain, only Man himself; who, however high the object of his yearning may soar above the limits of his earthly wont, can only stamp it with the imprint of his human nature. From the highest sphere to which the might of his desire may bear him up, he finally can only long again for what is purely human, can only crave the taste of his own nature, as the one thing worth desiring. What then is the inmost essence of this

Human Nature, whereto the desire which reaches forth to farthest distance turns back at last, for its only possible appeasement? It is the *Necessity of Love*; and the essence of this love, in its truest utterance, is the *longing for utmost physical reality*, for fruition in an object that can be grasped by all the senses, held fast with all the force of actual being. In this finite, physically sure embrace, must not the *God* dissolve and disappear? Is not the mortal, who had *yearned* for God, undone, annulled? Yet is not *Love*, in its truest, highest essence, herein *revealed*?—Marvel, ye erudite Critics, at the omnipotence of human minstrelsy, unfolded in the simple *Mythos of the Folk*! Things that all your Understanding can not so much as comprehend, are there laid bare to human Feeling, with such a physically perfect surety as *no other means could bring to pass*.—

The ethereal sphere, from which the god is yearning to descend to men, had stretched itself, through Christian longing, to inconceivable bounds of space. To the Hellenes, it was still the cloud-locked realm of thunder and the thunderbolt, from which the lusty Zeus moved down, to mix with men in expert likeness: to the Christian, the blue firmament dissolved into an infinite sea of yearning ecstasy, in which the forms of all the gods were melted, until at last it was the lonely image of his own person, the yearning Man, that alone was left to greet him from the ocean of his phantasy. One primal, manifold-repeated trait [336] runs through the Sagas of those peoples who dwelt beside the sea or sea-embouching rivers: upon the blue mirror of the waters there draws nigh an Unknown-being, of utmost grace and purest virtue, who moves and wins all hearts by charm resistless; he is the embodied wish of the yearner who dreams of happiness in that far-off land he can not sense. This Unknown-being vanishes across the ocean's waves, so soon as ever questioned on his nature. Thus—so goes the story—there once came in a swan-drawn skiff, over the sea to the banks of the Scheldt, an unknown hero: there he rescued downtrod innocence, and wedded a sweet maiden; but since she asked him who he was and whence he came, he needs must seek the sea once more and leave his All behind.—Why this Saga, when I learnt it in its simplest outlines, so irresistibly attracted me that, at the very time when I had but just completed *Tannhäuser*, I could concern myself with naught but it, was to be made clearer to my feeling by the immediately succeeding incidents of my life.—

With the finished sketch for the poem of *Lohengrin*, I returned to Dresden, in order to produce *Tannhäuser*. This production was prepared with no inconsiderable outlay on the part of the directorate, who cherished great hopes of the work. The public, by their enthusiastic reception of *Rienzi* and cooler welcome of the *Flying Dutchman*, had plainly shewn me what I must set before them if I sought to please. I completely undeceived their expectations: they left the theatre, after the first performance of *Tannhäuser*, in a confused and discontented mood.—The feeling of the utter loneliness in which I now found myself, quite unmanned me. The few friends who gave me hearty sympathy, felt so depressed by the painfulness of my situation, that the involuntary exhibition of their own disappointment was the only sign of friendly life around me. A week passed by, ere a second performance of *Tannhäuser* could take place; a thing so needed to correct erroneous impressions, and pave the way for better understanding. [337] To me this week was fraught with the burden of a lifetime. Not wounded vanity, but the shock of an utter disillusionment, chilled my very marrow. It became clear to me that my *Tannhäuser* had appealed to a handful of intimate friends alone, and not to the heart of a public to whom, nevertheless, I had instinctively turned in the production of this my work. Here was a contradiction which I could not but deem insoluble. There seemed but one possibility of winning the public also to my side, namely—to secure its *understanding*: but I here felt, for the first time with any great distinctness, that the character to which we have grown accustomed in operatic performances was completely at variance with what I



demanding of a representation.—In our Opera the *singer*, by virtue of the purely material attributes of his voice, usurps the first place; whilst the *actor* takes the second, or even a quite subsidiary rank. On the other side of the line, stands, logically enough, a public that looks chiefly for satisfaction of the purely sensuous demands of its nerve of hearing, and thus almost entirely abjures the enjoyment of a dramatic portrayal. My claim, however, was diametrically opposed to this whole state of affairs: I required the Actor (*Darsteller*) in the forefront, and the Singer only as the actor's aid; lastly, therefore, a public who should join me in this claim. For I was forced to see that not until such claim were met, could there be the remotest question of an impression by the story told; whereas any impression must be nothing but a chaos of confusion, when the fulfilment of that claim was disregarded upon every hand. Thus I could only look upon myself as a madman who speaks to the wind and expects it to understand him; for I was openly speaking of things which were all the more doomed to stay uncomprehended as not even the *tongue* in which I uttered them was understood. The gradually awakened interest in my work, displayed by a portion of the public, appeared to me like the good-natured sympathy shewn to a lunatic by his friends: this sympathy impels us to enter into the spirit of the sufferer's [338] wanderings, to try to unriddle some meaning therefrom, and in this unriddled sense at last to answer, in order thus to make his sad condition a little bearable to him; then throngs around the indifferent crowd, to whom it is a piquant entertainment to catch the utterances of a madman, and from the odds and ends of intelligible matter in his talk to fall into a pleasurable bewilderment as to whether the madman has suddenly become sane, or they themselves have lost their reason. This was the precise manner in which I thenceforth interpreted my position towards the general "public." The benevolent intentions of the directorate, and, above all, the friendly zeal and exceptional talent of the performers, succeeded in gradually establishing my opera in public favour. But no more could this success deceive me; I now *knew* what I and the public were to one another, and even if I had still been left in any doubt, my further experiences would have well enough dispelled it.

The consequences of my earlier blindness as to my true position toward the public now made themselves appallingly evident: the impossibility of procuring *Tannhäuser* a popular success, or even a circulation among the German theatres, was clear as day; and therewith I was confronted with the complete downfall of my outer circumstances. Almost solely to stave off that downfall, I still made further efforts to spread this opera; and, with that end in view, I turned towards Berlin. By the Intendant of the Royal Prussian Stage I was waved aside with the critical verdict that my opera was too "epically" constructed to be suitable for production in Berlin. The General-Intendant of the Royal Prussian Court-music, (30) however, appeared to be of another opinion. When, in order to gain the royal interest for the production of my work, I begged him induce the King to allow me to dedicate *Tannhäuser* to his Majesty, I received for reply the advice that—seeing, on the one hand, the King only [339] accepted works which were already known to him, but on the other, there were obstacles in the way of producing this opera upon the Berlin Court-stage—I had better assist His Majesty to an acquaintance with the work in question by arranging something from it for a military band, which something could then be played before the King during the 'change of guard.'—I could scarcely have been more deeply humbled, nor brought to a preciser knowledge of my situation! Henceforth our entire modern art-publicity began to vanish more and more completely from my purview.—But what, then, was my position? And what sort of a mood must that have been which, precisely at this time, and amid these facts and these impressions, urged me on with headlong haste to carry out the project of my *Lohengrin*?—I will endeavour to make it clear to myself and friends, in order to explain the meaning that the Lohengrin legend bore for me; and the light in which alone I could regard it, both as man and artist.

I was now so completely awoken to the utter *loneliness* of my position as an artist, that the

very feeling of this loneliness supplied me with the spur and the ability to address myself to my surroundings. Since this prompting spoke so loud within me that, even without any conscious prospect of compassing an intelligible message, I yet felt passionately impelled to unbosom myself,—this could only proceed from a mood of wellnigh fanatical yearning, which itself was born of that feeling of isolation.—In *Tannhäuser* I had yearned to flee a world of frivolous and repellent sensuousness,—the only form our modern Present has to offer; my impulse lay towards the unknown land of pure and chaste virginity, as toward the element that might allay a nobler, but still at bottom sensuous longing: only, a longing such as our frivolous Present can never satisfy. By the strength of my longing, I had mounted to the realms where purity and chastity abide: I felt myself out side the modern world, and mid a sacred, limpid aether which, in the transport of my solitude, filled me with that delicious awe we drink-in upon the summits of the Alps, [340] when, circled with a sea of azure air, we look down upon the lower hills and valleys. Such mountain-peaks the Thinker climbs, and on this height imagines he is "cleansed" from all that's "earthly," (31) the topmost branch upon the tree of man's omnipotence: here at last may he feed full upon himself, and, midst this self-repast, freeze finally beneath the Alpine chill into a monument of ice; as which, philosopher or critic, he stonily frowns down upon the warm and living world below. The desire, however, that had driven *me* to those heights, was a desire sprung from art and man's five senses: it was not the warmth of *Life*, I fain would flee, but the vaporous morass of trivial sensuousness whose exhalations form *one definite* shape of Life, the life of modern times. Upon those heights, more over, I was warmed by the sunny rays of Love, whose living impulse alone had sped me up. And so it was, that, hardly had this blessed solitude enwrapt me, when it woke a new and overpowering desire, the desire *from peak to valley*, from the dazzling brilliance of chaste Sanctity to the sweet shadows of Love's humanest caresses. From these heights my longing glance beheld at last—*das Weib*: the woman for whom the "Flying Dutch man" yearned, from out the ocean of his misery; the woman who, star-like, showed to "Tannhäuser" the way that led from the hot passion of the Venusberg to Heaven; [341] the woman who now drew Lohengrin from sunny heights to the depths of Earth's warm breast.—

Lohengrin sought the woman who should *trust* in him; who should not ask how he was hight or whence he came, but love him as he was, and because he was whate'er she deemed him. He sought the woman who would not call for explanations or defence, but who should *love* him with an unconditioned love. Therefore must he cloak his higher nature, for only in the non-revealing of this higher (*höheren*)—or more correctly, heightened (*erhöhten*)—essence, could there lie the surety that he was not adored because of it alone, or humbly worshipped as a Being past all under standing—whereas his longing was *not* for worship nor for adoration, but for the only thing sufficient to redeem him from his loneliness, to still his deep desire,—for *Love*, for *being loved*, for *being understood through Love*. With the highest powers of his senses, with his fullest fill of consciousness, he would fain become and be none other than a warmly-feeling, warmth-inspiring Man; in a word, a *Man* and not a God—i.e. no 'absolute' artist. Thus yearned he for Woman,—for the human Heart. And thus did he step down from out his loneliness of sterile bliss, when he heard this woman's cry for succour, this heart-cry from humanity below. But there clings to him the tell-tale halo of his 'heightened' nature; he can not appear as aught but suprahuman; the gaping of the common herd, the poisoned trail of envy, throw their shadows even across the loving maiden's heart; doubt and jealousy convince him that he has not been *understood*, but only *worshipped*, and force from him the avowal of his divinity, wherewith, undone, he returns into his loneliness.—

It seemed then to me, and still it seems, most hard to comprehend, how the deep tragedy of

this subject and this character should have stayed unfelt; and how the story should have been so misunderstood that Lohengrin was looked on as a cold, forbidding figure, more prone to rouse dislike than sympathy. This reproach was first made [342] to me by an intimate friend, whose knowledge and whose intellectual gifts I highly prize. (32) In his case, however, I reaped an experience which has since been verified by repetition: namely, that upon the first direct acquaintance with my poem the impression produced is thoroughly affecting, and that this reproach only enters when the impression of the artwork itself has faded, and given place to cold, reflective criticism. (33) Thus this reproach was not an instinctive act of the immediate-feeling heart, but a purposed act of mediate reflection. In this occurrence I therefore found the tragedy of Lohengrin's character and situation confirmed, as one deep-rooted in our modern life: it was reproduced upon the artwork and its author, just in the same way as it had borne down upon the hero of the poem. The character and situation of this Lohengrin I now recognise, with clearest sureness, as the *type of the only absolute tragedy*, in fine, of the *tragic element of modern life*; and that of just as great significance for the *Present*, as was the "Antigone"—though in another relation—for the life of the Hellenic State. (34) From out this sternest tragic moment of the Present one path alone can lead: the full reunion of sense and soul, the only genuinely *gladsome* element of the Future's Life and Art, each in its utmost consummation.—

I must admit that I myself was so far infected with the doubting spirit of Criticism, that I seriously thought of forcing [343] on my poem a complete change of motive. Through my sharing in this criticism, I had fallen, for a short time, so far out of touch with the essence of the story, that I actually strayed into the sketch of a new denouement, according to which Lohengrin should be allowed to put aside his higher nature, so soon as revealed, in favour of a sojourn upon earth with Elsa. The utterly unsatisfactory, and in the highest sense unnatural character of this denouement, however, not only was felt by myself—who had conceived it in a moment of variance with my inner being—but also by my critical friend. We came to the joint conclusion, that That which jarred upon our modern critical conscience lay in the unalterable idiosyncrasy of the *Stuff* itself; but on the other hand, that this 'stuff' exerted so precise and stimulating an effect upon our Feeling that, in truth, it must have for us a meaning sufficient to make its artistic exposition a desirable enrichment of our emotional impressions, and therewith of our powers of emotion.—

In effect, this "Lohengrin" is an entirely new phenomenon to the modern mind; for it could only issue from the *Stimmung* and the life-views of an artist who, at none other than the present time, and amid no other relations to Art and Life than those which had sprung from my own peculiar situation, had developed to exactly that point where this legend faced me with an imperative demand for treatment. Wherefore, only he who is able to free himself from all our modern abstract generalisms, and look Life straight into the eyes, can understand this Lohengrin. Whoso can *only* class under one general category the manifold phenomena that spring from the individual fashioning-force of Life's most active interactions, can comprehend as good as nothing of them: to wit, not the phenomenon itself, but only the mere category; whereto—as to an order laid down in advance—it in truth does not belong. He to whom there seems nothing comprehensible in Lohengrin beyond the category "Christian-Romantic," comprehends alone an accidental surface, but not its underlying essence. This essence, the essence of [344] a strictly new and hitherto unbroached phenomenon, can be comprehended by that faculty alone whereby is brought to man, in every instance, the fodder for his categorical understanding: and this is the purely physical faculty of Feeling. But only an artwork that presents itself in fullest physical show, can convey the new 'stuff,' with due insistence, to this emotional faculty; and only he who has taken-in this artwork in that complete embodiment—i.e. the emotional-man who has thus experienced an entire satisfaction of his highest powers of receiving—can also compass the new 'stuff' in all its

bearings.

Here I touch the tragic feature in the situation of the true Artist towards the life of the Present, that very situation to which I gave artistic effect in the Lohengrin story.—The most natural and urgent longing of such an artist is, to be taken up without reserve into the Feeling, and by it understood; and the *impossibility*—under the modern conditions of our art-life—of meeting with this Feeling in such a state of freedom and undoubting sureness as he needs for being fully understood,—the *compulsion* to address himself almost solely to the critical Understanding, instead of to the Feeling: this it is, that forms the tragic element in his situation; this it is, that, as an artist made of flesh and blood, I could not help but feel; and this, that, on the pathway of my further evolution, was to be forced so on my consciousness that I broke at last into open revolt against the burden of that situation.—

I now approach the account of my latest evolutionary period, which I must treat at somewhat greater length; since the chief aim of this Communication has been to correct the apparent contradictions which might be discovered betwixt the nature of my artistic works and the character of my recently-uttered views on Art and its true position toward Life,—contradictions which have already, in part, been held up to opprobrium by superficial critics. In strict connection with what I have already said, I shall proceed to this account, by way of the unbroken history of my artistic doings and the moods of mind from which they sprang.—

[345]

Criticism had proved itself unequal to alter the denouement of my *Lohengrin*, and by this victorious issue of the encounter between my instinctive artistic Feeling and the modern Critical conscience, my zeal for its artistic completion was kindled to yet brighter flame. In this *completion*, I felt, would lie the *demonstration* of the rightness of my feeling. It was clear to my inner sense, that an essential ground of misunderstanding of the tragical significance of my hero had lain in the assumption that Lohengrin, having descended from a glittering realm of painlessly-uneared and cold magnificence, and in obedience to an unnatural law that bound him will-lessly thereto, now turned his back upon the strife of earthly passions, to taste again the pleasures of divinity. As the chief lesson that this taught me, was the wilfulness of the modern critical mode of viewing things, which looks away from the instinctive aspect and twists them round to suit its purpose; and as it was easy for me to see that this misunderstanding had simply sprung from a wilful interpretation of that binding law, which in truth was no outwardly-imposed decree, but the expression of the necessary inner nature of one who, from the midst of lonely splendour, is athirst for being understood through *Love*: so, to ensure the desired correct impression, I held all the faster to the original outlines of the legend, whose naïve innocence had made so irresistible an impression upon myself. In order to artistically convey these outlines in entire accordance with the effect that they had made on me, I observed a still greater fidelity than in the case of "Tannhäuser," in my presentment of those half-historical, half-legendary features by which alone a subject so out of the beaten path could be brought with due conviction to the answering senses. This led me, in the conduct of the scenes (*scenische Haltung*) and dialogue (*sprachlichen Ausdruck*), to a path which brought me later to the discovery of possibilities whose logical sequence was certainly to point me out an utter revolution in the adjustment of those factors which have hitherto made up our [346] operatic mode of speech. But toward this path, also, I was led by *one* sole impulse, namely to convey to others as vividly and intelligibly as possible, what my own mind's eye had seen; and here, again, it was always the subject-matter that governed me in my every choice of form. Utmost clearness was the chief endeavour of my working-out; and that not the superficial clearness wherewith a shallow object greets us, but the rich and many-coloured light wherein alone a comprehensive, broad-related subject can intelligibly display itself, and yet which cannot help but seem superficial, and often downright obscure, to



those accustomed to mere form without contents.—

It was midst this struggle for clearness of exposition, as I remember, that the essence of the heart of Woman, such as I had to picture in the loving *Elsa*, first dawned upon me with more and more distinctness. The artist can only attain the power of convincing portraiture, when he has been able to sink himself with fullest sympathy into the essence of the character to be portrayed. (35) In "Elsa" I saw, from the commencement, my desired antithesis to Lohengrin,—yet naturally, not so absolute an antithesis as should lie far removed from his own nature, but rather the *other half* of his being,—the antithesis which is included in his general nature (36) and forms the necessarily longed-for complement of his specific man-hood. *Elsa* is the Unconscious, the Undeliberate (*Unwillkürliche*), into which Lohengrin's conscious, deliberate (*willkürliche*) being yearns to be redeemed; but this *yearning*, again, is itself the unconscious, undeliberate Necessity in Lohengrin, whereby he feels himself akin to *Elsa*'s being. Through the capability of this "unconscious consciousness," such as I myself now felt [347] alike with Lohengrin, the nature of Woman also—and that precisely as I felt impelled to the faithfullest portrayal of its essence—came to ever clearer understanding in my inner mind. Through this power I succeeded in so completely transferring myself to this female principle, that I came to an entire agreement with its utterance by my loving *Elsa*. I grew to find her so justified in the final outburst of her jealousy, that from this very outburst I learnt first to thoroughly understand the purely-human element of love; and I suffered deep and actual grief—often welling into bitter tears—as I saw the tragical necessity of the parting, the unavoidable undoing of this pair of lovers. This woman, who with clear foreknowledge rushes on her doom, for sake of Love's imperative behest,—who, amid the ecstasy of adoration, wills yet to lose her all, if so be she cannot all-embrace her loved one; this woman, who in her contact with this Lohengrin, of all men, must founder, and in doing so, must shipwreck her beloved too; this woman, who can love but thus and not otherwise, who, by the very outburst of her jealousy, wakes first from out the thrill of worship into the full reality of Love, and by her wreck reveals its essence to him who had not fathomed it as yet; this glorious woman, before whom Lohengrin must vanish, for reason that his own specific nature could not understand her,—I had found her *now*: and the random shaft that I had shot towards the treasure dreamt but hitherto *unknown*, was my own Lohengrin, whom now I must give up as lost; to track more certainly the footsteps of that *true Woman-hood*, which should one day bring to me and all the world redemption, after Man-hood's egoism, even in its noblest form, had shivered into self-crushed dust before her.—*Elsa*, the Woman,—Woman hitherto un-understood by me, and understood at last,—that most positive expression of the purest instinct of the senses, (37) —made me a Revolutionary at one blow. She was the Spirit of the [348] Folk, for whose redeeming hand I too, as artist-man, was longing.—

But this treasure trove of Knowledge lay hid, at first, within the silence of my lonely heart: only slowly did it ripen into loud avowal.—

I must now recall the outward situation of my life, at that time when—with long and frequent interruptions—I was working out my *Lohengrin*. This situation was at the utmost variance with my inner mood. I drew back into ever greater seclusion, and lived in intimate communion almost solely with one friend, (38) who went so far in his sympathy with *my* artistic evolution as to quell the natural impulse to develop, and gain credit for, his own artistic talents—as he himself confessed to me. Nothing could I wish so much, as to create in undisturbed retirement; the possibility of intelligibly conveying the result to others, albeit the one thing needful, then scarcely troubled me at all. I consoled myself by saying that my loneliness was no egoistic, self-sought thing, but absolutely imposed upon me by the

wilderness around. But *one* distasteful bond still chained me to our public art-affairs,— the obligation of taking thought for pecuniary profit from my works, in order to eke out my ways and means. Thus had I still to care for outer success, although I had already renounced it for myself and inner needs.

Berlin had declined my *Tannhäuser*: no longer for my self, but for the sake of others, (39) I bestirred myself to secure the production there of my *Rienzi*, a work I had long since done with. My sole reason for this step was the experience of this opera's success in Dresden, and a calculation of the outward advantage which a like success in Berlin would bring me, in the shape of the *tantièmes* I should there secure from the receipts of the performances. [349] —I remember with horror, into what a sludge of contradictions of the vilest sort I was plunged by this sheer solicitude for outward gain, amid my already fixed ideas regarding human-things artistic. I was forced to yield myself to the entire modern crime of hypocrisy and deceit: people whom I despised from the bottom of my heart, I flattered, or at least sedulously concealed from them my inner sentiments, because, as circumstances were, they had within their hands the success or failure of my enterprise; crafty men, who were ranged upon the side the farthest from my own true nature, and of whom I knew that they as mistrustfully disliked me as they themselves were repugnant to my inner feeling, I sought by an assumed ingenuousness to rob of their suspicion,—though with small chance of actually effecting this, as I pretty soon discovered. Naturally, this whole behaviour stayed without its only intended result, since I was but a 'prentice hand at lying: my candid opinion, which had a knack of always breaking out, just simply turned me from a dangerous into a ridiculous being. For instance, nothing did me more harm than a remark which, conscious of the better work I now could do, I made in an address to the performers at the commencement of the general rehearsal; when I described the excessive demands made by *Rienzi* on their strength, and only to be met by great exertion, as an "art-crime of my youth." The reporters served this saying to the public steaming-hot, and gave it thus the cue for its demeanour towards a work which the composer himself had characterised as "a miserable failure" (*ein "durchaus verfehltes"*), and whose presentation to the art-cultured public of Berlin was therefore a piece of audacity that cried for chastisement.—Thus I had, in truth, to ascribe my ill success in Berlin more to my badly-acted rôle of diplomat, than to my opera itself; which, if I had only gone to work with a complete belief in its merits and in my own eagerness to bring them forward, would possibly have made as good a 'hit' in that city as other works of far less effectiveness (*Wirkungskraft*) have done.

[350]

It was a hideous state of mind, in which I returned from Berlin. Only those who have misread my often lasting outbursts of unbridled ironical mirth, could shut their eyes to the fact that I now felt all the more wretched as I had made shipwreck with my enforced attempts at self-dishonouring—commonly called worldly wisdom. Never was the ghastly curb that the unbreakable connection of our modern Art and modern Life imposes on a man's free heart, and makes him bad, more clear to me than at that time. Was there any possible outlet for a single-handed man to find, but—Death? How laughable must seem to me those knowing gabies, who deemed it a point of honour to see nothing in the yearning for this Death but a "residue of Christian exaltation, already overcome by Science," and thus objectionable! If, in my longing to escape from the worthlessness of the modern world, I showed myself a *Christian*,—then I was a more honest Christian than any of those who now, with smug impertinence, upbraid me for my lapse from Christianity.—

One thing, only, kept me on end: *my art*, which for me was no mere mean to fame and gain, but to the proclamation of my thoughts to feeling hearts. When, therefore, I had exorcised that *outer* fiend which had lately tempted me to speculate on outward profit, I for the first time became plainly conscious of how imperative a necessity it was to me, to busy



myself about the formation of that artistic organ through which I might impart my aim to others. This organ was *the theatre*, or better still: the Art of Stage-portrayal, which I recognised each day more clearly as the only redeemer of the Poet, who through it alone can see the object of his Will contented in the certainty of physically-accomplished Deed. On this weightiest point of all, I had hitherto been yielding myself more and more to the hazards of Chance: *now* I felt that it was a question of here, at a definite place and under definite conditions, bringing the right and needful thing to pass; and that it never could be brought to pass, if one's hand were not stretched out at once to work that lay the closest. The [351] winning of the possibility of seeing my artistic views completely realised in the flesh, by the art of Stage-portrayal, no matter where—and therefore best at Dresden, where I was and worked,—seemed henceforth to me my nighest worthy goal; and in the struggle for its reach, I for the moment looked quite away from the constitution of that Public which I thought to gain myself by the mere fact of setting scenic performances so intellectually and physically complete before it, that the sympathy to be wrested from its purely-human Feeling would let it easily be led towards a higher plane.

In this sense I turned back to that art-institute in whose guidance I had already shared, as Kapellmeister, for nigh upon six years. I say: turned *back* to it; since my experiences, reaped thus far, had already reduced me to a state of hopeless indifference in its regard.—The ground of my inner repugnance to taking the post of Kapellmeister to any theatre, especially a Court theatre, had become ever clearer to my perception, in the course of my practical discharge of the duties of that office. Our theatrical institutions have, in general, no other end in view than to cater for a nightly entertainment, never energetically demanded, but forced down people's throats by the spirit of Speculation, and lazily swallowed by the social Ennui of the dwellers in our larger cities. Whatever, from a purely artistic standpoint, has rebelled against this mission of the stage, has always shown itself too weak for any good. The only regulator of distinctions, has been the *section* for whom this entertainment was to be provided: for the *rabble*, brought up in tutored grossness, coarse farces and crass monstrosities were served; the decorous *Philistines* of our bourgeoisie were treated to moral family-pieces; for the more delicately cultured, and art-spoilt *higher* and *highest classes*, only the most elegant art-viands were dished up, often garnished with aesthetic quips. The genuine Poet, who from time to time sought to make good his claim, among those of the three above-named classes, was always driven back with a taunt peculiar to our theatre-public, [352] the taunt of Ennui—at least until he had become an antiquarian morsel wherewith conveniently to grace that art-repast.

Now the special feature of our *greater* theatrical institutions consists in this, that they plan their performances to catch the taste of all three classes of the public; they are provided with an auditorium wherein those classes range themselves entirely apart, according to the figure of their entrance-money, thus placing the artist in the predicament of seeking-out his hearers now among the so-called 'Gods,' now in the Pit, and again in the Boxes. The Director of such institutions, who proximately has no other concern than to make money, has therefore to please each section of his public in its turn: this he arranges, generally with an eye to the business character of the day of the week, by furnishing the most diverse products of the playwright's art, giving today a vulgar burlesque, tomorrow a piece of Philistine sensationalism, and the day after, a toothsome delicacy for the epicures. This still left one thing to be aimed at, namely from all three mentioned *genera* to concoct a *genre* of stage-piece which should satisfy the whole public at one stroke. That task the modern Opera has with great energy fulfilled: it has thrown the vulgar, the philistinish, and the exquisite into one common pot, and now sets the broth before the entire public, crowded head on head. The Opera has thus succeeded in fining down the mob, in vulgarising the genteel, and finally in turning the whole conglomerate audience into a superfinely-mobbish Philistine; who now, in

the shape of the Theatre-public, flings his confused demands into the face of every man who undertakes the guidance of an Art-institute.

This position of affairs will not give a moment's uneasiness to *that* Stage-director whose only business is to charm the money out of the pockets of the "Public": the said problem is solved, even with great tact and never-failing certainty, by every Director of the un-subsidised theatres of our large or smaller cities. It operates confusingly, however, upon those who are called by a royal Court to [353] manage an exactly similar institution, differing only in that it is lent the Court aegis to cover any contingent deficiency in the 'takings.' In virtue of this protecting aegis, the Director of such a Court-theatre ought to feel bound to look aside from any speculation on the already corrupted taste of the masses, and rather to endeavour to improve that taste by seeing to it that the spirit of the stage performances be governed by the dictates of a higher art-intelligence. And, as a matter of fact, such was originally the good intention of enlightened princes, like Joseph II. of Austria, in founding their Court-theatres; as a tradition, it has also been transmitted to the Court-theatre Intendants even of our later days. Two practical obstacles, however, have stood in the way of realising this—in itself more munificently chimerical than actually attainable—object: firstly, the personal incapacity of the appointed Intendant, who is chosen from the ranks of court-officials mostly without any regard to acquired professional skill, or even so much as natural disposition to artistic sensibility; and secondly, the impossibility of really dispensing with speculation on the Public's taste. In fact, the ampler monetary support of the Court-theatres has only led to an increase in the price of the artistic *matériel*, the systematic cultivation whereof, so far as concerns theatric art, has never occurred to the else so education-rabid leaders of our State; and thus the expenses of these institutions have mounted so high, that it has become a sheer necessity to the Director of a Court theatre, beyond all others, to speculate upon the paying public, without whose active help the outlay could not possibly be met. But on the other hand, a successful pursuit of this speculation, in the same sense as that of any other theatrical manager, is made impossible to the distinguished Court-theatre-intendant by the feeling of his higher mission; a mission, however, which—in his personal incapacity for rightly fathoming its import—has been only taken in the sense of a shadowy Court dignity, and could be so interpreted that, for any particularly foolish arrangement, the Intendant [354] would excuse himself by saying that in a Court-theatre this was nobody's business. Thus a modern Court-theatre-intendant's skill can only, and inevitably, result in the perpetual exhibition of a conflict between a *second-rate* spirit of speculation and a courtier's red-tape arrogance. An insight into this dilemma is so easy to be gained, that I here have merely alluded to the situation, without any wish to throw its details into higher relief.

That no one, even the best intentioned, and—to give every man his due—the most accessible to good advice, can wrest himself from the iron grip of this unnatural situation, without he finally decide to give his office up for good: this could not but become perfectly plain to me from my Dresden experiences. These experiences, themselves, I scarcely think it necessary to describe more closely; hardly will it need assurance that, after constantly renewed, and as constantly proved fruitless, endeavours to gain from the good-will of my Intendant toward myself a definitely favourable influence on the affairs of the theatre, I at last fell into a quagmire of torturing cross-purposes, from which I could only free myself again by giving up the attempt entirely, and adhering strictly to the letter of my duties.—

When, then, I left this temporary reserve, and turned my thoughts again towards the Stage, this—in view of the proved fruitlessness of all detached attempts—could only be in the sense of a fundamental and *complete* reform thereof. I could but see that I here had not to do with isolated phenomena, but with a wide connexus of phenomena, whereof I was gradually forced to recognise that *it*, also, was inextricably involved in the endless-branching system of our whole social and political affairs. While pondering on the possibility of a thorough change in

our theatrical relations, I was insensibly driven to a full perception of *the worthlessness of that social and political system which, of its very nature, could beget no other public art-conditions than precisely those I then was grappling with.*—This knowledge was of decisive consequence for the further development of my whole life

[355]

Never had I occupied myself with politics, strictly so called. I now remember that I only turned my attention to the phenomena of the political world in exact measure as in them was manifested the spirit of Revolution—*i.e.*, as pure Human Nature rebelled against politico-juristic Formalism. In this sense a criminal case had the same interest for me as a political action; I could only take the side of the suffering party, and, indeed, in exact measure of vehemence as it was engaged in resisting any kind of oppression. I have never been able to relinquish this manner of 'taking sides,' in favour of any politically constructive notion. Therefore was my interest in the world of politics always in so far of an artistic nature, as I looked beneath its formal expression into its purely human contents. Only when I could strip off from the phenomena their formal shell, fashioned from the traditions of Juristic Rights, and light upon their inward kernel of purely human essence, could they arouse my sympathy; for here I then saw the same impelling motive which drove myself, as artist-man, to wrest from the evil physical form of the Present a new physical mould which should correspond to the true essence of humanity—a mould which is only to be gained through destruction of the physical form of the Present, and therefore through Revolution.

Thus, from my artistic standpoint, and specially on the forementioned path of pondering on the reconstruction of the Stage, (40) I had arrived at a point where I was in a position to thoroughly recognise the necessity of the commencing Revolution of 1848. The formal political channel into which—particularly in Dresden—the stream of agitation first poured itself, did not indeed deceive me as to the true nature of the Revolution; still I held myself at first aloof from any manner of share therein. I set about drawing up a comprehensive plan for the reorganisation of the theatre, in order to be fully equipped so soon as ever [356] the revolutionary question should reach this institution also. It did not escape me that, in a new arrangement of the Civil List, such as was to be expected, the object of the subvention for the Theatre would be submitted to a searching criticism. As it was to be foreseen that, so soon as this question arose, the public utility of the employment of that money would be disputed, my proposed plan was to start with an admission of this uselessness and aimlessness, not only from the standpoint of political economy, but also from that of purely artistic interests; but it was at like time to show the true social aim of theatric art, and to bring the necessity of providing such an aim with all the needful means for its attainment before those who, with righteous indignation, could see nothing in our *existing* Theatre but a useless, or even harmful public institution.

All this was prompted by the assumption of a peaceful *solution* of the imminent, more reformatory than revolutionary questions, and of the serious will of those in power, to themselves set on foot an actual reform. The course of political events was soon to teach me a different lesson; Reaction and Revolution set themselves squarely face to face, and the necessity arose, to either return completely to the Old, or thoroughly break therewith. My observation of the utter haziness of the views of the contending parties, as to the essential contents of the Revolution, decided me one day to openly declare myself *against* the purely formal and political conception of this Revolution, and *for* the necessity of keeping its purely human kernel plainly in the eye. From the results of this step I now saw, for the first time unmistakably, how our politicians were situated with regard to a knowledge of the true spirit of Revolution, and that genuine Revolution could never come from Above, from the standpoint of erudite intellect, but only from Below, from the urgency of true human need. The lying and hypocrisy of the political parties filled me with a disgust that drove me back, at

first, into the most utter solitude.

Here my energy, unsatisfied without, consumed itself [357] once more in projects for artistic work.—Two such projects, which had occupied my thoughts for some time previously, now claimed my attention wellnigh at the same moment; indeed, the character of their subjects made them almost seem to me as one. Even during the musical composition of *Lohengrin*, midst which I had always felt as though resting by an oasis in the desert, *both* these subjects had usurped my poetic fancy: they were "Siegfried" and "Frederic Barbarossa."—

Once again, and that the last time, did Myth and History stand before me with opposing claims; this while, as good as forcing me to decide whether it was a musical drama, or a spoken play, that I had to write. A closer narration of the conflict that lay behind this question, I have purposely reserved until this stage, because it was *here* first that I arrived at its definite answer, and thus at a full consciousness of its true nature.

Since my return to Germany from Paris, my favourite study had been that of ancient German lore I have already dwelt on the deep longing for my native home that filled me then. This Home, however, in its actual reality, could nowise satisfy my longing; thus I felt that a deeper instinct lay behind my impulse, and one that needs must have its source in some other yearning than merely for the modern homeland. As though to get down to its root, I sank myself into the primal element of Home, that meets us in the legends of a Past which attracts us the more warmly as the Present repels us with its hostile chill. To all our wishes and warm impulses, which in truth transport us to the *Future*, we seek to give a physical token by means of pictures from the Past, and thus to win for them *a* form the modern Present never can provide In the struggle to give the wishes of my heart artistic shape, and in the ardour to discover *what* thing it was that drew me so resistlessly to the primal source of old home Sagas, I drove step by step into the deeper regions of antiquity, where at last to my delight, and truly in the *utmost* reaches of old time, I was to light upon the fair young form of [358] *Man*, in all the freshness of his force My studies thus bore me, through the legends of the Middle Ages, right down to their foundation in the old-Germanic Mythos; one swathing after another, which the later legendary lore had bound around it, I was able to unloose, and thus at last to gaze upon it in its chastest beauty. What here I saw, was no longer the Figure of conventional history, whose garment claims our interest more than does the actual shape inside; but the real naked Man, in whom I might spy each throbbing of his pulses, each stir within his mighty muscles, in uncramped, freest motion: the type of the true *human being*.

At like time I had sought this human being *in History too*. Here offered themselves *relations*, and nothing but relations; the *human being* I could only see in so far as the relations ordered him: and not as he had power to order *them*. To get to the bottom of these 'relations,' whose coercive force compelled the strongest man to squander all his powers on objectless and never-compassed aims, I turned afresh to the soil of Greek antiquity, and here, again, was pointed at the last *to Mythos*, in which alone I could touch the ground of even these *relations*: but in that Mythos, these social relations were drawn in lines as simple, plastic and distinct as I had earlier recognised therein the human shape itself. From this side, also, did Mythos lead me to this Man alone, as to the involuntary *creator* of those relations, which, in their documento-monumental perversion, as the excrescences of History (*Geschichtsmomente*), as traditional fictions and established rights, have at last usurped dominion over Man and ground to dust his freedom.

Although the splendid type of *Siegfried* had long attracted me, it first enthralled my every thought when I had come to see it in its purest human shape, set free from every later wrappage Now for the first time, also, did I recognise the possibility of making him the hero



of a drama; a possibility that had not occurred to me while I [359] only knew him from the medieval *Nibelungenlied*. But at like time with him, had *Friedrich I.* loomed on me from the study of our History: he appeared to me, just as he had appeared to the Saga-framing German Folk, a historical rebirth of the old-pagan Siegfried. When the wave of political commotion broke lately in upon us, and proclaimed itself at first, in Germany, as a longing for national unity, it could not but seem to me that Friedrich I. would lie nearer to the Folk, (41) and be more readily understood, than the downright human Siegfried. Already I had sketched the plan for a drama in five acts, which should depict this Friedrich's life, from the Roncalian Diet down to his entry on the Crusade. But ever and again I turned in discontentment from my plan. It was no mere desire to mirror detached historical events, that had prompted my sketch, but the wish to show a wide connexus of relations, in such a fashion that its unity might be embraced in easy survey, and understood at once. In order to make plainly understandable both my hero and the relations that with giant force he strives to master, only to be at last subdued by them, I should have felt compelled to adopt the method of Mythos, in the very teeth of the historic material: the vast mass of incidents and intricate associations, whereof no single link could be omitted if the connection of the whole was to be intelligibly set before the eye, was adapted neither to the form, nor to the spirit of Drama. Had I chosen to comply with the imperative demands of History, then had my drama become an unsurveyable conglomerate of pictured incidents, entirely crowding out from view the real and only thing I wished to show; and thus, as artist, I should have met precisely the same fate in my drama as [360] did its hero: to wit, I should myself have been crushed by the weight of the very *relations* that I fain would master—i.e. portray—, without ever having brought my *purpose* to an understanding; just as Friedrich could not bring his *will* to carrying-out To attain my purpose, I should therefore have had to reduce this mass of relations by *free* construction, and should have fallen into a treatment that would have absolutely violated History. (42) Yet I could not but see the contradiction involved herein; for it was the main characteristic of Friedrich, in my eyes, that he should be a *historical* hero. If, on the other hand, I wished to dabble in mythical construction, then, for its ultimate and highest form, but quite beyond the modern poet's reach, I must go back to the unadulterated Mythos, which up to now the Folk alone has hymned, and which I had already found in full perfection—in the "Siegfried."

I now returned to "Siegfried"—at the selfsame time as, disgusted with the empty formalistic tendency of the doings of our political parties, I withdrew from contact with our public life—and that with a full conviction of History's unsuitedness to Art. But at like time I had definitely solved for myself a problem of artistic formalism: namely, the question of the applicability of the pure, i.e. the merely spoken, Play (*Schauspiel*) to the Drama of the Future. This question by no means presented itself to me from the formal æsthetic standpoint, but I happened on it through the very character of the poetic 'stuff' to be portrayed; which character alone, henceforth, laid down my lines of treatment When outward instigations prompted me to take up the sketch of "Friedrich Rothbart," I did not for a moment doubt that it could only be dealt with as a spoken play, and by no manner of means as a drama to be set to music. In that [361] period of my life when I conceived *Rienzi*; it might perhaps have struck me to regard the "Rothbart," also, as an opera subject: now, when it was no longer my purpose to write operas, but before all to give forth my poetic thoughts (*Anschaungen*) in the most living of artistic forms, to wit in Drama, I had not the remotest idea of handling a historico-political subject otherwise than as a spoken play. Yet when I put aside this 'stuff,' it was nowise from any scruple that might perchance have come to me as opera-poet and composer, and forbidden me to leave the trade that I was versed in: no, it came about— as I have shown—simply because I learnt to see the general unfitness of the *Stuff for drama*; and

this, again, grew clear to me, not merely from any scruple as to the artistic form, but from dissatisfaction of that same sheer human feeling that in actual life was set on edge by the political formalism of our era. I felt that the highest of what I had seen from the purely human standpoint, and longed to show to others, could *not* be imparted in the treatment of a historico-political subject; that the mere intellectual exposition of *relations* made impossible to me the presentment of the purely human Individuality; that I should therefore have had to leave to be *unriddled* the only and essential thing I was concerned with, and not to bring it actually and sensibly before the Feeling. For these reasons, together with the historico-political *subject* I necessarily also cast aside that dramatic *art-form* with which alone it could have been invested: for I recognised that this form had issued only from that subject, and by it alone was justifiable, but that it was altogether incapable of convincingly imparting to the Feeling the purely-human subject on which alone my gaze was henceforth bent; and thus that, with the disappearance of the historico-political subject, there must also necessarily vanish, in the future, the spoken form of play (*die Schauspielform*), as inadequate to meet the novel subject, incongruous and halting.

I have said that it was not my profession of Opera-composer that caused me to give up a story merely fitted [362] for the Play: nevertheless I must avow, that a recognition of the essence of the spectacular play and of the historico-political subject that demands this form, such as had now arisen in me, could certainly *not* have come to any absolute playwright or dramatic litterateur, but only to a man and artist who had passed through a development like mine, under the influence of the spirit of *music*.—Already in speaking of my Paris period, I have mentioned how I looked on Music as the good angel, who, amid my revolt against the baseness of modern public art, preserved me as an artist and saved me from the mere literary activity of the critic. In that paragraph, I reserved to myself the opportunity of describing somewhat more closely the influence that my musical predisposition (*Stimmung*) exerted on the fashioning of my artistic works. Although the character of this influence can scarcely have escaped anyone who has attentively followed the account of the origination of my poems, yet I must here return to the matter still more explicitly, since it was precisely now that, in forming an important artistic decision, this influence came to my full consciousness.

As far as my *Rienzi* I had it only in my mind to write an "opera." To this end I sought out my materials, and, merely concerned for "opera," I chose them from ready-made stories, and indeed from such as had already been fashioned with deliberate attention to artistic form: (43) a dramatic fairy-tale of Gozzi's, a play of Shakespeare's, and finally a romance of Bulwer's, I arranged for the sole end of Opera. With regard to the *Rienzi*, I have already said that I manipulated the story—as, for the matter of that, was unavoidable, from the very nature of a historical romance—according to my own impressions, and in such a manner as—to recall my expression—I had seen it through the "opera-glasses." With the *Flying Dutchman*, whose origin from specific moods of my own life I have already sufficiently [363] described, I struck out a new path; inasmuch as I became, myself; the artistic modeller of a 'stuff' that lay before me only in the blunt and simple outlines of Folk-Saga. Henceforward, with all my dramatic works, I was in the first instance *Poet*, and only in the complete working-out of the poem, did I become once more Musician. Only, I was a poet who was conscious in advance of the faculty of *musical* expression, for the working-out of his poems. This faculty I had exercised so far, that I was fully aware of my ability to employ it on the realisation of a poetic aim, and not only to reckon on its help when drafting a poetic sketch, but in that knowledge to draw such sketch itself more *freely*, and more in accordance with poetic necessity, than if I had designed merely with an eye to the musical effect. Before this, I had had to acquire facility of musical expression in the same manner as one learns a language. He who has not made himself thoroughly at home with a foreign, unaccustomed tongue, must pay heed to its idiosyncrasies in everything he says; to express himself intelligibly, he must keep a constant



watch upon this mode of utterance itself, and deliberately reckon for it *What* he desires to say. Wherefore, for every sentence he is entangled in the formal rules of speech, and cannot as yet speak out from his instinctive Feeling, and altogether *how* he means to, *what* he feels and what he sees. The rather, for their utterance, he must model his feelings and seeings, themselves, on a form of expression whereof he is not so completely master as of his mother-tongue; in which latter, entirely careless of expression, he finds the correct expression without an effort.

Now, however, I had completely learnt the speech of Music; I was at home with it, as with a genuine mother-tongue; in what I wished to utter, I need no more be careful for the formal mode: it stood ready at my call, exactly as I needed it, to impart a definite impression or emotion (*Anschauung oder Empfindung*) in keeping with my inner impulse. But one can never speak a foreign tongue without fatigue, and at like time thoroughly correctly, until one has taken up its spirit into oneself; until one feels [364] and thinks in this tongue, and thus desires to utter nothing but that which can be uttered in its spirit. When, however, we have arrived at speaking entirely from out the spirit of a tongue, at feeling and thinking quite instinctively therein, there also springs up in us the power of broadening this very spirit, of enriching and extending at once the mode of utterance and the utter-able in that tongue. Yet that which is utterable in the speech of Music, is limited to *feelings* and *emotions*: it expresses, in abundance, that which has been cast adrift from our Word-speech (*Wortsprache*) at its conversion into a mere organ of the Intellect, namely, the emotional contents of Purely-human speech. What thus remains unutterable in the absolute-musical tongue, is the exact definition of the *object* of the feeling and emotion, whereby the latter reach themselves a surer definition. The broadening and extension of the Musical form of speech (*musikalischer Sprachausdruck*), as called for by this Object, therefore consists in the attainment of the power to outline sharply and distinctly the Individual and the Particular; and this it gains alone by being wed to Word-speech. But then only can this marriage prove a fruitful one, when the Musical-speech allies itself directly to its kindred elements in Word-speech; the union must take place precisely *there*, where in Word-speech itself there is evinced a mastering desire for real utterance of Feeling to the senses. This, again, is governed by the *matter* to be uttered (*Inhalt des Auszudrückenden*), and the degree in which it becomes, from a matter of the intellect, a matter of the feeling. A Matter that is only seizable by the Understanding, can be conveyed alone by means of Word-speech; but the more it expands into a phase of Feeling, the more definitely does it also need a mode of expression that Tone-speech alone can, at the last, confer on it with answering fulness. Herewith is laid down, quite of itself; the Matter of what the Word-Tone poet has to utter: it is, *the Purely-human, freed from every shackle of Convention*.

With the attained facility of speaking in this Tone-speech [365] freely from my heart, I naturally could only have to give my message also in the spirit of that speech; and where, as artist-man, I felt the most peremptorily urged to its delivery, the Matter of my message was necessarily dictated by the Spirit of the means of expression that I had made my own. The poetic 'stuffs' which urged me to artistic fashioning, could only be of such a nature that, before all else, they usurped my emotional, and not my intellectual being: only the Purely-human (*Reinmenschliche*), loosed from all historical formality, could—once it came before my vision in its genuine natural shape, unruffled from outside—arouse my interest, and spur me on to impart what I beheld. What I beheld, I now looked at solely with the eyes of Music; though not of *that* music whose formal maxims might have held me still embarrassed for expression, but of the music which I had within my heart, and wherein I might express myself as in a mother-tongue. With this freedom of faculty, I now might

address myself without a hindrance to *that to be expressed*; henceforth the *object* of expression was the sole matter for regard in all my workmanship. Thus, precisely by the acquirement of facility in musical expression, did I become a *poet*; inasmuch as I no longer had, as fashioning artist, to refer to the mode of expression itself, but only to its object. Yet, without deliberately setting about an enrichment of the means of musical expression, I was absolutely driven to expand them, by the very nature of the objects I was seeking to express.

Now it lay conditioned in the nature of an advance from musical emotionalism (*Empfindungswesen*) to the shaping of poetic stuffs, that I should condense (44) the vague, more general emotional contents of these stuffs to an ever clearer and more individual precision, and thus at last arrive at the point where the poet, in his direct concern with Life, takes a firmer hold of the matter to be conveyed through musical expression, and stamps it with his own intent Whosoever, [366] therefore, will carefully consider the construction (*Bildung*) of the three accompanying poems, will find that what I drew in haziest outline in the *Flying Dutchman*, I brought with ever plainer definition into stabler form in *Tannhäuser*, and finally in *Lohengrin*. Since by such a procedure I was enabled to draw nearer and nearer to actual Life, I must inevitably reach a point of time at last, when, under certain external impressions, a poetic subject such as that of "*Friedrich Rothbart*" would present itself to me, for whose modelling I should have had to downright renounce all musical expression. But it was precisely here, that my hitherto *unconscious* procedure came to my *consciousness* as an artistic Necessity. With this 'stuff,' which would have made me altogether forget my music, I became aware of the bearings of true poetic stuffs in general; and *there, where I must have left unused my faculty of musical expression, I also found that I should have had to subordinate my poetic attainments to political abstractions, and thus to radically forswear my artistic nature.*—Here was it, also, that I had the most urgent occasion to clear my mind as to the essential difference between the historico-political, and the purely-human life; and when I knowingly and willingly gave up the "*Friedrich*," in which I had approached the closest to that political life, and—by so much the clearer as to what I wished—gave preference to the "*Siegfried*," I had entered a new and most decisive period of my evolution, both as artist and as man the period of *conscious artistic will* to continue on an altogether novel path, which I had struck with unconscious necessity, and whereon I now, as man and artist, press on to meet a newer world. (45)

I have here described the influence that my possession with the spirit of Music exerted on the choice of my poetic stuffs, and therewith on their poetic fashioning. I have next to show the reaction that my poetic procedure, thus influenced, exercised in turn upon my musical expression and its form.—This reaction manifested itself chiefly in [367] *two* departments: in the *dramatic-musical form* in general, and in the *melody* in particular.

Seeing that, onward from the said turning-point of my artistic course, I was once for all determined by *the stuff*, and by that stuff as seen with the eye of Music: so in its fashioning, I must necessarily pass forward to a gradual but complete upheaval of the traditional *operatic form*. This opera-form was never, of its very nature, a form embracing the whole Drama, but the rather an arbitrary conglomerate of separate smaller forms of song, whose fortuitous concatenation of Arias, Duos, Trios, &c., with Choruses and so-called ensemble-pieces, made out the actual edifice of Opera. In the poetic fashioning of my stuffs, it was henceforth impossible for me to contemplate a filling of these ready-moulded forms, but solely a bringing of the drama's broader Object to the cognisance of the Feeling. In the whole course of the drama I saw no possibility of division or demarcation, other than the Acts in which the place or time, or the Scenes in which the *dramatis personae* change. Moreover, the plastic unity of the Mythic Stuff brought with it this advantage, that, in the arrangement of my Scenes, all those minor details, which the modern playwright finds so indispensable for the elucidation of involved historical occurrences, were quite unnecessary, and the whole strength

of the portrayal could be concentrated upon a few weighty and decisive moments of development. Upon the working-out of these fewer scenes, in each of which a decisive *stimmung* was to be given its full play, I might linger with an exhaustiveness already reckoned-for in the original draft; I was not compelled to make shift with mere suggestions, and—for sake of the outward economy—to hasten on from one suggestion to another; but with needful repose, I could display the simple object in the very last connections required to bring it clearly home to the dramatic understanding. Through this natural attribute of the Stuff, I was not in the least coerced to strain the planning of my scenes into any preconceived conformity with given musical forms, [368] since they dictated of themselves their mode of musical completion. In the ever surer feeling hereof, it thus could no more occur to me to rack with wilful outward canons the musical form that sprang self-bidden from the very nature of these scenes, to break its natural mould by violent grafting-in of conventional slips of operatic song. Thus I by no means set out with the fixed purpose of a deliberate iconoclast (*Formumänderer*— lit: changer of forms) (46) to destroy, forsooth, the prevailing operatic forms, of Aria, Duet, &c.; but the omission of these forms followed from the very nature of the Stuff, with whose intelligible presentment to the Feeling through an adequate vehicle, I had alone to do. A mechanical reflex (*unwillkürliches Wissen*) of those traditional forms still influenced me so much in my *Flying Dutchman*, that any attentive investigator will recognise how often there it governed even the arrangement of my scenes; and only gradually, in *Tannhäuser*, and yet more decisively in *Lohengrin*—accordingly, with a more and more practised knowledge of the nature of my Stuff and the means necessary for its presentment—did I extricate myself from that form-al influence, and more and more definitely rule the Form of portrayal by the requirements and peculiarities of the Stuff and Situation.

This procedure, dictated by the nature of the poetic [369] subject, exercised a quite specific influence on the *tissue* of my music, as regards the characteristic *combination and ramification of the Thematic Motifs*. Just as the joinery of my individual Scenes excluded every alien and unnecessary detail, and led all interest to the dominant Chief-mood (*vorwaltende Hauptstimmung*), so did the whole building of my drama join itself into one organic unity, whose easily-surveyed members were made-out by those fewer scenes and situations which set the passing mood: no mood (*Stimmung*) could be permitted to be struck in any one of these scenes, that did not stand in a weighty relation to the moods of all the other scenes, so that the development of the moods from out each other, and the constant obviousness of this development, should establish the unity of the drama in its very mode of expression. Each of these chief moods, in keeping with the nature of the Stuff, must also gain a definite musical expression, which should display itself to the sense of hearing as a definite musical Theme. Just as, in the progress of the drama, the intended climax of a decisory Chief-mood was only to be reached through a development, continuously present to the Feeling, of the individual moods already roused: so must the musical expression, which directly influences the physical feeling, necessarily take a decisive share in this development to a climax; and this was brought about, quite of itself, in the shape of a characteristic tissue of principal themes, that spread itself not over *one* scene only (as heretofore in separate operatic 'numbers'), but *over the whole drama*, and that in *intimate connection with the poetic aim*.

The characteristic peculiarity of this thematic method, and its weighty consequences for the emotional understanding of a poetic aim, I have minutely described and vindicated, from the theoretic standpoint, in the third part of my book: *Opera and Drama*. While referring my readers to that work, I have only, in keeping with the object of the present Communication, to underline the fact that in *this* procedure also, which had never before [370] been systematically extended over the whole drama, I was not prompted by reflection, but solely by

practical experience and the nature of my artistic aim. I remember, before I set about the actual working-out of the *Flying Dutchman*, to have drafted first the Ballad of Senta in the second act, and completed both its verse and melody. In this piece, I unconsciously laid the thematic germ of the whole music of the opera: it was the picture *in petto* of the whole drama, such as it stood before my soul; and when I was about to betitle the finished work, I felt strongly tempted to call it a "dramatic ballad." In the eventual composition of the music, the thematic picture, thus evoked, spread itself quite instinctively over the whole drama, as one continuous tissue; I had only, without further initiative, to take the various thematic germs included in the Ballad and develop them to their legitimate conclusions, and I had all the Chief-moods of this poem, quite of themselves, in definite thematic shapes before me. I should have had stubbornly to follow the example of the self-willed opera-composer, had I chosen to invent a fresh motif for each recurrence of one and the same mood in different scenes; a course whereto I naturally did not feel the smallest inclination, since I had only in my mind the most intelligible portrayal of the subject-matter, and not a mere conglomerate of operatic numbers.

*Tannhäuser* I treated in a similar fashion, and finally *Lohengrin*; only that I here had not a finished musical piece before me in advance, such as that Ballad, but from the aspect of the scenes and their organic growth out of one another I first created the picture itself on which the thematic rays should all converge, and then let them fall in changeful play *wherever* necessary for the understanding of the main situations. Moreover my treatment gained a more definite artistic form, especially in *Lohengrin*, through a continual re-modelling of the thematic material to fit the character of the passing situation; and thus the music won a greater variety of appearance than was the case, for instance, in the *Flying Dutchman*, where the reappearance [371] of a Theme had often the mere character of an absolute Reminiscence—a device that had already been employed, before myself, by other composers.—

I have still to indicate the influence of my general poetic method upon the shaping of my Themes themselves, upon *the Melody*.

From the 'absolute-music' period of my youth, I recall that I had often posed myself the question: How must I set about, to invent thoroughly original Melodies, which should bear a stamp peculiar to myself? The more I approached the period when I based my musical construction upon the poetic Stuff the more completely vanished this anxiety for a special style of melody, until at last I lost it altogether. In my earlier operas I was purely governed by traditional or modern Melody, whose character I imitated and, from the solicitude just mentioned, merely sought to trick with rhythmic and harmonic artifices, and thus to model in a fashion of my own. I had always, however, a greater leaning to broad and long-spun melodies than to the short, broken and contrapuntal *melismus* proper to Instrumental Chamber-music: in my *Liebesverbot*, indeed, I had openly thrown myself into the arms of the modern Italian *cantilena*. In *Rienzi*, wherever the Stuff itself did not already begin to govern my invention, I was governed by the Franco-Italian Melismus, especially in the form in which it appealed to me from *Spontini's* operas. But the Operatic Melody, as stamped upon the modern ear, lost more and more its influence over me, and at last entirely, when I took in hand the *Flying Dutchman*.

While the putting-off of that outer influence followed chiefly from the nature of the general course I opened with this work, on the other hand I derived a reimbursement for my melody from the spirit of the Folk-song, to which I there approached. Already in that Ballad, I was



governed by an instinctive feeling (*unwillkürliches Innehaben*) of the peculiarities of national Folk-melismus; yet [372] more decisively in the Spinning-Chorus, and most of all in the Sailors' Song.

That which most palpably distinguishes the Folk-melody from the modern Italian melismus, is principally its sharp and lively *rhythm*, a family feature from the Folk-dance. Our *absolute* melody loses all popular intelligibility, in exact measure as it departs from this rhythmic quality; and, seeing that the history of modern operatic music is nothing else than that of Absolute Melody, (47) it seems easy to explain why the newer, especially the French composers and their imitators, have been compelled to turn back to the sheer Dance-melody, and now-a-days the *contredanse*, with its derivatives, inspires the whole of modern Opera-melody. For myself, however, I had now no more to do with *operatic melodies*, but with the most fitting vehicle for my subject of portrayal. In the *Flying Dutchman*, therefore, I touched indeed the rhythmic melody of the Folk, but only where the Stuff itself brought me at all into contact with the Folk-element, here taking more or less a National form. Wherever I had to give utterance to the emotions of my dramatis personae, as shown by them in feeling discourse, I was forced to entirely abstain from this rhythmic melody of the Folk: or rather, it could not so much as occur to me, to employ that method of expression; nay, here the dialogue itself, conformably to the emotional contents, was to be rendered in such a fashion that, *not the melodic Expression, per se, but the expressed Emotion* should rouse the interest of the hearer. The melody must therefore spring, quite of itself, from out the verse; in itself, as sheer melody, it could not be permitted to attract attention, but only in so far as it was the most expressive vehicle for an emotion already plainly outlined in the words. With this strict (*nothwendig*) conception of the melodic element, I now completely left the usual operatic mode of composition; inasmuch as I no longer tried intentionally for customary melody, or, in a sense, for Melody at all, but absolutely *let it take its rise* from feeling utterance of the words.

[373]

How very gradually this came about, however, as waned the influence of accustomed operatic melody, will be obvious from a consideration of my music to the *Flying Dutchman*. Here I was still so governed by the wonted Melismus, that I even retained the Cadenza, here and there, in all its nakedness; and to any one who, on the other hand, must admit that with this *Flying Dutchman* I commenced my new departure in the matter of melody, this may serve as proof with how little premeditation I swerved into that path.—In the further evolution of my melody, however un-deliberately I followed it in *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin*, at all events I freed myself more and more definitely from that influence, and that in exact measure as the Emotion expressed *in the verbal phrase (Sprachvers)* alone dictated to me its mode of enhancement by musical expression; nevertheless, here also, and markedly in *Tannhäuser*, a preoccupation with melodic Form, i.e., the felt necessity of aiming at a *strictly melodic* garment for my dialogue, is still distinctly visible. It is clear to me *now*, that this aim was still thrust upon me by an *imperfection in our modern verse*, in which I could find no *sensible* trace of natural melodic source, or standard of musical expression.

Upon the nature of Modern Verse I have spoken at length, in Part III. of *Opera and Drama*; here, therefore, I shall only touch upon it in so far as concerns its utter lack of *genuine Rhythm*. The rhythm of Modern Verse is a mere *indoctrination*; and no one could feel this more plainly, than that composer who fain would take from such verse alone the matter wherewithal to build his melody. In face of this Verse, I saw myself compelled either to dispense with melodic rhythm altogether, or, so soon as from the standpoint of sheer Music I felt a need thereof, to borrow wilfully the rhythmic structure of my melody from just that of absolute Opera-melody, and often artificially to bolster it upon the verse. Thus, whenever the expression of the poetry so gained the upper hand, that I could only justify the melody to my

Feeling by appeal thereto, this [374] melody must needs lose almost all rhythmic character, if it were not to bear a forced relation to the verse; and in treating it so, I was infinitely more conscientious and true to my purpose, than when contrariwise I sought to enliven my melody by a capricious rhythm.

I was hereby brought into the most intimate, and eventually fruitful concernment with Verse and *Speech*, wherefrom alone a sound Dramatic melody can gain its vindication. My melody's loss in rhythmic definition, or better: *strikingness*, I now made good by a *harmonic* livening of the expression, such as only a man in *my* situation towards melody could feel a need of. Whereas modern opera-composers had merely sought to make the wonted Opera-melody, in its final utter pauperism and stereotyped immutability, just new and piquant by far-fetched artifices, (48) the harmonic suppleness (*Beweglichkeit*) that I gave my melody had its mainspring in the feeling of a quite other need. I had now completely given up Traditional Melody, with its want of any prop, or vindication of its rhythmic structure, in the spoken text; in place of that *false* rhythmic garb, I gave my melody a harmonic characterisation, which, with its determinant effect upon the sense of hearing, made it the answering expression of each emotion pictured in the verse. Further, I heightened the individuality of this expression by a more and more symbolic treatment of the *instrumental orchestra*, to which latter I assigned the special office of making plain the harmonic 'motivation' of the melody. This method of procedure, at bottom directed to *dramatic* melody alone, I followed with the most decision in my *Lohengrin*, in which I have thus pursued to its necessary consequences the course struck-out in the *Flying Dutchman*.—One thing alone remained to be discovered, in this quest for artistic Form: namely, a new *rhythmical* enlivenment of the melody, to be won from its justification *by the verse*, by the *speech* itself. This also, I was to attain; [375] and that by no turning back upon my road, but by logical pursuit of a course whose idiosyncrasy consisted herein: that I derived my artistic bent, not from the *Form*—as almost all our modern artists have—but from the poetic *Stuff*.—

When I sketched my "*Siegfried*"—for the moment leaving altogether out of count its form of musical completion—I felt the impossibility, or at least the utter unsuitability, of carrying-out that poem in modern verse. With the conception of "*Siegfried*," I had pressed forward to where I saw before me the Human Being in the most natural and blithest fulness of his physical life. No historic garment more, confined his limbs; no outwardly-imposed relation hemmed his movements, which, springing from, the inner fount of Joy-in-life, so bore themselves in face of all encounter, that error and bewilderment, though nurtured on the wildest play of passions, might heap themselves around until they threatened to destroy him, without the hero checking for a moment, even in the face of death, the welling outflow of that inner fount; or ever holding anything the rightful master of himself and his own movements, but alone the natural outstreaming of his restless fount of Life. It was "Elsa" who had taught me to unearth this man: to me, he was the male-embodied spirit of perennial and sole creative Instinct (*Unwillkür*), of the doer of true Deeds, of *Manhood* in the utmost fulness of its inborn strength and proved loveliness. Here, in the promptings of this Man, Love's brooding Wish had no more place; but bodily lived it there, swelled every vein, and stirred each muscle of the gladsome being, to all-enthraling practice of its essence.

Just so as this Human Being moved, must his spoken utterance need to be. Here sufficed no more the merely *thought-out* verse, with its hazy, limbless body; the fantastic cheat of terminal Rhyme could no longer throw its cloak of seeming flesh above the total lack of living bony framework, above the viscid cartilage, here stretched capriciously [376] and there compressed, that verse's hulk still holds within as makeshift I must have straightway let my "*Siegfried*" go, could I have dressed it only in such verse. Thus I must needs bethink me of a



Speech-melody quite other. And yet, in truth, I had not to bethink, but merely to resolve me; for at the primal mythic spring where I had found the fair young Siegfried-man, I also lit, led by his hand, upon the physically-perfect mode of utterance wherein alone that man could speak his feelings. This was the *alliterative* verse, bending itself in natural and lively rhythm to the actual accents of our speech, yielding itself so readily to every shade of manifold expression,—that *Stabreim* (49) which the Folk itself once sang, when *it* was still both Poet and Myth-Maker. (50)

Upon the nature of this verse, how it wins its shape from the deep begetting force of *Speech* itself, and how it pours that force again into the female element of Music, to bring forth there the perfect melody of Rhythmic Tone, I have likewise dwelt in the said Part III. of *Opera and Drama*; and, now that I have shown the discovery of this form-al innovation, too, as being a necessary consequence of my artistic labours, I might perhaps consider the general aim of this Communication reached. Since I cannot as yet lay "Siegfried's Death" before the public, all further reference thereto must needs to me seem objectless, or at any rate [377] exposed to every kind of mis-understanding. Only in so far as an allusion to my remaining poetic drafts, and the life-moods whence they sprang, seems still to me of some importance for the explanation or vindication of my since-published theoretic writings, do I hold it of any use to continue this narration.

This I shall do—in brief—all the more gladly, since in this Communication, besides the aim I mentioned at the beginning, I have another and a special one: namely, to make my friends so far acquainted with the course of my development right down to the present day, that whenever I shall next come openly before them with a new dramatic work, I may hope to then address myself to folk entirely familiar. For sortie time past, I have been utterly cut off from this direct artistic intercourse; I could only address my friends from time to time, and now again, as Essayist. Of the pain this kind of address inflicts upon me, I scarcely need assure those who know me as Artist; they will recognise it in the very style of my literary works, where I must torture myself with circumstantial details to express That which I might show so tersely, easily and trimly in the work of art itself, were only its fitting physical presentment so ready to my hand as is its technical description with the pen on paper. But so hateful to me is the scribblers' art, and the Want that has driven me into their ranks, that I fain would make this Communication my last literary appearance before my friends: wherefore I here take stock of all that, under the prevailing difficulties of my lot, I still think necessary to say, in order to apprise them definitely what they have to expect from my newest dramatic work whenever it shall be set before them in performance; for *that* I wish to then induct to life *without* a Preface. (51)

I therefore proceed.—

My poem of "Siegfried's Death" I had sketched and [378] executed solely to satisfy my inner promptings, and nowise with the thought of a production on our theatric boards, or with the dramatic means to hand; which I could not but hold in every respect unsuitable thereto. Only quite recently has the hope been roused in me, that, under certain favouring conditions, and in due course of time, I may be able to bring this drama before the public; however, only after those preparations needful to guarantee as far as possible an effective production, shall have come to a happy issue. This is also the reason why I still keep back the poem.—In those days, in the autumn of 1848, I never dreamt of the possibility of a performance of "Siegfried's Death;" but merely regarded its technical completion in verse, and some fugitive attempts at

its musical composition, as an inner gratification, which I bestowed upon myself at that time of disgust at public affairs, and withdrawal from their contact.—This sad and solitary situation as man and artist, however, could not but be hereby forced all the more painfully upon my consciousness; and the gnawing torments of that pain I could only quiet by giving rein to my restless impulse towards fresh schemes. I was burning to write Something that should take the message of my tortured brain, and speak it in a fashion to be understood by present life. Just as with my Siegfried," the force of my desire had borne me to the fount of the Eternal Human: so now, when I found this desire cut off by Modern Life from all appeasement, and saw afresh that the sole redemption lay in flight from out this life, in casting-off its claims on me by self-destruction, did I come to the fount of every modern rendering of such a situation—to *Jesus of Nazareth* the Man.

While pondering on the wondrous apparition of this Jesus, I arrived at a judgment particularly resultful for the Artist, inasmuch as I distinguished between the symbolical Christ and *Him* who, thought-of as existing at a certain time and amid definite surroundings, presents so easily embraced an image to our hearts and minds. When I considered the epoch and the general life-conditions in [379] which so loving and so love-athirst a soul, as that of Jesus, unfolded itself, nothing seemed to me more natural than that this *solitary* One—who, fronted with a materialism (*Sinnlichkeit*) so honourless, so hollow, and so pitiful as that of the Roman world, and still more of the world subjected to the Roman's, could not demolish it and build upon its wrack an order answering to his soul's desire—should straightway long from out that world, from out the wider world at large, towards a better land Beyond,—toward Death. Since I saw the modern world of nowadays a prey to worthlessness akin to that which then surrounded Jesus, so did I now recognise this longing, in correspondence with the characteristics of our present state of things, as in truth deep-rooted in man's sentient nature, which yearns from out an evil and dishonoured world-of-sense (*Sinnlichkeit*) towards a nobler reality (52) that shall answer to his nature purified. Here Death is but the moment of despair; it is the act of demolition that we discharge upon ourselves, since—as solitary units—we can not discharge it on the evil order of the tyrant world. But the actual destruction of the outer, visible bonds of that honourless materialism, is the duty which devolves on *us*, as the healthy proclamation of a stress turned heretofore toward self-destruction.—So the thought attracted me, to present the nature of Jesus—such as it has gained a meaning for *our*, for the consciousness directed to the stir of Life—in such a fashion that his self-offering should be the but imperfect utterance of that human instinct which drives the individual into revolt against a loveless whole, into a revolt which the altogether Isolated can certainly [380] only seal by self-destruction; but yet which in this very self-destruction proclaims its own true nature, in that it was not directed to the personal death, but to a disowning of the lovelessness around (*der lieblosen Allgemeinheit*). (53)

In this sense did I seek to vent my rebellious feelings in the sketch of a drama, "*Jesus of Nazareth*." Two overpowering objections, however, held me back from filling up the preliminary draft: the one arose from the contradictory nature of the subject-matter, in the guise in which it lies before us; the other, from the recognised impossibility of bringing this work, either, to a public hearing. The story, such as it has stamped itself once and for all on the mind of the Folk, through religious dogma and popular conception, must be done too grievous a violence, if I fain would give therein my modern reading of its nature; its popular features must be touched, and altered with a deliberation more philosophic than artistic, in order to insensibly withdraw them from the customary point of view and show them in the light that I had seen them in. Now, even if I had been able to overcome *this*, yet I could not shut my eyes to the fact, that the only thing which could give this subject the meaning I intended, was just our modern life-conditions; and that this meaning could only have a due effect, provided it were set *precisely now* before the Folk, and not *hereafter*, when these same

conditions should have been demolished by that very Revolution which at like time—on the shore beyond—should open out the only possibility of publicly producing to the Folk this drama.

For I had already so far come to an agreement with myself, concerning the character of the movement around me, that I deemed we must either remain completely rooted in the Old, or completely bring the New to burst its swathings. A clear glance upon the outer world, freed from all illusions, taught me conclusively that I must altogether give up my *Jesus of Nazareth*. This glance, which, from [381] within my brooding solitude, I cast upon the political world outside, showed me now the near approaching catastrophe, that must inevitably engulf each man who was in earnest for a fundamental change of existing bad conditions, if, even amid such bad conditions, he loved his own existence above all else. In face of the open and shamelessly outspoken insolence of the outlived Old, which would fain maintain itself at any price, my earlier plans, such as that for a Stage reform, could not but now take for me a childish light. I gave them up, like all besides that had filled me with hope, and thus deceived me as to the true state of affairs. With a foreboding of the unavoidable decisions which, do what I might, must soon confront me also, if only I remained true to my nature and my opinions, I now shunned all drafting of artistic projects; every stroke of the pen that I might have driven, seemed laughable to me now, when I could no longer belie or numb myself with any artistic aspiration. Of a morning I left my chamber with its empty writing-table, and wandered alone in the open, to sun myself in the waking Spring; and midst its waxing warmth to cast aside all self-seeking wishes that might still have enchained me, with their cheating visions, to a world of conditions from which all my longing was tumultuously urging me forth.

Thus did the Dresden rising come upon me; a rising which I, with many others, regarded as the beginning of a general upheaval in Germany. After what I have said, who can be so intentionally blind as not to see that I had *there* no longer any choice, where I could only now determinately turn my back upon a world to which, in my inmost nature, I had long since ceased to belong?—

With nothing can I compare the feeling of wellbeing that invaded me—after the first painful impressions had been effaced—when I felt myself free: free from the world of torturing and never-granted wishes, free from the relations in which those wishes had been my sole, my heart-consuming sustenance! When I, the outlawed and proscribed, [382] was bound no more to any lie of any kind; when I had cast behind me every wish and every hope from this now triumphant world, and with unrestrained downrightness could cry aloud and open to it, that I, the Artist, despised it, this world of canting care for Art and Culture, from the bottom of my heart; when I could tell it that in all its life-veins there flowed no single drop of true artistic blood, that it could not draw one breath of human sentiment, breathe out one whiff of human beauty:—then did I, for the first time in my life, feel free from crown to sole, feel hale and blithe in every limb, though I did not even know what hidingplace the morrow might afford me, in which to dare respire the air of heaven.

Like a dark shadow from a long done with, hideous past, did *Paris* once more pass before me; that Paris to which my steps were next guided by the well-meant advice of a friend, who, in this instance, took more thought for my outward fortune than my inward contentment; that Paris which now, on my first re-survey of its mocking features, I put behind me like a midnight spectre, as I fled panting to the fresh Swiss highlands, to shun at least the pestilential

breath of modern Babylon. Here, in the shelter of swift-won sterling friends, I first gathered up my strength to publicly protest against the momentary conquerors of the Revolution, from whom I had to strip at least *that* title of their rulership by which they styled themselves as *Art's* defenders. Thus did I become once more a Writer, as heretofore in Paris when I cast behind my wishes for Parisian fame, and took arms against the formalism of its ruling art: but now I had to direct my blows against this whole art-system, *in its coherence with the whole politico-social status of the modern world*; and the breath that I must draw herefor, had to be deeper in its draught.

In a shorter essay, *Art and the Revolution*, I devoted myself to unmasking *this coherence*, and did my best to snatch the name of Art from That which nowadays, protected by such title, exploits the misery and baseness of [383] our modern "Public." In a somewhat more detailed treatise, which appeared under the name of *The Art-work of the Future*, I showed the fatal influence of that connexion upon the character of Art herself, and how, in her egoistic parcelling into the modern separate arts, she had become incapable of bringing forth the genuine artwork—the only admissible, because the only *intelligible* and alone capable of holding a purely human content. In my latest literary work, *Opera and Drama*, I then showed, in a preciser handling of the sheer artistic aspect of the matter, how *Opera* had been hitherto mistaken by critics and artists for that artwork in which the seeds, nay even the fruitage of the Artwork of the Future, as I conceived it, had already come to light of day; and I proved that alone by a complete reversal of the procedure hitherto adopted in *Opera*, could the artistic Right be done, inasmuch as I based upon my own artistic experiences my demonstration of the logical and only fit relation between the Poet and Musician. With that work, and with the present Communication, I now feel that I have done enough for the impulse which lately made me take the Writer's pen; for I think I may venture to say, that whoso does not even yet understand me, can never in any circumstances understand me,—because he *will* not.

During this literary period; however, I had never bidden entire farewell to my artistic sketches. Though my eyes were so far open to my general outlook, that I believed the less in a possibility of *now* seeing one of my works produced, as I myself, from personal conviction, had given up all hope of, and therefore all attempt at, successful dealings of any kind with our theatres; and though I thus no longer cherished inwardly the intention, but rather the utmost disinclination, to make possible the Impossible by fresh endeavours: yet at first there was outward motive in plenty, to place myself at least in a remoter contact with our public art. I had gone completely helpless into exile; and a possible success in Paris as *Opera*-composer must needs appear to my friends, and even to myself eventually, [384] the only promise of a lasting guarantee of my existence. Never, in my inner heart, could I conceive the possibility of such a success; and that the less, as even the bare thought of a concernment with Parisian operatic ways revolted me to the core: yet, in face of outer want, and since even my most devoted friends could not view my repugnance to this plan as altogether justified, I at last resigned myself to a final and exhausting war against my nature. However, even here I refused to budge one inch from my path; and I sketched for my Parisian opera-poet the draft for a "*Wieland the Smith*," on lines which my friends already know from the close of *The Art-work of the Future*. (54)

So once again I went to Paris. This was, and will be, the last time that I have ever permitted outward considerations to coerce my inner nature. That coercion weighed so terribly and crushingly upon me, that this while, through the mere burden of its strain, I came nigh to my undoing: an illness, racking all my nerves, attacked me so severely on my arrival in Paris, that even for this cause alone, I was obliged to abandon every step required by my undertaking. My bodily and mental pain grew soon so insupportable, that, driven by one of Life's blind instincts, I was about to seek relief in desperate measures, to break with everything that yet

was friendly toward me, to rush out into God knows what wild unknown world. But in this extremity, at which I had arrived, I was grasped by truest friends; with a hand of infinitely tender love, they led my footsteps back. Thanks be to those who know alone of whom I speak!

Yes! I now learnt to know the fullest, noblest, fairest love, the only genuine love; which sets up no conditions, but takes its object altogether as it is, and as it cannot else be, of its very nature. *It* has held me, too, to art!

[385]

Returned, I took up afresh with the thought of completely carrying out the music for "*Siegfried's Death*." Yet still there lurked a half despair in this resolve; for I knew that this music, now, could only have a paper life. That unbearable conviction lamed anew my purpose; and feeling that, in all my endeavours hitherto, I had for the most part been so utterly misunderstood, (55) I reached back to pen and ink, and wrote my "*Opera and Drama*."—Again, then, was I completely disheartened for the embracing of any artistic project: fresh-gotten proofs of the impossibility of my now addressing any artistic message to the understanding of the public, brought in their train an access of distaste for fresh dramatic labours; and I believed that I must openly avow the End of all my art-creation.—Then rose *one Friend*, and lifted me from out my deepest discontent. Through the most searching and overpowering proof that I did not stand alone, nay, that I was profoundly understood—even by those who else had almost stood the farthest from me—, did he make me anew, and now entirely, an Artist. This wondrous Friend of mine is

FRANZ LISZT.—

I here must touch a little closer on the character of this friendship, since to many it may seem a paradox. I have been unfortunate enough to earn the reputation of being not only on many sides forbidding (*abstossend*), but right-down malignant (*feindselig*); so that the account of an affectionate relationship becomes, in a certain sense, a pressing need to me.—

I met *Liszt*, for the first time in my life, during my [386] earliest stay in Paris; indeed, not until the second period of that stay, and at a time when—humiliated and disgusted—I had given up every hope, nay, all mind for a Paris success, and was involved in that inward rebellion against this art-world which I have characterised above. In this encounter, *Liszt* came before me as the completest antithesis of my nature and my lot. In that world which I had longed to tread with lustre, when, I yearned from petty things to grand, *Liszt* had unconsciously grown up from tenderest youth, to be its wonder and its charm at a time when I, already so far repulsed by the lovelessness and coldness of its contact, could recognise its void and nullity with all the bitterness of a disillusioned man. Thus *Liszt* was more to me than a mere object of my jealousy. I had no opportunity to make him know me in myself and doings: superficial, therefore, as was the only knowledge he could gain of me, equally so was the manner of our interview; and while this was quite explicable on his part—to wit, from a man who was daily thronged by the most kaleidoscopic of affairs—, I, on the other hand, was just then not in the mood to seek quietly and fairly for the simplest explanation of a behaviour which, friendly and obliging in itself, was of all others the kind to ruffle *me*. Beyond that first time, I visited *Liszt* no more; and—in like manner without my knowing *him*, nay with an utter disinclination on *my* side, to even the attempt—he remained for me one of those phenomena that one considers foreign and hostile to one's nature.

What I repeatedly expressed to others, in this continued mood, came later to the ears of *Liszt*, and indeed at the time when I had so suddenly attracted notice by the Dresden



production of my *Rienzi*. He was concerned at having been so hastily misunderstood, as he clearly saw from those expressions, by a man whose acquaintance he had scarcely made, and whom to know seemed now not quite unworth the while.—When I now think back to it, there is to me something exceedingly touching in the strenuous attempts, renewed with a positive patience, with [387] which Liszt troubled himself in order to bring me to another opinion of him. As yet he had not heard a note of my works, and therefore there could be no question of any artistic sympathy, in his endeavour to come into closer contact with me. No, it was simply the purely-human wish to put an end to any chance-arisen discord in his relations with another man; coupled, perhaps, with an infinitely tender misgiving that he might, after all, have really wounded me. Whoso in all our social relations, and especially in the bearing of modern artists to one another, knows the appalling self-seeking and the loveless disregard of others' feelings, as manifested in such intercourse, must be filled with more than astonishment, with the highest admiration, when he hears of personal advances such as those thrust on me by that extraordinary man.

But I was not then in a position to feel as yet the uncommon charm and fascination of these tokens of Liszt's pre-eminently lovable and loving nature: I at first regarded his overtures with a lingering tinge of wonder, to which, doubter that I was, I felt often inclined to give an almost trivial food.—Liszt, however, had attended a performance of *Rienzi*, which he wellnigh had to extort; and from all the ends of the earth, whithersoever his virtuoso-tour had borne him, I received witness, now from this person, and now from that, of Liszt's restless ardour to impart to others the delight he had experienced in my music, and thus—as I almost prefer to believe—quite unintentionally to set on foot a crusade for me. This happened at a time when, on the other side, it waxed more and more undoubtable to me, that I and my dramatic works would remain without a ghost of external success. But in direct proportion as this utter failure grew more certain, and at the last quite obvious, did Liszt succeed in his personal efforts to found a fostering refuge for my art. He, the favoured guest of Europe's stateliest cities, gave up his royal progresses, and, settling down in modest little Weimar, took up the Musical Conductor's bâton. There did I last meet him, when—uncertain, still, as to the actual nature of [388] the prosecution hanging over me—I halted for a few days on Thuringian soil, in my at last necessitated flight from Germany. On the very day on which I received information that made it more and more indubitable, and at last quite positive, that my person was exposed to the most serious peril, I heard Liszt conduct a rehearsal of my *Tannhäuser*. I was astounded to recognise in him my second self: what I had felt when I conceived this music, he felt when he performed it; what I had wished to say when I wrote down the notes, he said when he made them sound. Miraculous! Through the Love of this rarest of all Friends, and at the moment when I became a *homeless* man, I won the true, long yearned for, ever sought amiss, ne'er happed-on *habitation for my art*. Whilst I was banned to wandering afar, the great world-wanderer had cast his anchor on a little spot of earth, to turn it into Home for me. Caring for me everywhere and everywhen, helping ever swiftly and decisively where help was needed, with heart wide opened to my every wish, with love the most devoted for my whole being,—did Liszt become what I had never found before, and in a measure whose fulness we can only then conceive, when it actually surrounds us with its own full compass.—

At the end of my latest stay in Paris, as I lay ill and wretched, gazing brooding into space, my eye fell on the score of my already almost quite forgotten *Lohengrin*. It filled me with a sudden grief, to think that these notes should never ring from off the death-wan paper. Two words I wrote to Liszt. His answer was none other than an announcement of preparations the most sumptuous—for the modest means of Weimar—for *Lohengrin's* production. What men and means could do, was done, to bring the work to understanding there. The only thing that—given the unavoidably halting nature of our present Stage representations—can bring



about a needful understanding, the active, willing Fancy of the public, could not, distracted by our modern wont, assert itself at once in helpful strength: mistake and misconception blocked the [389] path of hardly-strived success. What was there to do, to make good the lack, to help on every side to comprehension, and therewith to success? Liszt swiftly saw and *did* it: he laid before the public his personal views and feeling of the work, in a fashion unapproached before for convincing eloquence and potent charm. Success rewarded him; and, crowned with this success, he ran to meet me with the cry: *See! Thus far have we brought it. Do thou create for us anew a work, that we may bring it farther yet!*

In effect, it was this summons and this challenge, that woke in me the liveliest resolve to set myself to fresh artistic labour. I sketched a poem, and finished it in flying haste; my hand was already laid to its musical composition. For the production, to be promptly set on foot, I had only *Liszt* in view, together with those of my *friends* whom, after my late experiences, I have learnt to group under the local concept: *Weimar*.—If, then, I have quite recently been forced to change this resolution, in some very essential points, so that in truth it can no longer be carried out in the form in which it had already been publicly announced: the ground hereof lies chiefly in the *character of the poetic Stuff* itself, as to whose only fitting mode of exposition I have but now at last become thoroughly settled in my mind. I think it not unweighty to give my friends, in brief and in conclusion, a communication of my views hereon.

When, at every attempt to take it up in earnest, I was forced to look upon the composition of my "*Siegfried's Death*" as aimless and impossible, provided I held to my definite intention of immediately producing it upon the stage: I was weighted not only by my general knowledge of our present opera-singers' inability to fulfil a task such as I was setting before them in this drama, but in particular by the fear that my poetic purpose (*dichterische Absicht*)—as such—could not be conveyed in all its bearings to the only organ at which I aimed, namely, the Feeling's-understanding, [390] either in the case of our modern, or of any Public whatsoever. To begin with, I had set forth this wide-ranging purpose in a sketch of the Nibelungen-mythos, such as it had become my own poetic property. "*Siegfried's Death*" was, as I now recognise, only the first attempt to bring a most important feature of this myth to dramatic portrayal; in that drama I should have had, involuntarily, to tax myself to *suggest* a host of huge connexions (*Beziehungen*), in order to present a notion of the given feature in its strongest meaning. But these *suggestions*, naturally, could only be inlaid in *epic* form into the drama; and here was the point that filled me with misgiving as to the efficacy of my drama, in its proper sense of a scenic exposition. Tortured by this feeling, I fell upon the plan of carrying out as an independent drama a most attractive portion of the mythos, which in "*Siegfried's Death*" could only have been given in narrative fashion. Yet here again, it was the *Stuff* itself that so urged me to its dramatic moulding, that it only further needed Liszt's appeal, to call into being, with the swiftness of a lightning-flash, the "*Young Siegfried*," the Winner of the Hoard and Waker of Brünnhilde.

Again, however, I had to go through the same experience with this "*Junge Siegfried*" that had earlier been brought me in the train of "*Siegfried's Tod*." The richer and completer the means of imparting my purpose, that it offered me, all the more forcibly must I feel that, even with these two dramas, my myth had not as yet entirely passed over into the sensible reality of Drama; but that Connexions of the most vital importance had been left un realised, and relegated to the reflective and co-ordinating powers of the beholder. That these Connexions, however, in keeping with the unique character of genuine Mythos, were of such a nature that they could proclaim themselves alone *in actual physical situations* (*Handlungsmomenten*), and thus in 'moments' which can only be intelligibly displayed *in Drama*,—this quality it was, that, so soon as [391] ever I made its glad discovery, led me to find at last the final fitting form for the conveyance of my comprehensive purpose.

With the framework of this form I now may make my Friends acquainted, as being the substance of the project to which alone I shall address myself henceforward.

I propose to produce my myth *in three complete dramas*, (56) preceded by a lengthy *Prelude* (Vorspiel). With these dramas, however, although each is to constitute a self-included whole, I have in mind no "Repertory-piece," in the modern theatrical sense; but, for their performance, I shall abide by the following plan:—

At a specially-appointed Festival, I propose, some future time, to produce those three Dramas with their Prelude, *in the course of three days and a fore-evening*. The object of this production I shall consider thoroughly attained, if I and my artistic comrades, the actual performers, shall within these four evenings succeed in *artistically conveying my purpose to the true Emotional* (not the Critical) *Understanding* of spectators who shall have gathered together expressly to learn it. A further issue is as indifferent to me, as it cannot but seem superfluous.—

From this plan for the *representation*, every one of my Friends may now also deduce the nature of my plan for the poetic and musical *working-out*; while every one who approves thereof, will, *for the nonce*, be equally unconcerned with myself as to the How and When of the public realisation of this plan, since he will at least conceive one item, namely that with *this* undertaking I have nothing more to do with our Theatre of *to-day*. Then if my Friends take firmly up this certainty into themselves, they surely will end by taking also thought with me: *How and under what circumstances* a plan, such as that just named, can finally [392] be carried out; and thus, perhaps—will there also arise that help of theirs which alone can bring this thing to pass.—

So now I give You time and ease to think it out:—for only *with my Work*, will Ye see me again!

ZURICH, November 1851.



## Notes

### Note 01 on page 7

I must explain, once and for all, that whenever in the course of this Communication I speak of "understanding me" or "not understanding me," it is not as though I fancied myself a shade too lofty, too deep-meaning, or too high-soaring; but I simply demand of whosoever may desire to understand me, that he will look upon me no otherwise than as I am, and in my communications upon Art will only regard as essential precisely what, in accordance with my general aim and as far as lay within my powers of exposition, has been put forth in them by myself. R. WAGNER.—The latter portion of this sentence is somewhat ambiguous in the German, running thus: "und in meiner künstlerischen Mittheilungen genau eben nur Das als wesentlich erkenne, was meiner Absicht und meinem Darstellungsvermögen gemäss in ihnen von mir kundgegeben wurde." It will be seen that the expression "künstlerischen Mittheilungen" admits of two interpretations, viz : either "artistic communications,"—in other words, his operas,—or "communications upon the subject of Art." After some hesitation, I have chosen the latter, as it seems to me that Wagner is here referring to the distortions of his views promulgated by hostile critics—and nearly all his critics were both crafty and malicious—e.g. Professor Bischoff and his perversion of the title: "Artwork of the Future" into "Music of the Future," together with the consequences he deduced from this wilful misunderstanding of the author's aim.—TR.

### Note 02 on page 7

For the matter of that, they understand by the expression "Man," strictly speaking, nothing but a "Subject" ("*Unterthan*"); and perhaps also, in my particular case, one who has his own opinions and follows them without regard of consequences.—R. WAGNER.—Considerable light is thrown upon both these notes, when we reflect that Wagner, at the period of writing, was in exile for attempting to introduce ethical considerations into politics, whilst actually—think on it!—a court-salaried Musical conductor. As regards the present note, its second half (*i.e.* the words following "*Unterthan*") does not appear in the original edition, of the "Three Opera-Poems with a Preface;" and it should be added that the opening line of the essay referred, in that edition, to the necessity of publishing in self-defence the opera-poems themselves—not merely, as now, the "Communication."—TR.

### Note 03 on page 9

Thus, even now, our literary dilettantists know no more refreshing entertainment for themselves and their aestheto-political public of idling readers, than for ever and a day to jog round *Shakespeare* with their writings. It never occurs to them for a moment, that *that Shakespeare* whom they suck dry with their critical sponges, is not worth a rushlight, and serves at utmost as the sheet of foolscap for the exhibition of those proofs of their intellectual poverty which they take such desperate pains to air. The Shakespeare, who alone can be worth somewhat to us, is the ever new-creating poet who, now and in all ages, is That which Shakespeare once was to his age.—R. WAGNER.

### Note 04 on page 10

"Wie es bisher in Religion und Staat der Fall war, das Wesen der Individualität in die Gattung setzen, folgerichtig es dieser aufopfern."—In connection with [the footnote to \*Art and\*](#)

*Climate*, page 260, I would draw attention to page 552 of George Eliot's translation of *The Essence of Christianity* (Ludwig Feuerbach) "All divine attributes are attributes of the species, attributes which in the individual are limited, but the limits of which are abolished in the essence of the species. My knowledge, my will is limited; but my limit is not that of another man, to say nothing of mankind." In the first chapter of Feuerbach's book we also read, "Certainly the human individual—and herein consists his distinction from the animal—can and must feel himself confined by limits; but he can only become conscious of his limits in that he takes the perfection, the infinitude of the species as his 'object,' be it the object of his feeling, his conscious experience, or his reflection. That he nevertheless confounds *his* limits with the *limits of the species*, rests upon the illusion whereby he *directly* identifies himself with the species—an illusion which is intimately bound up with the indolence, the vanity, and the self-seeking of the individual."—TR.

#### Note 05 on page 15

We have here another instance of the unconscious identity of Wagner's thought with that of Schopenhauer, who has said in "*Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*":—"It is as if, when genius appears in an individual, a far greater measure of the power of knowledge falls to his lot than is necessary for the service of an individual will; and this superfluity of knowledge, being free, now becomes *subject* purified from will, a clear mirror of the inner nature of the world. This explains the activity, amounting even to disquietude, of men of genius; for the present can seldom satisfy them, because it does not fill their consciousness. This gives them that longing for men of similar nature and of like stature to whom they might communicate themselves."—TR.

#### Note 06 on page 17

At this assertion, in his time, Professor Bischoff of Cologne waxed mighty wrath; he considered it a most unbecoming suggestion to make to himself and his friends.—R. WAGNER.—This sly little sarcasm does not appear in the original edition. As to our author's want of "education" (perhaps "bringing-up" would better express the idea), the statement in the next sentence must not be taken too literally; see the "*Autobiographic Sketch* ."—TR.

#### Note 07 on page 17

The author of this libretto (or sketch for a libretto?) was Heinrich Laube mentioned by Wagner on [page 9](#) of the present volume.—TR.

#### Note 08 on page 17

By an oversight, the title of this story was given by me, on [page 8](#) (*Autobiographic Sketch*) in the German form, instead of in the Italian; it should there read: "*La Donna Serpente*," in place of "*Die Frau als Schlange*."—W. A. E.

#### Note 09 on page 17

Note to the original edition:—"Whom people most unjustifiably take for a *mere* imitator of Weber."

#### Note 10 on page 19

Note to original edition.—"Delicious was the spirit of the negotiations upon which I was compelled to enter with the then-time Director of the Leipzig theatre, with a view to the

production of this opera. He declared that the Town Council would never grant permission for the representation of such things, and that he, as a father, would demolish all the principles in which he had brought his daughter up, should he allow her to appear in such an opera,—a condition upon which, for the rest, I by no means insisted."

#### [Note 11 on page 19](#)

Our author is here somewhat too hard upon himself, having apparently forgotten the exact bearing of an article, "*Pasticcio*," which he wrote at this period (1834) for the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* (see No. XVI. of *The Meister*). That article, though certainly advocating the Italian *method* of singing (with reservations), by no means looks upon Opera with a "frivolous" eye.—TR.

#### [Note 12 on page 20](#)

For an attempt at elucidation of the hypothesis of a Fitzball origin of Heine's version, see *The Meister*, No. XVII., Feb. 1892.—TR.

#### [Note 13 on page 21](#)

That this Pantomime has had to be omitted from all the stage-performances of *Rienzi*, has been a serious drawback to me; for the Ballet that replaced it has obscured my nobler intentions, and turned this scene into nothing more nor less than an ordinary operatic spectacle.—R. WAGNER.

#### [Note 14 on page 22](#)

In a letter to Ferd. Heine (*Wagner's Letters to Uhlig &c.*—H. Grevel & Co.) dated Paris, Jan. 4th, 1842, Wagner writes "If you or any other person exactly realised how my whole situation, all my plans, and all my resolutions were destroyed by such procrastination, some pity would he surely shown me.... I am truly quite exhausted! Alas, I meet with so little that is encouraging, that it would really be of untold import to me if at least in Dresden things should go according to my wish."—TR.

#### [Note 15 on page 23](#)

Note to the original edition (1852):—"Among these I may mention the articles which I wrote for Lewald's magazine, *Europa*, under the name of 'Freudenfeuer.'"—A translation of these articles is now (1892) appearing in "*The Meister*," and will be included, together with Wagner's other early writings, in the last volume of this present series. —TR.

#### [Note 16 on page 23](#)

In the revolt of Schleswig-Holstein against Denmark, General Willisen (a Prussian officer who had been unsuccessful in his dealings with Poland) was appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Schleswig-Holstein army of volunteers, in April 1850. General Willisen's tactics were so ill-conceived and disastrous, that he was removed from the command in December of that year. Wagner, writing the *Mittheilung*—at all events, its first portion—only two or three months after these events, has fixed upon this particular Commander as a current representative of red-tape incapacity.—TR.

#### [Note 17 on page 24](#)

Note to the original edition:—"A critic recently considered this Devil and this Flying



Dutchman as an orthodox (*dogmatischer*) Devil and an orthodox ghost."

[Note 18 on page 25](#)

See the "[Autobiographic Sketch](#)."—R. WAGNER

[Note 19 on page 25](#)

As this passage is somewhat obscure, I append the original, in case that any German scholar might prefer to substitute another rendering for that which—after considerable pondering—I have here adopted:—"und diess Element gewann hier den Ausdruck *der Heimath*, d. h. des Umschlosseneins von einem innig vertrauten Allgemeinen, aber einem Allgemeinen, das ich noch nicht kannte, sondern eben erst mir ersehnte, nach der Verwirklichung des Begriffes 'Heimath.'"—TR.

[Note 20 on page 26](#)

This "Volksbuch," alluded to again a few lines lower down, can nowhere be traced. For the arguments for and against its existence, I must refer my readers to Dr. Wolfgang Golther's article in the "*Bayreuther Taschen-Kalender*" for 1891, and to my article on "The Tannhäuser Drama" in No. XIV. of *The Meister*."—W. A. E.

[Note 21 on page 26](#)

One of the three divisions into which the German literature and mode of speech are classified, in order of time, by literary historians; that preceding it being called the *Althochdeutsch*, and that following it the *Neuhochdeutsch*. According to *Brockhaus*, the integral distinction between the *M.h.d.* and its predecessor consisted in the weakening of the inflectional vowels, after the root-syllable, into a colourless 'e.' The period lasted from the commencement of the 12th century to about the middle of the 15th. As regards literature, however, the epoch best known as the *M.h.d.* is that covered chiefly by the 13th century and coincident with the glories of the Hohenstaufian reign. Its treasures are represented by the ballads of the strolling singers from among the Folk (*Der Nibelunger Not, Wolfdietrich &c.*), and by the lyrics and epics of the courtly minstrels, among whom Wolfram von Eschenbach, Gottfried von Strassburg, Walther von der Vogelweide, and Albrecht von Scharffenberg are of special interest to the Wagnerian student.—TR.

[Note 22 on page 28](#)

Gottlieb Reissiger, successor to Carl Maria von Weber in that post.—TR.

[Note 23 on page 28](#)

This is the same text that—after my colleague had apparently found it beneath his dignity to carry out a cast-off project of mine—was set to music by *Kittl*, who could nowhere obtain a libretto more to his mind than just this one. It was brought to a hearing in Prag, after divers Royal-Imperial-Austrian alterations, under the title of "*die Franzosen vor Nizza*" (The French before Nice).—R. WAGNER.

[Note 24 on page 28](#)

Joseph Tichatschek.—TR.

[Note 25 on page 29](#)

The subordinate post of *Musikdirector*, i.e. conductor of the playhouse-music and the weekday church-music, was that which was first offered to Wagner, for a probationary year; this he declined, in a manly letter addressed to v. Lüttichau, Jan. 5, 1843, three days after the production of the *Flying Dutchman* (see R. Prölss' "*Beitrage zur Geschichte des Hoftheaters zu Dresden*"). Lüttichau thereupon offered him the higher post, in which he shared with Reissiger the supreme control of the Court orchestra.—TR.

#### Note 26 on page 30

Lest any misconception should arise, it may be as well to state that the unworthy object of Schröder-Devrient's affections was a certain Saxon officer, von Döring by name, who first inspired her with a passion for him in 1842, and for the next seven years dragged her from one 'starring' engagement to another, only to squander her money on the gaming-tables (vide—Glaserapp's "*Life of Wagner*").—TR.

#### Note 27 on page 31

One scarcely need emphasise this forecast of the poem of *Tristan und Isolde*, except to compare it with [page 116](#), *Art-work of the Future*.—TR.

#### Note 28 on page 32

We have no single word that will adequately replace the German "*Stimmung*"; the meaning being partly "drift" or "tendency," and partly "mood," "impression," or "frame of mind." The term is gradually finding its way into our conversation, wherefore I may perhaps be forgiven for occasionally adopting it in print.—TR.

#### Note 29 on page 36

In view of the author's preface to the two volumes in which this *Communication* was included (see [page 25](#) of the present volume), it would appear that the allusion is to Ludwig Feuerbach's *Essence of Christianity*.—TR.

#### Note 30 on page 38

In view of the accusation so often levelled against Wagner, of *ingratitude* toward Meyerbeer, it is as well to bear in mind that Meyerbeer was at this time 'Generalmusikdirector' at the Berlin Court.—TR.

#### Note 31 on page 39

In a [foot-note to page 286](#), I drew attention to the similarity of Wagner's description of the "artistic temperament" to that given by Schopenhauer in Chapter 30 of Vol. II. "*Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*"; in like manner he has here unconsciously approached, though by an opposite path, the same idea as Schopenhauer expounds in § 34, Vol. I. of that work, where he refers to the man "who has so plunged and lost himself in contemplation of Nature, that he is now nothing more than the sheer perceiving *Subject*, and thus becomes directly conscious that, as such, he is the bearer of the world and all *objective* existence, since it shows itself as dependent on his own. He draws all Nature into his own self, so that he now regards it as an *accidental* of his being [or essence]. In this sense it is, that Byron says: Are not the mountains, waves and skies, a part Of me and of my soul, as I of them?"—It is significant that to both these thinkers the solitude of the Alps should have suggested the same line of thought; but perhaps it may be carried farther back, to the idea underlying the Temptation on the

Mountain.—TR

[Note 32 on page 40](#)

According to the late Mr F. Praeger's "*Wagner as I knew him*" (page 145) this friend was August Roeckel; but it seems far more likely to have been Theodor Uhlig or Eduard Devrient.—TR.

[Note 33 on page 40](#)

Of this I have recently been assured again by a talented reporter, who *during* the performance of *Lohengrin* at Weimar—according to his own confession—felt nothing calling for an adverse criticism, but gave himself without restraint to the enjoyment of a touching story. The doubts that *afterwards* arose in him, I am delighted to say, in dearest self-defence, have never attacked the *actual artist*. The latter could *thoroughly* understand me: a thing that was impossible to the critic.—R. WAGNER.

[Note 34 on page 40](#)

Exactly as my critic, may the Athenian citizen have felt, who under the immediate influence of the artwork was seized with unquestioning sympathy for Antigone, yet in the Areopagus, upon the following day, would certainly have voted to death the living heroine.—R. WAGNER.

[Note 35 on page 42](#)

Compare *Art-work of the Future*, [page 149](#).—TR.

[Note 36 on page 42](#)

At first sight this looks as though it were written under the influence of the Hegelian doctrine, of every Reality being the "unification of two contradictory elements," and every true Idea containing a "coincidence of opposites"; but there is, so far as I can see, no warrant for believing that Wagner ever studied Hegel's system of philosophy, excepting in so far as it had been transformed by Feuerbach, who seems to have discarded the formula of "Thesis, antithesis, and synthesis."—TR.

[Note 37 on page 42](#)

"Diese nothwendigste Wesenäußerung der reinsten sinnlichen Unwillkür."

[Note 38 on page 42](#)

By all accounts, this "friend" was August Roeckel; and according to Ferdinand Praeger, he withdrew his opera "Farinelli" before its production, in humble recognition of the supremacy of Wagner's genius.—TR.

[Note 39 on page 43](#)

For his creditors, who had advanced money for the publication of the scores of *Rienzi*, *The Flying Dutchman*, and *Tannhäuser*. See the *Letters to Uhlig and Fischer*.—TR.

[Note 40 on page 46](#)

I lay stress on this, how tasteless soever it may appear to those who make merry over me as

"a revolutionary for the sake of the theatre."—R. WAGNER

[Note 41 on page 48](#)

The connection of this subject with the events of 1848 is made obvious by the prefatory note to the *Wibelungen* essay: "I, too, in the late arousing times, shared the ardent wishes of so many, for the re-awakening of *Frederick the Red-beard*." The tradition ran (though now proved to have been originally connected with Friedrich II.) that the first and greatest Hohenstaufian Kaiser was still sleeping in the heart of the Kyffhäuser hills, and would one day come again to free his people and knit them once more into a sovereign nation.—TR.

[Note 42 on page 48](#)

The studies that I made upon these lines, and whose very necessity decided me to abandon my proposal, I a short while since laid publicly before my friends—at least, not at the feet of historico-juristic criticism—in a little essay entitled "*Die Wibelungen*."—R. WAGNER.

[Note 43 on page 49](#)

Here I got no further in the formalities of my trade than did the skilful Lortzing, who likewise adapted ready-made stage-pieces for his opera-texts.—R. WAGNER.

[Note 44 on page 51](#)

Again we have the—logical—play of words between "*dichterisch*" (poetic) and "*verdichten*" (to condense). Compare [page 92](#).—TR.

[Note 45 on page 51](#)

To wit, that ideal condition of society which he still considered realisable in the near future.—TR.

[Note 46 on page 52](#)

Note to the original edition, of 1852:—"This bugbear of the generality of musical critics, is the rôle they think necessary to ascribe to me, whenever they pay me the honour of their notice. As they never concern themselves about a *whole*, it is only the *part*, the question of Form, that can become the object of *their* reflection; and the blame, that in matters of music they should be compelled to 'reflect,' they lay on *me*, for stepping before them with a 'reflected' music. But herein they make a changeling of me, keeping *only the musician* in view, and confound me with certain actual brain-grubbers of Absolute Music, who—as such—can only exercise their inventive ingenuity on a wilful variation and twisting-about of forms. In their agony lest I should upset the forms that keep our musical hotch-potch steady, they go at last so far, as to see in every new work projected by me an imminent disaster; and fan themselves into such a fury, that they end by fancying my operas, albeit entirely unknown to the directors, are deluging the German stage. So foolish maketh Fear!"

[Note 47 on page 54](#)

See *Opera and Drama*, [Part I](#).—R. WAGNER.

[Note 48 on page 55](#)

Take for instance the hideously contorted harmonic variations, wherewith folk have sought

to make the old and threadbare Rossinian Closing-cadence into something 'à part.'—R. WAGNER.

[Note 49 on page 56](#)

In a [footnote to page 132](#) I have endeavoured to give a slight idea of the meaning of this term.—TR.

[Note 50 on page 56](#)

Note to the first German edition:—"A newest critic, having by chance obtained a glimpse of its manuscript, has had the questionable taste to publish his opinion of my poem '*Siegfried's Tod*'; whereas I myself am here careful not to enter closer on the subject of that work, for the very reason that I cannot as yet present it to the public in the fashion I should like. Among other things, this unwarranted critic calls that verse 'old-Frankish rubbish.' Truly he could not have found a better term to characterise the blindness that makes him *there* see nothing but the Old, where we are already living and moving in the wholly *New*!"—The reference is to an unsigned critique in the *Grenzboten*, for the "24th week" of 1851 ; this article is also alluded to, by Wagner, in [the footnote to page 308](#) of the present volume. A reply, by "Bw" (?Hans von Bülow?), was printed in the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* of Oct. 10 and 17, 1851.—TR.

[Note 51 on page 56](#)

Note to the edition of 1872:—"This wish, however, was not to be fulfilled."—It should be also remarked that, as noted earlier, the *Communication* originally formed a *preface* to the three Opera-poems.—TR.

[Note 52 on page 57](#)

*Wahrnehmbarkeit*—literally, 'the qualities that make an object perceptible.' It appears that, by opposing the terms *Sinnlichkeit* and *Wahrnehmbarkeit*, our author here seeks to draw a distinction between the faculties of the lower and the higher senses, and thus between the objects on which these faculties must be exercised. It is perhaps unnecessary to point out how intrinsically this passage differs from the views of Feuerbach and his circle, and how it already foreshadows the transcendentalism of Wagner's later period, as developed in the [Beethoven](#) essay, *Religion and Art*, and *Parsifal*.—TR.

[Note 53 on page 57](#)

It will scarcely fail to be noticed, how much the *artist* was alone concerned in this conception.—R. WAGNER ("The Editor"), 1872.

[Note 54 on page 59](#)

This, of course, is the summary given on [pages 210-13](#); the longer "Dramatic Sketch," though written about this time, was not printed until 1872, when it made its appearance in Vol. III. of the *Gesammelte Schriften*.—TR.

[Note 55 on page 60](#)

Nothing could more thoroughly reveal this—among other matters—to me, than a letter I received from a former friend, a noted composer, in which he adjured me to "leave politics aside, as they brought no good to any one" ("*doch von der Politik zu lassen, bei der im Ganzen doch nichts herauskäme*"). This obstinacy—I know not whether intentional or not—in

taking me sheerly as a politician, and studiously passing over the artistic tenour of my already promulgated views, had for me something exasperating.—R. WAGNER.—As may be seen by letter 59 to *Uhlig*, the "former friend" was Ferdinand Hiller.—TR.

[Note 56 on page 63](#)

I shall never write an *Opera* more. As I have no wish to invent an arbitrary title for my works, I will call them *Dramas*, since hereby will at least be clearest indicated the standpoint whence the thing I offer should be accepted.—R. WAGNER.





[393]

## Appendix

Author's variants, in the original editions of the works included in this volume; omitting such as either are altogether insignificant, and would have called for no difference in translation, or have already been reproduced in the Footnotes to the text.

[396]

The opening sentence in the edition of 1852 ran as follows: "*The reason that decided me to undertake this present publication of three of my opera-poems lay in the necessity I felt of explaining the apparent, or real, contradiction offered by the character and form of these opera-poems, and of the musical compositions which had sprung therefrom, to the views and principles which I have recently set down at considerable length and shall presently—perhaps simultaneously with them—lay before the public under the title of OPERA AND DRAMA.*"—The italicised words are those that differ from the 1872 edition (as translated on [page 269](#)), and are to be explained by the fact that the original *Communication*—as stated in the words: "which I set before the poems as a Preface"—formed an introduction to the poems of the *Flying Dutchman*, *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin*, and that the *Communication* and *Opera and Drama* were in the hands of two different publishing firms, J. J. Weber and Breitkopf und Härtel, at the same time. As a matter of fact, *Opera and Drama* was published in November '51 and the *Communication* at the end of the following month.

[Page 291](#), line 17, after "educators.—" appeared "Look ye! herein lies all Genius!" (*Seht, hierin liegt alles Genie!*)

[Page 294](#), line 8, after "horizon." appeared: "The timid reserve towards the female sex, that is inculcated into all of us—this ground of all the vices of the modern male generation, and no less of the stunting of Woman's nature (*Verkümmerung des Weibes*)—my natural temperament had only been able to break through by fits and starts, and in isolated utterances of a pert impetuosity (*kecke Heftigkeit*): a hasty, conscience-stinging snatch of pleasure must form the unrequiting substitute for instinctively-desired delight."

[Ibidem](#), line 15, after "social system" appeared "to wit, as—using a current expression: unfortunately to-be-put-up-with—vice."

[Page 306](#), line 10 from bottom ran as follows: "belong the three dramatic poems which, in this publication, I lay before my friends in the order wherein they arose: namely, besides the just-named *Flying Dutchman*, *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin*."

[Page 309](#), line 2 from bottom, "in the *Zeitung für die elegante Welt*, 1843," for "elsewhere."

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*On the Performing of "Tannhäuser."*

By Richard Wagner

Translated by William Ashton Ellis



The Wagner Library

Edition 1.0

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## Contents

About this Title .....	4
Translator's Note .....	5
On the Performing of "Tannhäuser." - (An Address to the Directors and Performers of this Opera.) .....	7
Notes .....	27
Summary .....	29

## About this Title

### Source

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This title contains 14309 words.  
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Notes are indicated using parenthesis, like (1).  
Page numbers of the original source are indicated  
using square-bracketed parentheses, like [62].



[168]

## Translator's Note

Considerable portions of this "Address" were printed in the *Neue Zeitschrift* for December 3 and 24, 1852, and January 1, 7 and 14, 1853—the extracts being chosen by the editor of that journal and arranged in a sequence other than, that of the *Ges. Schr.*, vol. v, which latter would appear to have been also the order of the original pamphlet. To the first extract the editor appended a footnote: "This brochure is neither obtainable from the book-trade, nor destined for publication. It lies before us with the author's permission to make a *partial* use of it in this journal." The reasons for the "partial" permission are evident, for all the merely personal and local allusions were omitted in the *Zeitschrift*.

In '*Letters to Uhlig*' (Letter 74, August 14, '52) we read: "I am busy working at a concise address, . . . Unfortunately I can only work very slowly, as any work now tries my head extremely. Yet I hope to have done in four or five days at latest"; and in Letter 75 (August 23, '52) "Only to-day have I finished the manuscript of my 'Address on the performance of *Tannhäuser*.' It had to be more detailed than I at first thought, and I am now glad that I hit upon this way of removing a great weight from my mind. I am again much exhausted by the work, and I must now try to thoroughly recover from the effects. After ripe reflection, I found it necessary to give the manuscript at once to be printed here, so as to be able to send as quickly as possible a sufficient quantity of copies to the theatres (*privatim* and *gratis*). I have ordered two hundred, of which I will at once send you a good share, so that you may be able to deliver them to the theatres, together with the scores."—



[169]

## On the Performing of "Tannhäuser."

(An Address to the Directors and Performers of this Opera.)

A CONSIDERABLE number of theatres are entertaining the idea of producing my "Tannhäuser" before long. This unexpected situation, by no means due to my own initiative, has made me so keenly feel the hurtfulness of my inability to personally attend the preparations for the performances proposed, that for a long time I was in doubt as to whether I ought not to refuse my sanction to those undertakings for the present.—If the artist's work first approaches its actual fulfilment, when it is in course of preparation for direct presentment to the senses; if, therefore, the dramatic poet or composer *there* first begins to exert his definitive influence, where he has to bring his aim to intimate knowledge of the artistic organs for its realisation, and through their perfect understanding to make possible an utmost intelligible re-presentment of it: then this influence is nowhere more indispensable to him, than in the case of works with whose composition he has looked aside from customary methods of performance by the sole artistic organs forthcoming, and for their needful method has kept in eye a hitherto unwonted and un-evolved conception of the nature of the art-genre in question. To none can this have been brought more clearly home, than to myself; and it is among my greatest torments of later years, that I have not been able to be present at the individual attempts already made to perform my dramatic works, so that I might have arranged with those concerned the infinite variety of details by [170] whose exact observance alone can the executant artists gain a thoroughly correct conception of the whole.

If paramount reasons have now inclined me to place no unconditional obstacles in the way of further performances of my earlier works, it has been in the belief that, so far as lay within my power, I might succeed in making-up for the impossibility of personal and oral intervention, by written communications to the respective managers and performers. But the number of the theatres which have announced themselves for "Tannhäuser" has so very much increased of late, that private correspondence with each several manager and performer would prove a task beyond my strength. Wherefore I seize on the expedient of the present summary, in pamphlet form, which I primarily address to all to whose understanding and goodwill I have to entrust my work.

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The *Musical Directors* of our theatres have accustomed themselves, almost without exception, to allow the inscenation, and everything connected with it, to be entirely withdrawn from their concernment; in correspondence herewith, our *Regisseurs* (Stage-managers) confine their attention to the scenery, leaving the orchestra wholly out of count. From this ill state of things results the want of inner harmony, and the dramatic inefficiency, of our operatic representations. In necessary sequence, the performer has lost the habit of observing the slightest connection with a whole, and, in his isolated position toward the public, has gradually evolved to what we see him now—the opera-singer pure and simple. Now, if the musical-director regards the orchestra as a thing entirely for itself, he can only take the measure for its understanding from works of absolute Instrumental-music, such as the Symphony, and everything which departs from the [171] forms of that genre must stay

ununderstood by him. But the very thing which departs from the said forms, is just *that* whose own particular form is conditioned by an action or an emotional incident of the play; thus it cannot possibly find its explanation in Absolute Instrumental-music, but solely in that scenic incident. The conductor, therefore, who omits a strict observance of the latter, will detect nothing but caprice in the corresponding musical passages, and by his own capricious, purely-musical interpretation of them, will make them prove as much in execution; for, as he lacks any standard whereby to measure out the purely-musical essence of such passages, he is also sure to go astray in their tempo and expression. This result, again, suffices to so mislead the stage-manager and performers in their part of the business, that, losing the thread of dramatic connection between the stage and orchestra, and at last giving up all continuity of any kind, they feel urged to caprices of another sort in their performance; to caprices which, in their whole wonderful concordance, make out the stereotype conventions of our modern operatic style.

It is manifest that spirited dramatic compositions must in this wise be crippled past all recognition; it is equally certain that even the sickliest of modern Italian operas would gain immeasurably in representation, were due heed paid to that coherence which subsists in even such operas (albeit in merely the grotesquest phase). But I declare that a dramatic composition like my "Tannhäuser," whose sole potentiality of effect rests simply on the said connection between scene and music, must be ruined out and out if Musical and Scenic Directors apply to its performance the methods I have just denounced. I therefore beg that musical-director whom fancy or injunction has assigned the task of producing my work, to read through my score with the very closest attention to the poem, and finally to the countless special indications for the stage performance. When convinced of the necessity for a careful handling of the Scene, it will be for him to acquaint the Regisseur with [172] the full compass of his task. The latter will gain a most inadequate notion of that task by studying the "book" alone; were this otherwise, it would only prove the musical setting unneedful and superfluous. The majority of the stage-instructions are only to be found in the score, against the appropriate musical passages, and the Regisseur has therefore to gain a thorough knowledge of them by aid of the *Kapellmeister* (Conductor).

The Regisseur's next care will be, to come to the precisest agreement with the *Scene-painter*. In ordinary the latter, also, goes to work with no reference whatever to the musical and scenic directors; he has the "book" given him to look through, and he pays no heed to anything in it but what appears to touch himself alone, namely the bracketed passages bearing on his special work. In course of this Address, however, I shall shew how indispensable it is that this companion factor, too, should enter into the inmost intentions of the whole artwork, and how necessarily I must insist upon his reaching the clearest knowledge of those aims from the very outset.

For their dealings with the *Performers*, I have first to point out to the musical-director and stage-manager that the so-called "vocal rehearsals" should not begin until the players have become acquainted with the poem itself, in its whole extent and compass. To this end we must not content ourselves with the book's being sent to each member of the company, for his or her perusal; we desire on their part no critical knowledge of the subject, but a living, an artistic one. I must therefore press for a meeting of the whole body of performers, under conduct of the Regisseur and attended by the Kapellmeister, at which the poem shall be gone through in the fashion usual with a spoken play, each individual performer reading his rôle aloud; the chorus-singers should likewise attend this reading, and their passages are to be recited by either the Chorus-director himself or one of the chorus-leaders. Care should also be taken, that this trial-reading is given with full dramatic [173] accent; and if, from lack of

practice or understanding, the right expression proper to the subject as a poem is not attainable at once, then this rehearsal must be repeated until the needful expression is won from a thorough understanding both of the situations and the inner organism of the plot. Such a demand upon a modern opera-troupe, just as it is in fact a quite unusual one, will certainly be deemed exorbitant, pedantic, and altogether needless; but this very fear of mine throws light enough on the lamentable condition of our Opera affairs. Our singers are wont to busy themselves with the How of execution before they have learnt to know its What: they study the notes of their voice-parts at their own pianos, and, when got by heart, pick up the dramatic by-play in a few stage-rehearsals —too often, only at the dress-rehearsal—in whatever fashion may be dictated by operatic routine and certain fixed suggestions of the Regisseur's for their comings and goings. That they are to be Players in the first place, and only after adequate preparation for their office as such should they venture on concernment with the enhanced, the musical expression of their talk—this, at any rate in the present state of Opera, can by no means fall within their reckoning. Their habit may perhaps seem justified by the products of most opera-composers, yet I must state that my work demands a method of performance directly opposite to the customary. That singer who is not equal to reciting his "part" as a play-rôle, with an expression duly answering to the *poet's* aim, will certainly be neither able to sing it in accordance with the aim of the *composer*, to say nothing of representing the character in its general bearings. By this assertion of mine I stand so firmly, and I hold so definitely to the fulfilment of my stipulation for sufficient reading-rehearsals, that, as against this claim on my side, I once for all express the wish—nay, the will—that, should these reading-rehearsals fail to rouse among those concerned an all-round interest in the subject and its projected exposition, my work shall be laid on the shelf and its production given up.

[174]

Upon the results of the reading-rehearsals, and the spirit in which they have been carried out, I therefore make depend the happy outcome of all further study. It is in them that the performers and the ordainers of the performance have to come to an exact and exhaustive agreement upon *everything* which in usual course is left to the helter-skelter of the final stage-rehearsals. More especially will the musical-director have gained a fresh, an essentially heightened view-point for his later labours; led by the first material impression of the whole, as furnished him by the hearing of an expressive lection, in his subsequent rehearsing of the purely-musical detail he will go to work with needful knowledge of the artist's aim—as to which he must otherwise have cherished doubt and error of all kinds, however sincere his zeal for the enterprise.

As concerns the musical study with the Singers, I have the following general remarks to make. In my opera there exists no distinction between so-called "declaimed" phrases and phrases "sung," but my declamation is song withal, and my song declamation. A definite arrest of "song" and definite commencement of the usual "recitative"—whereby, in Opera, the singer's method of delivery is wont to be divided into two completely different kinds—does not take place with me. To the true Italian Recitative, in which the composer leaves the rhythm of the notes almost entirely undefined, and hands over its completion to the singer's good pleasure, I am an utter stranger; no, in passages where the poem drops from a more impassioned lyric flight, to the mere utterance of feeling discourse, I have never made away the right to prescribe the phrasing just as strictly as in the purely lyric measures. Whoever, therefore, confounds these passages with the customary Recitative, and in consequence transforms from pure caprice their stated rhythm, he defaces my music quite as

much as though he fathered other notes and harmonies upon my lyric Melody. As in the said recitative-like passages I have throughout laboured to denote their phrasing in exact [175] rhythmic accordance with the 'aim' of my Expression, so I crave of conductors and singers that they first should execute these passages in the strict value both of notes and bars, and in a tempo corresponding to the sense of the words. If I have been so fortunate, however, as to find my indications for the delivery correctly felt, and thereafter definitely adopted, by the singers: then at last I urge an almost entire abandonment of the rigour of the musical beat, which was up to then a mere mechanical aid to agreement between composer and singer, but with the complete attainment of that agreement is to be thrown aside as a worn-out, useless, and thenceforth an irksome tool. From the moment when the singer has taken into his fullest knowledge my intentions for the rendering, let him give the freest play to his natural sensibility, nay, even to the physical necessities of his breath in the more agitated phrases; and the more creative he can become, through the fullest freedom of Feeling, the more will he pledge me to delighted thanks. The conductor will then have only to follow the singer, to keep untorn the bond which binds the vocal rendering with the orchestral accompaniment; on the other hand, this will be possible to him only when the orchestra itself is brought to exactest knowledge of the vocal phrasing—a result only to be brought about, on the one side, by the words and music for the voice being copied into each single orchestral part, and on the other, by sufficiently frequent rehearsals. The surest sign of the conductor's having completely solved his task in this respect would be the ultimate experience, at the production, that his active lead is scarcely noticeable. (I need hardly say that the mode of execution above-denoted—this highest point attainable in artistic phrasing—is not to be confounded with that too customary, where the conductor is held to have acquitted himself most ably when he places his whole intelligence and practised skill at the command of our prima-donnas' wayward whims, as their heedful, cringing lackey: here he is the bounden cloaker of revolting solecisms, but there the co-creative artist)

[176]

I now turn from these general observations on the chief lines of study, to impart my particular wishes as regards the special points in "Tannhäuser"; and here, again, I first shall keep in eye the functions of the Musical Director.

In view of certain circumstances unfavourable to the original production of "Tannhäuser," I saw myself forced at the time into various *omissions*. That most of them, however, were mere concessions wrung from me by utmost Want concessions, in truth, equivalent to a half surrender of my real artistic aim, this I would make clear to future conductors and performers of the opera, in order to convince them that, if they regard those concessions as conditions *sine quâ non*, I must necessarily assume withal their surrender of my intrinsic aim in crucial places.—

At Dresden, then, as early as the scene between *Tannhäuser* and *Venus* in the First Act I saw myself compelled (in the above sense) to plan an omission for the later representations: I cut the second verse of Tannhäuser's song and the immediately-preceding speech of Venus. This was by no means because these passages in themselves had proved flat, unpleasing, or ineffective, but the real reason was as follows: the whole scene failed in performance, above all because we had not succeeded in finding a thoroughly suitable representatrix for the difficult rôle of Venus; the rare and unwonted demands of this rôle were doomed to non-fulfilment by one of the greatest artists herself, because inexpugnable circumstances deprived her of the unconstraint required by her task. Thus the portrayal of the whole scene was involved in an embarrassment that became at last a positive torture, to the actress, to the



public, and most of all to myself. I therefore resolved to make that torture as short as possible, and consequently shortened the scene by omitting a passage which (if anything was to be cut at all) not only was the best adapted for excision, but was also of such a nature, in itself, that its omission spared the principal male singer no insignificant exertion. This was the sole cause of the abbreviation, and every inducement to continue it would [177] vanish at once where there was no real ground for fear about the success of this scene as a whole. In fact, the very portion of this scene which failed at Dresden, despite the efforts of one of our greatest female artists, succeeded perfectly at Weimar later on, where Venus had a representatrix who certainly could not compare in general with my Dresdener, as artist, yet was so favourably disposed to this particular rôle, and discharged her task with such warmth and freedom from constraint, that this same distressing Dresden scene made the most profound impression here. Under like circumstances the said omission will become nothing less than a senseless mutilation, the verdict whereon I leave to whoever will take the trouble to closely examine the structure of the whole scene, with its gradual growth of mood and situation from their first beginnings to their final outburst; he will bear me witness, I trust, that that cut lops off an organically essential member from the natural body of this scene; and only where the effect of this extremely weighty scene must be given up in advance, could I consent again to its omission—though in such a case I would far rather advise the whole production being given up.

A second omission affects the orchestral postlude of the closing-scene of the First Act. The passage struck-out was intended to accompany a scenic incident (the joyous tumult of the chase, as huntsmen fill the stage from every side) of such animation as I was unable to get enacted upon even the Dresden boards. Owing to the uncommon stiffness and conventionality of our usual stage-supers and such-like, the effect could not be brought to that exuberance of spirits which I had intended, and which should have offered the fitting climax to a mood (*Stimmung*) led over into keenest feeling of life's freshness. Where this effect cannot be brought about, then, the music also must keep to its shortened form. On the other hand, where a combination of favourable circumstances shall enable the regisseur to bring-out the full scenic effect intended by me, there [178] nothing but an undocked rendering of the postlude can realise my whole original aim: namely, through an entirely adequate impression of the scene, to raise to its utmost height the *Stimmung* roused by the previous situation—to a height whereon alone can a bustling passage for the violins, omitted from the prelude to the Second Act, be rightly understood.

In the scores sent to the theatres a third omission will be found marked down in the long closing-scene of the Second Act, from page 326 to 331. This bracketed passage comprises one of the weightiest moments in the drama. In its predecessor we had been shewn the effect of Elisabeth's sacrificial courage, her profoundly moving and assuaging plea for her lover, upon those to whom she had immediately addressed herself—the prince, the knights and minstrels in very act of hounding Tannhäuser to the death: Elisabeth and this surrounding, with their mutual attitude toward one another, took all our interest, which concerned itself but indirectly with Tannhäuser himself. But when this first imperative interest is satiated, our sympathy turns back at last to the chief figure in the whole complex situation, the outlawed knight of Venus; Elisabeth and all the rest become a mere surrounding of the man about whom our urgent Feeling demands to be in so far set at rest, as it shall gain clear knowledge of the impression made by this appalling catastrophe upon its prime originator. After his fanatical

defiance of the men's attack, *Tannhäuser*—most terribly affected by Elisabeth's intervention, the expression of her words, the tone of her voice, and the conscience of his hideous blasphemy against her—has fallen to the ground in final outbreak of the shattering sense of utter humiliation, thus plunging from the height of frenzied ecstasy to awful recognition of his present lot: as though unconscious, he has lain with face turned earthwards while we listened breathless to the effect proclaimed by his surrounding. Now Tannhäuser lifts up his head, his features blanched and seared by fearful suffering; [179] still lying on the ground and staring vacantly before him, he begins with more and more impetuous accents to vent the feelings of his bursting heart:

(01)

To lead the sinner to salvation,  
God's messeng'ress to me drew nigh;  
but, ah! that vilest desecration  
should lift to her its scathing eye!  
O Mary Mother, high above earth's dwelling  
who sent'st to me the angel of my weal—  
have mercy on me, sunk in sin's compelling,  
who shamed the heavenly grace thou didst reveal!

These words, with the expression lent them by this situation, contain the pith of Tannhäuser's subsequent existence, and form the axis of his whole career; without our having received with absolute certainty the impression meant to be conveyed by them at this particular crisis, we are in no position to maintain any further interest in the hero of the drama. If we have not been here at last attuned to deepest fellow-suffering with Tannhäuser, the drama will run its whole remaining course without consistence, without necessity, and all our hitherto-aroused awaitings will halt unsatisfied. Even Tannhäuser's recital of his sufferings, in the Third Act, can never compensate us for the missed impression; for that recital can only make the full effect intended, when it links itself to our memory of this earlier, this decisory impression.

What could have determined me, then, to omit this very passage from the second, and all later Dresden performances? My answer might well include the history of all the troubles I have had to suffer, both as poet and musician, from our Opera-affairs; but I here will put the matter "briefly. The first representative of Tannhäuser—unable, in his capacity of eminently-gifted singer, to grasp anything beyond the "Opera" proper—could not succeed in seizing the characteristic nature of a claim which addressed itself more to his acting powers, than to his vocal talent. In keeping with the situation, the aforesaid passage is accompanied [180] by whispered phrases for all the singers on the stage, their voices at times, however, threatening to hastily break short Tannhäuser's motif with warnings of their smothered anger: in the eyes of our singers, this gave the passage all the semblance of an ordinary concerted piece, in which no individual thinks himself entitled to take a prominent lead. Now the obstinacy of this error must bear the blame that this passage's true import, the high relief given to Tannhäuser's personality, was completely lost in the performance, and that the whole situation, with its needful breadth of musical treatment, acquired the character of one of those *Adagio-ensembles* which we are wont to hear precede the closing *Stretto* of an opera-Finale. In the light of such an *Adagio*-section, dragging itself along without a change, the whole thing must necessarily appear too spun-out and fatiguing; and when the question of a cut arose, to stem the manifest displeasure, it was just this passage that—seeing it had been robbed, in performance, of its proper import—appeared to me a tedious 'length', i.e., a *void*. But I ask any intelligent person to judge my humour toward the external success of my work at Dresden, and whether a twenty-fold performance, with regularly repeated "calls" for the author, could repay me for the gnawing consciousness that a large portion of the received applause was due to nothing but a misunderstanding, or at least a thoroughly defective

understanding, of my real artistic aim! If in future my intentions are to be better met, and my aim realised in fact, I must especially insist on a correct rendering of the passage just discussed at length, since it is no longer to be excised. In those days its omission, and the consequent abandonment of its whole import, resulted in all interest in Tannhäuser completely vanishing at the close of the Second Act, and centering simply in his environment and opposites—thus altogether nullifying my intrinsic aim. In the Third Act Tannhäuser was met by this lack of interest to such a point, that people troubled themselves about his subsequent fate merely insofar as the fate of Elisabeth and even Wolfram, now raised into the virtual [181] protagonists, appeared to hang upon it: only the truly marvellous ability and staying-power of the singer of the chief rôle, when in sonorous and energetic accents he told the story of his pilgrimage, could laboriously re-awaken interest in himself. Wherefore my prayer goes out to every future exponent of Tannhäuser, to lay utmost weight -on the passage in question; his delivery of it will not succeed till, even in midst of that delivery, he gets full feeling that at this moment he is master of the dramatic, as well as the musical situation, that the audience is listening exclusively to *his* utterance, and that this latter is of such a kind as to instil the deepest sense of awe. The cries: "*Ach! erbarm' dich mein!*" demand so piercing an accent, that he here will not get through as a merely well-trained singer; no, the highest dramatic art must yield him all the energy of grief and desperation, for tones which must seem to break from the very bottom of a heart distraught by fearful suffering, like an outcry for redemption. It must be the conductor's duty, to see to it that the desired effect be made possible to the chief performer through the most discreet accompaniment, on part alike of the other singers and the orchestra.—

Yet another omission was I obliged to make in this closing scene of the Second Act, namely of the passage occupying pages 348 to 356 of the score. It came about for precisely the same reasons as in the case of the passage last referred-to, and was merely a consequence of the prior cut having grown inevitable: i.e., I felt that any interest in Tannhäuser, in this Act, was past praying for. The essence of the present passage is the renewed assumption of supremacy by Elisabeth, and more especially by Tannhäuser, as they approach their surrounding, which hitherto has filled the centre of the stage: here the theme of the men, with its command to Rome, is taken up by Elisabeth in fashion of an ardent prayer for her lover; Tannhäuser adds to the song the impassioned cries of broken-hearted penitence, athirst for action; while the remainder of the men break [182] forth anew with threats and execrations. Whether this passage—which certainly belongs to the strictest sequence of the situation—shall be retained in future representations, I must make dependent on its outcome in the stage-rehearsals. If in the long run it should not entirely succeed, i.e., should it not bring about a heightening of the situation through the animation displayed by the surrounding; above all, if the singer of Tannhäuser should feel himself and his voice too sorely taxed by what has gone before, and especially by that aforesaid passage in *adagio*, to sing this too with fullest energy,—then I myself must strenuously advise that the cut shall here hold good: for only by the amplest force of acting and delivery, will the effect intended here be still attainable. In that event I must console myself that the chief matter, the focusing of the main interest on himself, has been compassed through Tannhäuser's enthralling effect in the *Adagio*, and must content myself with the further effect reserved for him to produce at the supreme moment of his exit. To that moment I should wish this performer's attention most emphatically directed. The men, affronted and incensed afresh at sight of the hated one's delay, are in act to carry out their threats with hand upon the sword-hilt; an adjuring gesture of Elisabeth's holds them back to the path which *she* has won: then suddenly there rings from out the valley the chant of the Younger Pilgrims, like a voice of promise and atonement; as it

enchains the rest, so it falls on Tannhäuser with a summons from the tempest of his blind remorse. Like a flash from heaven, a sudden ray of hope invades his tortured soul; tears of ineffable woe well from his eyes; an irresistible impulse carries him to the feet of Elisabeth; he dares not lift to her his look, but presses the hem of her garment to his lips with passionate ardour. Hastily he leaps to his feet once more; hurls from his breast the cry: "To Rome!" with an expression as though the whole swift-kindled hope of a new life were urged into the sound; and rushes from the stage with burning steps. This action, which must be carried out [183] with greatest sharpness and in briefest time, is of the most determinant weight for the final impression of the whole Act; and it is this impression that is absolutely indispensable, through the mood in which it leaves the public, for making possible the full effect of the difficult Third Act.—

The abridged version of the long instrumental introduction to the Third Act, as contained in the scores revised for the theatres, is the one I now wish kept-to. When first composing this piece, I allowed the subject of expression to betray me into almost recitative-like phrases for the orchestra; at the performance, however, I felt that their meaning might well be intelligible to myself, who carried in my head the fancy-picture of the incidents thus shadowed, but not to others. Nevertheless I must insist on a complete rendering of this tone-piece in its new shape, since I deem it indispensable for establishing the *Stimmung* needed by what follows.

For similar reasons to those given above, after the first representation I saw myself compelled to effect an omission in Elisabeth's Prayer, namely that marked on pages 396 to 398. That the weightiest motivation of Elisabeth's self-offering and death thus went by the board, must be obvious to anyone who will examine carefully the words and music here. Certainly, if the simple outlines of this tone-piece, completely bare of musical embroidery, are to avoid the effect of monotonous length for that of an outflow of sincere emotion, its delivery demands a conception and devotion to the task such as we can seldom hope to meet among our dainty opera-singeresses. Here the mere technical cultivation of even the most brilliant of voices will not suffice us; by no art of absolute-musical execution can this Prayer be made interesting; but *that* actress alone can satisfy my aim, who is able to feel-out Elisabeth's piteous situation, from the first quick budding of her affection for Tannhäuser, through all the phases of its growth, to the final efflorescence of the death-perfumed [184] bloom—as it unfolds itself in this prayer,—and to feel this with the finest organs of a true woman's sensibility. Yet that only the highest dramatic, and particularly the highest *vocal* art, can make it possible to bring this sensibility to outward operation this is a thing that just *those* lady-singers will be the first to recognise, who have erewhile been clever enough at tricking a feelingless heap of loungers out of their ennui through their own most blinding arts, but cannot help perceiving the utter futility of their juggling-feats when confronted with the present task. —The initial inexperience of my Dresden actress must bear the blame, that I was forced to immolate the passage here referred-to; in course of the later performances I had reason to hope for a successful issue of the *whole* Prayer, were I to restore it to its integrity. But another experience made me hold my hand, and I consider this a most appropriate place for imparting it to the conductors and performers of my opera, in form of the following exhortation. —Whatever characteristic feature of a dramatic work we deem expedient to omit from the first few representations, can never be restored in subsequent performances. The first impression, even when a faulty one, fixes itself alike for public and performers as a definite, a given thing; and any subsequent change, albeit for the better, will always take the light of a

derangement The performers in particular, after once getting over the worry and excitement of the first few nights, soon accustom themselves to holding their achievements, as set and moulded during this incubatory process, for something inviolable by any meddling hand; whilst carelessness and gradual indifference add their share, at last, toward making it impossible to deal afresh with a problem now considered solved. For this reason I entreat directors and performers to come to an agreement, upon everything I here am bringing under their notice, *before* the first production. What they are able to achieve, or not, must be definitely established in the stage-rehearsals, if not earlier; and, saving under utmost stress, one should therefore not decide upon omissions with [185] the sorry hope that what has been neglected may be made good again in later performances: for this it never comes to. In like manner one must not at once feel prompted to lop away this or that passage because of insufficient success at the first public performance, but rather have care that its success shall not be lacking in the next; for where one attempts to make an organically-coherent work more palatable through excisions, one merely bears witness to one's own incapacity, and the enjoyment that seems hereby brought within reach at last is no enjoyment of the work as such, but only a self-deception, inasmuch as the work is taken for something other than it really is.

Now the genuine triumph of the representress of Elisabeth would consist in this: that she not only should give due effect to the Prayer in its entirety, but should further maintain that effect at such a pitch, by the magic of her acting, as to make possible an unabridged performance of its pantomimic postlude. I am well aware that this task is no less difficult than the vocal rendering of the Prayer itself; therefore only where the actress feels quite confident of her effect in this solemn dumb-show, do I wish sanction given to the undocked execution of this scene.

As regards the *revision of the opera's close*, upon whose observance I rigidly insist, I have first to beg all those who do not like this change—owing to impressions harboured from its earlier arrangement,—to consider what I have just said about first performances and repetitions. The revised Close stands towards its first version as the working-out to the sketch, and I soon experienced the pressing need of this working-out; whilst the very fact of my effecting it, may prove to every one that I do not obstinately abide by my first draughts, and therefore, when I press for the reinstatement of passages omitted earlier, that it is not from any blind affection for my works. When I first composed this closing scene I had just as complete an image of it in my brain, as I since have worked-out in its second version; [186] not an atom here is changed in the intention, but merely that intention is more distinctly realised. The truth is, I had built too much on certain scenic effects, which proved inadequate when brought to actual execution: the mere glowing of the Venusberg, in the farthest background, was not enough to produce the disquieting impression which I meant to lead up to the denouement; still less could the lighting of the windows of the Wartburg (also in the most distant background) and the far-off strains of the Dirge bring the catastrophic moment, which enters with Elisabeth's death, to instantaneous perception by an unbiased spectator not familiar with the literary and artistic details of the subject My experiences hereanent were so painfully convincing, that the very non-understanding of this situation afforded me a cogent reason for remodelling the closing-scene; and in no other way could this be accomplished, than by making Venus herself draw near, with witchcraft sensible to ear and eye, whilst Elisabeth's death is no longer merely hinted at, but the dying Tannhäuser sinks down upon her actual corse. Although the effect of this change was complete and decisive on the unbiased public,

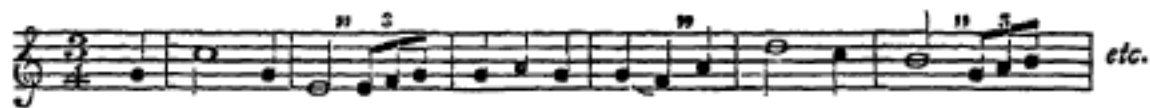



yet I can easily imagine how the art-connoisseur, already familiar with the earlier form—and that through his having acquired a clue to the situation by a study of the poem and music apart from representment,—must have found it disconcerting. This I the more readily comprehend, as the new Close could only be represented in a very halting style at Dresden: it had to be carried-out with the existing scenic material from the First Act, and with none of the fresh scenery which it required; moreover (as I have already mentioned) the rôle of Venus was one of the least satisfactorily rendered in that production, and thus her reappearance in itself could make no favourable impression. These grounds, however, are quite untenable against the validity of the new Close when it is a question, as now, of producing *Tannhäuser* for the first time on other stages and under quite other conditions, and therefore I cannot grant them the least regard.

[187]

Still reserving my discussion of this closing-scene with the regisseur, and especially the scene-painter, I have next to inform the musical-director that I deemed necessary to omit from the second edition the final chorus of the Younger Pilgrims, occurring in the first arrangement; after what has gone before, it is easy for this chorus to appear a length too much, if by the amplest vocal forces, on the one side, and a striking portrayal of the scene on the other, it be not brought to a powerful effect of its own. The chant is sung exclusively by soprano and alto voices: these must be available in considerable number and great beauty of tone; the approach of the singers must be so contrived that, despite the mere gradual arrival of the whole choir upon the stage, yet the chant is sounded from the very first with utmost possible fulness; and finally, the scene must very effectively reproduce the valley's glowing flush at break of dawn,—if the Director is to feel justified in carrying out this Close of the opera in its entirety. Only the largest and amplest-equipped theatres, however, can command the needful means for the effect last-named; but these alone, by supplying the conditions necessary for retaining this Pilgrims'-chant, could also fully meet my aim; for, with its announcement of the miracle, and as forming the counterpart to *Tannhäuser's* story of his reception in Rome, this chant at any rate rounds off the whole in a thoroughly satisfying manner. (02)

Before I quite turn my back on the musical-director, (03) I have a few things to discuss with him as regards the *Orchestra*, and chiefly in reference to the phrasing of the *Overture*.—The theme with which this tone-piece begins, [188] will at once be correctly grasped by the wind-instrumentists, if the conductor insists on their all taking breath together at the right caesura in the melody; this invariably precedes the upstroke leading to the 'good' bar of the rhythm, and thus occurs in the third, fifth, seventh, &c., of the melody, as follows:



In order to gain the effect intended, in imitation of a chorus sung to words, I further beg an alteration in the fourth and twelfth bars of the bassoon-parts, resolving the rhythm  into



. When the trombones later take up the same theme *forte*, this breathing-mark will

not of course hold good, but, for sake of the needful strength and duration of tone, the blowers must take breath as often as they require.—The *fortissimo* passage, from the third bar of page 5 to the second bar of page 10, should be executed by the accompanying instruments (i.e., the whole orchestra except the trombones, tuba, and drums) in such a manner that, whereas a full *fortissimo* marks the first beat of every bar, the second and third crotchets are played with decreasing force. Thus:





Only the instruments named above, as directly occupied with the theme itself, must maintain an even strength.—At the sixth bar of page 22 the conductor should somewhat restrain the pace, which had shortly before grown almost too rapid, yet without causing any conspicuous retardation; the expression of this passage should merely be sharply contrasted with that of the former, through its obtaining a yearning—I might almost say, a panting—character, both in phrasing and in tempo. On page 23, bar 2, the accent is to be removed from the first note of the first violins; similarly in the first bar of page 24 the *fp* is to be changed to a simple *p*, for all the instruments. On page 25 the time is to be again taken [189] somewhat more briskly; only, the conductor must guard against the theme which enters with page 26 being played too fast: for all the fire with which it is to be rendered, a too rapid tempo would give it a certain taint of levity, which I should like kept very far away from it.—In the distribution of the violins into eight groups, from page 34 onwards, it must be seen-to that the six lower groups are of equal strength, while the two upper, from page 35 on, are manned in such a fashion that the second group is stronger than the first; the first part might even be entrusted to one solitary leader, whereas the second must be numerically stronger than all the others.—The clarinetist generally mistakes the 'slur' in the first bar of page 35, and connects the first note of the triplet with the preceding  $\frac{3}{4}$  crotchet; it must, on the contrary, be emphasised apart. On page 36 particular heed should be paid to the clarinet's standing sharply out from all the other instruments; even the first violin must not overshadow it, and the clarinetist must fully realise that, from its first entry on this page down to the fifth bar of page 37, his instrument takes the absolutely leading part.—A moderately brisk *accelerando* must commence with page 39, and not slacken until the fifth bar of page 41, when it passes into the energetic tempo there required.—From the third bar of page 50 onwards, the conductor must maintain an unbroken body of fullest tone in all the instruments; any abatement in the first eight bars must be strenuously avoided.—It is of the greatest moment for an understanding of the whole closing section of the Overture, that from page 54 onwards the violins be played in utmost *piano*, so that above their wave-like figure—almost merely whispered—the theme of the wind-instruments may be heard with absolute distinctness; for this theme, albeit it is not to be played at all loud, must forthwith rivet the attention of the hearer.—Beginning with the third bar on page 66, the conductor must accelerate the pace in regular progression, though with marked effect—in such a way that with the entry of the *fortissimo* on page 68 that pitch of rapidity is reached [190] in which alone the trombone-theme, so greatly 'augmented' in rhythm, can be given an intelligible enunciation through its notes losing all appearance of detached and disconnected sounds.—Finally, I scarcely need lay to the heart of the conductor and band that it is only by expenditure of the utmost energy and force, that the intended effect of this unbroken *fortissimo* can be attained. After yet another acceleration of the six preceding them, the last four bars are to be slackened to a solemn breadth of measure.—

As to the "tempi" of the whole work in general, I here can only say that if conductor and singers are to depend for their time-measure on the metronomical marks alone, the spirit of their work must stand indeed in sorry case; only *then* will both discern the proper measure, when an understanding of the dramatic and musical situations, an understanding won by lively sympathy, shall let them find it as a thing that comes quite of itself, without their further seeking.

For what concerns the *manning of the orchestra*—seeing that the body of wind-instruments

in this opera exceeds in no essential the usual complement of all good German orchestras—I have only to draw attention to one point, though certainly of great importance to me: I mean, the requisite effective number of *string-instruments*. German orchestras are invariably too poorly manned with 'strings'; upon the grounds of this lack of fine feeling for the truest needs of good orchestral delivery much might be said, and that pretty decisive of any verdict on the state of Music in Germany; but, to be sure, it here would lead us too far afield. Thus much is certain, that the French—however we may cry out against their frivolity—keep their smallest orchestras better manned with 'strings' than we find in Germany, often in quite celebrated bands. Now in the instrumentation of "Tannhäuser" I so deliberately kept in view a particularly strong muster of strings, that I must positively insist on all the theatres increasing their string-instruments beyond the usual tally; and my requirements [191] may be measured by this very simple standard—I declare that an orchestra which cannot muster at least four good viola-players, can bring to hearing but a mutilation of my music.

For the musical equipment of the stage itself I have made still more unwonted demands. If I stand by the exactest observance of my instructions for the stage-music, I am justified by the knowledge that in all the more important cities of Germany there exist large and well-manned music-corps, especially belonging to the military, and from these the stage-music-corps required for "Tannhäuser" can readily be combined. Further, I know that any opposition to the fulfilment of my demand will come chiefly from the parsimony—often alas! most warrantable, as I admit—of the theatrical Directors. I must tell these Directors, however, that they can expect no manner of success from the production of my "Tannhäuser," saving when the representation is prepared with the most exceptional care in every respect; with a care such as needs must give this representation, when contrasted with customary operatic performances, the character of something quite Unwonted. And as this character has to be evinced by the whole thing, under its every aspect, it must be also shewn on the side of its external mounting; for which I count on no mere tinsel pomp and blinding juggleries, but precisely on a supplanting of these trumpery effects by a really rich and thoughtfully-planned artistic treatment of the whole alike with every detail.



I must now devote a few lines to the *Regisseur*, begging him to lay to heart what I hitherto have chiefly addressed to the Musical Director, and thence to derive a measure for my claims on the character of his own collaboration. Nothing I have said about the representation from the [192] musical side can succeed at all, unless the most punctilious carrying-out of every scenic detail makes possible a general prospering of the dramatic whole. The stage-directions in the score, to which I drew his marked attention in my opening statement, will mostly give him an exact idea of my aim; my circumstantial instructions, with reference to certain habitually-omitted passages, may shew him what unusual weight I lay on the precisest motivation of the situations through the dramatic action; and he thence may perceive the value I attach to his solicitous co-operation in the arrangement of even the most trifling scenic incidents. I therefore entreat the *regisseur* to cast to the winds that indulgence alas! too customarily shewn to operatic favourites, which leaves them almost solely in the hands of the musical-director. Though, in their general belittlement of Opera as a *genre*, people have thought fit to let a singer perpetrate any folly he pleases in his conception of a situation, because "an opera-singer isn't an actor, you know, and one goes to the opera simply to hear the singing, not to see a play,"—yet I declare that if this indulgence is applied to the present case, my work may as well be given up at once for lost. What I ask of the performer, will

certainly not be drummed into him by sheer weight of talk; and the whole course of study laid down by me, especially the holding of reading-rehearsals, aims at making the performer a fellow-feeling, a fellow-knowing, and finally, from his own convictions, a fellow-creative partner in the production: but it is just as certain that, under prevailing conditions, this result can only be brought about by the most active co-operation of the regisseur.

So I beg the stage-director to pay special heed to the scenic action's synchronising in the precisest fashion with the various features of the orchestral accompaniment. Often it has happened to me, that a piece of by-play—a gesture, a significant glance—has escaped the attention of the spectator because it came too early or too late, and at any rate did not exactly correspond in tempo or duration [193] with the correlated passage for the orchestra which was influencing that same spectator in his capacity of listener. Not only does this heedlessness damage the effect of the performer's acting, but this inconsequence in the features of the orchestra confuses the spectator to such a pitch, that he can only deem them arbitrary caprices of the composer. What a chain of misunderstandings is hereby given rise to, it is easy enough to see.

I further urge the regisseur to guard against the processions in "Tannhäuser" being carried out by the stage-personnel in the manner of the customary March, now stereotyped in all our operatic productions. Marches, in the ordinary sense, are not to be found in my later operas; therefore if the entry of the guests into the Singers' Hall (Act II. Scene 4) be so effected that the choir and supers march upon the stage in double file, draw the favourite serpentine curve around it, and take possession of the wings like two regiments of well-drilled troops, in wait for further operatic business,—then I merely beg the band to play some march from "Norma" or "Belisario," but not my music. If on the contrary one thinks it as well to retain my music, the entry of the guests must be so ordered as to thoroughly imitate real life, in its noblest, freest forms. Away with that painful regularity of the traditional marching-order! The more varied and unconstrained are the groups of oncomers, divided into separate knots of friends or relatives, the more attractive will be the effect of the whole Entry. Each knight and dame must be greeted with friendly dignity, on arrival, by the Landgrave and Elisabeth; but, naturally, there must be no visible pretence of conversation—a thing that under any circumstances should be strictly prohibited in a musical drama.—A most important task, in this sense, will then be the ordering of the whole Singers'-Tourney, the easy grouping of its audience, and especially the portrayal of their changing and waxing interest in the main action. Here the regisseur must tax the full resources of his art; for only through his [194] most ingenious tactics can this complex scene attain its due effect.

He must treat in a similar fashion the bands of Pilgrims in the First and Third Acts; the freer the play, and the more natural the groupings, the better will my aim be answered. As to the close of the First Act, where (in fact during this whole scene, albeit unobtrusively at first) the stage is gradually occupied by the full hunting retinue; and as to the close of the Third Act, where I have been obliged to make the giving of the Younger Pilgrims' chorus depend in great measure on a skilful handling of the stage—I believe I have already said enough. But one most weighty matter still remains for me to clear up with the regisseur: the execution of the opera's first scene, the *dance*—if so I may call it—in the Venusberg. I need scarcely point out that we here have nothing to do with a dance such as is usual in our operas and ballets; the

ballet-master, whom one should ask to arrange such a dance-set for this music, would soon send us to the right-about and declare the music quite unsuitable. No, what I have in mind is an epitome of everything the highest choreographic and pantomimic art can offer: a wild, and yet seductive chaos of movements and groupings, of soft delight, of yearning and burning, carried to the most delirious pitch of frenzied riot. For sure, the problem is not an easy one to solve, and to produce the desired chaotic effect undoubtedly requires most careful and artistic treatment of the smallest details. The 'argument' of this wild scene is plainly set forth in the score, as concerns its essential features, and I must entreat whoever undertakes its carrying out, for all the freedom I concede to his invention, to strictly maintain the prescribed chief-moments; a frequent hearing of the music, rendered by the orchestra, will be the best means of inspiring any person in the least expert with the devices whereby to make the action correspond therewith.—

This scene now brings me into contact with the *Scene-painter*, [195] whom I shall henceforth figure to myself as in close alliance with the Machinist Only through an accurate knowledge of the whole poetic subject, and after a careful agreement as to the scheme of its portrayal with the Regisseur—and the Kapellmeister—too will the scene-painter and machinist succeed in giving the stage its needful aspect In the absence of such an agreement, how often must it happen that, for mere sake of employing work already executed by the scene-painter and machinist after a one-sided acquaintance with the subject, one is forced at the last moment to embark on violent distortions of the intrinsic aim!

The main features of the Venusberg scenery, whose mechanical structure must accurately fit-in with that for the Wartburg valley set in readiness behind it (an arrangement favoured by the mountainous projections common to both), are sufficiently indicated in the score. However, the shrouding of this scene with a veil of rosy mist, to narrow down its space, is a somewhat difficult matter: all the intended witchery would be destroyed, if this were clumsily effected by pushing forward, and dropping down, a massive cloud-piece. After many a careful trial, this veiling was most effectively carried-out at Dresden by gradually lowering a number of vaporous sheets of painted gauze, let slowly fall behind each other; so that not until the contours of the previous scene had become quite unrecognisable, was a massive rose-tinted canvas back-cloth let down behind these veils, thus completely shutting-in the scene. The tempo also was accurately reckoned, so as to coincide with the music.—The main change of scene is then effected at one stroke, as follows: the stage is suddenly plunged in darkness, and first the massive cloud-cloth, and immediately thereafter the veils of gauze, are drawn swiftly up; where-upon the light is instantly turned on again, revealing the new scene, the valley bathed in brilliant sunshine. The effect of this valley-picture—which must be mounted in strict accordance with the directions in the score—should be so [196] overpoweringly fresh, so invitingly serene, that the poet and musician may be allowed to leave the spectator to its impression for a while.

The decorations for the Second Act, shewing the Singers'-Hall in the Wartburg, were so admirably designed for the Dresden production, by an eminent French artist, that I can only advise each theatre to procure a copy and mount this scene in accordance with it. The arrangement of the stage, as regards the tiers of seats for the guests at the Singers'-tourney, was also so happily effected there, that I have only to urge an employment of the plans, which

may easily be obtained from Dresden.

Less happily did the scenery for the Third Act turn out at Dresden; not until after the production of the opera did it become evident that a special canvas should have been painted for this Act, whereas I had fancied we could manage with the second back-cloth from the First. But it proved beyond the most ingenious artifice of lighting, to give to the same canvas, previously reckoned for the brightest effect of a spring morning, the autumn-evening aspect so needful to the Third Act. Above all, the magic apparition of the Venusberg could not be effectually rendered with this scenery, so that—as already said—for the second version I had to content myself with somewhat consequently letting drop once more the veils of the First Act; whereby the whole apparition of Venus was driven much too much into the foreground, and thus quite missed its effect of a beckoning from afar. I therefore engage the scene-painter, to whom the mounting of this opera is confided, to insist on a special canvas being provided for the Third Act, and to treat it in such a way that it shall reproduce the last scene of the First Act in the tones of autumn and evening, but with strict observance of the fact that the valley is eventually to be shewn in the glowing flush of dawn.—Then for the spectral apparition of the Venusberg something like the following mode might [197] be adopted. At the passage indicated in the score the lights should be very much lowered, while half-way up the stage two veils are dropped, one after the other, completely concealing the contours of the valley in the background; immediately afterwards the distant Venusberg, now painted as a transparency, must be lit with a roseate glow. The inventive talent of the scene-painter and machinist should next devise some means whereby the effect may be produced as though the glowing Venusberg were drawing nearer, and stretching wide enough—now that we can see through it—to hold within it groups of dancing figures, whose whirling movements must be plainly visible to the spectator. When the whole hinder stage is occupied by this apparition, Venus herself will then be seen, reclining on a litter. The perspective, however, must still appear as distant as is consistent with the size of actual human figures. The phantom's vanishing will then be brought about by a rapid diminution and final extinction of the rosy lighting of the background, which till then had grown more and more vivid—therefore by the stage being momentarily plunged in total darkness, during which the whole apparatus required by this vision of the Venusberg is to be speedily removed. Next, and while the dirge is being chanted, one perceives through the two still-hanging veils the lights and torches of the funeral train, as it descends from the heights at the back. Then the veils are drawn slowly up, one after the other, and at like time the gradual grey of early morn fills all the scene; to pass at last, as said, into the glowing flush of dawn.

The scene-painter may see, then, how infinitely important to me is his intelligent collaboration—nay, how alone enabling—and that I assign to him a certainly not un-decisive share in the success of the whole; a success only to be won through a clear and instant understanding of the most unwonted situations. But only a close and genuinely artistic acquaintance with my inmost aims, on his part, can secure me that collaboration.



[198]

After this somewhat circumstantial disquisition, I must turn at last to the *Actors* in particular. I cannot, however, attempt to discuss with them the minutiae of their rôles; to gain a full and fitting opportunity for this, I should need to enter on a personal and friendly intercourse with each performer. Therefore I must confine myself to what I have already said about the needful mode of approaching the general study, in the hope that through familiarity



with my intentions the performers will of themselves attain the power of executing them. But in all that I have addressed to the Musical Director, in the first place, my claims upon the players are so markedly involved, and in dealing with individual situations I have found occasion to so exactly motivate these claims, that I need only add that my requirements for the conception of those single passages must hold good for every other detail of the performance.—

Yet I deem it as well to go a little deeper into the character of the principal rôles.

Indisputably the hardest rôle is that of *Tannhäuser* himself, and I must admit that it may be one of the hardest problems ever set before an actor. The essentials of this character, in my eyes, are an ever prompt and active, nay, a brimming-over saturation with the emotion woken by the passing incident, and the lively contrasts which the swift changes of situation produce in the utterance of this fill of feeling. Tannhäuser is nowhere and never "a little" anything, but each thing fully and entirely. With fullest transport has he revelled in the arms of Venus; with keenest feeling of the necessity for his breaking from her, does he tear the bonds that bound him to Love's Goddess, without one moment's railing at her. With fullest unreserve he gives himself to the overpowering impression of re-entered homely Nature, to the familiar round of old sensations, and lastly to the tearful outburst of a childlike feeling of religious penitence; the cry: "Almighty, Thine the praise! Great are the wonders of Thy grace!" is the instinctive outpour of an emotion [199] which usurps his heart with might resistless, down to its deepest root. So strong and upright is this emotion, and the felt need of reconciliation with the world—with the World in its widest, grandest sense—that he sullenly draws back from the encounter with his former comrades, and shuns their proffered reconciliation: no turning-back will he hear of, but only thrusting-on towards a thing as great and lofty as his new-won feeling of the World itself. This one, this nameless thing, that alone can satisfy his present longing, is suddenly named for him with the name "Elisabeth": Past and Future stream together, with lightning quickness, at mention of this name; while he listens to the story of Elisabeth's love they melt in one great flood of flame, and light the path that leads him to new life. Wholly and entirely mastered by this latest, this impression never felt before, he shouts for very joy of life, and rushes forth to meet the loved one. The whole Past now lies behind him like a dim and distant dream; scarce can he call it back to mind: one thing alone he knows of, a tender, gracious woman, a sweet maid who loves him; and one thing alone lies bare to him within this love, one thing alone in its rejoinder,—the burning, all-consuming fire of Life.—With this fire, this fervour, he tasted once the love of Venus, and instinctively must he fulfil what he had freely pledged her at his parting: "'gainst all the world, henceforth, her doughty knight to be." This World tarries not in challenging him to the combat In it—where the Strong brims full the sacrifice demanded of it by the Weak—man finds his only passport to survival in an endless accommodation of his instinctive feelings to the all-ruling mould of use and wont (*Sitte*). Tannhäuser, who is capable of nothing but the most direct expression of his frankest, most instinctive feelings, must find himself in crying contrast with this world; and so strongly must this be driven home upon his Feeling, that for sake of sheer existence, he has to battle with this his opposite in a struggle for life or death. It is this one necessity that absorbs his soul, when matters come to open [200] combat in the "Singers'-tourney"; to content it he forgets his whole surrounding, and casts discretion to the winds: and yet his heart is simply fighting for his love to Elisabeth, when at last he flaunts his colours openly as Venus' knight. Here stands he on the summit of his life-glad ardour, and naught can dash him from the pinnacle of transport whereon he plants his solitary standard 'gainst the whole wide world,—nothing but the one experience whose utter newness, whose variance with all his past, now suddenly usurps the field of his emotions: the woman who *offers up herself* for love of him.—Forth from that excess of bliss on which he fed in Venus' arms, he had yearned for—Sorrow: this profoundly human yearning was to lead him to the woman who *suffers* with



him, whilst Venus had but joyed. His claim is now fulfilled, and no longer can he live aloof from griefs as overwhelming as were once his joys. Yet these are no sought-for, no arbitrarily chosen griefs; with irresistible might have they forced an entrance to his heart through fellow-feeling, and it nurtures them with all the energy of his being, even to self-annihilation. It is here that his love for Elisabeth proclaims the vastness of its difference from that for Venus: her whose gaze he can no longer bear, whose words pierce his breast like a sword—to her must he atone, and expiate by fearsome tortures the torture of her love for him, though Death's most bitter pang should only let him distantly forebode that last atonement—Where is the suffering that he would not gladly bear? Before that world, confronting which he stood but now its jubilant foe, he casts himself with willing fervour in the dust, to let it tread him under foot. No likeness shews he to his fellow-pilgrims, who lay upon themselves convenient penance for healing of their own souls: only "her tears to sweeten, the tears she weeps o'er his great sin," seeks he the path of healing, amid the horriest of torments; for this healing can consist in nothing but the knowledge that those tears are dried. We must believe him, that never did a pilgrim pray for pardon with such ardour. But the more sincere and total his prostration, [201] his remorse and craving for purification, the more terribly must he be overcome with loathing at the heartless lie that reared itself upon his journey's goal. It is just his utter singlemindedness, recking naught of self, of welfare for his individual soul, but solely of his love towards another being, and thus of that beloved being's weal—it is just this feeling that at last must kindle into brightest flame his hate against this world, which must break from off its axis or ever it absolved his love and him; and these are the flames whose embers of despair scorch up his heart. When he returns from Rome, he is nothing but embodied wrath against a world that refuses him the right of Being for simple reason of the wholeness of his feelings; and not from any thirst for joy or pleasure, seeks he once more the Venusberg; but despair and hatred of this world he needs must flout now drive him thither, to hide him from his "angel's" look, whose "tears to sweeten" the wide world could not afford to him the balm.—Thus does he love Elisabeth; and this love it is that she returns. What the whole moral world could not, that could she when, defying all the world, she clothed her lover in her prayer, and in hallowed knowledge of the puissance of her death she dying set the culprit free. And Tannhäuser's last breath goes up to her, in thanks for this supernal gift of Love. Beside his lifeless body stands no man but must envy him; the whole world, and God Himself—must call him blessed.—

Now I declare that not even the most eminent *actor*, of our own or bygone times, could solve the task of a perfect portrayal of Tannhäuser's character on the lines laid down in the above analysis; and I meet the question: "How could I hold it possible for an opera-singer to fulfil it?" by the simple answer that to *Music* alone could the draft of such a task be offered, and only a dramatic *singer*, just through the aid of Music, can be in the position to fulfil it. Where a Player would seek in vain among the means of recitation, for the expression wherewithal to give [202] this character success, to the Singer that expression is self-offered in the music; I therefore merely beg the latter to approach his task with unrestricted warmth, and he may be certain also of achieving it.—But above all, I must ask the singer of Tannhäuser to completely give over and forget his quondam standing as Opera-singer; *as such* he cannot even dream of a possibility of solving this task. To our *tenors*, in particular, there cleaves a downright curse as outcome of their rendering of the usual tenor-rôles—giving them for the most part an unmanly, vapid, and utterly invertebrate appearance. Under the influence, and in consequence, of the positively criminal school of singing now in vogue, during the whole of their theatrical career they are accustomed to so exclusively devote their attention to the paltriest details of vocal trickery, that they seldom attain to anything beyond

the care whether that G or A-flat will come out roundly, or the delight that this G-sharp or A has "taken" well. Besides this care and this delight, they generally know nothing but the pleasure of fine clothes, and the toil to make their finery and voice together bring-in as much applause as possible—above all with an eye to higher wages. (04) I grant, then, that the mere attempt to handle such a task as that of my Tannhäuser will be sufficient in itself to ruffle the composure of the singer, and that this very disquietude will induce him to alter many of his old stage habits; in fact I go so far as to hope that, if the study of Tannhäuser is conducted on the lines laid down by me, so great a change will come over the habits and notions of the singer, in favour of his task, that of itself it will lead him to the right and needful thing. But a thoroughly successful issue of his labours I can only expect when this change shall compass a total revolution in himself and his former methods of conception and portrayal—a revolution such [203] as to make him conscious that for this project he has to become something entirely different from what he has been, the diametric opposite of his earlier self. Let him not reply that already he has had tasks set before him which made unusual demands on his gift for acting: I can prove to him that what he haply has made his own in the so-called dramatic-tenor rôles of latter days will by no means help him out with Tannhäuser; for I could shew him that in the operas of Meyerbeer, for instance, the character for which I have blamed the modern tenor is regarded as unalterable, from top to toe, in means and end, and with the utmost shrewdness. Whoever, then, relying on his previous successes in the said operas, should attempt to play Tannhäuser with merely the same expenditure on the art of portrayal as has sufficed to make those operas both widely given and universally popular, would turn this rôle into the very opposite of what it is. Above all, he would not grasp the energy of Tannhäuser's nature, and thus would turn him into an undecided, vacillating, a weak and unmanly character; since for the *superficial* observer there certainly might exist temptation to such a false conception of the part (lending it somewhat of a resemblance to "Robert the Devil"). But nothing could make the whole drama less intelligible and more disfigure the chief character, than if Tannhäuser were displayed weak, or even by fits and starts "well-meaning," bourgeoisly devout, and at most afflicted with a few reprehensible cravings. This I believe I have substantiated by the foregoing characterisation of his nature; and as I can await no understanding of my work if its chief rôle be not conceived and rendered in consonance with that characterisation, so the singer of Tannhäuser may perceive not only what an unwonted demand I make upon him, but also to what joyful thanks he'll pledge me should he fully realise my aim. I do not hesitate to say that a completely successful impersonation of Tannhäuser will be the highest achievement in the record of his art.—

After this exhaustive talk with the singer of Tannhäuser, [204] I have but little to tell the interpreters of the remaining rôles; the main gist of what I have said to him concerns them all. The hardest tasks, after that of Tannhäuser himself, are certainly those which fall to the two ladies, the exponents of *Venus* and *Elisabeth*. As to Venus, this rôle will only succeed when to a favourable exterior the actress joins a full belief in her part; and this will come to her so soon as she is able to hold Venus completely justified in her every utterance,—so justified that she can yield to no one but the woman who offers up herself for Love. The difficulty in the rôle of Elisabeth, on the other hand, is for the actress to give the impression of the most youthful and virginal unconstraint, without betraying how experienced, how refined a womanly feeling it is, that alone can fit her for the task.—The other male parts are less exacting, and even *Wolfram*—whose rôle I can by no means hold for unconditionally easy—needs little more than to address himself to the sympathy of the finer-feeling section of our public, to be sure of winning its interest. The lesser vehemence of his directly physical instincts has allowed him to make the impressions of Life a matter of meditation; he thus is pre-eminently Poet and Artist, whereas Tannhäuser is before all Man. His standing toward Elisabeth, which a noble manly pride enables him to bear so worthily, no less than his final

deep fellow-feeling for Tannhäuser—whom he certainly can never comprehend—will make him one of the most prepossessing figures. Let the singer of this part, however, be on his guard against imagining the music as easy as might at first appear: more particularly his first song in the "Singers'-tourney"—comprising, as it does, the story of the whole evolution of Wolfram's life-views, both as artist and as man—will demand a phrasing (*Vortrag*) thought-out with the most sensitive care, after a minutest pondering of the poetic subject, while it will need the greatest practice to pitch the voice to that variety of expression which alone can give this piece the right effect.—In conclusion I would gladly turn from the "Performers" to the "Singers" in particular, [205] did I not on the one hand fear to weary, and on the other, venture to assume that what I have already said will suffice to make clear my wishes to the representants in their function, too, of vocal artists.—

So I will now close this Address, albeit with a mournful feeling that I have most imperfectly attained my object: namely, to make good by it a thing denied me, and yet the thing I deem so needful—a personal and word-of-mouth address to all concerned. (05) Amid my deep feeling of the insufficiency of this by-way that I have struck, my only solace is a firm reliance on the good will of my artistic comrades; a good will such as never an artist needed more for making possible his artwork, than I need in my present plight May all whom I have addressed take thought on my peculiar lot, and above all ascribe to the mood which consequently has grown upon me any stray sentence wherein I may have shewn myself too exacting, too anxious, or even too mistrustful, rigorous and harsh.—In view of the unwontedness of such an Address as the preceding, I certainly must prepare myself for its being wholly or for the most part disregarded—perhaps not even understood—by many of those to whom it is directed. With this knowledge I therefore can only regard it as an experiment, which I cast like a die on the world, uncertain whether it shall win or lose. Yet if merely among a handful of individuals I fully reach my aim, that attainment will richly compensate me for all mischanced besides; and cordially do I grasp in anticipation the hand of those valiant artists who shall not have been ashamed to concern themselves more closely with me, and more familiarly to befriend me, than is wonted In our modern Art-world's intercourse.



## Notes

### Note 01 on page 12

"*Zum Heil den Sünder zu führen,*" &c.

### Note 02 on page 16

The theatres must apply to me for the music of this chorus.—R. WAGNER.

### Note 03 on page 16

Touching the vocal parts, I must make one more request to the Kapellmeister: viz., if the singer of *Walther*, whose solos in the "Minstrel's Tourney" are pitched somewhat low (yet in any case are to be maintained in the key prescribed), should find any difficulty with the persistently high register of the concerted pieces,—to effect a change by having the notes assigned to *Heinrich der Schreiber* copied into the music-part of the former, in addition to his own solo-passages, while the higher voice is made over to Heinrich.—R. WAGNER.

### Note 04 on page 24

As I direct these remarks to a whole class, and in such general terms, it naturally is impossible for me to take notice of the manifold varieties which more or less depart from the generic character; wherefore in dealing with crying faults I here must necessarily employ superlatives, which, at any rate, can find no application to many an individual case.—R. WAGNER.

### Note 05 on page 25

This "Address" was written when Wagner had already spent over three years in exile,—an exile destined to last for nearly ten years more.—TR.





[393]

## Summary

Unexpectedly a number of theatres now (1852) applying for its performing-rights; one of my greatest torments that I cannot be present, but must convey instructions by pen; personal correspondence being beyond my strength, I print this pamphlet.

Anarchy among Conductors, Regisseurs and Scene-painters, each working independently at German theatres. Even the sickliest Italian opera would gain immensely by heed paid to "dramatic coherence; a work like "Tannhäuser" must be ruined out and out by present methods of performance (172). —The poem to be first read aloud by the assembled performers, in presence of chorus, with full dramatic accent; singers generally pick up their rdles at their own pianos, but until they can *recite* their parts they can never sing them in accord with even the *composer's* aim. If this not complied with, I withdraw my work. Advantage of the Conductor's attending these rehearsals. In *Tann.* no real Recitative; strict tempo to be observed by singers in the recitative-like phrases till they have mastered my aim, *then* they should give free play to natural feeling; for full agreement, words should be written out in each *orchestral part*.—Caution against misunderstanding—(175). The cuts [394] (to be restored) necessitated at Dresden: 1, second strophe of T.'s song to Venus, because Fr. Devrient unsuited for rôle of Venus, and thus to shorten scene this entire scene at Weimar, however, made a good effect; 2, orchestral postlude to act i, because of stiffness of supers; 3, bustling violin-passage in prelude to act ii, consequent thereon (178). Cut 4, *Adagio* in act ii: this situation forms the axis of T.'s career, nothing can compensate us for missing its due impression; omitted because singers treated it as an ordinary ensemble, instead of simply accompanying in whispers; could a twenty-times-repeated performance at Dresden, with regular calls for author, repay me for the gnawing consciousness that my aim was misunderstood? T. must here feel that he is master of the *dramatic* situation, that the audience is listening to him alone: "*Ach! erbarm dich mein!*" (181). Cut 5, in closing ensemble of act ii, because all interest in T. past praying for—if this passage too sorely tries singer etc. cut must be maintained, and trust to supreme effect of exit, which is indispensable for the mood in which public approaches act iii; 6, abridged version of prelude to act iii—to remain; 7, in Elisabeth's Prayer, because of Johanna Wagner's inexperience, and could not be restored later at Dresden since first impressions fix themselves on public and performers as a definite unalterable thing—the dumb-show after Prayer difficult, but vital (185). Revision of opera's close: first version contains same idea, but merely sketched and thus not understood; public v art-connoisseurs. Younger Pilgrims' Chant only to be given where scenery quite satisfactory and voices good, full and ample in number; this chant at any rate rounds off the whole in a satisfactory manner (187). Tempi and dynamics of overture; in general an artistic understanding v metronomical marks. Manning of orchestra, usual deficiency of strings in German theatres compared with French; 'stage-music' to be recruited from military bands. Avoid parsimony, for performance must be unwonted, in character with work (191).

*Duties of the Regisseur*: "an opera-singer isn't an actor"; discard deference to operatic favourites, and make the performer a partner in the artist's creation from his own convictions; gesture and by-play to synchronise with orchestra. Freedom of grouping in the 'Processions': Entry of Guests and a march from *Norma*; usual serpentine curve, double file, and stage-conversation, prohibited; Minstrels' Tourney; entries and exits of Pilgrims; Dance in Venusberg, a wild and yet seductive chaos—freedom of invention to Regisseur, but must follow chief indications and strictly observe the music (194). *Scene-painter and Machinist*: necessity of intelligent acquaintance with subject, and agreement thereon with Conductor and Regisseur. The cloud-veilings in Venusberg scene; lighting of stage; Wartburg valley to be so

fresh that spectator may be left a while to its impression. French designs for Dresden mounting of act ii. Necessity of separate canvas for Wartburg valley in act iii; arrangements for making glowing Venusberg seem to draw nearer; funeral train and flush of dawn (197).

*The rôles.* That of Tannhäuser himself may be one of the hardest problems ever set before an actor: his saturation with the passing incident, and the dramatic contrasts hence arising. Never "a little" anything; naming of the nameless, 'Elisabeth;' the whole Past now lies behind him like a dream; [395] one thing alone in this love, the all-consuming fire of Life. The moral world and how it treats the strong; a struggle for life or death; his colours flaunted openly; only one thing can daunt him—the woman who *offers up herself* for love of him. Sorrow, once yearned for, now drunk deep, "her tears to sweeten"; unlike his self-saving fellow-pilgrims. The heartless lie at his journey's end; in despair and hatred of this self-righteous world, he seeks again the Venusberg, to hide him from his "angel's" look. Her love-death sets the culprit free; the world, and God Himself, must call him blessed (201). To Music alone could such a task be proposed, and only a dramatic *singer* could fulfil it, but not as *opera-singer*. Curse that cleaves to tenors, through present criminal school of singing; vocal trickery, fine clothes, applause and high wages. This rôle will ruffle singer's composure, and force him to change his habits; but a *total* revolution needed. Not a bit like Meyerbeer's so popular "dramatic-tenor" rôles, neither vapid and unmanly like *Robert*, nor "well-meaning" with a few reprehensible cravings. A completely successful impersonation will be the highest triumph of his art (203). Venus must have a full *belief* in her part; so justified, that she can yield to none but the *self-offering* woman. Elisabeth needs virginal unconstraint, without betraying how much experience that requires. Wolfram addresses sympathy of more refined section of audience; pre-eminently Poet and Artist—Tannhäuser being before all Man. Performers as singers also.—Valediction: a die cast on the world, unknowing whether it shall win or lose; cordially do I grasp the hands of valiant artists who shall not be ashamed to realise my aim (205).

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*Remarks on performing the opera "The Flying Dutchman."*

By Richard Wagner

Translated by William Ashton Ellis



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## Contents

About this Title .....	4
Translator's Note .....	5
Remarks on performing the opera "The Flying Dutchman." .....	7
Notes .....	13

## About this Title

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[208]

## Translator's Note

The accompanying article was evidently written soon after that on *Tannhäuser*,—at any rate either in 1852 or early in 1853. It does not appear in the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*.



[209]

## Remarks on performing the opera "The Flying Dutchman."

IN the first place I have to remind the Conductor and Regisseur of what I laid to their heart before, when dealing with the production of "Tannhäuser," as regards the close accord between what passes in the orchestra and what passes on the stage. The ships and sea, in particular, demand from the Regisseur an unusual amount of care: he will find all needful indications at the corresponding places of the pianoforte edition or full score. The opera's first scene has to bring the spectator into that *Stimmung* in which it becomes possible for him to conceive the mysterious figure of the "Flying Dutchman" himself: it must therefore be handled with exceptional kindness; the sea between the headlands must be shewn as boisterous as possible; the treatment of the ship cannot be naturalistic enough: little touches, such as the heeling of the ship when struck by an extra big wave (between the two verses of the Steersman's song) must be very drastically carried out. Special attention is demanded by the lighting, with its manifold changes: to make the nuances of storm in the First Act effective, a skilful use of painted gauzes, as far as quite the middle distance of the stage, is indispensable. However, as these Remarks are not specially directed to the purely decorative aspect of the performance (for which I must refer to the scenarium of this opera as produced in the Berlin playhouse) I content myself—as said—with pleading for an exact observance of my scattered scenic indications, and leave to the inventive powers of the Scene-painter and Machinist the method of their carrying out

I therefore turn simply to the performers, and among these more particularly to the representant of the difficult principal rôle, that of the "*Holländer*" (the "Dutchman"). [210] Upon the happy issue of this title rôle depends the *real* success of the whole opera: its exponent must succeed in rousing and maintaining the deepest pity (*Mitleid*); and this he will be able to, if he strictly observes the following chief characteristics.—

His outward appearance is sufficiently notified. His first entry is most solemn and earnest: the measured slowness of his landing should offer a marked contrast with his vessel's weirdly rapid passage through the seas. During the deep trumpet-notes (B-minor) at quite the close of the introductory scene he has come off board, along a plank lowered by one of the crew, to a shelf of rock on the shore; his rolling gait, proper to sea-folk on first treading dry land after a long voyage, is accompanied by a wave-like figure for the violins and 'tenors': with the first crotchet of the third bar he makes his second step—always with folded arms and sunken head; his third and fourth steps coincide with the notes of the eighth and tenth bars. From here on, his movements will follow the dictates of his general delivery, yet the actor must never let himself be betrayed into exaggerated stridings to and fro: a certain terrible repose in his outward demeanour, even amid the most passionate expression of inward anguish and despair, will give the characteristic stamp to this impersonation. The first phrases are to be sung without a trace of passion (almost in strict beat, like the whole of this recitative), as though the man were tired out; at the words, declaimed with bitter ire: "*ha, stolzer Ozean*" etc. ("thou haughty Ocean") he does not break as yet into positive passion: more in terrible scorn, he merely turns his head half-round towards the sea. During the ritornello, after: "*doch ewig meine Qual*" ("but ever lasts my pain"), he bows his head once more, as though in utter weariness; the words: "*euch, des Weltmeers Fluthen*" etc. ("to you, ye waves of earthly sea") he sings in this posture, staring blankly before him. For the mimetic accompaniment of the Allegro: "*wie oft in Meeres tiefsten Grund*" etc. ("how oft in Ocean's deep [211] abyss") I do not wish the singer to cramp too much his outer motion, yet he still must abide by my prime

maxim, namely however deep the passion, however agonised the feeling which he has to breathe into the voice-part, he must for the present keep to the utmost calm in his outer bearing: a movement of the arm or hand, but not too sweeping, will suffice to mark the single more emphatic accents. Even the words: "*Niemals der Tod, nirgends ein Grab!*" ("Nor ever death, nowhere a grave!"), which are certainly to be sung with the greatest vehemence, belong rather to the *description* of his sufferings than to a direct, an actual outburst of his despair: the latter he only reaches with what follows, for which the utmost energy of action must therefore be reserved. With the repetition of the words: "*diess der Verdammniss Schreckgebot!*" ("This was my curse's dread decree!") he has somewhat inclined his head and his whole body: so he remains throughout the first four bars of the postlude; with the tremolo of the violins (E-flat) at the fifth bar he raises his face to heaven, his body still bent low; with the entry of the muffled roll of the kettle-drum at the ninth bar of the postlude he begins to shudder, the down-held fists are clenched convulsively, the lips commence to move, and at last (with eyes fixed heavenward throughout) he starts the phrase: "*Dich frage ich*" etc. ("Of thee I ask"). This whole, almost direct address to "God's angel's (*den "Engel Gottes"*), for all the terrible expression with which it is to be sung, must yet be delivered in the pose just indicated (without any marked change beyond what the execution necessarily demands at certain places): we must see before us a "fallen angel" himself, whose fearful torment drives him to proclaim his wrath against Eternal Justice. At last, however, with the words: "*Vergeb'ne Hoffnung*" etc. ("Thou vainest hope") the full force of his despair finds vent: furious, he stands erect, his eyes still gazing heavenwards, and with utmost energy of grief he casts all "futile hopes" behind: no more will he hear of promised ransom, and finally (at entry of the kettle-drum and basses) he falls of a heap, as [212] though undone. With the opening of the allegro-ritornel his features kindle to a new, a horrible last hope—the hope of World's-upheaval, in which he too must pass away. This closing Allegro requires the most terrible energy, not only in the vocal phrasing, but also in the mimic action; for everything here is unmasked passion. Yet the singer must do his best to give this whole tempo, despite its vehemence of phrasing, the semblance of a mere gathering of all his force for the final crushing outbreak at the words: "*Ihr Welten! endet euren Lauf!*" etc. ("Ye worlds! now end your last career!"). Here the expression must reach its loftiest pitch. After the closing words: "*ewige Vernichtung, nimm' mich auf!*" ("Eternal Chaos, take me hence!") he remains standing at full height, almost like a statue, throughout the whole *fortissimo* of the postlude: only with the entry of the *piano*, during the muffled chant from the ship's hold, does he gradually relax his attitude; his arms fall down; at the four bars of "*espressivo*" for the first violins he slowly sinks his head, and during the last eight bars of the postlude he totters to the rock-wall at the side: he leans his back against it and remains for long in this position, with arms tight-folded on the breast.—

I have discussed this scene at so much length, in order to shew in what sense I wish the "*Holländer*" to be portrayed, and what weight I place on the most careful adapting of the action to the music. In a like sense should the performer take pains to conceive the whole remainder of his rôle. Moreover, this aria is also the hardest in all the part, and more especially since the public's further understanding of the subject depends upon the issue of this scene: if this monologue, in keeping with its aim, has thoroughly attuned and touched the hearer, the further success of the 'whole work is for the major part insured— whereas nothing that comes after could possibly make up for anything neglected here.

In the ensuing scene with *Daland* the "Dutchman" retains at first his present posture. Daland's questions, from aboard-ship, he answers with the faintest movement of [213] his head. When Daland comes towards him on dry land, the Dutchman also advances to about the middle of the stage, with stately calm. His whole demeanour here shews quiet, restful dignity; the expression of his voice is noble, equable, without a tinge of stronger accent: he acts and

talks as though from ancient habit: so often has he passed through like encounters and transactions; everything, even the seemingly most purposed questions and answers, takes place as if by instinct; he deals as though at bidding of his situation, to which he gives himself mechanically and without interest, like a wearied man. Just as instinctively again, his yearning for "redemption" re-awakes: after his fearful outburst of despair he has grown gentler, softer, and it is with touching sadness that he speaks his yearning after rest. The question: "*hast du eine Tochter?*" ("Hast thou a daughter?") he still throws out with seeming calm; but suddenly the old hope (so often recognised as vain) is roused once more by Daland's enthusiastic answer: "*fürwahr, ein treues Kind*" ("Ay! ay! a *faithful* child"); with spasmodic haste he cries "*sie sei mein Weib!*" ("be *she* my wife!"). The old longing takes him once again, and in moving accents (though outwardly calm) he draws the picture of his lot: "*ach, ohne Weib, ohne Kind bin ich*" ("Ah! neither wife nor child have I"). The glowing colours in which Daland now paints his daughter still more revive the *Holländer's* old yearning for "redemption through a woman's truth," and in the duet's closing Allegro the battle between hope and despair is driven to the height of passion—wherein already hope appears to wellnigh conquer.—

At his first appearance before *Senta*, in the Second Act, the *Holländer* again is calm and solemn in his outer bearing: all his passionate emotions are strenuously thrust back within his breast. Throughout the lengthy first 'fermata' he stays motionless beside the door; at the commencement of the drum-solo he slowly strides towards the front; with the eighth bar of that solo he halts (the two bars "*accelerando*" for the strings relate to the gestures of [214] *Daland*, who still stands wondering in the doorway, awaiting *Senta's* welcome, and impatiently invites it with a movement of his outstretched arms); during the next three bars for the drum the *Holländer* advances to the extreme side-front, where he now remains without a motion, his eyes bent fixedly on *Senta*. (The recurrence of the figure for the strings relates to the emphatic repetition of *Daland's* gesture: at the *pizzicato* on the next fermata he ceases inviting her, and shakes his head in amazement; with the entry of the basses, after the fermata, he himself comes down to *Senta*).—The postlude of *Daland's* aria must be played in full: during its first four bars he turns to depart without further ado; with the fifth and sixth he pauses, and turns round again; the next seven bars accompany his byplay as he watches now the *Holländer*, now *Senta*, half pleased, half curiously expectant; during the subsequent two bars for the double-basses he goes as far as the door, shaking his head; with the theme's resumption by the wind-instruments he thrusts in his head once more, withdraws it vexedly, and shuts the door behind him—so that with the entry of the F-sharp chord for the 'wind' he has disappeared for good. The remainder of the postlude, together with the ritornello of the following duet, is accompanied on the stage by total immobility and silence: *Senta* and the *Holländer*, at opposite extremities of the foreground, are riveted in contemplation of each other. (The performers need not be afraid of wearying by this situation: it is a matter of experience that this is just the one which most powerfully engrosses the spectator, and most fittingly prepares him for the following scene).

The whole succeeding E-major section is to be executed by the *Holländer* with complete repose of outer mien, however stirring the emotion wherewith he delivers his lines; only the hands and arms (and that most sparingly) must he employ to emphasise the stronger accents.—Not until the two bars of the drum solo, before the following E-minor tempo, does he rouse himself, to draw somewhat closer to *Senta*: during the short ritornello he moves a few [215] steps towards the middle of the stage, with a certain constraint and mournful courtesy. (I must here inform the conductor, that experience has shewn me I was mistaken in marking the tempo "*un poco meno sostenuto*": the long preceding tempo, true enough, is somewhat slow at its commencement—particularly in the *Holländer's* first solo—but little by little it instinctively freshens towards the close, so that with the entry of E-minor the pace

must necessarily be somewhat restrained once more, in order to give at least the opening of this section its needful impress of decorous calm. The four-bar phrase, in fact, must be *slackened down* in such a manner that the fourth bar is played in marked "*ritenuto*": the same thing applies to the first phrase now sung by the Holländer). With the ninth and tenth bars, during the solo for the drum, the Hollander again advances one, and two steps nearer to Senta. With the eleventh and twelfth bars, however, the time must be taken somewhat more briskly, so that at the B-minor: "*du könntest dich*" etc., the tempo I really meant—*moderato*, certainly, but not quite so dragging—at last arrives, and is to be maintained throughout the section. At the *più animato*: "*so unbedingt, wie?*" the *Holländer* betrays the animating effect which *Senta's* first real speech has wrought on him: with this passage he must already begin to shew more visible agitation. But *Senta's* passionate interjection: "*o welche Leiden! Könnst' ich Trost ihm bringen!*" ("What tale of grief! O, could I respite bring him! ") stirs him to the depths of his being: filled with astonished admiration, he stammers out the half-hushed words: "*welch' holder Klang im nächtlichen Gewühl!*" ("What gentle strains in Night's most raging storm!"). With the *molto più animato*, he scarce can master himself any longer; he sings with the utmost fire of passion, and at the words: "*Allmächtiger, durch diese sei's!*" ("Almighty, be't through *her!*") he hurls himself upon his knees. With the *agitato* (B-minor) he rises to his feet impetuously: his *love* for *Senta* displays itself at once in terror of the danger she herself incurs by reaching out a rescuing hand to him. It comes over him as a [216] hideous crime, and in his passionate remonstrance against her sharing in his fate he becomes a human being through and through; whereas he hitherto had often given us but the grim impression of a ghost. Here, then, the actor must give to even his outer bearing the full impress of human passion; as if felled to the ground, he falls before *Senta* with the last words: "*nennst ew'ge Treue du nicht dein!*" ("if troth of thine lasts not for aye!") so that *Senta* stands high above him, like his angel, as she tells him what *she* means by troth. (01) —During the ritomello of the succeeding *Allegro molto* the *Holländer* lifts himself erect, in solemn exaltation: his voice is stirred to the sublimest height of victory. In all that follows there can be no more room for misunderstanding: at his last entry, in the Third Act, all is passion, pain, despair. Particularly do I exhort the singer not to drag the recitative passages, but to take everything in the most spirited, most stressful *tempo*.—

The rôle of *Senta* will be hard to misread; one warning alone have I to give: let not the *dreamy* side of her nature be conceived in the sense of a modern, sickly sentimentality! *Senta*, on the contrary, is an altogether robust (*kerniges*) Northern maid, and even in her apparent sentimentality she is thoroughly *naïve*. Only in the heart of an entirely naïve girl, surrounded by the idiosyncrasies of Northern Nature, could impressions such as those of the ballad of the "Flying Dutchman" and the picture of the pallid seaman call forth so wondrous strong a bent, as the impulse to redeem the doomed: with her this takes the outward form of an active monomania (*ein kräftiger Wahnsinn*) such, in deed, as can only be found in quite naïve natures. We have been told of Norwegian maids of such a force of feeling, that death has come upon them through a sudden *rigor* (*Erstarrung*) of the heart. Much in this wise may it go, with the seeming "morbidness" of pallid *Senta*—Nor must *Eric* be a sentimental whiner: on the contrary, he is stormy, impulsive and sombre (*düster*), like every man who lives alone (particularly in the Northern highlands). [217] Whoever should give a sugary rendering to his "*Cavatina*" in the Third Act, would do me a sorry service, for it ought instead to breathe distress and heart-ache. (Everything that might justify a false conception of this piece, such as its falsetto-passage and final cadenza, I implore may be either altered or struck out).—Further, I beseech the exponent of *Daland* not to drag his rôle into the region of the positively comic: he is a rough-hewn figure from the life of everyday, a sailor who scoffs at storms and danger for sake of gain, and with whom, for instance, the—certainly apparent—sale of his daughter to a rich man ought not to seem at all disgraceful: he thinks and deals, like a hundred



thousand others, without the least suspicion that he is doing any wrong.



## Notes

### Note 01 on page 10

"Treue"="trueness, loyalty," and thus *eternal* "troth."—TR.

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*A Report on the Production of "Tannhäuser" in  
Paris.*

By Richard Wagner

Translated by William Ashton Ellis



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## Contents

About this Title .....	4
Translator's Notes .....	4
A Report on the Production of "Tannhäuser" in Paris. ....	5
Notes .....	11
Summary .....	13



## About this Title

### Source

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By Richard Wagner

Translated by William Ashton Ellis

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[348]

## Translator's Notes

The letter on *"Tannhäuser" in Paris* was originally published in the supplement to the *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* for April 7, 1861, and reprinted in the *Neue Zeitschrift* five days later.

[349]

## A Report on the Production of "Tannhäuser" in Paris.

Paris, 27th March, 1861.

I PROMISED to give you a full report, some day, of my Tannhäuser affairs in Paris; now that they have reached a climax, and can be surveyed in their whole extent, it is some satisfaction to myself to come to a final settlement by a calm review of their leading features—as it were for my own behoof. But none of you can rightly grasp the nature of this business, unless I also touch upon the true motive of my coming to Paris at all. Let me therefore begin with that.

After wellnigh ten years' preclusion from all possibility of reinvigorating myself by assisting at good performances of my dramatic compositions—if only periodically—I felt driven at last to contemplate removal to a spot which might bring this needful living contact with my art within my reach, in time. I hoped to be able to find that spot in some modest nook of Germany itself. The Grand Duke of Baden had already promised me, with most touching kindness, the production of my latest work at Karlsruhe under my personal direction; in the summer of 1859 I pressed him most importunately, in lieu of the projected temporary sojourn, to use his influence to forthwith procure me a permanent domicile in his country, (01) as there would otherwise be nothing for me to do but settle down in Paris for good. My plea's fulfilment was—impossible.

However, when I removed to Paris in the autumn of that same year, I still kept in sight the production of my "Tristan," for which I hoped to be summoned to Karlsruhe for the 3rd December. Once brought to performance under [350] my own supervision, I believed I then could entrust the work to the other theatres of Germany. The prospect of dealing in the same way with the rest of my works, in future, sufficed me; and on this assumption Paris offered me the solitary interest of hearing an excellent quartet, an admirable orchestra, from time to time, and thus keeping myself in refreshing touch with at least the living organs of my art. All this was changed at a blow when I received notice from Karlsruhe that it had turned out impossible to produce my "Tristan" there. My sorry plight at once inspired me with the notion of inviting certain first-rate singers of my acquaintance to Paris for the following spring, so as to bring about the desired model-performance of my new work, with their assistance, on the boards of the "Italian Opera"; to this I also meant to invite the Directors and Regisseurs of friendly German theatres, in order to compass the same result as I had had in eye with the Karlsruhe production. Since the execution of my plan was impossible without the assistance of the larger Paris public, I was bound to bespeak its interest for my music, and to that end I undertook the well-known three concerts in the Théâtre des Italiens. The highly encouraging result of these concerts, in the matter of applause and interest, unfortunately could not help forward the main enterprise I had in view; for it was just these concerts that plainly shewed me the difficulties of any such undertaking, whilst the impossibility of gathering at one time in Paris the singers I had chosen was sufficient in itself to make me abandon the plan.

Hemmed in on every hand, and once more casting a longing look on Germany, I learnt to my intense surprise that my lot had become the subject of animated discussion and advocacy at the court of the Tuileries. It was to the extraordinarily friendly interest—almost unknown to myself before—of several members of the German embassies here, that I had to thank this propitious turn of affairs. It went so far that the Emperor, having also heard the most flattering

account of my "Tannhäuser" (the work most spoken of) from a German princess for whom he entertained [351] a particular esteem, (02) at once gave orders for the performance of that opera in the *Académie impériale de musique*.

Now I don't deny that, though highly delighted at first by this quite unexpected evidence of my works' success in social circles from which I personally had stood so distant, I soon could think with naught but grave misgivings of a performance of "Tannhäuser" at that particular theatre. To whom was it clearer, that this great opera-house had long estranged itself from every earnest artistic tendency; that in it quite other claims, than those of Dramatic Music, had brought themselves to currency; that Opera itself had there become a mere excuse for Ballet? In fact, when of late years I had received repeated invitations to think about the performance of one of my works in Paris, I had never dreamt of the *Grand Opéra*, but rather—for a trial—of the unassuming *Théâtre Lyrique*. And for two definite reasons: firstly, that here no special class of the audience prescribes the tone; secondly, that—thanks to the poverty of its exchequer—the Ballet pure and simple has not as yet become the focus of its whole art-doings. But, after many times returning to the idea, of his own accord, the Director of this theatre had been obliged to renounce a performance of "Tannhäuser," mainly because he could find no tenor competent to fill the difficult chief rôle.

As a matter of fact, my first conference with the Director of the Grand Opéra shewed me that the introduction of a ballet into "Tannhäuser," and indeed in the second act, was considered a *sine qua non* of its successful performance. I couldn't fathom the meaning of this requirement, until I had declared that I could not possibly disturb the course of just this second act by a ballet, which must here be senseless from every point of view; while on the other hand I thought the first act, at the voluptuous court of Venus, would afford the most apposite occasion for a choreographic scene of amplest meaning, since I myself [352] had not deemed possible to dispense with dance in my first arrangement of that scene. Indeed I was quite charmed with the idea of strengthening an undoubtedly weak point in my earlier score, and I drafted an exhaustive plan for raising this scene in the Venusberg to one of great importance. This plan the Director most emphatically rejected, telling me frankly that in the production of an opera it was not merely a question of a ballet, but of a ballet to be danced in the middle of the evening's entertainment; for it was only at about this time that the subscribers to whom the ballet almost exclusively belonged, appeared in their boxes, as they were in the habit of dining very late; a ballet in the opening scene would therefore be of no use to them, since they were never by any chance present for the first act. These and similar admissions were subsequently repeated to me by the Cabinet-minister himself, and all possibility of a good result was made so definitely dependent on the said conditions being fulfilled, that I began to believe I should have to renounce the whole undertaking.

But while I thus was thinking again, more actively than ever, of my return to Germany, and spying out for a foothold to be granted me for the performance of my new works, I was now to discover the full value of the Emperor's command; for he placed the whole institute of the Grand Opéra at my disposal, without conditions or reserve, and allowed me *carte blanche* for whatever engagements I deemed needful. Every acquisition desired by me was forthwith carried out, without the slightest counting of the cost; to the *mise-en-scène* a care was devoted such as I had never conceived before. Under circumstances so entirely novel to me, I soon was more and more persuaded of the possibility of seeing a thoroughly complete, nay, an ideal performance. The vision of such a performance, wellnigh no matter of which of my works, had long occupied my mind since my withdrawal from our Opera-house; what nowhere and never had stood within my power, was unexpectedly to greet me here in Paris, and at [353] a time when no efforts had availed to procure me an even remotely similar privilege on German soil. I openly admit that this thought inspired me with a warmth unknown for many a day, a warmth only intensified, perhaps, by a bitter feeling mixed

therewith. I soon had eyes for nothing but the possibility of a splendid performance, and in the absorbing care to realise that possibility I allowed no other sort of consideration to influence me: if I attain what I may dare hold possible—said I to myself—what care I for the Jockey Club and its ballet?

Henceforth my every thought was for the performance. There was no French tenor to be had, so the Director told me, for the rôle of Tannhäuser. Informed of the brilliant talents of the youthful singer *Niemann*, though I had never heard him myself, I cast him for the title-rôle; after the most careful preliminaries, his engagement was concluded at great expense, especially as he was master of a very fluent French pronunciation. Several other artists, and in particular the barytone *Morelli*, owed their engagement to nothing but my wish to acquire them for my work. Moreover, instead of certain first singers already popular here, whose too settled method alarmed me, I gave the preference to youthful talents whom I might hope to mould more easily to my style. I was surprised by the carefulness, quite unknown among ourselves, with which the voice-and-pianoforte rehearsals are here conducted; under the intelligent and sensitive guidance of the *chef du chant*, Vauthrot, I soon found our studies progressing at a rapid pace. In particular was I rejoiced to see how the younger French artists arrived at a better and better understanding of the thing, and caught a genuine liking for their task.

Thus I myself was taken with a new liking- for this earlier work of mine: I most carefully revised the score afresh, entirely re-wrote the scene of Venus and the ballet-scene preceding it, and everywhere sought to bring the vocal parts into closest agreement with the translated text.

Now, as I had made the performance my unique aim, [354] and left every other consideration out of count, so my real trouble at last began with the perception that this performance itself would not attain the height expected by me. It would be hard for me, to tell you exactly on what points I had finally to see myself undeceived. The most serious, however, was that the singer of the difficult chief rôle fell into greater and greater disheartenment the nearer we approached the actual production, in consequence of interviews it had been thought necessary for him to hold with the reporters, who assured him of the inevitable failure of my opera. (03) The most promising hopes, which I had harboured in the course of the pianoforte-rehearsals, sank deeper and deeper the more we came in contact with the stage and orchestra. I saw that we were getting back to the dead level of ordinary Operatic performances, that all the requirements meant to bear us far above it were doomed to stay unmet. Yet in this sense, which I naturally had disallowed from the first, we lacked the only thing that could confer distinction on such an Operatic show: some noted 'talent' or other, some tried and trusted favourite of the public; whereas I was making my *début* with almost absolute novices. Finally what most distressed me, was that I had not been able to wrest the orchestral conductorship, through which I might still have exercised a great influence on the spirit of performance, from the hands of the official *chef d'orchestre*; and my being thus compelled to mournfully resign myself to a dull and spiritless rendering of my work (for my wish to withdraw the score was not acceded to) is what makes out my genuine trouble even to this day.

Under such circumstances it became almost a matter of indifference to me, what kind of reception my opera would meet at the hands of the public: the most brilliant could not have moved me to personally attend a longer series of performances, for I found far too little satisfaction in the thing. But hitherto you have been diligently kept in [355] ignorance of the true character of that reception, as it seems to me, and you would do very wrong if you based thereon a judgment of the Paris public in general, however flattering to the German, yet in reality incorrect. On the contrary, I abide by my opinion that the Paris public has very agreeable qualities, in particular those of a quick appreciation and a truly magnanimous sense

of justice. A public, I say: a whole audience to which I am a total stranger, which day by day has heard from the journals and idle chatterers the most preposterous things about me, and has been deliberately set against me with wellnigh unexampled care—to see such a public repeatedly taking up the cudgels in my behalf against a clique, with demonstrations of applause a quarter of an hour long, must fill me with a warmth of heart towards it, were I even the most indifferent of men. But, through the admirable foresight of those who have the sole distribution of seats on first nights, and had made it almost impossible for me to gain admission for my handful of personal friends, there was assembled on that evening in the Grand Opera-house an audience which every dispassionate person could see at once was prejudiced in the extreme against my work; add to this the whole Parisian Press, which is always invited officially on such occasions, and whose hostile attitude towards me you have simply to read its reports to discover: and you may well believe that I have a right to speak of a great victory, when I tell you in all sober earnest that this by no means exquisite performance of my work met with louder and more unanimous applause than ever I experienced personally in Germany. The actual leaders of an opposition perhaps almost universal at first—several, nay, very likely all of the musical reporters here—who up to then had done their utmost to distract the attention of the public, were seized towards the end of the second act by manifest terror of having to witness a complete and brilliant success of "Tannhäuser"; and now they fell on the expedient of breaking into roars of laughter after certain cues, pre-arranged among themselves at the [356] general-rehearsals, whereby they created a diversion sufficiently disturbing to damp a considerable manifestation of applause at the curtain's second fall. These selfsame gentlemen, however, had observed at the stage-rehearsals, which I had also not been able to hinder them from attending, that the opera's real success lay guaranteed in the execution of its third act. At the rehearsals an admirable 'set' by Mons. Despléchin, representing the Wartburg valley in the light of an autumn evening, had already exerted on everyone present a charm which irresistibly gave birth to the *Stimmung* requisite for taking-in the following scenes; on the part of the performers these scenes were the bright spot in the whole day's work; quite insurpassably was the Pilgrims' Chorus sung and managed; the Prayer of Elisabeth, delivered in its entirety by Fraulein Sax with affecting expression, the 'fantasie' to the Evening-star, rendered by *Morelli* with perfect elegiac tenderness, so happily prepared the way for the best part of *Niemann's* performance, his narration of the Pilgrimage—which has always won this artist the liveliest commendation—that a quite exceptional success seemed assured for just this third act, even in the eyes of my most determined adversaries. So this was the act the aforesaid leaders fastened on, trying to hinder any onset of the needful mood of absorption (*Sammlung*) by outbursts of violent laughter, for which the most trivial occasion had to afford the childish pretext. Undeterred by these adverse demonstrations, neither did my singers allow themselves to be put out, nor the public refrain from devoting its sympathetic attention, and often its profuse applause, to their valiant exertions; and at the end, when the performers were vociferously called before the curtain, the opposition was at last entirely beaten down.

That I had made no mistake in viewing this evening's outcome as a complete victory, was proved to me by the public's demeanour on the night of the second performance; for here it became manifest with *what* opposition alone I should have to do in the future, to wit, with that of the [357] Paris Jockey Club—whose name I need not scruple to give you, as the public itself, with its cry "*à la porte les Jockeys*," both openly and loudly denounced my chief opponents. The members of this club—whose right to consider themselves the rulers of the Grand Opéra I need not here explain to you—feeling their interests deeply compromised by the absence of the usual ballet at the hour of their arrival, i.e. towards the middle of the representation, were horrified to discover that "Tannhäuser" had *not* made a fiasco, but an actual triumph at its first performance. Henceforth it was their business to prevent this



ballet-less opera from being given night after night; to this end, on their way from dinner they had bought a number of dog-calls and such-like instruments, with which they manœuvred against "Tannhäuser" in the most unblushing manner directly they had entered the opera-house. Until then, that is to say from the beginning of the first to about the middle of the second act, not a single trace of the first night's opposition had been shewn, and the most prolonged applause had undisturbedly accompanied those passages of my opera which had become the speediest favourites. But from now on, no acclamation was of the least avail: in vain did the Emperor himself, with his Consort, demonstrate for a second time in favour of my work; by those who considered themselves masters of the house, and all of whom belong to France's highest aristocracy, the condemnation of "Tannhäuser" was irrevocably pronounced. Whistles and flageolets accompanied every plaudit of the audience, down to the very close.

In view of the management's utter impotence against this powerful club, in view of even the State-minister's obvious dread of making serious enemies of its members, I recognised that I had no right to expect my proved and faithful artists of the stage to expose themselves any longer to the abominable agitation put upon them by unscrupulous persons (naturally with the intention of forcing them to throw up their engagements). I told the management that I must withdraw my opera, and consented to a third [358] performance only upon condition that it should take place on a Sunday: that is to say, on a night outside the subscription, and thus under circumstances which would not incur the subscribers' wrath, while on the other hand the house would be left completely clear for the public proper. My wish to have this performance announced on the posters as "the last" was not allowed, and all I could do was to personally inform my acquaintances of the fact. These precautionary measures, however, were powerless to dissipate the Jockey Club's alarm; on the contrary, it fancied that it detected in this Sunday performance a bold stratagem against its dearest interests, after which—the opera once brought to an unqualified success—the hated work might be forced quite easily down its throat. In the sincerity of my assurance, that in case of such a success I should still more certainly withdraw my work, people hadn't the courage to believe. So the gentlemen forsook their other pleasures for this evening, returned to the Opéra in full battle-array, and renewed the scenes of the second night. This time the public's exasperation, at the attempt to downright hinder it from following the opera at all, reached a pitch unknown before, as people have assured me; and it was only the, as it would seem, unassailable social standing of Messieurs Disturbers-of-the-peace, that saved them from positive rough handling. To put the matter briefly: astonished as I am at the outrageous behaviour of those gentlemen, I am equally touched and moved by the real public's heroic exertions to procure me justice; and nothing can be more distant from my mind, than to entertain the smallest doubt of the Paris Public whenever it shall find itself on a neutral terrain of its own.

My withdrawal of the score, at last announced officially, has placed the Directors of the Opéra in great and genuine perplexity. They frankly and openly confess to regarding my opera as one of their greatest successes, for they cannot remember having ever seen the public side so actively in favour of a contested work. The most abundant receipts appear to them assured with "Tannhäuser," the house [359] being already sold-out for several performances in advance. They are informed of a growing irritation on the part of the public, which sees its rights of hearing and judging a new, much-talked-of work in peace and quietness, denied it by an infinitely small minority. I learn that the Emperor remains thoroughly well-disposed, that the Empress would gladly take upon herself the protection of my opera, and demand guarantees against further disturbances of the peace. At this moment there is circulating among the musicians, painters, artists and authors of Paris a protest against the unseemly occurrences in the Opera-house: a protest addressed to the Minister of State and, as I am told, already numerous signed. Under such circumstances folk think I might well feel encouraged



to let my opera proceed. But a weighty artistic consideration holds me back. Hitherto my work has had no quiet, no collected hearing; its intrinsic character—lying in its intentional appeal to a *Stimmung* foreign to the customary opera-public, a *Stimmung* compassing the whole—has not dawned as yet upon the audience; up to the present they have only been able to catch at certain glittering points which served me, strictly speaking, merely as a garnish (*Staffage*), and to single these out for ready sympathy. But should they once arrive at a calm, attentive hearing of my opera, then, after what I have hinted to you about the character of the performance here, I fear they would soon unearth the latter's inner feebleness and want of verve—for these evils are no secret to those who really know my work, though I have been debarred from intervening personally for their removal; so that I could not dream for this time of a radical, not merely an external, success for my opera. Wherefore let all the inadequacies of this production lie buried decently beneath the dust of those three evenings' warfare, and may many a one, who bitterly deceived my hopes reposed in him, save his honour for the nonce with the belief that he fell fighting for a good cause!

So let us hold the Parisian "Tannhäuser" as played-out [360] for the present. Should the wish of earnest friends of my art be fulfilled; should a project, seriously entertained of late by people who know their business, and aiming at nothing less than the speedy foundation of a new opera-house for the realisation of reforms which I have mooted here, as well as elsewhere—should this be carried out, then perhaps you may hear from Paris itself yet once again of "Tannhäuser."

As to what has been done with my work in Paris till to-day, rest assured that you now have heard the strictest truth. One simple thing may be your warranty: that it is impossible for me to content myself with a semblance, when my inmost wish stays unfulfilled; and that wish is only to be stilled by the consciousness of having evoked a really intelligent impression.

Hearty greetings from yours,

RICHARD WAGNER.

## Notes

### Note 01 on page 5

Referring to his exile; for the first, the partial, amnesty was not granted until the summer of 1860.—TR.

### Note 02 on page 6

Princess Metternich, née Countess Pauline Sandór, wife of the Austrian ambassador.—TR.

### Note 03 on page 7

The clause about the reviewers was omitted in the *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, and therefore in the *Neue Zeitschrift*.—TR.



[403]

## Summary

Projects for *Tristan* at Karlsruhe in 1859; amnesty impossible then; removal to Paris in autumn, for sake of hearing good orchestra etc. at last; Karlsruhe plan falls through. Idea of *Tristan* at Théâtre des Italiens, inviting German Directors to a model-performance; the three Paris concerts were to prepare the public, but they proved the plan's impossibility (350). Princess Metternich and the Emperor; order for *Tannhäuser* at Grand Opéra a complete surprise. Difficulties about a ballet in act ii for the late diners; plan for new Venusberg scene; carte blanche for engagements and mise en scene; Niemann, Morelli and young talents; Vauthrot and his pains with pianoforte rehearsals; taken with a new liking for this early work, I carefully revised the .score (353). Gradual disheartenment; reporters prophesy failure to Niemann; spiritless orchestral conducting; offer to withdraw score (354). Performance and false accounts; magnanimity of Paris public proper. First night: clique of reviewers, cues and roars of laughter, especially in third act, which promised so well; uproar, but opposition beaten down at end by public—in reality a victory for the work (356). Second night: Jockey Club and dog-calls for the ballet-less opera. Second offer to withdraw the work, but management persisted, and refused to announce third night as "final." Jockey Club's alarm at stratagem of Sunday performance; scenes of second night renewed, indignation of public; only social standing of Messieurs Disturbors-of-peace saved them from rough handling (358). Definite withdrawal prompted by artistic considerations—the house was sold-out for several nights in advance; circular protest signed by musicians, authors etc.; Empress's offer to intervene. Let the inadequacies of this production lie buried beneath the dust of its three nights' war! Project for a new theatre in Paris, to realise my reforms (360).

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*Overture to "Tannhäuser."*

By Richard Wagner

Translated by William Ashton Ellis



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## Contents

About this Title .....	4
Translator's Note .....	5
Overture to "Tannhäuser." .....	7
Notes .....	9
Summary .....	11

## About this Title

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By Richard Wagner  
Translated by William Ashton Ellis

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[220]

## Translator's Note

Appeared in the *Neue Zeitschrift* for January 14, '53, with a note: "Written by the composer on the occasion of the performance of this work at Zurich". In Letter 56, (*Letters to Uhlig*, Zurich, Feb. 26, '52), Wagner writes: "At the first rehearsal of the *Tannhäuser* overture the orchestra begged me to give them an explanation of the contents, after the manner of the *Coriolanus* overture, as it would enable them to 'play better.'"



[229]

## Overture to "Tannhäuser."

To begin with, the orchestra leads before us the Pilgrims' Chant alone (01); it draws near, then swells into a mighty outpour, and passes finally away.—Evenfall: last echo of [230] the chant.—As night breaks, magic sights and sounds appear; a rosy mist floats up, exultant shouts assail our ear; the whirlings of a fearsomely voluptuous dance are seen. These are the "Venusberg's" seductive spells, that shew themselves at dead of night to those whose breast is fired by daring of the senses.—Attracted by the tempting show, a shapely human form draws nigh: 'tis *Tannhäuser*, Love's minstrel. He sounds his jubilant Song of Love in joyous challenge, as though to force the wanton witchery to do his bidding.—Wild cries of riot answer him: the rosy cloud grows denser round him, entrancing perfumes hem him in and steal away his senses. In the most seductive of half-lights, his wonder-seeing eye beholds a female form indicable; he hears a voice that sweetly murmurs out the siren-call, which promises contentment of the darer's wildest wishes. *Venus* herself it is, this woman who appears to him.—Then heart and senses burn within him; a fierce, devouring passion fires the blood in all his veins: with irresistible constraint it thrusts him nearer; before the Goddess' self he steps with that canticle of love triumphant, and now he sings it in ecstatic praise of *her*.—As though at wizard spell of his, the wonders of the Venusberg unroll their brightest fill before him: tumultuous shouts and savage cries of joy mount up on every hand; in drunken glee Bacchantes drive their raging dance and drag Tannhäuser to the warm caresses of Love's Goddess, who throws her glowing arms around the mortal drowned with bliss, and bears him where no step dare tread, to the realm of Being-no-more (*Nichtmehrseins*). A scurry, like the sound of the Wild Hunt, and speedily the storm is laid. Merely a wanton whirl still pulses in the breeze, a wave of weird voluptuousness, like the sensuous breath of unblest love, still sougns above the spot where impious charms had shed their raptures, and over which the night now broods once more.—But dawn begins to break already: from afar is heard again the Pilgrims' Chant. As this chant draws closer yet and closer, as the day drives farther back the night, that whirl and sougning of the air—which had erewhile [231] sounded like the eerie cries of souls condemned—now rises, too, to ever gladder waves; so that when the sun ascends at last in splendour, and the Pilgrims' Chant proclaims in ecstasy to all the world, to all that lives and moves thereon, Salvation won, this wave itself swells out the tidings of sublimest joy. 'Tis the carol of the Venusberg itself, redeemed from curse of impiousness, this cry we hear amid the hymn of God. So wells and leaps each pulse of Life in chorus of Redemption; and both dissevered elements, both soul and senses, God and Nature, unite in the atoning kiss of hallowed Love.





## Notes

### Note 01 on page 7

In the *N. Z.* the opening sentence ran thus: "A band of pilgrims marches past us; their chant—of faith, remorse and penitence, mounting to hope and confident assurance of salvation—draws near at the commencement, swells louder, as if close beside us," etc.—TR.



[396]

## Summary

Pilgrim's Chant; night falls; magic sights and sounds appear to those whose heart is fired by daring of the senses. Love's minstrel and the siren call of Venus; to *her* he sings the canticle of love triumphant; wonders of the Venusberg; he treads the realm of Being-no-more. A scurry, like the sound of the Wild Hunt; the storm is laid, merely a wanton whir remains; as dawn begins, it blends with the sacred chant. The sun rises in splendour on a world redeemed; soul and senses, God and Nature, united by the kiss of Love (231).

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# *On State and Religion*

By Richard Wagner

Translated by William Ashton Ellis



The Wagner Library

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## Contents

About this Title .....	4
Translator's Note .....	5
On State and Religion. ....	7
Notes .....	21



## About this Title

### Source

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By Richard Wagner

Translated by William Ashton Ellis

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[4]

## Translator's Note

The article on "*State and Religion*" was written at the request of King Ludwig II. of Bavaria, in the same year in which Richard Wagner was summoned to his intimate companionship. It does not appear to have been printed, at least for public circulation, until nine years later (1873), when it was included in Vol. viii. of the *Gesammelte Schriften*. Undoubtedly to its intimate character we owe those deeper glimpses into Wagner's inmost thought, such as we meet so often in his private correspondence.



[5]

## On State and Religion.

A HIGHLY-PRIZED young friend desires me to tell him whether, and if so in what way, my views on State and Religion have changed since the composition of my art-writings in the years 1849 to 1851.

As a few years ago, at the instigation of a friend in France, I was persuaded to re-survey my views on Music and Poetry, and assemble them in one concise synopsis (namely the preface to a French prose-translation of some of my opera-poems (01) ), so it might not be unwelcome to me to clear and summarise my thoughts upon that other side as well, were it not that precisely here, where everyone considers he has a right to his opinion, a definite utterance becomes more and more difficult the older and more experienced one grows. For here is shewn again what Schiller says: "*ernst ist das Leben, heiter ist die Kunst*" ("Life is earnest, Art is gay"). Perhaps, however, it may be said of me that, having taken Art in such special earnest, I ought to be able to find without much difficulty the proper mood for judging Life. In truth I believe the best way to inform my young friend about myself, will be to draw his foremost notice to the earnestness of my artistic aims; for it was just this earnestness, that once constrained me to enter realms apparently so distant as State and Religion. What there I sought, was really never aught beyond my art—that art which I took so earnestly, that I asked for it a basis and a sanction in Life, in State, and lastly in Religion. That these I could not find in modern life, impelled me to search out the cause in my own fashion; I had to try to make plain to myself the tendency of the State, in order to account for the disdain with which I [6] found my earnest art-ideal regarded everywhere in public life.

But it certainly was characteristic of my inquiry, that it never led me down to the arena of *politics* proper; that is to say, the politics of the day remained as entirely untouched by me, as, despite the commotion of those times, they never truly touched myself. (02) That this or that form of Government, the jurisdiction of this or that party, this or that alteration in the mechanism of our State affairs, could furnish my art-ideal with any veritable furtherance, I never fancied; therefore whoever has really read my art-writings, must rightly have accounted me unpractical; but whoever has assigned me the rôle of a political revolutionary, with actual enrolment in the lists of such, manifestly knew nothing at all about me, and judged me by an outer semblance of events which haply might mislead a police-officer, but not a statesman. Yet this misconstruction of the character of my aims is entangled also with my own mistake: through taking Art in such uncommon earnest, I took Life itself too lightly; and just as this avenged itself upon my personal fortunes, so my views thereon were soon to be given another tinge. To put the matter plainly, I had arrived at a reversal of Schiller's saying, and desired to see my earnest art embedded in a gladsome life; for which Greek life, as we regard it, had thus to serve me as a model.

From all my imaginary provisions for the entry of the Artwork into Public Life, it is evident that I pictured them as a summons to self-collection (*Sammlung*) from amid the distractions of a life which was to be conceived, at bottom, merely as a gladsome occupation (*heitere Beschäftigung*), and not as a fatiguing toil. Hence the political movements of that time did not attract my serious attention until they touched the purely social sphere, and thus appeared to offer prospects of the realisation of my ideal premises—prospects which, I admit, for some time occupied my earnest thought. The line my fancy followed was an organisation of public life in common, as also of domestic life, such as must lead of itself to a beautiful fashioning of the human race. The calculations of the newer Socialists therefore lost my sympathy from the moment they seemed to end in systems that took at first the repellent aspect of an organisation of Society for no other purpose but an equally-allotted toil. (03)

However, after sharing the horror which this aspect kindled in aesthetically-cultured minds, (04) a deeper glance into the proposed condition of society made me believe I detected something very different from what had hovered before the fancy of those calculating Socialists themselves. I found to wit that, when equally divided among all, actual *labour*, with its crippling burthen and fatigue, would be downright done away with, leaving nothing in its stead but an *occupation*, which necessarily must assume an artistic character of itself. A clue to the character of this occupation, as substitute for actual labour, was offered me by Husbandry, among other things; this, when plied by every member of the commonalty [8] [or "parish"—*Gemeinde*], I conceived as partly developed into more productive tillage of the Garden, partly into joint observances for times and seasons of the day and year, which, looked at closer, would take the character of strengthening exercises, (05) ay, of recreations and festivities. Whilst trying to work out all the bearings of this transformation of one-sided labour, with its castes in town and country, into a more universal occupation lying at the door of every man, (06) I became conscious on the other hand that I was meditating nothing so intensely new, but merely pursuing problems akin to those which so dearly had busied our greatest poets themselves, as we may see in "Wilhelm Meister's Wanderjahre." I, too, was therefore picturing to myself a world that I deemed possible, but the purer I imagined it, the more it parted company with the reality of the political tendencies-of-the-day around me; so that I could say to myself, my world will never make its entry until the very moment when the present world has ceased—in other words, where Socialists and Politicians came to end, should *we* commence. (07) I will not deny that this view became with me a positive mood (*Stimmung*): the political relations of the beginning of the bygone 'fifties kept everyone in a state of nervous tension, sufficient to awake in me a certain pleasurable feeling which might rightly seem suspicious to the practical politician.

Now, on thinking back, I believe I may acquit myself of having been sobered from the aforesaid mood—not unlike a spiritual intoxication—first and merely through the turn soon taken by European politics. It is an attribute of the poet, to be riper in his inner intuition (*Anschauung*) of the essence of the world than in his conscious abstract knowledge: precisely at that time I had already sketched, and finally completed, the poem of my "Ring des Nibelungen." With this conception I had unconsciously admitted to myself [9] the truth about things human. Here everything is tragic through and through, and the Will, that fain would shape a world according to its wish, at last can reach no greater satisfaction than the breaking of itself in dignified annulment. (08) It was the time when I returned entirely and exclusively to my artistic plans, and thus, acknowledging Life's earnestness with all my heart, withdrew to where alone can "gladsomeness" abide.—

My youthful friend will surely not expect me to give a categorical account of my later views on Politics and State: under any circumstances they could have no practical importance, and in truth would simply amount to an expression of my horror of concerning myself professionally with matters of the sort. No; he can merely be wishful to learn how things so remote from its ordinary field of action may shape themselves in the brain of a man like myself, cut out for nothing but an artist, after all that he has gone through and felt. But lest I might appear to have meant the above as a disparagement, I must promptly add that whatever I might have to put forward would strictly and solely be a witness to my having arrived at a full valuation of the great, nay, terrible earnest of the matter. The artist, too, may say of himself: "My kingdom is not of this world;" and, perhaps more than any artist now living, I may say this of myself, for very reason of the earnestness wherewith I view my art. Amid that's the hardship of it; for with this beyond-the-worldly realm of ours we stand amid a world itself so serious and so careworn, that it deems a fleeting dissipation its only fitting refuge,

whereas the need for earnest elevation (*Erhebung*) has quite become a stranger to it.—

Life is earnest, and—has always been.

Whoever would wholly clear his mind on this, let him but consider how in every age, and under ever freshly-shaped, but ever self-repeating forms, this life and world [10] have spurred great hearts and spacious minds to seek for possibility of its bettering; and how 'twas always just the noblest, the men who cared alone for others' weal and offered willingly their own in pledge, that stayed without the slightest influence on the lasting shape of things. The small success of all such high endeavours would shew him plainly that these world-improvers were victims to a fundamental error, and demanded from the world itself a thing it cannot give. Should it even seem possible that much might be ordered more efficiently in man's affairs, yet the said experiences will teach us that the means and ways of reaching this are never rightly predetermined by the single thinker; never, at least, in a manner enabling him to bring them with success before the knowledge of the mass of men. Upon a closer scrutiny of this relation, we fall into astonishment at the quite incredible pettiness and weakness of the average human intellect, and finally into shamefaced wonder that it should ever have astonished us; for any proper knowledge of the world would have taught us from the outset that blindness is the world's true essence, and not Knowledge prompts its movements, but merely a head-long impulse, a blind impetus of unique weight and violence, which procures itself just so much light and knowledge as will suffice to still the pressing need experienced at the moment. So we recognise that nothing really happens but what has issued from this not far-seeing Will, from this Will that answers merely to the momentarily-experienced need; and thus we see that practical success, throughout all time, has attended only those politicians who took account of nothing but the momentary need, neglecting all remoter, general needs, all needs as yet unfelt to-day, and which therefore appeal so little to the mass of mankind that it is impossible to count on its assistance in their ministration.

Moreover we find personal success and great, if not enduring influence on the outer fashioning of the world allotted to the violent, the passionate individual, who, unchaining the elemental principles of human impulse under [11] favouring circumstances, points out to greed and self-indulgence the speedy pathways to their satisfaction. To the fear of violence from this quarter, as also to a modicum of knowledge thus acquired of basic human nature, we owe the *State*. In it the Need is expressed as the human Will's necessity of establishing some workable agreement among the myriad blindly-grasping individuals into which it is divided. It is a contract whereby the units seek to save themselves from mutual violence, through a little mutual practice of restraint. As in the Nature-religions a portion of the fruits of the field or spoils of the chase was brought as offering to the Gods, to make sure of a right to enjoy the remainder, so in the State the unit offered up just so much of his egoism as appeared necessary to ensure for himself the contentment of its major bulk. (09) Here the tendency of the unit naturally makes for obtaining the greatest possible security in barter for the smallest possible sacrifice: but to this tendency, also, he can only give effect through equal-righted fellowships; and these diverse fellowships of individuals equally-entitled in their groups make up the parties in the State, the larger owners striving for a state of permanence, the less favoured for its alteration. But even the party of alteration desires nothing beyond the bringing about a state of matters in which it, too, would wish no further change; and thus the State's main object is upheld from first to last by those whose profit lies in permanence.

*Stability* is therefore the intrinsic tendency of the State. And rightly; for it constitutes withal the unconscious aim in every higher human effort to get beyond the primal need: namely to reach a freer evolution of spiritual attributes, which is always cramped so long as hindrances forestall the satisfaction of that first root-need. Everyone thus strives by nature for stability, for maintenance of quiet: ensured can it only be, however, when the maintenance of existing conditions is not the preponderant interest of *one* party only. Hence it is in the truest



interest of all parties, [12] and thus of the State itself, that the interest in its abidingness should not be left to a single party. There must consequently be given a possibility of constantly relieving the suffering interests of less favoured parties: in this regard the more the nearest need is kept alone in eye, the more intelligible will be itself; and the easier and more tranquillising will be its satisfaction. General laws in provision of this possibility, whilst they allow of minor alterations, thus aim alike at maintenance of stability; and that law which, reckoned for the possibility of constant remedy of pressing needs, contains withal the strongest warrant of stability, must therefore be the most perfect law of State.

The embodied voucher for this fundamental law is the *Monarch*. In no State is there a weightier law than that which centres its stability in the supreme hereditary power of one particular family, unconnected and un-commingling with any other lineage in that State. Never yet has there been a Constitution in which, after the downfall of such families and abrogation of the Kingly power, some substitution or periphrasis has not necessarily, and for the most part necessitously, reconstructed a power of similar kind. It therefore is established as the most essential principle of the State; and as in it resides the warrant of stability, so in the person of the King the State attains its true *ideal*.

For, as the King on one hand gives assurance of the State's solidity, on the other his loftiest interest soars high beyond the State. Personally he has naught in common with the interests of parties, but his sole concern is that the conflict of these interests should be adjusted, precisely for the safety of the whole. His sphere is therefore equity, and where this is unattainable, the exercise of grace (*Gnade*). Thus, as against the party interests, he is the representative of purely-human interests, and in the eyes of the party-seeking citizen he therefore occupies in truth a position welinigh superhuman. To him is consequently accorded a reverence such as the highest citizen would [13] never dream of distantly demanding for himself; and here, at this summit of the State where we see its ideal reached, we therefore meet that side of human apperception (*Anschauungsweise*) which, in distinction from the faculty of recognising the nearest need, we will call the power of *Wahn*. (10) All those, to wit, whose simple powers of cognisance do not extend beyond what bears upon their nearest need—and they form by far the largest portion of mankind—would be unable to recognise the importance of a Royal Prerogative whose exercise has no directly cognisable relation with their nearest need, to say nothing of the necessity of bestirring themselves for its upholding, nay, even of bringing the King their highest offerings, the sacrifice of goods and life, if there intervened no form of apperception entirely opposed to ordinary cognisance.

This form is *Wahn*.

Before we seek to gain intelligence of the nature of *Wahn* from its most wondrous phases, let us take for guide the uncommonly suggestive light thrown by an exceptionally deep-thinking and keen-sighted philosopher of the immediate past (11) upon the phenomena, so puzzling in themselves, of animal instinct.—The astounding aimfulness [14] (*Zweckmässigkeit*) in the procedures (*Verrichtungen*) of insects, among whom the bees and ants lie handiest for general observation, is admittedly inexplicable on the grounds that account for the aimfulness of kindred joint procedures in human life; that is to say, we cannot possibly suppose that these arrangements are directed by an actual knowledge of their aimfulness indwelling in the individuals, nay, even of their aim. In explanation of the extraordinary, ay, the self-sacrificing zeal, as also the ingenious manner, in which such animals provide for their eggs, for instance, of whose aim and future mission they cannot possibly be conscious from experience and observation, our philosopher infers the existence of a *Wahn* that feigns to the individual insect's so scanty intellectual powers an end which it holds for the satisfaction of its private need, whereas that end in truth has nothing to do with the individual, but with the species. The individual's egoism is here assumed, and rightly, to be so invincible that arrangements beneficial merely to the species, to coming generations,

and hence the preservation of the species at cost of the transient individual, would never be consummated by that individual with labour and self-sacrifice, were it not guided by the fancy (*Wahn*) that it is thereby serving an end of its own; nay, this fancied end of its own must seem weightier to the individual, the satisfaction reaping from its attainment more potent and complete, than the purely-individual aim of everyday, of satisfying hunger and so forth, since, as we see, the latter is sacrificed with greatest keenness to the former. The author and incitor of this *Wahn* our philosopher deems to be the spirit of the race itself; the almighty Will-of-life (*Lebenswille*) supplanting the individual's limited perceptive-faculty, seeing that without its intervention the [15] individual, in narrow egoistic care for self; would gladly sacrifice the species on the altar of its personal continuance.

Should we succeed in bringing the nature of this *Wahn* to our inner consciousness by any means, we should therewith win the key to that else so enigmatic relation of the individual to the species. Perhaps this may be made easier to us on the path that leads us out above the State. Meanwhile, however, the application of the results of our inquiry into animal instinct to the products of certain constant factors of the highest efficacy in the human State—factors unbidden by any extraneous power, but arising ever of their own accord—will furnish us with an immediate possibility of defining *Wahn* in terms of general experience.

In political life this *Wahn* displays itself as *patriotism*. As such it prompts the citizen to offer up his private welfare, for whose amplest possible ensurement he erst was solely concerned in all his personal and party efforts, nay, to offer up his life itself; for ensuring the State's continuance. The *Wahn* that any violent transmutation of the State must affect him altogether personally, must crush him to a degree which he believes he never could survive, here governs him in such a manner that his exertions to turn aside the danger threatening the State, as 'twere a danger to be suffered in his individual person, are quite as strenuous, and indeed more eager than in the actual latter case; whereas the traitor, as also the churlish realist, finds it easy enough to prove that, even after entry of the evil which the patriot fears, his personal prosperity can remain as flourishing as ever.

The positive renunciation of egoism accomplished in the patriotic action, however, is certainly so violent a strain, that it cannot possibly hold out for long together; moreover the *Wahn* that prompts it is still so strongly tinged with a really egoistic notion, that the relapse into the sober, purely egoistic mood of everyday occurs in general with marked rapidity, and this latter mood goes on to fill the [16] actual breadth of life. Hence the Patriotic *Wahn* requires a lasting symbol, whereto it may attach itself amid the dominant mood of everyday—thence, should exigence again arise, to promptly gain once more its quickening force; something like the colours that led us formerly to battle, and now wave peacefully above the city from the tower; a sheltering token of the meeting-place for all, should danger newly enter. This symbol is the King; in him the burgher honours unawares the visible representative, nay, the live embodiment of that same *Wahn* which, already bearing him beyond and above his common notions of the nature of things, inspirits and ennobles him to the point of shewing himself a patriot.

Now, what lies above and beyond Patriotism—that form of *Wahn* sufficient for the preservation of the State—will not be cognisable to the state-burgher as such, but, strictly speaking, can bring itself to the knowledge of none save the King or those who are able to make his personal interest their own. Only from the Kingdom's height can be seen the rents in the garment wherewithal *Wahn* clothes itself to reach its nearest goal, the preservation of the species, under the form of a State-fellowship. Though Patriotism may sharpen the burgher's eyes to interests of State, yet it leaves him blind to the interest of mankind in general; nay, its most effectual force is spent in passionately intensifying this blindness, which often finds a ray of daylight in the common intercourse of man and man. The patriot subordinates himself to his State in order to raise it above all other States, and thus, as it were, to find his personal

sacrifice repaid with ample interest through the might and greatness of his fatherland. Injustice and violence toward other States and peoples have therefore been the true dynamic law of Patriotism throughout all time. Self-preservation is still the real prime motor here, since the quiet, and thus the power, of one's own State appears securable in no other way than through the powerlessness of other States, according to Machiavelli's telling maxim: "What you don't wish put on yourself; go put [17] upon your neighbour!" But this fact that one's own quiet can be ensured by nothing but violence and injustice to the world without, must naturally make one's quiet seem always problematic in itself: thereby leaving a door forever open to violence and' injustice within one's own State too. The measures and acts which shew us violently-disposed towards the outer world, can never stay without a violent reaction on ourselves. When modern state-political optimists speak of a state of International Law, (12) in which the [European] States stand nowadays toward one another, one need only point to the necessity of maintaining and constantly increasing our enormous standing armies, to convince them, on the contrary, of the actual lawlessness of that state (*Rechtslosigkeit dieses Zustandes*). Since it does not occur to me to attempt to shew how matters could be otherwise, I merely record the fact that we are living in a perpetual state of war, with intervals of armistice, and that the inner condition of the State itself is not so utterly unlike this state of things as to pass muster for its diametric opposite. If the prime concern of all State systems is the ensurance of stability, and if this ensurance hinges on the condition that no party shall feel an irresistible need of radical change; if; to obviate such an event, it is indispensable that the moment's pressing need shall always be relieved in due season ; and if the practical common-sense of the burgher may be held sufficient, nay alone competent, to recognise this need: on the other hand we have seen that the highest associate tendence of the State could only be kept in active vigour through a form of Wahn; and as we were obliged to recognise that this particular Wahn, namely that of Patriotism, neither was truly pure, nor wholly answered to the objects of the human race as such,—we now have to take this Wahn in eye, withal, under the guise of a constant menace to public peace and equity.

[18]

The very Wahn that prompts the egoistic burgher to the most self-sacrificing actions, can equally mislead him into the most deplorable embroglios, into acts the most injurious to Quiet.

The reason lies in the scarcely exaggerable weakness of the average human intellect, as also in the infinitely diverse shades and grades of perceptive-faculty in the units who, taken all together, create the so-called *public opinion*. Genuine respect for this "public opinion" is founded on the sure and certain observation that no one is more accurately aware of the community's true immediate life-needs, nor can better devise the means for their satisfaction, than the community itself: it would be strange indeed, were man more faultily organised in this respect than the dumb animal. Nevertheless we often are driven to the opposite view, if we remark how even for this, for the correct perception of its nearest, commonest needs, the ordinary human understanding does not suffice—not, at least, to the extent of jointly satisfying them in the spirit of true fellowship the presence of beggars in our midst, and even at times of starving fellow-creatures, shews how weak the commonest human sense must be at bottom. So here already we have evidence of the great difficulty it must cost to bring true reason (*wirkliche Vernunft*) into the joint determinings of Man: though the cause may well reside in the boundless egoism of each single unit, which, outstripping far his intellect, prescribes his portion of the joint resolve at the very junctures where right knowledge can be attained through nothing but repression of egoism and sharpening of the understanding,—yet precisely here we may plainly detect the influence of a baneful Wahn. This Wahn has always found its only nurture in insatiable egoism; it is dangled before the latter from without, however, to wit by ambitious individuals, just as egoistic, but gifted with a higher, though in

itself by no means high degree of intellect This intentional employment and conscious [19] or unconscious perversion of the Wahn can avail itself of none but the form alone accessible to the burgher, that of Patriotism, albeit in some disfigurement or other; it thus will always give itself out as an effort for the common good, and never yet has a demagogue or intriguer led a Folk astray without in some way making it believe itself inspired by patriotic ardour. Thus in Patriotism itself there lies the holdfast for misguidance; and the possibility of keeping always handy the means of this misguidance, resides in the artfully inflated value which certain people pretend to attach to "public opinion."

What manner of thing this "public opinion" is, should be best known to those who have its name forever in their mouths and erect the regard for it into a positive article of religion. Its self-styled organ in our times is the "Press": were she candid, she would call herself its generatrix, but she prefers to hide her moral and intellectual foibles—manifest enough to every thinking and earnest observer,—her utter want of independence and truthful judgment, behind the lofty mission of her subservience to this sole representative of human dignity, this Public Opinion, which marvellously bids her stoop to every indignity, to every contradiction, to to-day's betrayal of what she dubbed right sacred yesterday. Since, as we else may see, every sacred thing seems to come into the world merely to be employed for ends profane, the open profanation of Public Opinion might perhaps not warrant us in arguing to its badness in and for itself: only, its actual existence is difficult, or wellnigh impossible to prove, for *ex hypothesi* it cannot manifest as such in the single individual, as is done by every other noble Wahn; such as we must certainly account true Patriotism, which has its strongest and its plainest manifestation precisely in the individual unit. The pretended vicegerent of "public opinion," on the other hand, always gives herself out as its will-less slave; and thus one never can get at this wondrous power, save— [20] by making it for oneself. This, in effect, is what is done by the "press," and that with all the keenness of the trade the world best understands, industrial business. Whereas each writer for the papers represents nothing, as a rule, but a literary failure or a bankrupt mercantile career, *many* newspaper-writers, or all of them together, form the awe-commanding power of the "*press*," the sublimation of public spirit, of practical human intellect, the indubitable guarantee of manhood's constant progress. Each man uses her according to his need, and she herself expounds the nature of Public Opinion through her practical behaviour—to the intent that it is at all times havable for gold or profit.

It certainly is not as paradoxical as it might appear, to aver that with the invention of the art of printing, and quite certainly with the rise of journalism, mankind has gradually lost much of its capacity for healthy judgment: demonstrably the plastic memory, (13) the widespread aptitude for poetical conception and reproduction, has considerably and progressively diminished since even written characters first gained the upper hand. No doubt a compensatory profit to the general evolution of human faculties, taken in the very widest survey, must be likewise capable of proof; but in any case it does not accrue to us immediately, for whole generations—including most emphatically our own, as any close observer must recognise—have been so degraded through the abuses practised on the healthy human power of judgment by the manipulators of the modern daily Press in particular, and consequently through the lethargy into which that power of judgment has fallen, in keeping with man's habitual bent to easygoingness, that, in flat contradiction of the lies they let themselves be told, men shew themselves more incapable each day of sympathy with truly great ideas.

The most injurious to the common welfare is the harm thus done to the simple sense of equity: there exists no form [21] of injustice, of onesidedness and narrowness of heart, that does not find expression in the pronouncements of "public opinion," and—what adds to the hatefulness of the thing—forever with a passionateness that masquerades as the warmth of genuine patriotism, but has its true and constant origin in the most self-seeking of all human



motives. Whoso would learn this accurately, has but to run counter to "public opinion," or indeed to defy it: he will find himself brought face to face with the most implacable tyrant; and no one is more driven to suffer from its despotism, than the Monarch, for very reason that he is the representant of that selfsame Patriotism whose noxious counterfeit steps up to him, as "public opinion," with the boast of being identical in kind.

Matters strictly pertaining to the interest of the King, which in truth can only be that of purest patriotism, are cut and dried by his unworthy substitute, this Public Opinion, in the interest of the vulgar egoism of the mass; and the necessitation to yield to its requirements, notwithstanding, becomes the earliest source of that higher form of suffering which the King alone can personally experience as his own. If we add hereto the personal sacrifice of private freedom which the monarch has to bring to "reasons of State," and if we reflect how he alone is in a position to make purely-human considerations lying far above mere patriotism—as, for instance, in his intercourse with the heads of other States—his personal concern, and yet is forced to immolate them upon the altar of his State: then we shall understand why the legends and the poetry of every age have brought the tragedy of human life the plainest and the oftenest to show in just the destiny of Kings. In the fortunes and the fate of Kings the tragic import of the world can first be brought completely to our knowledge. Up to the King a clearance of every obstacle to the human Will is thinkable, so far as that Will takes on the mould of State, since the endeavour of the citizen does not outstep the satisfaction of certain needs allayable within the confines of the State. The General and Statesman, [22] too, remains a practical realist; in his enterprises he may be unlucky and succumb, but chance might also favour him to reach the thing not in and for itself impossible: for he ever serves a definite, practical aim. But the King desires the Ideal, he wishes justice and humanity; nay, wished he them not, wished he naught but what the simple burgher or party-leader wants,—the very claims made on him by his office, claims that allow him nothing but an ideal interest, by making him a traitor to the idea he represents, would plunge him into those sufferings which have inspired tragic poets from all time to paint their pictures of the vanity of human life and strife. (14) True justice and humanity are ideals irrealisable: to be bound to strive for them, nay, to recognise an unsilenceable summons to their carrying out, is to be condemned to misery. What the thoroughly noble, truly kingly individual directly feels of this, in time is given also to the individual unqualified for knowledge of his tragic task, and solely placed by Nature's dispensation on the throne, to learn in some uncommon fashion reserved for kings alone: upon the height allotted to it by an unavoidable destiny, the vulgar head, the ignoble heart that in a humbler sphere might very well subsist in fullest civic honour, in thorough harmony with itself and its surroundings, here falls into a dire contempt, far-reaching and long-lasting, often in itself unreasoning, and therefore to be accounted wellnigh tragic. The very fact that the individual called to the throne has no personal choice, may allow no sanction to his purely human leanings, and needs must fill a great position for which nothing but great natural parts can qualify, foreordains him to a superhuman lot that needs must crush the weakling into personal nullity. The highly fit, however, is summoned to drink the full, deep cup of life's true tragedy in his exalted station. Should his construction of the Patriotic ideal be passionate and ambitious, he becomes a warrior-chief and conqueror, and thereby courts the portion of the violent, the faithlessness of Fortune; but should his nature [23] be noble-minded, full of human pity, more deeply and more bitterly than every other is he called to see the futility of all endeavours for true, for perfect justice.

To him more deeply and more inwardly than is possible to the State-citizen, as such, is it therefore given to feel that in Man there dwells an infinitely deeper, more capacious need than the State and its ideal can ever satisfy. Wherefore as it was Patriotism that raised the burgher to the highest height by him attainable, it is *Religion* alone that can bear the King to the stricter dignity of manhood (*zur eigentlichen Menschenwürde*).

*Religion*, of its very essence, is radically divergent from the State. The religions that have come into the world have been high and pure in direct ratio as they seceded from the State, and in themselves entirely upheaved it. We find State and Religion in complete alliance only where each still stands upon its lowest step of evolution and significance. The primitive Nature-religion subserves no ends but those which Patriotism provides for in the adult State: hence with the full development of patriotic spirit the ancient Nature-religion has always lost its meaning for the State. So long as it flourishes, however, so long do men subsume by their gods their highest practical interest of State; the tribal god is the representant of the tribesmen's solidarity; the remaining Nature-gods become Penates, protectors of the home, the town, the fields and flocks. Only in the wholly adult State, where these religions have paled before the full-fledged patriotic duty, and are sinking into inessential forms and ceremonies; only where "Fate" has shewn itself to be Political Necessity (15) —could true Religion step into the world. Its basis is a feeling of the unblestness of human being, of the State's profound inadequacy to still the purely human need. Its inmost kernel is denial of the world— [24] i.e. recognition of the world as a fleeting and dreamlike state [of mind] reposing merely on illusion (*auf einer Täuschung*)—and struggle for Redemption from it, prepared-for by renunciation, attained by Faith.

In true Religion a complete reversal thus occurs of all the aspirations to which the State had owed its founding and its organising: what is seen to be unattainable here, the human mind desists from striving-for upon this path, to ensure its reaching by a path completely opposite. To the religious eye (*der religiösen Vorstellung*) the truth grows plain that there must be another world than this, because the inextinguishable bent-to-happiness cannot be stilled within this world, and hence requires another world for its redemption. What, now, is that other world? So far as the conceptual faculties of human Understanding reach, and in their practical application as intellectual Reason, it is quite impossible to gain a notion that shall not clearly shew itself as founded on this selfsame world of need and change: wherefore, since this world is the source of our unhappiness, that other world, of redemption from it, must be precisely as different from this present world as the mode of cognisance whereby we are to perceive that other world must be different from the mode which shews us nothing but this present world of suffering and illusion. (16)

In Patriotism we have already seen that a Wahn usurps the single individual prompted merely by personal interests, a Wahn that makes the peril of the State appear to him an infinitely intensified personal peril, to ward off which he then will sacrifice himself with equally intensified ardour. But where, as now, it is a question of letting the personal [25] egoism, at bottom the only decisor, perceive the nullity of all the world) of the whole assemblage of relations in which alone contentment had hitherto seemed possible to the individual; of directing his zeal toward free-willed suffering and renunciation, to detach him from dependence on this world: this wonder-working intuition—which, in contradistinction from the ordinary practical mode of ideation, we can only apprehend as Wahn (17) —must have a source so sublime, so utterly incomparable with every other, that the only notion possible to be granted us of that source itself; in truth, must consist in our necessary inference of its existence from this its supernatural effect.—

Whosoever thinks he has said the last word on the essence of the Christian faith when he styles it an attempted satisfaction of the most unbounded egoism, a kind of contract wherein the beneficiary is to obtain eternal, never-ending bliss on condition of abstinence [or "renunciation"—*Entsagung*] and free-willed suffering in this relatively brief and fleeting life, he certainly has defined therewith the sort of notion alone accessible to unshaken human egoism, but nothing even distantly resembling the Wahn-transfigured concept proper to the actual practiser of free-willed suffering and renunciation. Through voluntary suffering and renunciation, on the contrary, man's egoism is already practically upheaved, and he who



chooses them, let his object be whate'er you please, is thereby raised already above all notions bound by Time and Space; for no longer can he seek a happiness that lies in Time and Space, e'en were they figured as eternal and immeasurable. That which gives to him the superhuman strength to suffer voluntarily, must itself be felt by him [26] already as a profoundly inward happiness, incognisable by any other, a happiness quite incommunicable to the world except through outer suffering: it must be the measurelessly lofty joy of world-overcoming, compared wherewith the empty pleasure of the world-conqueror seems downright null and childish. (18)

From this result, sublime above all others, we have to infer the nature of the Divine Wahn itself; and, to gain any sort of notion thereof; we have therefore to pay close heed to how it displays itself to the religious world-Overcomer, simply endeavouring to reproduce and set before ourselves this conception of his in all its purity, but in nowise attempting to reduce the Wahn itself; forsooth, to terms of *our* conceptual method, so radically distinct from that of the Religious.—

As Religion's highest force proclaims itself in *Faith*, its most essential import lies within its *Dogma*. (19) Not through its practical importance for the State, i.e. its moral law, is Religion of such weight; for the root principles of all morality are to be found in every, even in the most imperfect, religion: but through its measureless value to the Individual, does the Christian religion prove its lofty mission, and that through its Dogma. The wondrous, quite incomparable attribute of religious Dogma is this: it presents in positive form that which on the path of reflection (*des Nachdenkens*), and through the strictest philosophic methods, can be seized in none but negative form. That is to say, whereas the philosopher arrives at demonstrating the erroneousness and incompetence of that natural mode of ideation in power whereof we take the world, as it commonly presents itself; for an undoubtable reality: religious Dogma shews the other world itself; as yet unrecognised; and with such unfailing sureness and distinctness, that the Religious, on whom that world has dawned, is straightway possessed with the most unshatterable, [27] most deeply-blessing peace. We must assume that this conception, so indicibly beatifying in its effect, this idea which we can only rank under the category of Wahn, or better, this immediate vision seen by the Religious, to the ordinary human apprehension remains entirely foreign and unconveyable, in respect of both its substance and its form. What, on the other hand, is imparted thereof and thereon to the layman (*den Profanen*), to the people, can be nothing more than a kind of allegory; to wit, a rendering of the unspeakable, impalpable, and never understandable through [their] immediate intuition, into the speech of common life and of its only feasible form of knowledge, erroneous *per se*. In this sacred allegory an attempt is made to transmit to wordly minds (*der weltlichen Vorstellung*) the mystery of the divine revelation: but the only relation it can bear to what the Religious had immediately beheld, is the relation of the day-told dream to the actual dream of night. As to the part the most essential of the thing to be transmitted, this narration will be itself so strongly tintured with the impressions of ordinary daily life, and through them so distorted, that it neither can truly satisfy the teller—since he feels that just the weightiest part had really been quite otherwise—nor fill the hearer with the certainty afforded by the hearing of something wholly comprehensible and intelligible in itself. If; then, the record left upon our own mind by a deeply moving dream is strictly nothing but an allegorical paraphrase, whose intrinsic disagreement with the original remains a trouble to our waking consciousness; and therefore if the knowledge reaped by the hearer can at bottom be nothing but an essentially distorted image of that original: yet this [allegorical] message, in the case both of the dream and of the actually received divine revelation, remains the only possible way of proclaiming the thing received to the layman. Upon these lines is formed the Dogma; and this is the revelation's only portion cognisable by the world, which it therefore has to take on authority, so as to become a partner, at least [28] through Faith, in what its eye

has never seen. Hence is Faith so strenuously commended to the Folk: the Religious, become a sharer in salvation through his own eye's beholding (*durch eigene Anschauung*), feels and knows that the layman, to whom the vision (*die Anschauung*) itself remains a stranger, has no path to knowledge of the Divine except the path of Faith; and this Faith, to be effectual, must be sincere, undoubting and unconditional, in measure as the Dogma embraces all the incomprehensible, and to common knowledge contradictory-seeming, conditioned by the incomparable difficulty of its wording. (20)

The intrinsic distortion of Religion's fundamental essence, beheld through divine revelation, that is to say of the true root-essence incommunicable *per se* to ordinary knowledge, is hence undoubtedly engendered in the first instance by the aforesaid difficulty in the wording of its Dogma; but this distortion first becomes actual and perceptible, from the moment when the Dogma's nature is dragged before the tribunal of common causal apprehension. The resulting vitiation of Religion itself; whose holy of holies is just the indubitable Dogma that blesses through an inward Faith, is brought about by the ineluctable requirement to defend that Dogma against the assaults of common human apprehension, to explain and make it seizable to the latter. This requirement grows more pressing in degree as Religion, which had its primal fount within the deepest chasms of the world-fleeing heart, comes once again into a relation with the State. The disputations traversing the centuries of the Christian religion's development into a Church and its complete metamorphosis into a State-establishment, the perpetually recurring strifes in countless forms anent the rightness and the rationality of religious Dogma and its points, present us with the sad and painfully [29] instructive history of an attack of madness. Two absolutely incongruous modes of view and knowledge, at variance in their entire nature, cross one another in this strife, without so much as letting men detect their radical divergence: not but that one must allow to the truly religious champions of Dogma that they started with a thorough consciousness of the total difference between their mode of knowledge and that belonging to the world; whereas the terrible wrong, to which they were driven at last, consisted in their letting themselves be hurried into zealotism and the most inhuman use of violence when they found that nothing was to be done with human reason (*Vernunft*), thus practically degenerating into the utmost opposite of religiousness. On the other hand the hopelessly materialistic, industrially commonplace, entirely un-Goded aspect of the modern world is debitable to the counter eagerness of the common practical understanding to construe religious Dogma by laws of cause-and-effect deduced from the phenomena of natural and social life, and to fling aside whatever rebelled against that mode of explanation as a reasonless chimera. After the Church, in her zeal, had clutched at the weapons of State-jurisdiction (*staatsrechtlichen Exekution*), thus transforming herself into a political power, the contradiction into which she thereby fell with herself—since religious Dogma assuredly conveyed no lawful title to such a power—was bound to become a truly lawful weapon in the hands of her opponents; and, whatever other semblance may still be toilsomely upheld, to-day we see her lowered to an institution of the State, employed for objects of the State-machinery; wherewith she may prove her use, indeed, but no more her divinity.

But does this mean that Religion itself has ceased?—

No, no! It lives, but only at its primal source and sole true dwelling-place, within the deepest, holiest inner chamber of the individual; there whither never yet has surged a conflict of the rationalist and supranaturalist, the Clergy and the State. For *this* is the essence of true [30] Religion: that, away from the cheating show of the day-tide world, it shines in the night of man's inmost heart, with a light quite other than the world-sun's light, and visible nowhence save from out that depth. (21) —

'Tis thus indeed! Profoundest knowledge teaches us that only in the inner chamber of our heart, in nowise from the world presented to us without, can true assuagement come to us.

Our organs of perception of the outer world are merely destined for discovering the means wherewith to satisfy the individual unit's need, that unit which feels so single and so needy in face of just this world; with the selfsame organs we cannot possibly perceive the basic Oneness of all being; it is allowed us solely by the new cognitive faculty that is suddenly awoken in us, as if through Grace, so soon as ever the vanity of the world comes home to our inner consciousness on any kind of path. Wherefore the truly religious knows also that he cannot really impart to the world on a theoretic path, forsooth through argument and controversy, his inner beatific vision, and thus persuade it of that vision's truth: he can do this only on a practical path, through *example*, (22) through the deed of renunciation, of sacrifice, through gentleness unshakable, through the sublime serenity of earnestness (*Heiterkeit des Ernstes*) that spreads itself o'er all his actions. The saint, the martyr, is therefore the true mediator of salvation; through his example the Folk is shewn, in the only manner to it comprehensible, of what purport must that vision be, wherein itself can share through Faith alone, but not yet through immediate knowledge. Hence there lies a deep and pregnant meaning behind the Folk's addressing itself to God through the medium of its heart-loved saints; and it says little for the vaunted enlightenment of our era, that every English shopkeeper for instance, so soon as he has donned his sunday-coat and taken the right book with him, opines [31] that he is entering into immediate personal intercourse with God. No: a proper understanding of that Wahn wherein a higher world imparts itself to common human ideation, and which proves its virtue through man's heartfelt resignation (*Untertworfenheit*) to this present world, alone is able to lead to knowledge of man's most deep concerns; and it must be borne in mind, withal, that we can be prompted to that resignation only through the said example of true saintliness, but never urged into it by an overbearing clergy's vain appeal to Dogma pure and simple.—

This attribute of true religiousness, which, for the deep reason given above, does not proclaim itself through disputation, but solely through the active example—this attribute, should it be indwelling in the King, becomes the only revelation, of profit to both State and Religion, that can bring the two into relationship. As I have already shewn, no one is more compelled than he, through his exalted, well-nigh superhuman station, to grasp the profoundest earnestness of Life; and—if he gain this only insight worthy of his calling—no one stands in more need, than he, of that sublime and strengthening solace which Religion alone can give. What no cunning of the politician can ever compass, to him, thus armoured and equipped, will then alone be possible: gazing out of that world into this, the mournful seriousness wherewith the sight of mundane passions fills him, will arm him for the exercise of strictest equity; the inner knowledge that all these passions spring only from the one great suffering of unredeemed mankind, will move him pitying to the exercise of grace. *Unflinching justice, ever ready mercy—here is the mystery of the King's ideal!* But though it faces toward the State with surety of its healing, this ideal's possibility of attainment arises not from any tendence of the State, but purely from Religion. Here, then, would be the happy trysting-place where State and Religion, as erst in their prophetic days of old, met once again.



[32]

We here have ascribed to the King a mission so uncommon, and repeatedly denoted as almost superhuman, that the question draws near: how is its constant fulfilment to be compassed by the human individual, even though he own the natural capacity for which alone its possibility is reckoned, without his sinking under it? In truth there rules so great a doubt as to the possibility of attaining the Kingly ideal, that the contrary case is provided for in advance in the framing of State-constitutions. Neither could we ourselves imagine a monarch

qualified to fulfil his highest task, saving under conditions similar to those we are moved to advance when seeking to account for the working and endurance of everything uncommon and unordinary in this ordinary world. For, when we regard it with closer sympathy, each truly great mind—which the human generative-force, for all its teeming productivity, brings forth so vastly seldom—sets us a-wondering how twas possible for it to hold out for any length of time within this world, to wit for long enough to acquit itself of its tale of work.

Now, the great, the truly noble spirit is distinguished from the common organisation of everyday by this: to *it* every, often the seemingly most trivial, incident of life and world-intercourse is capable of swiftly displaying its widest correlation with the essential root-phenomena of all existence, thus of shewing Life and the World themselves in their true, their terribly earnest meaning. The naïve, ordinary man—accustomed merely to seize the outmost side of such events, the side of practical service for the moment's need—when once this awful earnestness suddenly reveals itself to him through an unaccustomed juncture, falls into such consternation that self-murder is very frequently the consequence. The great, the exceptional man finds himself each day, in a certain measure, in the situation where the ordinary man forthwith despairs of life. Certainly the great, the truly religious man I mean, is saved from this consequence by the lofty earnest of that inner ure-knowledge (*Ur-erkenntniss*) of the essence [33] of the world which has become the standard of all his beholdings; at each instant he is prepared for the terrible phenomenon: also, he is armoured with a gentleness and patience which never let him fall a-storming against any manifestation of evil that may haply take him unawares.

Yet an irrecusable yearning to turn his back completely on this world must necessarily surge up within his breast, were there not for him—as for the common man who lives away a life of constant care—a certain distraction, a periodical turning-aside from that world's-earnestness which else is ever present to his thoughts. What for the common man is entertainment and amusement, must be forthcoming for him as well, but in the noble form befitting him; and that which renders possible this turning aside, this noble illusion, must again be a work of that man-redeeming Wahn which spreads its wonders wherever the individual's normal mode of view can help itself no farther. But in this instance the Wahn must be entirely candid; it must confess itself in advance for an illusion, if it is to be willingly embraced by the man who really longs for distraction and illusion in the high and earnest sense I mean. The fancy-picture brought before him must never afford a loophole for re-summoning the earnestness of Life through any possible dispute about its actuality and provable foundation upon fact, as religious Dogma does: no, it must exercise its specific virtue through its very setting of the conscious Wahn in place of the reality. This office is fulfilled by *Art*; and in conclusion I therefore point my highly-loved young friend to Art, as the kindly Life-saviour who does not really and wholly lead us out beyond this life, but, within it, lifts us up above it and shews it as itself a game of play; a game that, take it ne'er so terrible and earnest an appearance, yet here again is shewn us as a mere Wahn-picture, as which it comforts us and wafts us from the common truth of our distress (*Noth*). The work of noblest Art will be given a glad admittance by my friend, the work that, treading on the footprints of Life's earnestness, shall soothingly dissolve reality into [34] that Wahn wherein itself in turn, this serious reality, at last seems nothing else to us but Wahn: and in his most rapt beholding of this wondrous Wahn-play (*Wahnspiel*) there will return to him the indicible dream-picture of the holiest revelation, of meaning ure-akin (*urverwandt sinnvoll*), with clearness unmistakable,—that same divine dream-picture which the disputes of sects and churches had made ever more incognisable to him, and which, as wellnigh unintelligible Dogma, could only end in his dismay. The nothingness of the world, here is it harmless, frank, avowed as though in smiling: for our willing purpose to deceive ourselves has led us on to recognise the world's real state without a shadow of illusion.—

Thus has it been possible for me, even from this earnest sally into the weightiest regions of Life's earnestness, and without losing myself or feigning, to come back to my beloved Art. Will my friend in sympathy understand me, when I confess that first upon this path have I regained full consciousness of Art's serenity?

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## Notes

### Note 01 on page 7

See Volume vii., "Zukunftsmusik."—Richard Wagner.—Volume III. of the present series.—Tr.

### Note 02 on page 7

"Gewiss war es aber für meine Untersuchung charakteristisch, dass ich hierbei nie auf das Gebiet der eigentlichen *Politik* herabstieg, namentlich die Zeitpolitik, wie sie mich trotz der Heftigkeit der Zustände nicht wahrhaft berührte, auch von mir gänzlich unberührt blieb." In confirmation of this statement, which has been disputed by Wagner's enemies and by one so-called "friend," the late Ferdinand Praeger, I may refer to the facts collected in my little brochure "1849: A Vindication," published in 1892 by Messrs Kegan Paul & Co.—Tr.

### Note 03 on page 7

"Nicht eher nahmen daher die politischen Bewegungen jener Zeit meine Aufmerksamkeit ernster in Anspruch, als his durch den Übertritt derselben auf das rein soziale Gebiet in mir Ideen angeregt wurden, die, weil sie meiner idealen Forderung Nahrung zu geben schienen, mich, wie ich gestehe, eine Zeit lang ernstlich erfüllten. Meine Richtung ging darauf, mir eine Organisation des gemeinsamen öffentlichen, wie des hauslichen Lebens vorzustellen, welche von selbst zu einer schonen Gestaltung des menschlichen Geschlechtes führen müsste. Die Berechnungen der neueren Sozialisten fesselten demnach meine Theilnahme von da ab, wo sie in Systeme auszugehen schienen, welche zunächst nichts Anderes als den widerlichen Anblick einer Organisation der Gesellschaft zu gleichmässig vertheilter Arbeit hervorbrachten." As I have been compelled to slightly paraphrase the first of these sentences, and as there are minor difficulties in the other two, I give all three in the original.—Tr.

### Note 04 on page 8

Cf. Vol. I., 30-31.—Tr.

### Note 05 on page 8

Cf. Vol. I., 58.—Tr.

### Note 06 on page 8

Cf. *Letters to Uhlig*, pp. 81-82, written October 22nd, 1850.—Tr.

### Note 07 on page 8

Cf. Vol I., 24, and Vol II., 178.—Tr.

### Note 08 on page 8

"Zu schauen kam ich, nicht zu schaffen"—Wotan in *Siegfried*, act ii.—Tr.

### Note 09 on page 9

Cf. Vol. II., 186-187.—Tr.



[Note 10 on page 10](#)

"Wahn-Vermögen." As the word "Wahn" is frequently used in these pages, and is absolutely untranslatable, I shall mostly retain it as it stands. It does not so much mean an "illusion" or "delusion," in general, as a "semi-conscious *feigning*" (such as the 'legal fiction'), a "dream," or a "symbolical aspiration"—its etymological kinship being quite as near to "fain" as to "feign"; but the context will leave the reader in no doubt as to its particular application in any sentence. It will be remembered that "Wahn" plays an important part in Hans Sachs' monologue in *Die Meistersinger*, act iii; the poem of that drama, containing the Wahn-monologue in a somewhat more extended form than its ultimate version, had already been published in 1862.—Tr.

[Note 11 on page 10](#)

Arthur Schopenhauer, in "*Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*," vol. ii, cap. 27. The philosopher there compares the operations of this "animal instinct" with a case of what we now should call hypnotism, and says that "insects are, in a certain sense, natural somnambulists . . . They have the feeling that they *must* perform a certain action, without exactly knowing why." He also compares this "instinct" to the "daimonion" of Socrates, but does not absolutely employ the expression "Wahn" in this connection. Neither does the "spirit of the race" (or "species"), mentioned by Wagner a few sentences farther on, occur in so many words with Schopenhauer. Nowadays for "the spirit of the race" some of us might be inclined to read "the principle of the survival of the fittest"; but the explanation of its *mode* of action, through a "Wahn," would hold as good to-day as thirty years ago.—Tr.

[Note 12 on page 12](#)

"Von einem allgemeinen Rechtszustande,"—literally, "of a general (or universal) state of right (or law);" the expression seems to refer to the so-called "Balance of power," and may also be paraphrased by the more modern European concert.—Tr.

[Note 13 on page 13](#)

"Das plastische Gedächtniss"—evidently the mental record of things in their visual, concrete form, as opposed to their abstract labels.—Tr.

[Note 14 on page 14](#)

Cf. Amfortas; at this epoch our author was drafting his *Parsifal*.—Tr.

[Note 15 on page 15](#)

Cf. [Vol II., 178, 179](#). Upon coupling the present parallelism with that noted [on page 11 antea](#), it would appear highly probable that King Ludwig had been studying Part II. of *Oper und Drama*, and had directed Wagner's attention to this section—surrounding the *Ædipus-Antigone* myth—in particular.—Tr.

[Note 16 on page 15](#)

"So weit die intellektualen Vorstellungsfähigkeiten des menschlichen Verstandes reichen, und in ihrer praktischen Anwendung als Vernunft sich geltend machen, ist durchaus keine Vorstellung zu gewinnen, welche nicht genau immer nur wieder diese selbe Welt des Bedürfnisses und des Wechsels erkennen liesse: da diese der Quell unserer Unseligkeit ist,

muss daher jene andere Welt der Erlösung von dieser Welt genau so verschieden sein, als diejenige Erkenntnissart, durch welche wir sie erkennen sollen, verschieden von derjenigen sein muss, welcher einzig diese täuschende leidenvolle Welt sich darstellt."

[Note 17 on page 15](#)

"Diese wunderwirkende Vorstellung, die wir, der gemeinen praktischen Vorstellungsweise gegenüber, nur als Wahn auffassen können" etc. I here have translated the first "Vorstellung" as "intuition," though "idea" is the word generally employed for rendering the Schopenhauerian term; literally it signifies an image "*set before* the mind," and hence any "mental concept," but with a less *abstract* shade of meaning than "Begriff"—the bare "idea"; a difficulty arises at times, in the translation of this term, from its connoting not only the "mental picture" itself, but also the act of forming it.—Tr.

[Note 18 on page 16](#)

Cf. "Doch wenn der mich im Himmel hält, dann liegt zu Füßen mir die Welt." *Die Meistersinger*, act ii.—Tr.

[Note 19 on page 16](#)

"Wie die höchste Kraft der Religion sich im *Glauben* kundgiebt, liegt ihre wesentlichste Bedeutung in ihrem *Dogma*."

[Note 20 on page 17](#)

"Und dieser [Glaube] muss, soll er erfolgreich sein, in dem Maasse innig, unbedingt und zweifellos sein, als das Dogma in sich all' das Unbegreifliche, und der gemeinen Erkenntniss widerspruchvoll Dünkende enthält, welches durch die unvergleichliche Schwierigkeit seiner Abfassung bedingt war." The obscurity of this sentence—*credo ouia impossibile*—will be cleared up in the next paragraph.—Tr.

[Note 21 on page 17](#)

"Da erdämmerte mild erhab'ner Macht im Busen mir die Nacht; mein Tag war da vollbracht." *Tristan und Isolde*, act ii.—Tr.

[Note 22 on page 18](#)

"Nicht darf sie Zweifels Last beschweren; sie sahen meine gute That." *Lohengrin*, act ii.—Tr.

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# *What is German?*

By Richard Wagner

Translated by William Ashton Ellis



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## Contents

About this Title .....	4
Translator's Note .....	5
What is German? .....	5
Notes .....	15
Summary .....	17

## About this Title

### Source

*What is German?*

By Richard Wagner

Translated by William Ashton Ellis

*Art and Politics*

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Notes are indicated using parenthesis, like (1).

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[150]

## Translator's Note

For a similar reason as in the case of the Vaterlandsverein Speech, I have chosen "*Was ist deutsch?*" to follow after "German Art and German Policy." The author's introductory note explains the intimate connexion of the two articles.

"*Was ist deutsch?*" was evidently written, either entirely or in part, towards the *end* of 1865; for the review of C. H. Bitter's "Johann Sebastian Bach," quoted on page 163, appeared in the Augsburg *Allgemeine Zeitung* of September 22nd 1865.

The article itself was first printed in the second Number of the *Bayreuther Blätter*, namely for February 1878. It was reprinted in the last, i.e. the tenth, volume of Richard Wagner's *Gesammelte Schriften*, 1883, the contents whereof were collected by Baron Hans von Wolzogen soon after the author's death.

[151]

## What is German?

WHEN lately searching through my papers, I found in disconnected paragraphs a manuscript of the year 1865; to-day, at wish of my younger friend and colleague in the publication of the "Bayreuther Blätter," I have decided to hand over the greater portion for issue to our more distant friends of the Patronatverein.

If the question "What is German?" was in itself so hard for me to answer, that I did not presume to include the all-unfinished article in the Collected Edition of my writings, my recent difficulty has been the matter of selection; for several of the points discussed in these paragraphs had already been treated by me at greater length in other essays, particularly in that on "German Art and German Policy." May this be my apology for the present article's shortcomings. In any case I have still to close the train of thought I then sketched out; and that close—to which, after thirteen years of fresh experience, I have certainly to give a colour of its own—will this time be my final word upon the sadly earnest theme.—



It has often weighed upon my mind, to gain a clear idea of what is really to be understood by the expression "*deutsch*" ["German"].

It is a commonplace of the Patriot's, to introduce his nation's name with unconditional homage; the mightier a nation is, however, the less store it seems to set on repeating its own name with all this show of reverence. It happens seldomer in the public life of England and France, that people speak of "English" and "French virtues"; whereas the Germans are always appealing to "German depth," "German earnestness," "German fidelity" (*Treue*) and the like. Unfortunately it has become patent, in very [152] many cases, that this appeal was not entirely founded; yet we haply should do wrong to suppose that the qualities themselves are mere figments of the imagination, even though their name be taken in vain. It will be best to seek upon the path of History the meaning of this idiosyncrasy of the Germans.

The word "*deutsch*," according to the latest and most profound researches, is not a definite Folk's name in history there has been no people that could claim the original title "Deutsche." Jacob Grimm, on the contrary, has proved that "*diutisk*" or "*deutsch*" means nothing more than what is homelike to ourselves, "ourselves" being those who parley in a language mutually intelligible. It was early set in contrast with the "*walsch*," whereby the Germanic

racés signify. the "proper to the Gaels and Kelts." The word "deutsch" reappears in the verb "deuten" [to "point, indicate, or explain"]: thus "deutsch" is what is plain (*deutlich*) to us, the familiar, the wonted, inherited from our fathers, racy of our soil. Now it is a striking fact, that the peoples remaining on this side of the Rhine and Alps began to call themselves by the name of "*Deutsche*" only after the Goths, Vandals, Franks and Lombards had established their dominion in the rest of Europe. Whilst the "Franks" spread their name over the whole great conquered land of Gaul, but the races left on the hither side of the Rhine consolidated themselves into Saxons, Bavarians, Swabians and East-Franks, it is at the division of the empire of Karl the Great [Charlemagne] that the name "Deutschland" makes its first appearance; and that as collective-name for all the races who had stayed this side the Rhine. Consequently it denotes those peoples who, remaining in their ancestral seat, continued to speak their ure-mother-tongue, whereas the races ruling in Romanic lands gave up that mother-tongue. It is to the speech and the ure-homeland, then, that the idea of "*deutsch*" is knit; and there came a time when these "Deutschen" could reap the advantage of fidelity to their homeland and their speech, for from the bosom of that home there sprang for [153] centuries the ceaseless renovation and freshening of the soon decaying outland races. Moribund and weakened dynasties were recruited from the primal stock of home. To the enfeebled Merovingians succeeded the East-Frankish Carolingians; from the degenerate Carolingians, in their turn, Saxons and Swabians took the sceptre of the German lands; and when the whole might of Romanised Frankdom passed into the power of the purely-German stock, arose the strange, but pregnant appellation "the Roman Empire of the German Nation." (01) Finally, upon this glorious memory we could feed the pride that bade us look into the Past for consolation, amid the ruins of the Present. No great culture-Folk has fallen into the plight of building for itself a fanciful renown, as the Germans. What profit the obligation to build such a fantastic edifice from relics of the Past might haply bring us, will perchance grow clear if first we try to realise its drawbacks, free from prejudice.

These drawbacks, past dispute, are found above all in the realm of Politics. Curiously enough, the memory of the German name's historic glory (*Herrlichkeit*) attaches precisely to that period which was so fatal to the German essence, the period of the German's authority over non-German peoples. The King of the Germans had to fetch the confirmation of this authority from Rome; the Romish Kaiser belonged not strictly to the Germans: The cavalcades to Rome were hateful to the Germans, who could be made at most take kindly to them as predatory marches, during which, however, their chief desire was a speedy return to home. Peevishly they followed the Romish Kaiser into Italy, most cheerfully their German Princes back to home. This relation is responsible for the constant powerlessness of so-called German Glory. The idea of this Glory was an un-German one. What distinguishes the "Deutschen" proper from the Franks, Goths, Lombards [154] &c., is that the latter found pleasure in the foreign land, settled there, and commingled with its people to the point of forgetting their own speech and customs. The German proper, on the contrary, weighed always as a stranger on the foreign people, because he did not feel himself at home abroad; and strikingly enough, we see the Germans hated to our day (1865) in Italy and in Slavonic lands, as foreigners and oppressors, whereas we cannot veil the shaming truth that German nationalities quite willingly abide beneath a foreign sceptre, if only they be not dealt with violently in regard of speech and customs, as we have before us in the case of Elsass [Alsace].—

With the fall of outer political might, i.e. with the lost significance of the Romish Kaiserdom, which we bemoan to-day as the foundering of German glory, there begins on the contrary the real development of genuine German essence (*Wesen*). Albeit in undeniable conjunction with the development of all other European nations, the German homeland assimilates their influences, especially those of Italy, in so individual a manner that in the last

century of the Middle Ages the German costume actually becomes a pattern for the rest of Europe, whereas at the time of so-called German glory even the magnates of the German Reich were clad in Romo-Byzantine garb. In the German Netherlands German art and industry were powerful rivals of Italy's most splendid bloom. After the complete downfall of the German nature, after the wellnigh total extinction of the German nation in consequence of the indescribable devastations of the Thirty Years' War, it was this inmost world of Home from whence the German spirit was reborn. German poetry, German music, German philosophy, are nowadays esteemed and honoured by every nation in the world: but in his yearning after "German glory" the German, as a rule, can dream of nothing but a sort of resurrection of the Romish Kaiser-Reich, and the thought inspires the most good-tempered German with an unmistakable lust of mastery, a longing for the upper hand over other nations. He forgets how detrimental to the [155] welfare of the German peoples that notion of the Romish State had been already.

To gain a clear idea of the only policy to help this welfare, to be worthy the name of German, we must before all ascertain the true meaning and peculiarity of that German essence which we have found to be the only prominent power in history itself. Therefore, still to keep an historical footing, let us somewhat more closely consider one of the weightiest epochs in the German people's evolution, that extraordinarily agitated crisis which it had to pass through at time of the so-called Reformation.

The Christian religion belongs to no specific national stock: the Christian dogma addresses purely - human nature. Only in so far as it has seized in all its purity this content common to all men, can a people call itself Christian in truth. However, a people can make nothing fully its own but what becomes possible for it to grasp with its inborn feeling, and to grasp in such a fashion that in the New it finds its own familiar self again. Upon the realm of aesthetics and philosophic Criticism it may be demonstrated, almost palpably, that it was predestined for the German spirit to seize and assimilate the Foreign, the primarily remote from it, in utmost purity and objectivity of intuition (*in höchster objektiver Reinheit der Anschauung*). One may aver, without exaggeration, that the Antique would have stayed unknown, in its now universal world-significance, had the German spirit not recognised and expounded it. The Italian made as much of the Antique his own, as he could copy and remodel; the Frenchman borrowed from this remodelling, in his turn, whatever caressed his national sense for elegance of Form: the German was the first to apprehend its purely-human originality, to seize therein a meaning quite aloof from usefulness, but therefore of the only use for rendering the Purely-human. Through its inmost understanding of the Antique, the German spirit arrived at the capability of restoring the Purely-human itself to its pristine freedom; not employing [156] the antique form to display a certain given 'stuff,' but moulding the necessary new form itself through an employment of the antique conception of the world. (02) To recognise this plainly, let anyone compare Goethe's *Iphigenia* with that of Euripides. One may say that the true idea of the Antique has existed only since the middle of the eighteenth century, since Winckelmann and Lessing.

Now, that the German would have apprehended the Christian dogma in equally preeminent clearness and purity, and would have raised it to the only valid Confession-of-faith, just as he had raised the Antique to a dogma in AEsthetics,—this can not be demonstrated. Perhaps on evolutionary paths unknown to us, and by us unimaginable, he might have arrived hereat; and certain attributes would make it appear that, of all others, the German spirit was called thereto. In any case 'tis easier for us to see what hindered its solution of the problem, since we recognise what enabled it to solve a like one in the region of AEsthetics. For here there was nothing to hinder it: AEsthetics were neither interfered with by the State, nor converted to its ends. With Religion things were otherwise: it had become an interest of the State, and this State-interest obtained its meaning and its guidance, not from the German, but quite definitely

from the un-German, the Romanic spirit. It was. the incalculable misfortune of Germany that, about the time when the German spirit was ripening for its task upon that high domain, the legitimate State-interests of all German peoples were entrusted to the counsels of a prince to whom the German spirit was a total stranger, to the most thorough-paced representative of the un-German, Romanic State-idea: Charles the Fifth, King of Spain and Naples, hereditary Archduke of Austria, elected Romish Kaiser and Sovereign of the German Reich, devoured by ambition for [157] world-supremacy, which would actually have fallen to him if he had been able to master France,—this sovereign felt no other interest in Germany, than to weld it with his empire, an iron-bound monarchy like Spain.

With him arrived the grave fatality that later doomed weinigh each German prince to misunderstanding of the German spirit; yet he was opposed by the majority of the Reichs-princes of that time, whose interests then coincided, as good fortune would have it, with those of the German Folk-spirit. One can never conjecture the mode in which the actual religious question, too, would have been answered to the honour of the German spirit if Germany then had had a sterling patriotic overchief for Kaiser, such as the Luxemburgian Heinrich VII. At any rate the original Reformatory movement in Germany made not for separation from the Catholic Church; on the contrary, it was an attempt to strengthen and reknit the Church's general union, by putting an end to the hideous abuses of the Roman Curia, so wounding to German religious feeling. What good and world-significant thing might here have come to life, we can scarce approximately measure; but we have before us the results of the disastrous conflict of the German spirit with the un-German spirit of the German Reich's supreme controller. Since that time—cleavage of religion: a dire misfortune! None but a universal religion is Religion in truth: divers confessions, politically established and ranged beside or over one another by contract with the State, simply confess that Religion is in act of dissolution. In that conflict the German Folk was brought near its total foundering, nay, weinigh it altogether reached it through the outcome of the Thirty Years' War. If therefore the German Princes had mostly worked in common with the German spirit, I have already shewn how since that time, alas l our Princes themselves almost quite unlearnt an understanding of this spirit. The sequel we may see in our public State-life of to-day: the sterling German nature (*das eigentlich deutsche Wesen*) is withdrawing ever farther from it; in part the German is following [158] his native bent to phlegma, in part that to fantasticism: and since the lordling and even the lawyer is becoming quite old-fashioned, the royal rights of Prussia and Austria have gradually to accustom themselves to being upheld before their peoples by—Israelites. (03)

In this singular phenomenon, this invasion of the German nature by an utterly alien element, there is more than meets the eye. Here, however, we will only notice that other nature in so far as its conjunction with us obliges us to become quite clear as to what we have to understand by the "German" nature which it exploits.—It everywhere appears to be the duty of the Jew, to shew the nations of modern Europe where haply there may be a profit they have overlooked, or not made use of. The Poles and Hungarians did not understand the value, to themselves, of a national development of trade and commerce: the Jew displayed it, by appropriating that neglected profit None of the European nations had recognised the boundless advantages, for the nation's general oeconomy, of an ordering of the relations of Labour and Capital in accordance with the modern spirit of burgher-enterprise: the Jews laid hand on those advantages, and upon the hindered and dwindling prosperity of the nation the Jewish banker feeds his enormous wealth. Adorable and beautiful is that foible of the German's which forbade his coining into personal profit the inwardness and purity of his feelings and beholdings, particularly in his public and political life: that a profit here, as well,

was left unused, could be cognisable to none but a mind which misunderstood the very essence of the German nature. The German Princes supplied the misunderstanding, the Jews exploited it. Since the new-birth of German poetry and music, it only needed the Princes to follow the example of Frederick the Great, to make a fad of ignoring those arts, or wrongly and unjustly measuring them with French square and compasses, [159] and consequently allowing no influence to the spirit which they manifested,—it only needed this, to throw open to the spirit of alien speculation a field whereon it saw much profit to be reaped. 'Tis as though the Jew had been astounded to find such a store of mind and genius yielding no returns but poverty and unsuccess. He could not conceive, when the Frenchman worked for "*gloire*," the Italian for the *denaro*, why the German did it simply "*pour le roi de Prusse*." The Jew set right this bungling of the German's, by taking German intellectual labour into his own hands; and thus we see an odious travesty of the German spirit upheld to-day before the German Folk, as its imputed likeness. It is to be feared, ere long the nation may really take this simulacrum for its mirrored image: then one of the finest natural dispositions in all the human race were done to death, perchance for ever.

We have to inquire how to save it from such a shameful doom, and therefore first of all will try to signalise the characteristics of genuine "German" nature.—

Once more let us briefly, but plainly recite the outer, historical documents of German nature. "Deutsche" is the title given to those Germanic races which, upon their natal soil, retained their speech and customs. Even from lovely Italy the German yearns back to his homeland. Hence he quits the Romish Kaiser, and cleaves the closer and the trustier to his native Prince. In rugged woods, throughout the lengthy winter, by the warm hearth-fire of his turret-chamber soaring high into the clouds, for generations he keeps green the deeds of his forefathers; the myths of native gods he weaves into an endless web of sagas. (04) He wards not off the influences incoming from abroad; he loves to journey and to look; but, full of the strange impressions, he longs to reproduce them; he therefore turns his steps toward home, for he knows that here alone will he be *understood*: here, by his homely hearth, he [160] tells what he has seen and gone through there outside. Romanic, Gaelic (*wälische*), French books and legends he transposes for himself, and whilst the Latins, Gaels and French know nothing of him, he keenly studies all their ways. But his is no mere idle gaping at the Foreign, as such, as purely foreign; he wills to understand it "Germanly." He renders the foreign poem into German, to gain an inner knowledge of its content. Herewith he strips the Foreign of its accidentals, its externals, of all that to him is unintelligible, and makes good the loss by adding just so much of his own externals and accidentals as it needs to set the foreign object plain and undefaced before him. In these his natural endeavours he makes the foreign exploit yield to him a picture of its purely-human motives. Thus "Parzival" and "Tristan" were shaped anew by Germans: and whilst the originals have become mere curiosities, of no importance save to the history of literature, in their German counterparts we recognise poetic works of worth imperishable.—

In the same spirit the German borrows for his home the civic measures of abroad. Beneath the castle's shelter, expands the burghers' town; but the flourishing town does not pull down the Burg: the "Free Town" renders homage to the Prince; the industrial burgher decks the castle of his ancient lord. The German is conservative: his treasure bears the stamp of all the ages; he hoards the Old, and well knows how to use it. Fonder is he of keeping, than of winning: the gathered New has value for him only when it serves to deck the Old. He craves for nothing from without; but he wills no hindrances within. He attacks not, neither will he brook attack.—Religion he takes in earnest: the ethical corruption of the Roman Curia, with its demoralising influence on the clergy, irks him to the quick. By Religious Liberty he means nothing other than the right to deal honestly and in earnest with the Holiest. Here he waxes warm, and disputes with all the hazy passionateness of the goaded friend of peace and quiet.



Politics get mixed therein: shall Germany become [161] a Spanish monarchy, the free Reich be trodden under foot, his Princes made mere eminent courtiers? No people has taken arms against invasions of its inner freedom, its own true essence, as the Germans: there is no comparison for the doggedness with which the German chose his total ruin, rather than accommodate himself to claims quite foreign to his nature. This is weighty. The outcome of the Thirty Years' War destroyed the German nation; yet, that a German Folk could rise again, is due to nothing but that outcome. The nation was annihilated, but the German spirit had passed through. It is the essence of that spirit which we call "genius in the case of highly-gifted individuals, not to trim its sails to worldly profit. (05) What with other nations led at last to compromise, to a practical ensurance of that profit through accommodation, could not control the Germans: at a time when Richelieu forced the French to accept the laws of political advantage, the German nation was completing its shipwreck; but that which never could bend before the laws of this advantage, lived on and bore its Folk afresh: the German Spirit.

A Folk reduced to a tenth of its former numbers, its significance could nowhere survive but in the memory of units. Even that memory had first to be revived and toilsomely fed, to begin with, by the most prescient of minds. It is a wonderful trait of the German spirit's, that whereas in its earlier period of evolution it had most intimately assimilated the influences coming from without, now, when it quite had lost the vantage-ground of outward political power, it bore itself anew from out its own most inward store.—Recollection (*Erinnerung*) now became for it in truth a self-collection (*Er-Innerung*); for upon its deepest inner self it drew, to ward itself from the now immoderate Outer influences. 'Twas no question of its external existence, for that had been ensured by the continuance of [162] the German Princes; ay! survived there not the title of "Romo-German Kaiser"? But its truest essence, now ignored by most of these its Princes,—that was the German spirit's object to preserve and quicken to new force. In the French livery and uniform, with periwig and pigtail (*Zopf*), and laughably set out with imitations of French gallantry, the scanty remnant of its people fronted it; while its language even the burgher, with his garnish of French flourishes, was about to abandon merely to the peasant—Yet when its native countenance, its very speech was lost, there remained to the German spirit one last, one undreamt sanctuary wherein to plainly tell itself the story of its heart of hearts. From the Italians the German had adopted Music, also, for his own. Whoso would seize the wondrous individuality, the strength and meaning of the German spirit in one incomparably speaking image, let him cast a searching glance upon the else so puzzling, welinigh unaccountable figure of Music's wonder-man SEBASTIAN BACH. He is the history of the German spirit's inmost life throughout the gruesome century of the German Folk's complete extinction. See there that head, insanely muffled in the French full-bottomed wig; behold that master, a wretched organist and cantor, slinking from one Thuringian parish to another, puny places scarcely known to us by name; see him so unheeded, that it required a whole century to drag his works from oblivion; finding even Music pinioned in an art-form the very effigy of his age, dry, stiff, pedantic, like wig and pigtail set to notes: then see what a world the unfathomably great Sebastian built from out these elements! I merely point to that Creation; for it is impossible to denote its wealth, its sublimity, its all-embracing import, through any manner of comparison. If, however, we wish to account for the amazing rebirth of the German spirit on the field of poetic and philosophic Literature too, we can do so only by learning from Bach what the German spirit is in truth, where it dwelt, and how it restless shaped itself anew, when it seemed to have altogether vanished from the [163] world. A biography of this man has recently appeared, and the *Ailgemeine Zeitung* has reviewed it. I cannot resist quoting the following passages from that review: "With labour and rare force of will he struggles up from poverty and want to the topmost height of art, strews with full hands an almost incommensurable plenty of most glorious masterworks, strews it on an age which



can neither comprehend nor prize him, and dies beneath a burden of downweighing cares, lonely and forgotten, leaving his family in poverty and privation. . . . The grave of the Song-dispenser closes over the weary home-gone man without a song or sound, because the household penury cannot afford the grave-chant fee. . . . Might the reason, why our composers so seldom find biographers, lie partly in the circumstance that their end is usually so mournful, so harrowing?"—And while this was happening with great Bach, sole harbourer and new-bearer of the German spirit, the large and little Courts of German princes were swarming with Italian opera-composers and virtuosi, bought with untold outlay, too, to shower on slighted Germany the leavings of an art that nowadays cannot be accorded the least consideration.

Yet Bach's spirit, the German spirit, stepped forth from the sanctuary of divinest Music, the place of its new-birth. When Goethe's "Götz" appeared, its joyous cry went up: "That's German!" And, beholding his likeness, the German also knew to shew himself, to shew the world, what Shakespeare is, whom his own people did not understand. These deeds the German spirit brought forth of itself, from its inmost longing to grow conscious of itself. And this consciousness told it—what it was the first to publish to the world—that *the Beautiful and Noble came not into the world for sake of profit, nay, not for sake of even fame and recognition*. And everything done in the sense of this teaching is "*deutsch*"; and *therefore* is the German great; and *only what is done in that sense, can lead Germany to greatness*.

To the nurture of the German Spirit, the greatness of [164] the German Folk, nothing can lead, then, save its veritable understanding by the rulers. The German Folk arrived at its rebirth, at unfolding of its highest faculties, through its conservative temper, its inward cleaving to itself, to its own idiosyncrasy: once it shed its life's blood for the preservation of its Princes. 'Tis now for them to shew the German Folk that they belong to it; and where the German spirit achieved its (deed of rebearing the Folk, *there* is the realm whereon the Princes, too, have first to found their new alliance with the Folk. It is highest time the Princes turned to this re-baptism: the danger that menaces the whole of German public life, I have already pointed out. Woe to us and the world, if the nation itself were this time saved, but the German spirit vanished from the world! (06) —

How are we to conceive a state of things in which the German *Folk* remained, but the German *Spirit* had taken flight? The hardly-thinkable is closer to us than we fancy. When I defined the essence and functions of the German spirit, I kept in view a happy development of the German people's most significant attributes. But the birthplace of the German spirit is alike the basis of the German people's failings. The capacity of diving deep within, and thence observing lucidly and thoughtfully the world without, always presupposes a bent to meditation; which, in the less gifted individual, quite easily becomes a love of doing nothing, a positive phlegma. What in its happiest manifestation places us nearest the supremely gifted folk of ancient Indus, may give the mass the character of common Oriental sloth (*Trägheit*); nay, even that neighbouring development to utmost power can become a curse for us, by betraying us into fantastic self-complacency. That Goethe and Schiller, Mozart and Beethoven have issued from the German people's womb, [165] far too easily tempts the bulk of middling talents to consider these great minds their own by right of birth, to persuade the mass with demagogic flatulence that they themselves are Goethes and Schillers, Mozarts and Beethovens. Nothing flatters more the bent to sloth and easygoingness, than a high opinion of oneself, an opinion that quite of oneself one is something great and needs take no sort of pains to first become it. This leaning is root-German, and hence no people more requires to be flicked up and compelled to help itself, to act for itself, than the German. But German Princes and Governments have done the very opposite. It was reserved for Börne the Jew, to sound the first challenge to the German's sloth; and, albeit in this sense unintentionally, he thereby raised the Germans' great misunderstanding of themselves to the pitch of direfulest confusion.

The misunderstanding that prompted the Austrian Chancellor, Prince Metternich, in the day of his leadership of German Cabinet-policy, to deem the aspirations of the German "Burschenschaft" identical with those of the bygone Paris club of Jacobins, and to take hostile measures accordingly,—that misunderstanding was most advantageous to the [Jewish] speculator who stood outside, seeking nothing but his personal profit. This time, if he played his game well, that speculator had only to swing himself into the midst of the German Folk and State, to exploit and, in the end, not merely govern it, but downright make it his own property.

After all that had gone before, it now had really become a difficult matter, to rule in Germany. Had the Governments made it a maxim to judge their German peoples by the measure of French events, there also soon arose adventurers to teach the downtrod German Folk-spirit to apply French maxims to its estimate of the Governments. The *Demagogue* had now arrived indeed: but what a doleful after-birth! Every new Parisian revolution was promptly 'mounted' in Germany: of course, for every new spectacular Paris opera had been mounted forthwith at the Court-theatres of Berlin and Vienna, a pattern for all [166] Germany. I have no hesitation about styling the subsequent revolutions in Germany entirely un-German. (07) "Democracy" in Germany is purely a translated thing. It exists merely in the "Press"; and what this German Press is, one must find out for oneself. But untowardly enough, this translated Franco-Judaico-German Democracy could really borrow a handle, a pretext and deceptive cloak, from the misprised and maltreated spirit of the German Folk. To secure a following among the people, "Democracy" aped a German mien; and "*Deutschthum*," "German spirit," "German honesty," "German freedom," "German morals," became catchwords disgusting no one more than him who had true German culture, who had to stand in sorrow and watch the singular comedy of agitators from a non-German people pleading for him without letting their client so much as get a word in edgewise. The astounding unsuccessfulness of the so loud-mouthed movement of 1848 is easily explained by the curious circumstance that the genuine German found himself; and found his name, so suddenly represented by a race of men quite alien to him. Whilst Goethe and Schiller had shed the German spirit on the world, without so much as talking of the "German" spirit, these Democratic speculators fill every book- and print-shop, every so-called "Volks-," i.e. joint-stock theatre, with vulgar, utterly vapid dummies, forever plastered with the puff of "deutsch," and "deutsch" again, to decoy the easygoing crowd. And really we have got so far, that we presently shall see the German Folk quite turned to gabies by it: the national propensity to sloth and phlegma is being lured into fantastic satisfaction with itself; already the German people is taking a large part, itself, in the playing of the shameful comedy; and not without a shudder can the thoughtful German spirit look upon those foolish festive gatherings, with their theatrical processions, their silly speeches, and the cheerless empty songs wherewith one tries [167] to make the German Folk imagine it is something special and does not need to first endeavour to become it.—



So far the earlier article, from the year 1865. My project was to get a political journal founded for the purpose of advocating the tendencies expressed therein: Herr Julius Fröbel declared his readiness to undertake that advocacy: the "*Suddeutsche Presse*" came to daylight. Unfortunately I soon discovered that Herr Fröbel's view of the problem in question was different from my own, and one fine day we parted; for the thought that Art should serve no end of usefulness, but only its own honour (*Werth*), so sorely went against his grain that he fell into a fit of tears and sobbing.

However, I certainly had other grounds for leaving my task unfinished.—"What is German?"—The question puzzled me more and more. What simply aggravated my

bewilderment, were the impressions of the eventful years which followed the time when that article was begun. What German could have lived through the year 1870 without amazement at the forces manifested here, as also at the courage and determination with which the man who palpably knew something that we others did not know, brought those forces into action?—Many an objectionable feature one might overlook at the time. We who, with the spirit of our great masters at heart, witnessed the physiognomic bearing of our death-defiant landsmen in the soldier's coat, we cordially rejoiced when listening to the "Kutschkelied," (08) and deeply were we affected by the "feste Burg" before the war and "nun danket Alle Gott" when it was over. To be sure, it was precisely we who [168] found it hard to comprehend how the deadly courage of our patriots could whet itself on nothing better than the "Wacht am Rhein"; a somewhat mawkish Liedertafel product, which the Frenchmen held for one of those Rhine-wine songs at which they earlier had made so merry. But no matter, they might scoff as they pleased, even their "*allons enfants de la patrie*" could not this time put down "lieb Vaterland, kannst ruhig sein," or stop their being soundly beaten.—When our victorious troops were journeying home I made private inquiries in Berlin as to whether, supposing one contemplated a grand solemnity for the slain in battle, I should be permitted to compose a piece of music for performance thereat, and to be dedicated to the sublime event. The answer was: upon so joyful a return, one wished to make no special arrangements for painful impressions. Still beneath the rose, I suggested another music-piece to accompany the entry of the troops, at the close of which, mayhap at the march past the victorious Monarch, the singing-corps so well supported in the Prussian army should join-in with a national song. No: that would have necessitated serious alterations in arrangements settled long before, and I was counselled not to make the proposal. My Kaisermarsch I arranged for the concert-room: there may it fit as best it can!—In any case, I ought not to have expected the "German spirit," new-risen on the field of battle, to trouble itself with the musical fancies of a presumably conceited opera-composer. However, divers other experiences made me gradually feel odd in this new "Reich;" so that when I came to editing the last volume of my Collected Writings, as already mentioned, I could find no right incitement to complete my article on "What is German?"

When once I spoke my mind about the character of the Berlin performances of my "Lohengrin," (09) I was reprimanded by the editor of the "Norddeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung," to the effect that I must not consider myself sole lessee of the "German spirit." I took the hint, and [169] surrendered the lease. On the other hand, I was glad to find a coinage minted for the whole new German Reich, particularly when I heard that it had turned out so original-German that it would fit the currency of no other of the Great Powers, but remained subject to a "rate of exchange" with "franc" and "shilling": people told me this was tricky for the common trader, no doubt, but most advantageous to the banker. My German heart leaped high, too, when Liberally we voted for "Free-trade": there was, and still prevails, much want throughout the land; the workman hungers, and industry has fallen sick: but "business" flourishes. For "business" in the very grandest sense, indeed, the Reichs-"broker" has recently been patented; and, to grace and dignify the wedding-feasts of Highnesses, with oriental etiquette the newest Minister leads off the torch-dance.

This all may be good, and well beseem the novel Deutsches Reich; but no longer can I plumb its meaning, and therefore I must hold myself unqualified for further answering the question: "was ist Deutsch?" Could not Herr Constantin Frantz, for instance, afford us splendid aid? Herr Paul de Lagarde, too? May they consider themselves most friendly invited to take up the answer to that fateful question, for instruction of our poor Bayreuther Patronatverein. If they haply then should reach the realm whereon we had to take Sebastian Bach in view, in course of the preceding article, I might perchance be able to relieve my hoped-for colleagues of their task again. How capital, if I should gain these writers' ear for my

appeal!

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## Notes

### Note 01 on page 6

"Und als die ganze Macht des romanisirten Frankenreiches in die Gewalt der reindeutschen Stämme überging, kam die seltsame, aber bedeutungsvolle Bezeichnung 'römisches Reich deutscher Nation auf.'"

### Note 02 on page 7

"Durch das innigste Verständniss der Antike ist der deutsche Geist zu der Fähigkeit gelangt, das Reinmenschliche selbst wiederum in ursprünglicher Freiheit nachzubilden, nämlich, nicht durch die Anwendung der antiken Form einen bestimmten Stoff darzustellen, sondern durch eine Anwendung der antiken Auffassung der Welt die nothwendige neue Form selbst zu bilden."

### Note 03 on page 8

In the original there occurs a Stabreim, unfortunately irreproducible, of "Junker, Jurist and Juden."—TR.

### Note 04 on page 9

Cf. *Die Meistersinger*: "Am stillen Heerd in Winterszeit, wenn Burg und Hof mir eingeschneit . . . ein altes Buch, vom Ahn' vermacht, gab das mir oft zu lesen."—TR.

### Note 05 on page 10

"Es ist das Wesen des Geistes, den man in einzelnen hochbegabten Menschen 'Genie' nennt, sich auf den weltlichen Vortheil nicht zu verstehen." The colloquialism "not to be up to" is really the best translation for what I have rendered "not to trim its sails to."—TR.

### Note 06 on page 11

Cf. *Die Meistersinger*, act iii: "Habt Acht! Uns drohen üble Streich!—zerfällt erst deutsches Volk und Reich, in falscher wälscher Majestät kein Fürst bald mehr sein Volk versteht; und wälschen Dunst mit wälschem Tand sie pflanzen uns in's deutsche Land."—TR,

### Note 07 on page 12

"Ich stehe nicht an, die seitdem vorgekommenen Revolutionen in Deutschland als ganz undeutsch zu bezeichnen."

### Note 08 on page 13

A song very popular with the German troops in the Franco-German War, originally attributed to a fusilier by name of Kutschke, but later ascertained to have been written by Field-chaplain Herm. Alex. Pistorius (1811-1877).—The "determined man" of two sentences back is, of course, Prince Bismarck.—TR.

### Note 09 on page 13

Cf. Vol. III. p. 270—written in the year 1871.—TR.





## Summary

History of M. S. for the article,—Meaning of "deutsch"; applies to those peoples who remained faithful to the fatherland and mother-tongue (152). Curiously enough, the memory of German glory is always attached to a period fatal to the German nature, when the Germans ruled over non-Germanic peoples; with the fall of outer political might began the real development of genuine German qualities (154). The Reformation contrasted with German evaluation of the Antique: had Germany's ruler, Charles V., been guided by the German Spirit, the Christian Church might then have been strengthened and re-knit; none but a universal religion is Religion in truth (157). Owing to the German's phlegma and fantasticism, gradual invasion of the Jew, usurping whole range of German public life and travestyng the German spirit (159). Characteristics of genuine German Spirit: its openmindedness and introspection, conservatism and assimilation, love of intellectual liberty and refusal to trim its sails to worldly profit (161). Thirty Years' War decimated the nation, and dressed the remnant in French costume, but the German spirit survived: its sanctuary was Music; Bach as forerunner of Goethe. The *Beautiful and Noble not for profit, nor even Fame*—that is German, and alone can lead to German greatness (163). Let its Princes shew the German Folk they belong to it in this sense: it is high time, for fear the German spirit vanish again from the world, out of sheer inertia, and yield place to the Judaic. Franco-Judaico-German demagogues and Revolution of 1848: the genuine German represented by a race of men quite alien to him. German nation now being taught by blatant mediocrities to imagine it *is* already something great and does not need to first *become* it (167).

Experiences since 1865: the Franco-German War, courage of Bismarck and the army; Liedertafel songs. Return of the victorious troops. I offer to compose music in celebration of our fallen heroes; "upon so joyful an occasion we desire no painful impressions." *Kaisermarsch* proposed for the march past: declined; let it fit the *concert-room* as best it may. New Coinage, Free Trade, and "Reichs-broker"; I surrender my "lease of the German Spirit," for I no longer (1878) can read the meaning of the new German Reich. Will some political writer enlighten us (169).

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*Modern*

By Richard Wagner

Translated by William Ashton Ellis



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Edition 1.0

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# Contents

About this Title .....	4
Translator's Note .....	4
Modern .....	5
Notes .....	9

## About this Title

### Source

*Modern*

By Richard Wagner

Translated by William Ashton Ellis

*Religion and Art*

Richard Wagner's Prose Works

Volume 6

Pages 43-49

Published in 1897

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*Modern*

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Sämtliche Schriften und Dichtungen : Volume X

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Notes are indicated using parenthesis, like (1).

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[42]

## Translator's Note

The article "Modern" originally appeared in the *Bayreuther Blätter* for March 1878.

[43]

## Modern

IN a pamphlet lately sent to me an "important Jewish voice" is cited, its words being given as follows:—

"The modern world must gain the victory, since it wields incomparably better weapons than the old world of orthodoxy. The power of the pen has become the world-power, without which one can hold one's ground on no domain; and of that power you orthodox are almost wholly bare. Your men of learning write finely, intellectually, it's true, but simply for their fellows; whereas the Popular is the shibboleth of our time. Modern journalism and romance have been captured entire by the free-thinking Jew-and-Christian world. I say, the free-thinking Jewish world—for it is the fact that German Judaism now works so forcibly, so giant-like and so untiredly at the new culture and science, that the greater part of Christendom is led by the spirit of modern Judaism either consciously or unconsciously. To-day, for example, there is scarcely a newspaper or magazine that is not directly or indirectly conducted by Jews."—

Too true!—A thing like that I had never read before, and thought our Jewish fellow-citizens were none too pleased to hear such matters talked of. But now that we are met with such plain-speaking, we perhaps may insert an equally candid word ourselves without the instant fear of being variously maltreated as ridiculous and yet most hateful persecutors of the Jews, and tumultuously hissed upon occasion. Perchance we may even be allowed to make clear a few fundamental terms to our Culture-purveyors—whose world-power we don't for a moment question; certain terms they may not employ in quite the proper sense, and upon whose explanation, if they really [44] mean honestly by us, their "gigantic exertions" might have a good result for all.

To begin with "the modern world."—If this does not simply mean the world of to-day, the time in which we live—the "now-time," as it is so euphoniously styled in modern German—our latest culture-mongers must be thinking of a world such as never existed before: a "modern" world, unknown to the world at any previous epoch—: an entirely novel world in fact, which has nothing at all to do with the worlds preceding it, and therefore shapes itself by its own judgment to its good pleasure. In truth this world must now appear a wholly new, unprecedented world to the Jews, who—as a national body—still stood remote from all our cultural efforts just half a century ago; this world on which they entered so suddenly, and have appropriated with such increasing force. Correctly speaking, they should consider themselves the only novelty in this old world: avowal of that, however, they seem only too keen to avoid, and to want to make themselves believe that this old world of ours has suddenly become brand-new through their mere entry on it. To us this seems an error, which they really ought to diligently rectify,—always assuming that they mean honourably by us, and truly wish to help us in our decay, merely used and aggravated by them hitherto. Let us assume this unconditionally.—

Taken strictly, then, our world was new to the Jews; and all they undertook, to set them straight therein, consisted in the appropriation of our ancient heritage. This applies before all to our language—for it would be rude to refer to our money. Never yet has it happened to me, to hear Jews employing their pristine tongue among themselves; on the contrary, it has been a perpetual surprise to me to find in every land of Europe that the Jews understood German, though alas! they mostly spoke it in a jargon manufactured by themselves. I fancy this crude and illegitimate acquaintance with the German tongue—which some inexplicable destiny must have [45] brought to them—may have been a peculiar obstacle to their proper understanding and true adoption of the German world upon their legitimation therein. The



French Protestants who settled in Germany after being driven from their home, in their descendants have become completely German; nay, Chamisso, who came to Germany as a boy speaking nothing but French, grew up to a master of German speech and thought. It is astonishing, how difficult this appears to be to the Jews. One might believe they went too hastily to work in the adoption of the wholly-alien, betrayed by just that unripe knowledge of our speech, their jargon. It belongs to another inquiry, to clear up the character of that falsification of speech which we owe to the commingling of the "modern" in our cultural evolution, particularly under the form of Jewish journalism; for to-day's theme we have merely to point to the many trials our language long had suffered, and how the brightest instincts of our great poets and sages had only just succeeded in restoring it to its productive individuality, when—in conjunction with the remarkable process of linguistic and literary development above denoted—it occurred to the flippancy of a consciously unproductive set of Epigones to cast adrift the irksome earnestness of their forerunners, and proclaim themselves as "Moderns."

Awaiting the original creations of our new Jewish fellow-citizens, we must protest that even the "Modern" is not their own invention. They found it as a weed upon the field of German literature. I myself beheld the early flowering of the plant. At that time it called itself "Young Germany." Its cultivators began with a war against all literary "Orthodoxy," by which was meant the belief in our great poets and sages of the previous century; attacked the so-called "Romanticism" that followed these (not to be confounded with the "journalism *and* romance"—!—of the "important Jewish voice" adduced above); went to Paris, studied Scribe and E. Sue, rendered them into a slipshod-showy German, and ended in part as [46] Theatre-directors, in part as journalists for the popular fireside.

That was a good commencement, and on such a groundwork, if only well supported by the power of the purse, with little trouble and no further ingenuity the "Modern" might be trimmed into a "modern world," to be victoriously set against an "old world of orthodoxy."

But to explain what this "modern" really means, is not so easy as the Moderns imagine; unless they will admit that it stands for a very shady thing, most perilous to us Germans in particular. That we will not suppose, however, as we are assuming that our Jewish fellow-citizens mean well by us. On the same assumption, are we then to conclude that they have no idea of what they say, and merely drivel? We deem it useless here to trace the history of the concept "Modern," a term originally allotted to the plastic arts in Italy to distinguish them from the Antique; enough, that we have learnt the influence of "Mode" in development of the French nation's spirit. The Frenchman can call himself "modern" with a peculiar pride, for he *makes* the Mode, and thereby rules the whole world's exterior. Should the Jews push their "gigantic exertions in common with liberal Christendom" to the length of likewise making a Mode for us, then—may the god of their fathers reward them for conferring such a boon on us poor German slaves of French fashions! Meanwhile the outlook is altogether different: for, spite of all their power, they have no approach to Originality, especially in the application of that force they vaunt as irresistible, the "power of the quill." With foreign plumes one may *decorate* oneself, as much as with the exquisite names under which our new Jewish fellow-citizens now present themselves no less to our astonishment than our delight, whilst we poor old burgher and peasant families have to content us with a paltry "Smith" or "Miller," "Weaver," "Wainwright" etc., for all futurity. (01) Foreign names, however, do not much matter; but our feathers must have [47] grown from our own skin if we do not merely want to deck ourselves, but to write from our heart with them, and so to write as thereby to gain the victory over a whole world—which had not occurred to any Papageno before. But this old world—or rather, this German world has still its originals, whose feathers yet grow without aid from cantharides; and our "important voice" itself admits that our learned men write "finely and intellectually," though it is to be feared that they soon will unlearn all their

little fine writing, under the perpetual contagion of Jewish journalism; already they speak and hold silence "self-talkingly," (02) just like that modern "pen-power." "Liberal Judaism" has nevertheless a "giant's work" before it, ere all the original parts of its German co-citizens shall have been entirely ruined, ere the plumes that have grown on our skin shall write nothing but plays on un-understood words, falsely rendered "*bons mots*" and the like, or even ere all our musicians acquire the strange art of composing without inspiration.

It is possible the Jews' originality will then reveal itself upon the field of German intellectual life to us as well, namely when no man understands his own words more. Among the lower classes, our peasants for instance, the care of giant-working Liberal Judaism has already brought things almost so far that the erewhile most intelligent can no longer utter a sensible word, "self-talkingly," and thinks he understands the purest nonsense.

Candidly, it would be difficult to anticipate much help for ourselves from the modern Jew-world's victory. I have become acquainted with earnest and gifted individuals of Jewish descent who, in the endeavour to draw closer to their German fellow-citizens, have really devoted much labour to thoroughly understanding us Germans, our speech and history; but these have turned entirely away from the modern world-conquerings of their former co-religionists, nay, have even made quite serious friends with myself for example. These few are thus excepted [48] from the "Moderns," with whom the journalist and essayist alone find full acclamation.

What reality may lurk behind that "orthodoxy" which the "important voice" expects to vanquish under convoy of the "Moderns," is not so easy to discover: I suspect that this word as well, so plumped upon our extant world of mind, is somewhat dimly understood, and used at random. If applied to Judaic orthodoxy, one perhaps might take it to mean the teachings of the Talmud, departure from which might not seem inadvisable to our Jewish fellow-citizens; for, as much as we know thereof, observance of those teachings must make a hearty companionship with us uncommonly hard to them. But it would not profoundly concern the German Folk, which liberal Judaism wants to help; and that sort of thing, well, the Jews must arrange with themselves. Christian orthodoxy, on the other hand, can really be no business of the liberal Jews,—provided their excess of Liberalism has not had them baptised in an hour of weakness. So they probably mean more the orthodoxy of the German Spirit in general,—a kind of right-belief in our stock of German science, art and philosophy. But this right-belief, again, is hard of comprehension, and certainly not easy to define. Some folk believe, while others doubt; even without the Jews a deal is criticised, disputed, and, broadly speaking, nothing right produced. The German, too, has his love and joy: he rejoices at the harm of others, and "loves to blacken the shining." We are not perfect. Let us therefore treat this as a fateful theme, which we had better leave untouched to-day; the same with "Popularity," which the "important voice" upholds as Shibboleth of our time. Indeed I pass this by with the greater pleasure, as "Shibboleth" inspires me with terror: for upon closer investigation of the meaning of this word I have learnt that, of no particular importance in itself, it was employed by the ancient Jews in a certain battle as means of detecting the tribesmen of a race they proposed, as usual, to root quite out; who pronounced the "Sch" without a hiss, as a soft "S," was [49] slaughtered. A decidedly fatal "*mot d'ordre*" in the fight for Popularity, especially with us Germans, to whom the lack of Semitic sibilants might be most disastrous if it ever came to an actual battle delivered by the Liberal-modern Jews.

Even for a minuter illustration of the "modern," these few remarks may prove sufficient. For the possible enlivenment of any member of our Patronat-Verein who reads these lines, I will therefore close them with a facetious rhyme that once occurred to me. It ran:

"In prudence let the old go moulder; (03)  
superior persons all are modern."



## Notes

### Note 01 on page 6

"Schmidt," "Müller," "Weber," "Wagner."—

### Note 02 on page 7

"Selhstredend" for "self-evidently."—Tr.

### Note 03 on page 7

"Modern," as a true German verb, means "to rot."—Tr.

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# *Religion and Art*

By Richard Wagner

Translated by William Ashton Ellis



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## Contents

About this Title .....	4
Religion and Art .....	5
Translator's Note .....	6
I .....	7
II .....	13
III .....	19
Notes .....	27

## About this Title

### Source

*Religion and Art*  
By Richard Wagner  
Translated by William Ashton Ellis

*Religion and Art*  
Richard Wagner's Prose Works  
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Notes are indicated using parenthesis, like (1).  
Page numbers of the original source are indicated  
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[211]

## Religion and Art

Ich finde in der christlichen Religion  
virtualiter die Anlage zu dem höchsten  
und Edelsten, und die Verschiedenen  
Erscheinungen derselben im Leben scheinen  
mir bloss desswegen so widrig und abgeschmackt,

weil sie verfehlte Darstellungen dieses höchsten sind.

Schiller, an Goethe

[212]

## Translator's Note

"Religion and Art" originally appeared in the *Bayreuther Blätter* for October 1880, constituting the whole of that number of the journal. The nearest translation of the motto taken from Schiller, would be

"in the Christian religion I find an intrinsic disposition to the Highest and the Noblest, and its various manifestations in life appear to me so vapid and repugnant simply because they have missed expression of that Highest."

[213]

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ONE might say that where Religion becomes artificial, it is reserved for Art to save the spirit of religion by recognising the figurative value of the mythic symbols which the former would have us believe in their literal sense, and revealing their deep and hidden truth through an ideal presentation. Whilst the priest stakes everything on the religious allegories being accepted as matters of fact, the artist has no concern at all with such a thing, since he freely and openly gives out his work as his own invention. But Religion has sunk into an artificial life, when she finds herself compelled to keep on adding to the edifice of her dogmatic symbols, and thus conceals the one divinely True in her beneath an ever growing heap of incredibilities commended to belief. Feeling this, she has always sought the aid of Art; who on her side has remained incapable of higher evolution so long as she must present that alleged reality of the symbol to the senses of the worshipper in form of fetishes and idols,—whereas she could only fulfil her true vocation when, by an ideal presentment of the allegoric figure, she led to apprehension of its inner kernel, the truth ineffably divine.

To see our way clear in this, we should have most carefully to test the origin of religions. These we must certainly deem the more divine, the simpler proves to be their inmost kernel. Now, the deepest basis of every true religion we find in recognition of the frailty of this world, and the consequent charge to free ourselves therefrom. It is manifest that at all times it needed a superhuman effort to disclose this knowledge to men in a raw state of nature, the Folk in fact, and accordingly the most successful work of the religious Founder consisted in the invention of [214] mythic allegories, by which the people might be led along the path of faith to practical observance of the lessons flowing from that root-knowledge. In this respect we can but regard it as a sublime distinction of the Christian religion, that it expressly claims to bare the deepest truth to the "poor in spirit," for their comfort and salvation whereas the doctrine of the Brahmins was the exclusive property of "those who know"—for which reason the "rich in spirit" viewed the nature-ridden multitude as shut from possibility of knowledge and only arriving at insight into the nullity of the world by means of numberless rebirths. That there was a shorter road to salvation; the most enlightened of the "Reborn" himself disclosed to the poor blind Folk: but the sublime example of renunciation and unruffled meekness, which the *Buddha* set, did not suffice his fervid followers; his last great doctrine, of the unity of all things living, was only to be made accessible to his disciples through a mythic explanation of the world whose wealth of imagery and allegoric comprehensiveness was taken bodily from the storehouse of Brahminic teachings, so astounding in their proofs of fertility and culture of mind. Here too, in all the course of time and progress of their transformation, true Art could never be invoked to paint and clarify these myths and allegories; Philosophy supplied her place, coming to the succour of the religious dogmas with the greatest refinements of intellectual exposition.

It was otherwise with the Christian religion. Its founder was not wise, but divine (1); his teaching was the deed of free-willed suffering. To believe in him, meant to emulate him; to hope for redemption, to strive for union with him. To the "poor in spirit" no metaphysical explanation of the [215] world was necessary; the knowledge of its suffering lay open to their feeling; and not to shut the doors of that, was the sole divine injunction to believers. Now we may assume that if the belief in Jesus had remained the possession of these "poor" alone, the Christian dogma would have passed to us as the simplest of religions. But it was too simple for the "rich in mind," and the unparalleled intricacies of the sectarian spirit in the first three centuries of Christianity shew us the ceaseless struggle of the intellectually rich to rob the poor in spirit of their faith, to twist and model it anew to suit their own abstractions. The

Church proscribed all philosophical expounding of this creed, designed by her to instigate a blind obedience; only—whatever she needed to give her parentage a superhuman rank she appropriated from the leavings of the battles of the sects, thus gradually garnering that harvest of most complicated myths, belief in which as quite material verities she demanded with unbending rigour.

Our best guide to an estimate of the belief in miracles, will be the demand addressed to natural man that he should change his previous mode of viewing the world and its appearances as the most absolute of realities; for he now was to know this world as null, an optical delusion, and to seek the only Truth beyond it. If by a miracle we mean an incident that sets aside the laws of Nature; and if, after ripe deliberation, we recognise these laws as founded on our own power of perception, and bound inextricably with the functions of our brain: then belief in miracles must be comprehensible to us as an almost necessary consequence of the reversal of the "will to live," in defiance of all Nature. To the natural man this reversal of the Will is certainly itself the greatest miracle, for it implies an abrogation of the laws of Nature; that which has effected it must consequently be far above Nature, and of superhuman power, since he finds that union with It is longed for as the only object worth endeavour. It is this Other that *Jesus* told his poor of, as the "Kingdom of [216] God," in opposition to the "kingdom of the world;" He who called to Him the weary and heavy-laden, the suffering and persecuted, the patient and meek, the friends of their enemies and lovers of all, was their "Heavenly Father," as whose "Son" he himself was sent to these "his Brothers."

We here behold the greatest miracle of all, and call it "Revelation." How it became possible to turn it into a State-religion for Romish Cæsars and Inquisitors, we shall have to consider in later course of this essay; our present attention is claimed by the wellnigh consequential evolution of those myths whose ultimate exuberance defaced the dogma of the Church with artificiality, yet offered fresh ideals to Art

What we understand in general by the artistic province, we might define as Evaluation of the Pictorial (*Ausbildung des Bildlichen*); that is to say, Art grasps the Figurative of an idea, that outer form in which it shews itself to the imagination, and by developing the likeness—before employed but allegorically—into a picture embracing in itself the whole idea, she lifts the latter high above itself into the realm of revelation. Speaking of the ideal shape of the Greek statue, our great philosopher finely says: It is as if the artist were shewing Nature what she would, but never completely could; wherefore the artistic Ideal surpasses Nature. (2) Of Greek theogony it may be said that, in touch with the artistic instinct of the nation, it always clung to anthropomorphism. Their gods were figures with distinctive names and plainest individuality; their names were used to mark specific groups of things (*Gattungsbegriffe*), just as the names of various coloured objects were used to denote the colours themselves, for which the Greeks employed no abstract terms like ours: "gods" were they called, to mark their nature as divine; but the Divine itself the Greeks called *God*, "#####." Never did it occur to them to think of " God " as a Person, or give to him artistic shape as to their named gods; he remained [217] an idea, to be defined by their philosophers, though the Hellenic spirit strove in vain to clearly fix it—till the wondrous inspiration of poor people spread abroad the incredible tidings that the "Son of God" had offered himself on the cross to redeem the world from deceit and sin.

We have nothing here to do with the astoundingly varied attempts of speculative human reason to explain the nature of this Son of *the* God, who walked on earth and suffered shame: where the greater miracle had been revealed in train of that manifestation, the reversal of the will-to-live which all believers experienced in themselves, it already embraced that other marvel, the divinity of the herald of salvation. The very shape of the Divine had presented itself in anthropomorphic guise; it was the body of the quintessence of all pitying Love, stretched out upon the cross of pain and suffering. A—symbol?—beckoning to the highest



pity, to worship of suffering, to imitation of this breaking of all self-seeking Will: nay, a picture, a very effigy! In this, and its effect upon the human heart, lies all the spell whereby the Church soon made the Græco-Roman world her own. But what was bound to prove her ruin, and lead at last to the ever louder "Atheism" of our day, was the tyrant-prompted thought of tracing back this Godliness upon the cross to the Jewish "Creator of heaven and earth," a wrathful God of Punishment who seemed to promise greater power than the self-offering, all-loving Saviour of the Poor. That god was doomed by Art: Jehova in the fiery bush, or even the reverend Father with the snow-white beard who looked down from out the clouds in blessing on his Son, could say but little to the believing soul, however masterly the artist's hand; whereas the suffering god upon the cross, "the Head with wounds all bleeding," still fills us with ecstatic throes, in the rudest reproduction.

As though impelled by an artistic need, leaving Jehova the "Father" to shift for himself, Belief devised the necessary miracle of the Saviour's birth by a *Mother* who, [218] not herself a goddess, became divine through her virginal conception of a son without human contact, against the laws of Nature. A thought of infinite depth, expressed in form of miracle. In the history of Christianity we certainly meet repeated instances of miraculous powers conferred by pure virginity, where a metaphysical concurs very well with a physiologic explanation, in the sense of a *causa finalis* with a *causa efficiens*; but the mystery of motherhood without natural fecundation can only be traced to the greater miracle, the birth of the God himself: for in this the Denial-of-the-world is revealed by a life pre-figuratively offered up for its redemption. (3) As the Saviour himself was recognised as sinless, nay, incapable of sin, it followed that in him the Will must have been completely broken ere ever he was born, so that he could no more suffer, but only feel for others' sufferings; and the root hereof was necessarily to be found in a birth that issued, not from the Will-to-live, but from the Will-to-redeem. But this mystery that seemed so plain to the illuminate, was exposed to the most glaring misinterpretations on the part of popular realism when demanded as an article of faith; the "immaculate conception by the Virgin Mary might be phrased indeed, but never thought, still less imagined. The Church, which in the Middle Ages had her articles expounded by her handmaid, Scholastic philosophy, sought at last for means of visibly portraying [219] them; above the porch of St. Kilian (4) at Wurzburg we may see a bas-relief of God the Father transmitting the embryo of the Saviour to the body of Mary by means of a blow-pipe. This instance may serve for thousands like it! Such appalling degradation of religious dogmas to arti ficiality we referred to in our opening paragraph, and this flagrant example will emphasise the redeeming effect of true idealistic art if we turn to their treatment by heaven-sent artists, such as Raphael in his so-called "Sistine Madonna." The Miraculous Conception still was handled in the Church's realistic spirit, to some extent, even when great artists painted its annunciation to the Virgin by an angel, albeit the spiritual beauty of the figures, removed from all materialism, here gives us a glimpse into the divine mysterium itself. But that picture of Raphael's shews us the final consummation of the miracle, the virgin mother transfigured and ascending with the new-born son: here we are taken by a beauty which the ancient world, for all its gifts, could not so much as dream of; for here is not the ice of chastity that made an Artemis seem unapproachable, but Love divine beyond all knowledge of unchastity, Love which of innermost denial of the world has born the affirmation of redemption. And this unspeakable wonder we see with our eyes, distinct and tangible, in sweetest concord with the noblest truths of our own inner being, yet lifted high above conceivable experience. If the Greek statue held to Nature her unattained ideal, the painter now unveiled the unseizable and therefore indefinable mystery of the religious dogmas, no longer to the plodding reason, but to enraptured sight.

Yet another dogma was to offer itself to the artist's phantasy, and one on which the Church at last seemed to set more store than on that of Redemption through Love. The

World-overcomer was called to be World-judge. From the arm of his virgin mother the divine child had bent his searching gaze upon the world, and, piercing all its tempting show, had recognised its true estate as [220] death-avoiding, death-accurst. Under the Redeemer's sway, this world of greed and hate durst not abide; to the downtrod poor, whom he called to free themselves through suffering and compassion, to meet him in his Father's kingdom, he must shew this world in the scales of justice, its own weight dragging it down to the slough of sin. From the sun-drenched heights of those fair hills on which he loved to preach salvation to the multitude in images and parables, whereby alone could he gain the understanding of his "poor," he pointed to the gruesome death-vale of "Gehenna"; thither, upon the day of judgment, should avarice and murder be condemned, to flee at one another in despair. Tartarus, Inferno, Hela, all places of post-mortem punishment of wicked men and cowards, were found again in this "Gehenna"; and to our day the threat of "Hell" has remained the Church's vital hold upon men's souls, from whom the "Kingdom of Heaven" has moved farther and farther away. The Last Judgment: a prophecy here big with solace, there terrible! No element of ghastly hatefulness and loathly awe, but was pressed into the service of the Church with sickening artifice, to give the terrified imagination a foretaste of that place of everlasting doom where the myths of each religion besmirched with belief in the torments of Hell were assembled in most hideous parody. As though in commiseration of the horrible itself, a supremely lofty artist felt impelled to paint this nightmare too: the thought of Christ seemed incomplete without this picture of the final judgment. Whilst Raphael had shewn us God born from the womb of sublimest love, Michael Angelo's prodigious painting shews us the God fulfilling his terrible work, God hurling from the realm of the elect all those belonging to the world of ever-dying death: yet—by his side the Mother whence he sprang, who bore divinest suffering with and for him, and now rains down on those unsharing in redemption the eternal glance of sorrowing pity. There the fount, but here the full-fed stream of the Divine!

[221]

Though we have not been attempting an account of Art's historical development from the religious idea, but simply an outline of their mutual affinities, yet that historic career must be touched upon in dealing with the circumstance that it was almost solely plastic art, and that of Painting in particular, which could present the religious dogmas—originally themselves symbolical—in an ideally figurative form. *Poetry*, on the contrary, was constrained by their very symbolism to adhere to the form laid down by canon as a matter of realistic truth and implicit credence. As these dogmas themselves were figurative concepts, so the greatest poetic genius—whose only instruments are mental figures—could remodel or explain nothing without falling into heterodoxy, like all the philosopher-poets of the earliest centuries of the Church, who succumbed to the charge of heresy. Perhaps the poetic power bestowed on *Dante* was the greatest e'er within the reach of mortal; yet in his stupendous poem it is only where he can hold the visionary world aloof from dogma, that his true creative force is shewn, whereas he always handles the dogmatic concepts according to the Church's principle of literal credence; and thus these latter never leave that lowering artificiality to which we have already alluded, confronting us with horror, nay, absurdity, from the mouth of so great a poet.

Now, in respect of plastic art it is palpable that its ideally creative force diminished in exact proportion as it withdrew from contact with religion. Betwixt those subhimest revelations of religious art, in the godlike birth of the Redeemer and the last fulfilment of the work of the Judge of the world, the saddest of all pictures, that of the Saviour suffering on the cross, had likewise attained to its height of perfection; and this remained the archetype of the countless representations of martyred saints, their agonies illumined by the bliss of transport. Here the portrayal of bodily pain, with the instruments of torture and their wielders, already led the artists down to [222] the common actual world, whose types of human wickedness and

cruelty surrounded them beyond escape. And then came "Characteristique," with its multiple attraction for the artist; the consummate "portrait" of even the vulgarest criminal, such as might be found among the temporal and spiritual princes of that remarkable time, became the painter's most rewarding task; as on the other hand, he early enough had taken his motives for the Beautiful from the physical charms of the women in his voluptuous surroundings.

The last sunset flush of artistic idealising of the Christian dogma had been kissed by the morning glow of the reviving Grecian art-ideal: but what could now be borrowed from the ancient world, was no longer that unity of Greek art with Antique religion whereby alone had the former blossomed and attained fruition. We have only to compare an antique statue of the goddess Venus with an Italian painting of the women chosen to impersonate this Venus, to perceive the difference between religious ideal and worldly reality. Greek art could only teach its sense of form, not lend its ideal content; whilst the Christian ideal had passed out of range of this sense-of-form, to which the actual world alone seemed henceforth visible. What shape this actual world at last took on, and what types alone it offered to the plastic arts, we will still exclude from our inquiry; suffice it to say that that art which was destined to reach its apogee in its affinity with religion, completely severing itself from this communion—as no one can deny—has fallen into utter ruin.

Once more to touch the quick of that affinity, let us turn one glance to the *Art of Tone*.

While it was possible for Painting to reveal the ideal content of a dogma couched in allegoric terms, and, without throwing doubt on the figure's claim to absolute credence, to take that allegory itself as object of ideal portrayal, we have had to see that Poetry was forced to leave its kindred power of imagery unexercised upon the dogmas of the Christian Church; employing concepts [223] as its vehicle (*durch Begriffe darstellend*), it must retain the conceptual form of the dogma inviolate in every point. It therefore was solely in the lyrical expression of rapturous worship that poetry could be approached, and as the religious concept must still be phrased in forms of words canonically fixed, the lyric necessarily poured itself into a purely musical expression, un-needing any mould of abstract terms. Through the art of Tone did the Christian Lyric thus first become itself an art: the music of the Church was sung to the words of the abstract dogma; in its effect however, it dissolved those words and the ideas they fixed, to the point of their vanishing out of sight; and hence it rendered nothing to the enraptured Feeling save their pure emotional content.

Speaking strictly, the only art that fully corresponds with the Christian belief is Music; even as the only music which, now at least, we can place on the same footing as the other arts, is an exclusive product of Christianity. In its development, alone among the fine arts, no share was borne by re-awaking Antique Art, whose tone-effects have almost passed beyond our ken: wherefore also we regard it as the youngest of the arts, and the most capable of endless evolution and appliance. With its past and future evolution, however, we here are not concerned, since our immediate object is to consider its affinity to Religion. In this sense, having seen the Lyric compelled to resolve the form of words to a shape of tones, we must recognise that Music reveals the inmost essence of the Christian religion with definition unapproached; wherefore we may figure it as bearing the same relation to Religion which that picture of Raphael's has shewn us borne by the Child-of-god to the virgin Mother: for, as pure Form of a divine Content freed from all abstractions, we may regard it as a world-redeeming incarnation of the divine dogma of the nullity of the phenomenal world itself. Even the painter's most ideal shape remains conditioned by the dogma's terms, and when we gaze upon her likeness, that sublimely virginal Mother of God lifts us up above the miracle's [224] irrationality only by making it appear as wellnigh possible. Here we have: "That signifies." But Music says: "That is,"—for she stops all strife between reason and feeling, and that by a tone-shape completely removed from the world of appearances, not to be compared with anything physical, but usurping our heart as by act of Grace.

This lofty property of Music's enabled her at last to quite divorce herself from the reasoned word; and the noblest music completed this divorce in measure as religious Dogma became the toy of Jesuitic casuistry or rationalistic pettifogging. The total worldlifying of the Church dragged after it a worldly change in Music: where both still work in unison, as in modern Italy for instance, neither in the one's displays nor the other's accompaniment can we detect any difference from every other parade of pomp. Only her final severance from the decaying Church could enable the art of Tone to save the noblest heritage of the Christian idea in its purity of over-worldly reformation; and the object of the remainder of our essay shall be, to foreshadow the affinities of a Beethovenian Symphony with a purest of religions once to blossom from the Christian revelation.

To reach that possibility, however, we first must tread the stony path on which may be found the cause of downfall even of the most exalted religions, and therewith the ground of decadence of all the culture they called forth, above all of the arts they fructified. However terrible may be the scenes the journey must unfold to us, yet this alone can be the road conducting to the shore of a new hope for the human race.



[225]

## II

IF we follow up that phase in the evolution of the human race which we call the Historic, as based on sure tradition, it is easier to comprehend why the religions arising in course of this period fell deeper and deeper in their inward spirit, the longer was their outward rule. The two sublimest of religions, Brahminism with its offshoot Buddhism, and Christianity, teach alienation from the world and its passions, thus steering straight against the flow of the world-tide without being able in truth to stem it. Hence their outer continuance seems explicable only by their having brought to the world the knowledge of Sin on the one hand, and used that knowledge, on the other, to found beside the temporal dominion over man's body a spiritual dominion over his soul which fouled the purity of the religion in measure with the general deterioration of the human race.

This doctrine of man's sinfulness, which forms the starting-point of each of these sublime religions, is unintelligible to the so-called "Free-thinker," who will neither allow to existing Churches a right to the adjudgment of sin, nor to the State a warrant to declare certain actions as criminal. Though both rights may be open to question, it would none the less be wrong to extend that doubt to the core of Religion itself; since it surely must be admitted in general that, not the religions themselves are to be blamed for their fall, but rather the fall of mankind, as traceable in history, has brought their ruin in its train; for we see this Fall of Man proceeding with so marked a nature-necessity, that it could but carry with itself each effort to arrest it.

And precisely by that misappropriated doctrine of Sin itself, can this shocking progress of events be shewn most plainly; for proof whereof we think best to commence with the Brahminic doctrine of the sinfulness of killing living creatures, or feeding on the carcasses of murdered beasts.

[226]

Upon probing the sense of this doctrine, with its resultant dissuasion, we light at once on the root of all true religious conviction, and at like time the deepest outcome of all knowledge of the world, both in essence and manifestation. For that teaching had its origin in recognition of the unity of all that lives, and of the illusion of our physical senses which dress this unity in guise of infinitely complex multitude and absolute diversity. It was thus the result of a profound metaphysical insight, and when the Brahmin pointed to the manifold appearances of the animate world, and said "This is thyself!" there woke in us the consciousness that in sacrificing one of our fellow-creatures we mangled and devoured ourselves. That the beasts are only distinguished from man by the grade of their mental faculties; that what precedes all intellectual equipment, what desires and suffers, is the same Will-to-live in them as in the most reason-gifted man; that this one Will it is, which strives for peace and freedom amid our world of changing forms and transitory semblances; and finally, that this assuagement of tumultuous longing can only be won by the most scrupulous practice of gentleness and sympathy toward all that lives,—upon this the religious conscience of the Brahmin and Buddhist has stood firm as a rock till this day. We learn that about the middle of last century certain English speculators bought up the whole rice-harvest of India, and thus induced a famine in the land, which swept away three millions of the natives: yet not one of these starving wretches could be moved to slay and eat his household animals; only after their masters, did they famish too. A mighty testimony to the genuineness of a religious belief, with which, however, the confessors themselves have been expunged from "*History*."

If on the other hand we look a little closer at the human race in its stamp upon History, we can only ascribe its deplorable infirmity to the same mad *Wahn* (5) that prompts the savage



animal to fall upon its prey when no [227] longer driven by hunger—sheer pleasure in its raging strength. Though physiologists are still divided as to whether Man was meant by Nature to feed exclusively on fruits, or also upon flesh-meat, from its first faint glimmerings History shews Man's constant progress as a beast of prey. As such he conquers every land, subdues the fruit-fed races, founds mighty realms by subjugating other subjugators, forms states and sets up civilisations, to enjoy his prey at rest.

Insufficient as are all our scientific data as to the first starting-point of this historic evolution, we may take it for granted that the birth and earliest dwelling-place of the human species may be set in countries warm and clad with ample vegetation. It seems more difficult to decide what violent changes drove a great portion of the human race from its natural birthplaces to rawer and inhospitable regions. At the first dawning of history we believe we find the aborigines of the present Indian peninsula in the cooler valleys of the Himalayan highlands, supporting themselves as graziers and tillers of the soil; from here, under guidance of a religion whose gentleness accorded with the herdsman's needs, we see them return to the lower valleys of the Indus, and thence again resume possession, as it were, of their ancient home, the delta of the Ganges. Great and deep must have been the impressions of this return from exodus upon the mind of races who had now gone through so much: a smiling Nature offered them with willing hand its varied products; fed without care, an earnest contemplation would lead them to profound reflection on that former world wherein they had learnt the stress of need and bitter toil, ay, of strife and warfare for possession. To the Brahmin, now feeling himself re-born, the warrior would appear a necessary guardian of exterior peace, and therefore worthy sympathy; but the hunter to him was an object of horror, and the slayer of man's friends, the domestic animals, unthinkable. No boar-tusks sprang from this people's gums, and yet it remained more courageous than any other race on earth, for it bore each agony [228] and every form of death at the hands of its later torturers in staunchness to the purity of its gentle faith; from which, unlike the professors of all other religions, no Brahmin or Buddhist could be turned away for fear or gain.

But in the selfsame valleys of the Indus we think we see at work that cleavage which parted cognate races from those returning southwards to their ancient home, and drove them westwards to the broad expanse of hither-Asia, where in course of time we find them as conquerors and founders of mighty dynasties, erecting ever more explicit monuments to History. These peoples had wandered through the wastes that separate the outmost Asiatic confines from the land of Indus; ravenous beasts of prey had taught them here to seek their food no longer from the milk of herds, but from their flesh; till blood at last, and blood alone, seemed fitted to sustain the conqueror's courage. Stretching northwards from the Indian highlands, the wild steppes of Asia—whither the aborigines of milder climates once had fled from huge disturbances of Nature—had already nursed the human beast of prey. From there, throughout all earlier and later times, have poured the floods destroying every recommencement of a gentler manhood; the very oldest sagas of the Iranian race recount a constant warfare with the Turanian peoples of these steppes. Attack and defence, want and war, victory and defeat, lordship and thralldom, all sealed with the seal of blood: this from henceforth is the History of Man. The victory of the stronger is followed close by enervation through a culture taught them by their conquered thralls; whereon, uprooting of the degenerate by fresh raw forces, of blood-thirst still unslaked. Then, falling lower and yet lower, the only worthy food for the world-conqueror appears to be human blood and corpses: the Feast of Thyestes would have been impossible among the Indians; but with such ghastly pictures could the human fancy play, now that the murder of man and beast had nothing strange for it. And why should the imagination of civilised modern man recoil in horror from such pictures, when it has accustomed [229] itself to the sight of a Parisian slaughter-house in its early-morning traffic, and perhaps of a field of carnage on the evening of some glorious



victory? In truth we seem to have merely improved on the spirit of Thyestes' feast, developing a heartless blindness to things that lay before our oldest ancestors in all their naked horror. Even those nations which had thrust as conquerors into hither-Asia could still express their consternation at the depths to which they had sunk, and we find them evolving such earnest religious ideas as lie at root of the Parsee creed of Zoroaster. Good and Evil, Light and Darkness, Ormuzd and Ahriman, Strife and Work, Creation and Destruction:—"Sons of the Light, have fear of the Shadow, propitiate the Evil and follow the Good!"—We here perceive a spirit still akin to the old Indus-people, but caught in the toils of sin, and doubting as to the issue of a never quite decisive fight.

But yet another issue from the degradation of its innate nobleness was sought by the baffled will of the human race, becoming conscious of its sinfulness through pain and suffering; to highly-gifted stocks, though the Good fell hard, the *Beautiful* was easy. In full avowal of the Will-to-live, the Greek mind did not indeed avoid the awful side of life, but turned this very knowledge to a matter of artistic contemplation: it saw the terrible with wholest truth, but this truth itself became the spur to a re-presentment whose very truthfulness was beautiful. In the workings of the Grecian spirit we thus are made spectators of a kind of pastime, a play in whose vicissitudes the joy of Shaping seeks to counteract the awe of Knowing. Content with this, rejoicing in the semblance, since it has banned therein its truthfulness of knowledge, it asks not after the goal of Being, and like the Parsee creed it leaves the fight of Good and Evil undecided; willing to pay for a lovely life by death, it merely strives to beautify death also.

We have called this a pastime, in a higher sense, namely a play of the Intellect in its release from the Will, which [230] it now only serves for self-mirroring,—the pastime of the over-rich in spirit. But the trouble of the constitution of the World is this: all steps in evolution of the utterances of Will, from the reaction of primary elements, through all the lower organisations, right up to the richest human intellect, stand side by side in space and time, and consequently the highest organism cannot but recognise itself and all its works as founded on the Will's most brutal of manifestations. Even the flower of the Grecian spirit was rooted to the conditions of this complex existence, which has for base a ball of earth revolving after laws immutable, with all its swarm of lives the rawer and more inexorable, the deeper the scale descends. As manhood's fairest dream that flower filled the world for long with its illusive fragrance, though to none but minds set free from the Will's sore want was it granted to bathe therein: and what but a mummery at last could such delight well be, when we find that blood and massacre, untamed and ever slipped afresh, still rage throughout the human race; that violence is master, and freedom of mind seems only buyable at price of seffdom of the world? But a heartless mummery must the concernment with Art ever be, and all enjoyment of the freedom thereby sought from the Will's distress, so long as nothing more was to be found in art: the Ideal was the aim of the single genius, and what survived its work was merely the trick of technical dexterity; and so we see Greek art without the Grecian genius pervading all the Roman Empire, without drying one tear of the poor, or drawing one sob from the withered heart of the rich. Though a broader patch of sunshine might deceive us, as spread in peace above the kingdom of the Antonines, we could only style it a short-lived triumph of the artistic-philosophic spirit over the brutal movement of the restless self-destroying forces of the Will of History. Yet even here 'tis but the surface that could cheat us, making us take a lethargy for healthy calm. On the other hand, it was folly to think that violence could be restrained by howsoever prudent steps of violence. Even [231] that world-truce was based on the Right of the Stronger, and never, since the human race first fell a-hungering for bloody spoil, has it ceased to found its claim to tenure and enjoyment on that same "right" alone. To the art-creative Greek, no less than the rudest Barbarian, it was the one sole law that shaped the world. There's no blood-guiltiness which even this fair-fashioning

race did not incur in rabid hate against its neighbour; till the Stronger came upon it too, that Stronger fell in turn before a yet more violent, and so the centuries have ever brought fresh grosser forces into play, and thrown ourselves at last to-day behind a fence of yearly waxing giant-guns and bastions.

From of old, amid the rage of robbery and blood-lust, it came to wise men's consciousness that the human race was suffering from a malady which necessarily kept it in progressive deterioration. Many a hint from observation of the natural man, as also dim half-legendary memories, had made them guess the primal *nature* of this man, and that his present state is therefore a degeneration. A mystery enwrapped Pythagoras, the preacher of vegetarianism; no philosopher since him has pondered on the essence of the world, without recurring to his teaching. Silent fellowships were founded, remote from turmoil of the world, to carry out this doctrine as a sanctification from sin and misery. Among the poorest and most distant from the world appeared the Saviour, no more to teach redemption as a path by precept, but example; his own flesh and blood he gave as last and highest expiation for all the sin of outpoured blood and slaughtered flesh, and offered his disciples wine and bread for each day's meal:—"Taste such alone, in memory of me." This the unique sacrament of the Christian faith; with its observance all the teaching of the Redeemer is fulfilled. As if with haunting pangs of conscience the Christian Church pursues this teaching, without ever being able to get it followed in its purity, although it very seriously should form the most intelligible core of Christianity. She has transformed it to a symbolic office of her priests, while its proper meaning [232] is only expressed in the ordinance of periodic fasts, and its strict observance is reserved for a few religious orders, more in the sense of an abstinence conducing to humility, than of a medicine for body alike and soul.

Perhaps the one impossibility, of getting all professors to continually observe this ordinance of the Redeemer's, and abstain entirely from animal food, may be taken for the essential cause of the early decay of the Christian religion as Christian Church. But to admit that impossibility, is as much as to confess the uncontrollable downfall of the human race itself. Called to upheave a State built-up on violence and rapine, the Church must deem her surest means the attainment of dominion over states and empires, in accordance with all the spirit of History. To subject decaying races to herself she needed the help of terror; and the singular circumstance that Christianity might be regarded as sprung from Judaism, placed the requisite hugbear in her hands. The tribal God of a petty nation had promised his people eventual rulership of the whole world and all that lives and moves therein, if only they adhered to laws whose strictest following would keep them barred against all other nations of the earth. Despised and hated equally by every race in answer to this segregation, without inherent productivity and only battenning on the general downfall, in course of violent revolutions this folk would very probably have been extinguished as completely as the greatest and noblest stems before them; Islam in particular seemed called to carry out the work of total extirpation, for it took to itself the Jewish God, as Creator of heaven and earth, to raise him up by fire and sword as one and only god of all that breathes. But the Jews, so it seems, could fling away all share in this world-rulership of their Jehova, for they had won a share in a development of the Christian religion well fitted to deliver it itself into their hands in time, with all its increment of culture, sovereignty and civilisation. The departure-point of all this strange exploit lay ready in the historical fact—that Jesus of Nazareth was born in a corner of their little [233] land, Judæa. Instead of seeing in so incomparably humble an origin a proof that among the ruling and highly-cultured nations of that historic period no birthplace could be found for the Redeemer of the *Poor*; that for very reason of its utmost lowliness this Galilee, distinguished by the contempt of the Jews themselves, could alone be chosen for cradle of the new belief,—to the first believers, poor shepherds and husbandmen in dull subjection to the Jewish law, it seemed imperative to trace the descent of their Saviour from

the royal house of David, as if to exculpate his bold attack on all that Jewish law. Though it is more than doubtful if Jesus himself was of Jewish extraction, since the dwellers in Galilee were despised by the Jews on express account of their impure origin, we may gladly leave this point with all that concerns the history of the Redeemer to the Historian, who for his part declares that "he can make nothing of a sinless Jesus." For us it is sufficient to derive the ruin of the Christian religion from its drawing upon Judaism for the elaboration of its dogmas. As we before have suggested, however, it is precisely hence that the Church obtained her source of might and mastery; for wherever Christian hosts fared forth to robbery and bloodshed, even beneath the banner of the Cross it was not the All-Sufferer whose name was invoked, but *Moses, Joshua, Gideon*, and all the other captains of Jehova who fought for the people of Israel, were the names in request to fire the heart of slaughter; whereof the history of England at time of the Puritan wars supplies a plain example throwing a light on the whole Old-Testament evolution of the English Church. Without this intrusion of the ancient Jewish spirit, and its raising to an equal rank with the purely Christian evangel, how were it possible to the Church till this day to claim for her own a "civilised world" whose peoples all stand armed to the teeth for mutual extermination, at the first summons of the Lord of War to squander every fruit of peace in methodically falling on each other's throats? Manifestly it is not Jesus Christ, the Redeemer, whose [234] pattern our army-chaplains commend to their battalions ere going into action; though they call on him, they can but mean Jehova, Jahve, or one of the Elohim, who hated all other gods beside himself, and wished them subjugated by his faithful people.

Now if we probe to the bottom of our boasted Civilisation, we find that it really has been made to do duty for the never fully-flowered spirit of the Christian religion, the latter being merely used for hallowing a compromise between brutality and cowardice. We may regard it as characteristic of the onset of this civilisation, that the Church made over her condemned heretics to the Temporal power, with the recommendation that no blood be shed in the execution of her sentence, while she had nothing to advance against their burning at the stake. In this bloodless mode the strongest and noblest minds were rooted out, and, bereft of these, the nations were taken under tutelage of "civilising" powers who, borrowing a leaf from the Church, have substituted what modern philosophers term *abstract* destruction by bullet and cannon-ball for the *concrete* wounds of sword and spear. And as the sight of bullocks offered to the gods had become an abomination to us, in our neat water-swilled shambles a daily blood-bath is concealed from all who at their mid-day meal shall feast upon the limbs of murdered household animals dressed up beyond all recognition.

Though all our States are founded on conquest and the subjugation of the earlier inhabitants, and the latest conqueror has always taken the land and soil as hereditament,—whereof England still affords a well-preserved example,—yet debilitation of the ruling races has also opened the way to a gradual effacement of the barbaric look of so unequal a division of property: money at last could buy the land from its indebted owner and give its purchaser the selfsame right as the whilom conqueror, and the Jew now bargains with the Junior for possession of the world, while the Jurist tries to find a common [235] platform with the Jesuit for the rights of man in general. But alas! this show of peace is shadowed by the fact that no man trusts another, for the right of might still reigns supreme in every mind, and all mutual commerce of the nations is only held possible under the thumb of politicians who wakefully observe the Machiavellian maxim: "What thou wouldst not he to thee should do, that let thy nearest neighbour rue!" And it is quite in keeping with this idea of maintenance of the State, that its embodiments, our sovereign masters, put on a military uniform when grand occasions call for royal attire, however ill its bare utilitarian cut becomes the frame of men more nobly clad throughout all time in robes of highest Justice.

If thus we see that even our complex Civilisation cannot succeed in veiling our utterly

unchristian origin; and if the Gospel, to which we nevertheless are sworn in tenderest youth, cannot be summoned to explain, to say nothing of justifying it,—we can only recognise our present state as a triumph of the foes of the Christian faith.

Whoever has made this clear to himself, will have no difficulty in discovering why an equal and ever deeper decline is manifest in the sphere of mental culture: violence may civilise, but Culture must sprout from the soil of peace, as it draws its very name from tillage of the fields. From this soil alone, belonging only to the busily creative Folk, have sprung in every age all knowledge, sciences and arts, nursed by religions in harmony with the people's spirit for the time being. But the conqueror's brute force draws near these sciences and arts of peace, and tells them, "What of you may serve for war, shall prosper; what not, shall perish." Thus the law of Mahomet has become the fundamental law of all our civilisations, and we have but to glance at our sciences and arts, to see how it suits them. Let there anywhere arise a man of brains, whose heart means honestly, the sciences and arts of Civilisation soon shew him how the land lies. Their question is: "Art thou of use, or not, to a heartless and sordid civilisation?" With regard to the so-called Natural sciences, especially [236] of Chemistry and Physics, our War-offices have been taught the possibility of their discovering any number of new destructive substances and forces, though alas! no means be yet forthcoming of stopping frost or hailstorms. These sciences are therefore petted. The dishonouring diseases of our culture invite our Physiologists to man-degrading experiments in speculative vivisection; the State and Reich protect them, on the "scientific standpoint." The ruin which a Latin renaissance of Grecian art once wrought on all sound evolution of a Christian culture for the people, is aggravated year by year by a lumbering Philology, which fawns upon the guardians of the ancient law of the Right of the Stronger. And every art is coaxed and pampered, so soon as it appears of service to blind us to our misery. Distraction! Dissipation! but no Collection—except at best a monetary one for sufferers by fire and flood, for whom our war-chests have nothing to spare.

And for *this* world men still paint and make their music! In the galleries Raphael is admired, admired and analysed again, and his "Sistine" remains a grandest masterpiece in the eyes of the connoisseur. In the concert-halls Beethoven also is heard; but if we ask what a Pastoral Symphony can possibly say to our public, the question brings us to most serious thoughts. More and more importunately have they pressed on the author of this essay, and he now will try to tell them to his kindly readers,—provided the hypothesis of a profound decline of Historic Man has not already scared them from all further journeying on the path just struck.



[237]

## III

THE theory of a degeneration of the human race, however much opposed it seem to Constant Progress, is yet the only one that, upon serious reflection, can afford us any solid hope. The so-called "Pessimistic" school of thought would thus be justified in nothing but its verdict on historic man; and that must needs be vastly modified, were the natural attributes of pre-historic man so clearly ascertained that we could argue to a later degeneration not unconditionally inherent in his nature. If, that is, we found proofs that this degeneration had been caused by overpowering *outward* influences, against which pre-historic man could not defend himself through inexperience, then the hitherto accepted history of the human race would rank for us as the painful period of evolution of its consciousness, in order that the knowledge thus acquired might be applied to combating those harmful influences.

Indefinite though be the results of our Scientific Research,—and often contradicted in so brief a time that they rather fog, than enlighten us,—yet one hypothesis of our geologists appears established past all cavil: namely that the youngest offspring of the animal population of this earth, the human race to which we still belong, has survived, or at least a great portion of it, a violent transformation of the surface of our planet. A careful survey of our earthly ball confirms this: it shews that at some epoch of its last development great stretches of the continent sank down and others rose, while floods immeasurable poured hither from the Southern Pole, only to be arrested by the jutting headlands of the Northern hemisphere, like monstrous ice-guards, after driving before them all the terrified survivors. The evidence of such a flight of the animal kingdom from the tropics to the rawest northern zones supplied by our geologists in the results of their excavations, such as skeletons of elephants in Siberia for [238] instance, is now well-known. For our inquiry, on the other hand, it is important to form some notion of the changes which such violent displacements must necessarily have induced among the animal and human races of the earth, erewhile brought up in the mother-bosom of their primitive lands of birth.

The emergence of huge deserts, like the African Sahara, must certainly have cast the dwellers on the once luxuriant coasts of inland seas into such straits of hunger as we can only form an idea of by recalling stories of the awful sufferings of the shipwrecked, whereby completely civilised citizens of our modern states have been reduced to cannibalism. On the swampy margins of Canadian lakes animal species allied to the panther and tiger still live as fruit-eaters, whereas upon those desert fringes the historic tiger and lion have become the most bloodthirsty of all the beasts of prey. That it must have been hunger alone, which first drove man to slay the animals and feed upon their flesh and blood; and that this compulsion was no mere consequence of his removal into colder climes, as those assert who deem the consumption of animal-food in northern parts a duty of self-preservation,—is proved by the patent fact that great nations with ample supplies of grain suffer nothing in strength or endurance even in colder regions through an almost exclusively vegetable diet, as is shewn by the eminent length of life of Russian peasants; while the Japanese, who know no other food than vegetables, are further renowned for their warlike valour and keenness of intellect. We may therefore call it quite an abnormality when hunger bred the thirst for blood, as in the branches of the Malayan stock transplanted to the northern steppes of Asia; that thirst which history teaches us can never more be slaked, and fills its victims with a raging madness, not with courage. One can only account for it all by the human beast of prey having made itself monarch of the peaceful world, just as the ravening wild beast usurped dominion of the woods: a result of those preceding cataclysms which overtook [239] primeval man while yet all unprepared for either. And little as the savage animals have prospered, we see the



sovereign human beast of prey decaying too. Owing to a nutriment against his nature, he falls sick with maladies that claim but him, attains no more his natural span of life or gentle death, but, plagued by pains and cares of body and soul unknown to any other species, he shuffles through an empty life to its ever fearful cutting short. (6)

As we began with a general outline of the effects produced by the human beast of prey upon world-History, it now may be of service to return to the attempts to counteract them and find again the "long-lost Paradise"; attempts we meet in seemingly progressive impotence as History goes on, till finally their operation passes almost wholly out of ken.

Among these last attempts we find in our own day the societies of so-called Vegetarians: nevertheless from out these very unions, which seem to have aimed directly at the centre of the question of mankind's Regeneration, we hear certain prominent members complaining that their comrades for the most part practise abstinence from meat on purely personal dietetic grounds, but in nowise link their practice with the great regenerative thought which alone could make the unions powerful. Next to them we find a union with an already more practical and somewhat more extended scope, that of the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals*: here again its members try to win the public's sympathy by mere utilitarian pleas, though a truly beneficial end could only be awaited from their pursuing their pity for animals to the point of an intelligent adoption of the deeper trend of Vegetarianism; founded on such a [240] mutual understanding, an amalgamation of these two societies might gain a power by no means to be despised. No less important would be the result, were this amalgamation then to take in hand the so-called Temperance-unions, and elevate the only tendency betrayed by them as yet. The plague of drunkenness, that last destroyer to seize the modern victims of our civilised state of siege, brings revenue of all kinds to the State, to part with which it has never evinced the smallest inclination; yet the unions formed for its suppression look simply to the practical aim of cheaper insurance for ships and freights, and the better guarding of their warehouses by sober servants. With contempt and scorn does our Civilisation regard the efforts of these three unions, each wholly ineffectual in its severance; whilst amazement caps disdain, as at a mad presumption, when the apostles of Peace-societies submissively address their protests to our mighty lords of War. 'Twas but the other day we had an instance and the answer of our famous "Battle-planner" that the obstacle to peace, for the next two centuries or so, was the lack of "religiosity" among the nations. What may here be meant by "religiosity," or religion in general, is at anyrate not easy to clear up; above all, it would be hard to imagine the irreligiousness of the peoples and nations themselves as the real foe of a ceasing of war. Our General-Field-Marshal [Moltke] must surely have meant something other than this, and a glance at recent manifestoes of certain international Peace-societies might explain why one would not give much for their practical "religiosity."

On the other hand, an experiment has lately been made in providing religious instruction for those great Trade-unions which no philanthropist can any longer deem unjustified, but whose actual or alleged encroachments on the established social order could only seem unwarrantable in the eyes of its protectors. Every demand, even the apparently most proper, addressed by so-called *Socialism* to a Society the product of our civilisation, speaking [241] strictly, sets the rights of that Society itself at once in question. Because of this, and since it can but seem infeasible to lawfully propose a lawful dissolution of what exists by law, the postulates of the Socialists must needs appear confused and therefore leading to false reckonings, whose mistakes the ready reckoners of our Civilisation have no difficulty in laying bare. Yet upon strong and inner grounds one might regard even present-day Socialism as well worth consideration by our established Society, if once it entered into true and hearty fellowship with the three associations named above, of the vegetarians, the protectors of animals, and the friends of temperance. Were it possible to expect of men directed by our Civilisation to nothing but a correct enforcement of the most calculating Egoism, that this



last-suggested fellowship could strike firm root among them—with full understanding of the deeper tendency of each of the mentioned groups, so powerless in their present separation—then were the hope of regaining a true Religion, also, no less legitimate. What would seem to have dawned on the founders of all those unions as a mere counsel of prudence, has really flowed, though no doubt in part unconsciously to themselves, from a root which we are not afraid to call the religious sense: at bottom of even the mutterings of the workman, who makes each object of utility without drawing the smallest particle of use from it himself, there lies a knowledge of the profound immorality of our civilisation, whose champions can in truth reply by naught but shameful sophisms; for, granted that it can be easily proved that wealth in itself cannot make men happy, yet none but the most heartless wretch would think of denying that poverty makes them wretched. To explain this sorry constitution of all human things our Old-testament Christian Church reverts to the fall of the earliest pair, which Jewish tradition derives—most strange to say—by no means from a forbidden taste of animal flesh, but from that of the fruit of a tree; wherewith we may couple the no less' striking fact that the Jewish God found Abel's fatted lamb more [242] savoury than Cain's offering of the produce of the field. From such suspicious evidences of the character of the Jewish tribal god we see a religion arise against whose direct employment for regeneration of the human race we fancy that a convinced vegetarian of nowadays might have serious complaints to lodge. But if an earnest communion with the Vegetarian must necessarily teach the Protector of Animals the true meaning of that pity which inspires himself; and if both then turned to the spirit-sodden pariah of our civilisation with tidings of new life through abstinence from that poison taken to benumb despair,—then results might be anticipated such as have followed the experiments already tried in certain American prisons, where the greatest criminals have been transformed by a wisely-planned botanic regimen into the mildest and most upright of men. Whose memory would the groups of this community in truth be celebrating when they gathered, after each day's work, to refresh themselves with Bread and Wine?

If this be a dream whose realisation is forbidden by no rational hypothesis save that of absolute Pessimism, it perhaps may be no less profitable to pursue in thought the acts of such a union, starting from the religious conviction that the degeneration of the human race has been brought about by its departure from its natural food, the only basis of a possible regeneration. The easily ascertainable fact that merely a portion—supposed to be a third—of mankind is involved in this departure, and the example of physical health displayed by the larger half that has stayed true to its natural diet, might fitly teach us the path to strike for regeneration of the depraved but ruling portion. Should the assumption prove correct that animal food is indispensable in Northern climates, what is to prevent our carrying out a sensibly conducted transmigration to those quarters of our globe whose rich fertility is sufficient to sustain the present population of every country in the world, as has been asserted of the South American peninsula in itself? Our rulers leave the luxuriant reaches of South Africa to [243] the policy of English traders, and do no better for the healthiest of their subjects than to let them move away from death-by-starving—at best unhindered, but always left without a helping hand to foreign exploitation. Since this is thus, our unions would have to devote their greatest care and energy to Emigration, perchance with some success: and according to recent experiences it seems not improbable that these Northern lands, now said to positively call for flesh-food, would soon be abandoned to the undivided possession of hunters of boars and big game, who could give a very good account of themselves as destroyers of the somewhat too prolific beasts of prey in the deserted districts, untroubled any longer by a lower populace all clamorous for bread. For ourselves, there surely could be no moral harm in our acting on the words of Christ: "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's," and leaving the huntsman his preserves while

we cultivate our acres; but the grabbing, grasping money-bags of our Civilisation, swelled by the sweat of our brow—should *they* cry Fie, we'd lay them on their backs and bring them, like the swine, to wondering silence at the sight of heaven, ne'er seen by them before.

In this by no means timid picture of an attempt at regeneration of the hum an race we may neglect, for the present, all objections which friends of our Civilisation are likely to raise. On this side our assumption of most fruitful possibilities rests on the results of honest scientific studies, a clear insight into which has been facilitated for us by the devoted toil of noble minds—whereof we have already mentioned one of the foremost. Waiving all such conceivable objections, we therefore have only to confirm ourselves in one radical persuasion: namely that all real bent, and all effective power to bring about the great Regeneration, can spring from nothing save the deep soil of a true Religion. And now that our general survey has repeatedly brought us within range of vivid hints in its regard, we must turn in especial to this main head of our [244] inquiry; for it is from it, as premised in our title, that we first shall gain a certain outlook upon Art.

We started with the theory of a corruption of pre-historic man; by the latter, however, we in nowise mean primeval man, of whom we can have no definite knowledge, but those races of whom we know no deeds, though their works we do know. These works are each invention of that culture which Historic Man has only trimmed to suit his civilising ends, by no means renovated or increased; above all Speech, which shews a progressive degeneration from Sanskrit to the newest European amalgam. Whoever rightly weighs these aptitudes of the human race,—so astounding to us in our present decline,—must come to the conclusion that the giant force which shaped this world by testing every means of self-appeasement, from destruction to re-fashioning, had reached its goal in bringing forth this Man; for in him it became conscious of itself as *Will*, and, with that knowledge, could thenceforth rule its destiny. To feel that horror at himself so needful for his last redemption, this Man was qualified by just that knowledge, to wit the recognition of himself in every manifestment of the one great Will; and the guide to evolution of this faculty was given him by Suffering, since he alone can feel it in the requisite degree. If we involuntarily conceive of the Divine as a sphere where Suffering is impossible, that conception ever rests on the desire of something for which we can find no positive, but merely a negative expression. So long as we have to fulfil the work of the Will, that Will which is ourselves, there in truth is nothing for us but the spirit of Negation, the spirit of our own will that, blind and hungering, can only plainly see itself in its un-will toward whatsoever crosses it as obstacle or disappointment. Yet that which crosses it, is but itself again; so that its rage expresses nothing save its self-negation: and this self-knowledge can be gained at last by Pity born of suffering—which, cancelling the Will, [245] expresses the negation of a negative; and that, by every rule of logic, amounts to Affirmation.

If we take this great thought of our philosopher [Schopenhauer] as guide to the inexorable metaphysical problem of the purpose of the human race, we shall have to acknowledge that what we have termed the decline of the race, as known to us by its historic deeds, is really the stern school of Suffering which the Will imposed on its blind self for sake of gaining sight,—somewhat in the sense of the power "that ever willeth ill, and ever doeth good." According to what we have learnt of the gradual formation of our globe, it has once already brought forth races like to man, and, by a fresh upheaval of its crust, destroyed them; as regards their successor, the present human race, we know that at least a great portion thereof was driven from its primal birthplace by some mighty transformation of the surface of the Earth, the last till now. No paradisiac ease can therefore be the final answer to the riddle of this violent stress, whose every utterance remains a source of fear and horror to our minds. Before us still will lie the same old possibilities of havoc and destruction, whereby it manifests its actual essence; our own descent from the germs of life we see the ocean's depth

bring forth anew in hideous shapes, can never more be hidden from our awe-struck thought. And this human race, endowed with faculty of knowledge and of meditation, and thus of laying the Will's tumultuous storm,—is it not founded still, itself, on all the lower grades where incomplete attempts to gain a higher step, obstructed by mad hindrances in their own will, have stayed immutable for us to see, abhorrent or with pity?

If this outlook filled with sorrow and dismay the noblest races of mankind, brought up to gentleness and lapped in a tender Nature's mother-bosom, what grief must seize them at the dreaded sight of their own fall, their degeneration to the lowest foregoers of the human race, with no defence but patience? The history of this falling off— already broadly outlined—should teach us, when regarded [246] as the human race's school of suffering, in consciousness to remedy an evil springing from the headstrong blindness of the world-creative Will, and ruinous to all attainment of its own unconscious goal; to rebuild, as it were, the storm-wrecked house, and ensure against its fresh destruction.

That all our machines are of no avail for this, might soon be brought home to the present race; for those alone can master Nature, who understand and place themselves in line with her; and this would first be effected by a more reasonable distribution of the people of the earth upon its surface. Our bungling Civilisation, on the contrary, with its puny mechanical and chemical appliances, its sacrifice of the best of human forces for their installation, delights in waging almost childish war with the impossible. But we, supposing even that a cataclysm should shatter our earthly dwelling-place, for all time should we be secure against the possibility of the human race's falling back from its attained development of higher morals, had the experience of the history of that former fall established in our minds a true religious sense—akin to that of those three-million Hindus of whom we spoke before.

And to guard against all re-subjection to the blindfold Will, must a new religion first be founded? Already in our daily meal should we not be celebrating the Redeemer? Could we need the huge array of allegories wherewith all religions hitherto, and in particular the deep Brahminical, have been distorted to a mummery? Have we not the actual documents of life set down for us, in our history that marks each lesson by a true example? Let us read it aright, this history, in spirit and in truth; not by the lie and letter of our university-historians, who know but actions, sing their pæans to the widest conqueror, and shut their ears to manhood's suffering. With the Redeemer in heart, let us recognise that not their actions, but their sufferings bring near to us the men of bygone days, and make them worth our memory; that our sympathy belongs not to the victor, but the vanquished hero. However great may be the peace of mind resulting from regeneration [247] of the human race, yet in the Nature that surrounds us, the violence of ure-elements, the unchanged emanations of the Will beneath us and on either hand in sea or desert,—ay, even in the insect, in the worm we tread upon unheeding, shall we ever feel the awful tragedy of this World-being, and daily have to lift our eyes to the Redeemer on the cross as last and loftiest refuge.

Well for us if then, in conscience of pure living, we keep our senses open to the mediator of the crushingly Sublime, and let ourselves be gently led to reconciliation with this mortal life by the *artistic teller* of the great World-tragedy. This Poet priest, the only one who never lied, was ever sent to humankind at epochs of its direst error, as mediating friend: us, too, will he lead over to that reborn life, to set before us there in ideal truth the "likeness" of this passing show, when the Historian's realistic lie shall have long since been interred beneath the mouldering archives of our Civilisation. Those allegorical accessories which hitherto have overlaid the noblest kernel of Religion to such a point that, now that their literal credibility is conclusively refuted, this kernel itself is found corroded; that theatrical hocus-pocus by which the so easily gullible fancy of the poor, especially in southern lands, is turned from true religiousness to a frivolous playing with things divine,—no more shall we need these proved debasers of religious cults. We began by shewing how Art's greatest genius had been able to

save for us the old exalted meaning of those allegories themselves, by moulding them to the Ideal; and how the selfsame art, then turning to the material side of life as if sated with fulfilment of that ideal mission, had been dragged to its own downfall by the worthlessness of this reality. But now we have a new reality before us, a race imbued with deep religious consciousness of the reason of its fall, and raising up itself therefrom to new development; and in that race's hand the truthful book of a true history, from which to draw its knowledge of itself without all self-deception. What their great Tragedians shewed the decadent Athenians once in sublimely shaped [248] examples, without being able to arrest the frenzied downfall of their nation; what Shakespeare held before a world that vainly thought itself the renaissance of art and man's free intellecta—its heartless blindness striving for a beauty all unfelt,—the wondrous mirror of those dramatic improvisations in which he shewed that world its utter emptiness, its violence and horror, without the bitter undeception being even heeded in his time: these *works* of the Sufferers shall now be ever present with us, whilst the deeds of the "makers of history" shall in them alone live on. So would the hour of redemption of the great Cassandra of world-history have sounded, of redemption from the curse of finding no one to believe her prophecies. To us shall all these poet-sages once have spoken; to us will they speak afresh.

It hitherto has been a commonplace of heartless and thoughtless minds alike, that so soon as the human race were freed from the common sufferings of a sinful life, its state would be one of dull indifference, (7) —whereon it is to be remarked that they consider a mere freedom from the very lowest troubles of the Will as lending life its varied charm, whilst the labours of great thinkers, poets and seers, they have always densely set aside. We, on the contrary, have learnt that the life essential to us in the future can only be freed from those cares and sufferings by a conscious impulse, whereto the fearful riddle of the world is ever present. That which, as simplest and most touching of religious symbols, unites us in the common practising of our belief; that which, ever newly living in the tragic teachings of great spirits, uplifts us to the altitudes of pity,—is the knowledge, given in infinite [249] variety of forms, of the Need of Redemption. In solemn hours when all the world's appearances dissolve away as in a prophet's dream, we seem already to partake of this redemption in advance: no more then tortures us the memory of that yawning gulf, the gruesome monsters of the deep, the reeking litter of the self-devouring Will, which Day—alas! the history of mankind, had forced upon us: then pure and peace-desiring sounds to us the cry of Nature, fearless, hopeful, all-assuaging, world-redeeming. United in this cry, by it made conscious of its own high office of Redemption of the whole like-suffering Nature, the soul of Manhood soars from the abyss of semblances, and, loosed from all that awful chain of rise and fall, the restless Will feels fettered by itself alone, but from itself set free.

The children of a parish-priest in new-converted Sweden once heard a Nixie singing to her harp upon the shore: "Sing as you will," they cried to her, "you'll never get to heaven." Sadly the fairy sank her head and harp: the children heard her weep, and ran to tell their father. He counselled them, and sent them back to greet the Nixie with good tidings. "Come, Nixie, dry your tears," they cried: "Father bids say, you yet may hope for heaven." Then all night through they heard the waters echoing with songs so sweet, that never man heard sweeter.—The Redeemer himself has bidden us sound and sing our longing, faith and hope. Its noblest legacy the Christian Church has left us in the all-uttering, all-expressing soul of the Christian religion: wafted beyond the temple-walls, the holy strains of Music fill each sphere of Nature with new life, teaching redemption-starved mankind a second speech in which the Infinite can voice itself with clearest definition.

But what have even the divinest works of music said to our modern world? What can these sounding revelations from the redeeming dream-world of purest knowledge tell to a concert-public of to-day? To whom the unspeakable bliss has been vouchsafed of taking one



of the last [250] four Symphonies of Beethoven into his heart and soul without alloy, let him conceive the constitution of a whole great audience prepared to receive an effect from any of these works in perfect correspondence with their nature: perhaps he might be assisted by an analogy from the remarkable devotions of the Shakers in America, who, after solemn attestation of their heartfelt vow of abstinence, all join in song and dance within the temple. If this is but expression of a childlike joy at innocence regained, for our part, after celebrating in our daily meal the Will's sure triumph over itself through knowledge wrung from manhood's fall, we might view the plunge into the waves of those symphonic revelations as a religious act of hallowed cleansing. Glad shouts ascending to divinest rapture. "Divin'st thou thy Creator, World?"—so cries the Poet, obliged to hazard an anthropomorphic metaphor for That which words can ne'er convey. But, above all possibility of concrete thought, the Tone-poet Seer reveals to us the Inexpressible: we divine, nay, feel and see that this insistent World of Will is also but a state that vanishes before the One: "I know that my Redeemer liveth!"



"Have you ever had to rule a State?" asked Mendelssohn Bartholdy once of Berthold Auerbach, who had been indulging in reflections on the Prussian Government, apparently distasteful to the famed composer. "Do you want to found a new religion?"—the author of the present essay might be asked. As that person, I should freely admit that it would be just as impossible as that Herr Auerbach could have deftly ruled a State, if Mendelssohn had managed to procure one for him. My thoughts have come to me as to a working artist in his intercourse with public life: in that contact it must seem to me that I [251] should light upon the proper road if I weighed the reasons why even considerable and envied successes have left me uncontented with the public. Upon this road I grew convinced that Art can only prosper on the basis of true Morals, and thus could but ascribe to it a mission all the higher when I found it altogether one with true Religion. Any judgment of the history and future of the human race must remain beyond the artist's reach while he approached it in the sense of Mendelssohn's question, and had to view the State as something like a mill in which the human grain, already bolted on the threshing-floor of War, must be ground before it could be relished. As on my path I had felt a wholesome shudder at this drilling of mankind to barren aims, at last it dawned on me that another, better state of future man—conceived by others as a hideous chaos—might well arise in comely order, if Religion and Art not only were retained therein, but for the first time gained their right acceptance. From this path all violence is quite shut out, for it merely needs the strengthening of those seeds of Peace which all around have taken root, though scant as yet and feeble.

But things may turn out otherwise, should Wisdom more and more recede from rampant Violence. What this last can do, we note with the same astonishment once humorously expressed by Frederick the Great when a royal guest, after witnessing a field-mancœuvre, declared his wonder at the soldiers' matchless discipline: "Not that's the greatest marvel," he replied, "but that the knaves don't shoot us dead." Considering the elaborate springs which are set in motion for military Honour, it fortunately is not to be anticipated that the war-machine will consume its own vitals, and collapse in such a way as to leave the great Frederick with no more marvels of his kind. Nevertheless it can but rouse our apprehension, to see the progress of the art-of-war departing from the springs of moral force, and turning more and more to the mechanical: here the rawest forces of the lower Nature-powers are brought into an artificial play, in which, for all arithmetic and mathematics, [252] the blind Will might one day break its leash and take an elemental share. Already a grim and ghostly sight is offered by the armoured Monitors, against which the stately sailing-ship avails no more: dumb serving-men, no longer with the looks of men, attend these monsters, nor even from their awful furnace-holds will they desert: but just as in Nature everything has its destroying foe, so Art

invents torpedoes for the sea, and dynamite cartouches, or the like, for everywhere else. 'Twere thinkable that all of this, with art and science, valour, point-of-honour, life and chattels, should one day fly into the air through some incalculable accident. When every pledge of peace was thus exploded in the grandest style, it would only need the outbreak of a general famine — already slowly, but infallibly prepared: then should we stand once more where world-Historical development began, and it really might look "as if God had made the world that the Devil might take it," as our great philosopher found stated in the Judæo-Christian dogma.

So reign the Will there in its full brutality. Happy we, if we have turned us to *the Fields of hoary eld!*





## Notes

### Note 1 on page 7

"Ihr Gründer war nicht weise, sondern göttlich"—evidently in answer to Nietzsche's "The founder of Christianity, as is self-evident, was not without the greatest defects and prejudices. . . . Socrates excels the founder of Christianity by his buoyant type of earnestness and that *wisdom full of roguish ruses* which constitutes the best state of mind for man. Moreover he had the greater intellect."—*Menschliches*, vol. ii. "Wanderer," aphor. 83 and 86.—Tr.

### Note 2 on page 8

Schopenhauer, *Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, Book III. § 45.—Tr.

### Note 3 on page 9

In his *Welt als W. u. V.*, Book IV. § 70, Schopenhauer says: "The Christian doctrine symbolises *Nature*, the *Affirmation of the Will-to-live*, by Adam.... *Grace*, on the other hand, the *Denial of the Will*, *Redemption*, by the God become Man; who is free from all sin, i.e. from all life-willing, and neither can have issued from the Will's most positive act of affirmation, as we have, nor have, as we, a body through and through but concrete Will; born of a pure virgin, he has but a seeming body." And in his *Parerga*, § 167: "The woman's share in procreation is more guiltless than the man's; for he bestows upon the child its *will*, which is the first sin, and therefore the root of all evil; the woman, on the contrary, bestows its intellect, which is the pathway to redemption. . . . So that in conception the Will is given afresh the possibility of redemption." On this hypothesis the absence of a father, who bestows "Affirmation of the will," would be the "necessary miracle" conducting to birth of the true redeemer.—Tr.

### Note 4 on page 9

The Marienkapelle in the old Marktplatz.—Tr.

### Note 5 on page 13

See footnote to page 13, Vol. IV.—Tr.

### Note 6 on page 20

The author here refers expressly to a book by A. Gleizès, "Thalysia, or the Healing of Mankind," most admirably translated from the French and edited by Robert Springer (Berlin, 1873; publisher, Otto Jahnke). Without a close acquaintance with the results, embodied in this book, of the most diligent researches which seem to have occupied the whole lifetime of one of the most amiable and profound of Frenchmen, it will be hard to win the reader's assent to the conclusions I have attempted to draw from its contents as to the possibility of a regeneration of the human race.—R. WAGNER.

### Note 7 on page 24

Another allusion to Nietzsche's *Menschliches*, where Aphorism 235 begins as follows: "The Socialists want to bring about the Well-living of the Greatest Number. If the lasting home of this Well-living, the perfect State, were actually attained, then this Well-living would

have destroyed the soil whence grows the powerful intellect, the mighty individual in general: I mean, the force of Energy. Mankind would have grown too torpid, when this State arrived, to be able to beget a genius. Ought one not, therefore, to wish that life may retain its violent character, and that savage forces and energies may ever be called forth afresh?"—Tr.

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*"What Boots This Knowledge?"*

By Richard Wagner

Translated by William Ashton Ellis



The Wagner Library

Edition 1.0

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## Contents

About this Title .....	4
"What Boots This Knowledge?" - A Supplement to "Religion and Art." .....	5
Notes .....	11

## About this Title

### Source

*"What Boots This Knowledge?"*

By Richard Wagner

Translated by William Ashton Ellis

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[253]

## "What Boots This Knowledge?"

### A Supplement to "Religion and Art."

(1)

SHOULD ye ask, "Of what use is the knowledge of man's historic fall, since it is just through his historic evolution that we all have become what we are?" one first might waive your question somewhat thus: "Ask those who from all time have made that knowledge wholly theirs, and learn from them to inwardly digest it. 'Tis no new thing, for all great spirits have been led by it alone. Ask the real great poets of every age; ask the founders of true religions." Willingly would we refer you also to the mighty chiefs of States, if among the very greatest of them we could presuppose a full acquaintance with it; that is impossible, however, because their trade has ever pointed them to mere experiments with given historic conditions, but never allowed a free glance past those conditions to their primal state. It therefore is the helmsman of the State himself, by whose miscarriages we may the plainest prove the ill results of non-obtainal of that knowledge. Even a Marcus Aurelius could only attain to knowledge of the world's nullity, but never to the idea of an actual downfall of a world that might have been so different,—to say nothing of the cause of this fall. That worthlessness has ever been the base of absolute Pessimism; by which despotic statesmen, and rulers in general, have but too gladly let themselves be led, were it only for convenience. On the contrary, a more thorough-going knowledge of the cause of our decline leads forthwith to the possibility of a just as radical regeneration; again without all reference to [254] Statesmen, since such a knowledge passes far beyond the - sphere of their violent, but always fruitless action.

Accordingly, to discover of whom we need *not* ask for vital knowledge of the world, we have only to take a general survey of the present so-called "political situation." This latter characterises itself, if we pick up the nearest newspaper and read it in the sense that nothing there concerns us personally: at once we light upon Shalt without Have, Will without Notion, and all with such a boundless greed of Might that even the mightiest thinks he owns none, until he has still more. What he dreams of doing with this Might, one seeks in vain to fathom. Everywhere we see the image of Robespierre, (2) who, when the guillotine had brushed away each hindrance to the revelation of his nostrums, had nothing left to recommend but Virtuousness in general,—a doctrine far more simply gained before him in Masonic lodges. As far as looks go, all our Statesmen now are striving after Robespierre's prize. Even last century this look was less affected; then men fought frankly for dynastic interests—carefully supervised, to be sure, by the interest of the Jesuits, who recently again alas! misled the last brute-force ruler of France. He deemed needful for insurance of his dynasty, and in the interest of civilisation, to deal Prussia a slap in the face; and as Prussia had no mind to calmly take it, things came to a war for German Unity. That Unity was won in course, and duly fixed by contract; but what it after all might mean, again was hard to answer. They tell us we shall hear some day, when much more Might has been procured: German Unity must first be primed to shew her teeth in every quarter, even if it leaves her with nothing to chew. One thinks one sees Robespierre presiding over his Committee of *Salut Public*, when one conjures up the picture [255] of the strong man armed behind locked doors, in ceaseless search for means of increase to his garnered Might What there was to do and tell to the world with the Might once proved, might have dawned on that strong man armed in the nick of time, had this *knowledge* but enlightened him. We gladly believe in his love of peace; though 'tis a sorry proof, to be forced into war, and though we sincerely hope that true Peace will some day be won on a peaceful path, it should have occurred to the beater-down of peace's last disturber

that the wantonly-provoked and fearful war would be fitly crowned by an other peace than this treaty of Frankfort-on-Main, which points direct to constant readiness for further war. Here a knowledge of the need and possibility of true regeneration of the human race, now crushed by an embattled Civilisation, could well have inspired a pact conducting to peace of the world itself: then would have been no forts to seize, but to demolish, no warrants of surer war to take, but pledges of sound peace to give; whereas historic rights alone were weighed against historic claims, and settled by the one established right of Conquest. With the best will in the world, it would seem that the pilot-of-State can see no farther. They all must prate of universal peace; even Napoleon III. had his mind on it,—but a peace of profit to his dynasty and France: for in no other way can these strong men armed conceive of peace, than under the wide-respected guardianship of countless cannons.

At anyrate we may conclude that, if *our* knowledge is to be treated as useless, the world-knowledge of our great Statesmen works us positive and serious harm.—

In the past I have found that my exposures of the downfall of our Public Art met little contradiction, but my ideas on its regeneration were violently opposed. If we leave out of count the flat Optimists proper, the hopeful babes of Abraham's bosom, we may take it that the sight of a degenerate world, of the perversion and badness of men in general, does not especially repel: what all think in secret of each other, they know right well; but Science [256] herself does not confess it, for she has learnt to find her reckoning in "constant progress." And Religion? Luther's main revolt was against the Roman Church's shameless Absolution, which went so far as to accept deliberate prepayment for sins not yet committed: his anger came too late; the world soon managed to abolish Sin entirely, and believers now look for redemption from evil to Physics and Chemistry.

We will admit that it is no easy task, to persuade the world of the use of this our knowledge, even though it leave the uselessness of its mean knowledge ungainsaid. But let us not therefore refrain from a closer search into that use. For this we must turn, not to the dull-brained throng, but to those better minds whose own prevailing cloudiness as yet prevents the freedom-bearing rays of rightful knowledge from piercing to that multitude. This cloud is still so dense, that it is truly astounding to see the highest minds of every age since the rise of the Bible enveloped in it, and thereby led to shallowness of judgment. Take Goethe, who held Christ for problematical, but the good God for wholly proven, albeit retaining the liberty to discover the latter in Nature after his own fashion; which led to all manner of physical assays and experiments, whose continued pursuit was bound, in turn, to lead the present reigning human intellect to the result that there's no God whatever, but only "Force and Matter." It was reserved for a master-mind—how late alas!—to light this more than thousand-years' confusion in which the Jewish God-idea had plunged the whole of Christendom: that the unsatisfied thinker at last can set firm foot again on a soil of genuine Ethics, we owe to Kant's continuator, large-hearted *Arthur Schopenhauer*.

Who would gain an idea of the confusion of modern thought, the maiming of the intellect of to-day, let him consider the untold difficulty that impedes a proper understanding of the most lucid of all philosophical systems—that of Schopenhauer. The reason is simple enough, when we recognise that the perfect understanding of this. [257] philosophy would effect as radical a revolution in our hitherto established modes of thought, as that demanded of the heathen by their conversion to Christianity. Nevertheless it is quite appalling to find this philosophy, based as it is on the most perfect of ethics, described as shorn of hope; from which it follows, that we wish to be of good hope without the consciousness of true morality. That upon this very depravation of men's hearts rests Schopenhauer's relentless condemnation of the world—in its only aspect shewn to us by history,—affrights all those who take no pains to track the paths so plainly traced by Schopenhauer for turning the misguided Will. Yet these paths, which well may lead to hope, are clearly and distinctly pointed out by our philosopher,

and it is not his fault if he was so fully occupied with the correct portrayal of the only world that lay before him, that he was compelled to leave their actual exploration to our own selves; for they brook no journeying save on foot.

In this sense, and as guide to an independent treading of the path of surest hope, nothing better can be recommended in our present state than to make Schopenhauer's philosophy, in its every bearing, the basis of all further mental and moral culture; and at nothing else have we to labour, than to get the necessity of this acknowledged in every walk of life. Should that succeed, the beneficial, the truly regenerative result were then immeasurable; for on the contrary we see to what mental and moral unfitness the lack of a right, all-permeating knowledge of the world's root-essence has now debased us.

The Popes knew well what they were doing, when they withdrew the Bible from the Folk; for the Old Testament in particular, so bound up with the New, might distort the pure idea of Christ to such a point that any nonsense and every deed of violence could claim its sanction; and such a use they deemed more prudent to reserve for the Church herself. Wellnigh we must view it as a grave misfortune, that Luther had no other weapon of authority against the degenerate Roman Church, than just this Bible; from [258] whose full text he durst drop nothing, without disarming. It even had to serve him for the drafting of a catechism for the poor neglected Folk; and with what despair he clutched at it, we may see from the heart-rending preface to that little book. If we hear aright the true deep note of pity for his people, that lent the soulful Reformer the sublime precipitance of the rescuer of a drowning man (3); that haste wherewith he brought the people in extremis the only spiritual food and covering that came to hand,— if we follow this, we may take example by himself for the provisional repairing of that food and clothing, now found no longer adequate, to last for stouter service. To denote the starting-point of such an undertaking, let us cite a fine passage from one of Schiller's letters to Goethe:—

"If one would lay hand on the characteristic mark of Christianity, distinguishing it from all mono-theistic religions, it lies in nothing less than the *upheaval of Law*, of Kant's 'Imperative,' in whose place it sets free Inclination. In its own pure form it therefore is the presentation of a beautiful morality, or of the humanising of the Holy; and in this sense it is the only *aesthetic* religion."—

From this fair picture let us cast one glance upon the Ten Commandments of the Mosaic tables of the Law—which even Luther found needful to take as first instruction to a people both mentally and morally brutalised under rule of the Roman Church and Germanic fist-right—and we there shall discover no faintest trace of a truly Christian thought; taken strictly, they are mere *forbiddals*, to most of which the character of *commands* was first assigned by Luther's running commentary. We have no idea of entering upon a criticism of those Commandments, for we should only encounter our police and criminal legislation, to which their supervision has been committed in the interest of civic order, even to the point of punishment for Atheism—wherfrom, perchance, the "other gods" alone would pass scot-free. [259]

If we leave these edicts on one side, as fairly well safeguarded, we come at once to the Christian command— if so we may term it—in the setting-up of the three so-called Theologic Virtues. These are commonly arranged in an order that appears to us not quite the right one for development of the Christian spirit; we should like to see "Faith, Hope, and Charity" transposed into "Love, Faith, and Hope." It may seem a contradiction to uphold this sole redeeming and engladdening trinity as the essence of all *virtue*, and its exercise as a *commandment*, seeing that its units, on the other hand, are claimed as grants of Grace. What a merit lies in their attainment, however, we soon shall see if first we weigh the almost exorbitant demand on the natural man conveyed by the injunction of "Love," in its exalted Christian sense. Through what is it, that our whole civilisation is going to ground, if not

through lack of Love? The heart of youth, to which the world of nowadays unveils itself with waxing plainness, how can it love this world when it is recommended naught save caution and suspicion in its dealings with it? Surely there can be but one right way of guidance for that heart, the path whereon the world's great lovelessness should be accounted as its *suffering*: then would the young man's roused compassion incite him to withdraw himself from the causes of that Suffering of the world's, to flee with knowledge from the greed of passions, to lessen and avert the woes of others. But how to wake this needful knowledge in the natural man, since the first and most un-understandable to him is his fellow-man himself? Impossible, that commandments here should bring about a knowledge only to be woken in the natural man by proper guidance to an understanding of the natural descent of all that lives.—The surest, nay, in our opinion almost the only thing to lead to this, would be a wise employment of the Schopenhauerian philosophy, whose outcome, to the shame of every earlier philosophic system, is the recognition of a *moral meaning of the world*; which crown of all Knowledge might then be practically realised [260] through Schopenhauer's Ethics. Only the love that springs from pity, and carries its compassion to the utmost breaking of self-will, is the redeeming Christian Love, in which Faith and Hope are both included of a—*Faith* as the unwavering consciousness of that moral meaning of the world, confirmed by the most divine exemplar; *Hope* as the blessed sense of the impossibility of any cheating of this consciousness.

And whence could we derive a clearer guidance for the heart afflicted by the cheat of this world's material semblance, than from our philosopher, if only we could bring that understanding within the natural powers of unlearned men? In such a sense we fain would see an attempt to draft a popular version of his matchless treatise "On apparent Design in the Fate of the Individual": how surely were the term "eternal Providence—so frequently employed for very sake of its equivocation—then justified in its true sense; whereas the contradiction thus expressed now drives despairing souls to flattest atheism. To people harassed by the arrogance of our chemists and physicists, and who begin to hold themselves for weak of brain if they shrink from accepting a resolution of the world into "force and matter,"—to them it were no less an act of charity, could we shew them from the works of our philosopher what clumsy things are those same "molecules and atoms." But what an untold boon could we bring to men affrighted on the one hand by the thunders of the Church, and driven to desperation by our physicists on the other, could we fit into the lofty edifice of "Love, Faith, and a vivid knowledge of the *ideality* of that world our only present mode of apperception maps out by laws of Time and Space; then would each question of the troubled spirit after the "when" and "where" of the "other world" be recognised as answerable by nothing but a blissful smile. For if there be an answer to these so infinitely weighty-seeming questions, our philosopher has given it with insurpassable beauty and precision in that phrase which [261] he merely meant, in a measure, to define the ideality of Space and Time: "Peace, rest and happiness dwell there alone where is *no When, no Where.*"

Yet the Folk—from whom we stand so lamentably far, alas I—demands a realistic notion of divine eternity in the affirmative sense, such as Theology herself can only give it in the negative "world without end." Religion, too, could ease this craving by naught but allegoric myths and images, from which the Church then built that storeyed dogma whose collapse has become notorious. How these crumbling blocks were turned to the foundation of an art unknown to the ancient world, I have endeavoured to shew in my preceding article on "Religion and Art"; of what import to the "Folk" itself this art might become through its full emancipation from unseemly service, and upon the soil of a new moral order, we should set ourselves in earnest to discover. Here again our philosopher would lead us to a boundless outlook on the realm of possibilities, if we sought out all the wealth contained in the following pregnant sentences:—"Complete contentment, the truly acceptable state, never

present themselves to us but in an image, in the *Artwork*, the Poem, in Music. From which one surely might derive the confidence that somewhere they exist in sooth." What here was hardly utterable without an almost sceptic smile, through its intrusion on a strictly philosophic system, for us might well become the starting-point of very serious inferences. The perfect "likeness" of the noblest artwork would so transport our heart that we should plainly find the archetype, whose "somewhere" must perforce reside within our inner self, (4); filled full with time-less, space-less Love and Faith and Hope.

But not even the highest art can gain the force for such a revelation while it lacks the support of a religious symbol of the most perfect moral ordering of the world, through which alone can it be truly understood of the people: [262] only by borrowing from life's exercise itself the likeness of the Divine, can the artwork hold this up to life, and holding, lead us out beyond this life to pure contentment and redemption.

A great, nay, an immeasurable field of search were thus defined in outlines sharp enough, perhaps, yet not so easily discernible through their remoteness from the common life; and its closer survey might well repay the trouble. That the Politician cannot guide us here, we have felt necessary to state quite plainly; and it further seems to us of weight to pursue our searches quite apart from the unfruitful field of Politics. On the other hand we must follow with the utmost diligence, and to its farthest bifurcation, each path whereon man's mental culture may lead to the establishment of true morality. Our heart's desire must be no less, than to win comrades and helpers on every one of these domains. Already we have gained some; our sympathy with the movement against Vivisection, for instance, has made us acquainted with kindred spirits in the realm of Physiology, who, armed with special scientific knowledge, have stood by our side against the impudent assertions of legalised defilers of Science,—though unresultfully alas!, as at present is unavoidable. Those peaceable associations to whom the practical fulfilment of our thoughts seems allotted by their very nature, we have mentioned elsewhere; we now have only to express the hope that their useful workers will turn to us, and combine their separate interests in that one great interest which might be expressed somewhat as follows:—

*We recognise the cause of the fall of Historic Man, and the necessity of his regeneration; we believe in the possibility of such Regeneration, and devote ourselves to its carrying-through in every sense.*

It may be open to question, whether the work of such a fellowship would not by far transcend the immediate scope of addresses to a Patronate of Stage-festivals. We [263] will hope, however, that the honoured members of this Verein have hitherto lent a not unwilling ear to kindred subjects. As far as the author of the present lines is concerned, he must in any case declare that henceforth nothing but advices from the aforesaid field may be expected of him.





## Notes

### Note 1 on page 5

"*Was nützt diese Erkenntniss?*" *Ein Nachtrag zu: Religion und Kunst* originally appeared in the *Bayreuther Blätter* for December, 1880.—Tr.

### Note 2 on page 5

A striking repetition of the thought expressed (to some extent in the selfsame words) in Wagner's letter to August Roeckel of January 25, 1854. The parallelism is easily accounted for, however, as these *Letters to Roeckel* only returned to their author after the death of their recipient (June 18, 1876), and apparently but a little while before the present article was written.—Tr.

### Note 3 on page 7

Cf. Nietzsche's perversion of the idea of Pity: "One springs to the rescue of a man, who has fallen into the water, just twice as fast when witnesses are present who do not dare."—*Menschliches*, Aph. 325.—Tr.

### Note 4 on page 9

Cf. *Luke*, xvii. 21: "Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for behold, the kingdom of God is within you."—Tr.

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*Know Thyself*

By Richard Wagner

Translated by William Ashton Ellis



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## Contents

About this Title .....	4
"Know Thyself" - A Continuation of "Religion and Art." .....	5
Notes .....	11

## About this Title

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[264]

## "Know Thyself"

### A Continuation of "Religion and Art."

(1)

GREAT KANT taught us to postpone the wish for knowledge of the world to criticism of man's power of knowledge; if we thus arrived at the most complete uncertainty about the reality of the world, *Schopenhauer* next taught us to draw the most infallible conclusions as to the world's In-itself from a farther-reaching criticism, no longer of our mental faculties, but of that Will in us which goes before all knowledge. "Know thyself, and thou hast read the world"—the Pythia said; "look round thee, all of this art thou"—the Brahmin.

How totally these lessons of ancestral wisdom had been lost to us, we may judge by their having to be re-discovered after tens of centuries by *Schopenhauer* treading in the shining wake of Kant. For if we view the present state of all our Sciences and Statecraft, we find them void of any true religious core, and simply wed to a barbaric babbling, to which two thousand years of practice have given a well-nigh venerable aspect in the people's purblind eye.

Who ever finds that "Know thyself" applied to any rating of the world? Not one Historic action do we know, that betrays this doctrine's influence on the transactors. We strike away at what we know not, and should we haply hit ourselves, we think another struck us. Who has not witnessed this once more in the present stir against the Jews, let us say, when looked at in light of that doctrine? What has given the Jews their now so dreaded power [265] among and over us, not one man seems to stop and ponder; or if he goes into the question, he seeks no farther than the facts and phases of the last ten years, or at most a few years earlier: nowhere can we trace as yet an inclination to a deeper search into ourselves, in this case to a thorough criticism of the will and spirit of all that conglomerate of nature and civilisation which we, for instance, call the "German."

Yet the movement here alluded to perhaps is more adapted than any other to set us marvelling at ourselves: in it we seem to see the late reawakening of an instinct that appeared extinct. A man who some thirty years ago drew notice to the Jews' inaptitude for taking a productive share in our Art, and felt impelled to renew that attempt just eighteen years thereafter, (2) was met by the utmost indignation of Jews alike and Germans; it became quite dangerous to breathe the word "Jew" with a doubtful accent. But what once roused the bitterest ill-will when spoken on the field of ethical Æsthetics, we suddenly hear cried in vulgar brutal tones upon the field of civic intercourse and party politics. The fact that lies between these two expressions, is the bestowal of full right upon the Jews to regard themselves in all conceivable respects as Germans (3) —much as a blanket authorised the blacks in Mexico to hold themselves for whites. Whoever weighs this matter well, even if its real absurdity escapes him, must at least be highly astonished at the levity—nay, the frivolity of our State-authorities, who could decree so vast, so incomputable a transformation of our national system without the smallest sense of what they were doing.

The formula ran as "Equalisation of the rights of all German citizens, without regard to difference of 'Confession.'"

How was it possible for there to be Germans, at any time, who could conceive of all that keeps the Jewish stem so wide apart from us under the idea of a religious [266] "confession," seeing it was first and solely in German history that divisions arose in the *Christian Church* which led to the State-acknowledgment of various confessions? However, if only we will turn that "Know thyself" with ruthless energy upon ourselves, this curiously perverted formula may afford us one of the principal clues to explanation of the seemingly inexplicable. The



first thing then to strike us, will be the recent experience that our clerics feel lamed at once in their agitation against the Jews when Judaism itself is seized by the root, and the patriarchs for instance, great Abraham in particular, are submitted to a criticism involving the actual text of the Mosaic books. (4) At once the groundwork of the Christian Church, its "positive" religion, seems to reel beneath their feet; a "Mosaic Confession" is recognised; and its adherents are accorded the right to take their place beside us, to examine the credentials of a second revelation through Jesus Christ—whom even in the opinion of the late English Prime Minister they regard as one of their countless minor prophets, of whom we have made by far too much ado. To tell the truth, it will fall hard to prove by the aspect of the Christian world, and the character of the Culture shed upon it by a Church so soon decayed, the superiority of the revelation through Jesus Christ to that through Abraham and Moses: in spite of its dispersion, the Jewish stock has remained one whole with the Mosaic laws to this very day, whereas our culture and civilisation stand in the most crying contradiction to Christ's teaching. To the Jew who works the sum out, the outcome of this culture is simply the necessity of waging wars, together with the still greater one, of having money for them. Accordingly he sees our State society divided into a military and a civil class: as it is a couple of thousand years since he did anything in the military line, he devotes his knowledge and experience with great gusto to the civil class, for he observes that this must find [267] the money for the military, and in that affair his talents have been trained to highest virtuosity.

Now the astounding success of our resident Jews in the gaining and amassing of huge stores of money has always filled our Military State authorities with nothing but respect and joyful admiration: so that the present campaign against the Jews seems to point to a wish to draw the attention of those authorities to the question, Where do the Jews get it from? The bottom of the whole dispute, as it appears to us, is Property, Ownership, which we suddenly perceive to be in jeopardy, notwithstanding that each outlay of the State has the look of aiming more at the insurance of possession than anything else.

If the application of "Know thyself" to our Church's religious descent would turn out poorly for our case against the Jews, the result will be no less unfavourable if we investigate the nature of the only thing our State systems understand by *possession*, before endeavouring to secure it from the Jews' encroachments.

"Property" has acquired an almost greater sacredness in our social conscience than religion: for offence against the latter there is lenience, for damage to the former no forgiveness. Since Property is deemed the base of all stability, the more's the pity that not all are owners, that in fact the greater proportion of Society comes disinherited into the world. Society is manifestly thus reduced by its own principle to such a perilous inquietude, that it is compelled to reckon all its laws for an impossible adjustment of this conflict; and protection of property—for which in its widest international sense the weaponed host is specially maintained—can truly mean no else than a defence of the possessors against the non-possessors. Many as are the earnest and sagacious brains that have applied themselves to this problem, its solution, such as that at last suggested of an equal division of all possessions, has not as yet been found amenable; and it seems as if the State's disposal of the apparently so simple idea [268] of Property had driven a beam into the body of mankind that dooms it to a lingering death of agony.

As the historic origin and evolution of our States seems worth a close examination in any verdict on their character, since thence alone do rights and conditions of right appear deducible, so the inequality of Possession, nay, its total absence in one great section of the State's constituents as result of the latest conquest of a country—e.g. of England by the Normans, or of Ireland in turn by the English—should be matter for explanation and, if need be, for vindication also. Far from embarking on inquiries of such difficulty ourselves, we have merely to point out the patent metamorphosis of the original idea of Property by the legal

hallowing of usurpation, and to say that right by purchase nowadays has taken the place of right by earning, between which two came right by violence of seizure.

Clever though be the many thoughts expressed by mouth or pen about the invention of *money* and its enormous value as a civiliser, against such praises should be set the curse to which it has always been doomed in song and legend. If *gold* here figures as the demon strangling manhood's innocence, our greatest poet shews at last the goblin's game of *paper money*. The Nibelung's fateful ring become a pocket-book, might well complete the eerie picture of the spectral world-controller. By the advocates of our Progressive Civilisation this rulership is indeed regarded as a spiritual, nay, a moral power; for vanished Faith is now replaced by "Credit," that fiction of our mutual honesty kept upright by the most elaborate safeguards against loss and trickery. What comes to pass beneath the benedictions of this Credit we now are witnessing, and seem inclined to lay all blame upon the Jews. They certainly are virtuosi in an art which we but bungle: only, the coinage of money out of nil was invented by our Civilisation itself; or if the Jews are blamable for that, it is because our entire civilisation is a barbaro-judaic medley, in nowise a Christian creation. [269] A little self-knowledge on this point, methinks, would not come amiss to the representatives of the Church themselves, particularly when combating the seed of Abraham, in whose name they still go on to claim fulfilment of certain promises of his Jehova. A Christianity which has accommodated itself to the brute violence of every ruling power in the world might find itself when turning from the raging to the reckoning beast of prey, outmatched in cleverness and cunning by its foe; wherefore there is little present hope of special welfare from the support of either our Church or our State authorities.

However, an inner motive plainly lies at bottom of the present movement, little as it may be evinced by the behaviour of its leaders so far. We expressed our belief, above, that this motive was the re-awakening of an instinct lost to the German nation. People speak of an antagonism of *racés*. In this sense we should have fresh cause for self-inspection, as it would necessitate our defining the relation of certain given breeds of man to one another. Here it would probably have to be recognised at the outset that, in talking of a German "race," it would be very difficult, nay, wellnigh impossible to compare it with a race so strongly pronounced, and still unaltered, as the Jewish. When learned men debate the relative value of mixed or pure-bred races, for the evolution of mankind, the decision must surely hinge on what we mean by man's developmental progress. The so-called Romanic nations, and the English too, are praised as hybrid stocks that obviously surpass in Culture-progress the peoples of a haply pure Germanic breed. On the other hand, if one declines to be blinded by the glamour of this culture and civilisation, and seeks the welfare of mankind in its bringing-to-birth of great characters, one finds that these far rather come to light—nay, almost solely—in pure-bred races; where it seems that the still unbroken nature-force of Race at first makes up for every higher human virtue yet unformed, and only to be won through life's sore trials, by that of *pride*. This peculiar pride of race, that still gave us in the [270] Middle Ages such towering characters as Princes, Kings and Kaisers, may be met even to-day in the old nobility of German origin, although in unmistakable degeneration; and that degeneration we should have to take seriously into account if we wished to explain the fall of the German Folk, now exposed defenceless to the inroads of the Jews. For this, the proper course might be to first recall the unexampled devastation which Germany suffered through the Thirty Years War: after by far the greatest part of the male population had been rooted out of town and country, while the female had been violated to no less a degree by Walloons, Croats, Spaniards, French and Swedes, the relatively little-injured nobles may scarcely have felt themselves one racial body with the remnant of this decimated people. That feeling of community we still find markedly expressed in many a preceding epoch; and then it was the true patrician families, that contrived to re-illuminate the proper spirit after serious diminution of

the nation's substance. This we may see in the revival of Germanic races by new offshoots from the parent stock, when tribal migration had robbed the home-stayers of their first heroic clans; we see it in the resuscitation of the German language by patrician poets of the Hohenstaufen era, after monkish Latin had become the only medium of gentility, whereas the spirit of their poetry thrust down to the peasant's hut and shaped one wholly equal speech for Folk alike and Noble; and once again we see it in the stand against the outrage foisted on the Germans by the Church of Rome, when the example of its lords and princes led the Folk to stout defence. 'Twas otherwise after the Thirty Years War: the nobles found no nation left, to which to feel their kinship; the great monarchic powers shifted from the stricter seat of Germany towards the Slavic east: degenerate Slays, decadent Germans, form the soil of the eighteenth century's history, a soil to which the Jew might confidently migrate from a Poland and a Hungary sucked dry, since even prince and noble durst no longer be ashamed of doing business with him; for—Pride [271] itself had just been pledged already, exchanged for vanity and greed.

Though in recent days we see these last two traits of character adopted by the Folk itself—our ancient relatives the Swiss can think of us no otherwise!—and though the title "German" has thus been almost coined anew, yet this new-birth still lacks too much, to constitute a real rebirth of racial feeling, a thing that always finds its first expression in a settled instinct. Our nation, one may say, has not the natural instinct for that which suits it, for what becomes it, helps and furthers it; estranged from itself, it dabbles in foreign manners. On none other have great and original spirits been bestowed, as on it, without its having known in time to treasure them: yet if the silliest news-writer or political cheap-jack but brazens out his lying phrases, it chooses him to represent its weightiest interests; whilst if the Jew comes tinkling with his bell of paper, it throws its savings at his feet, and makes him in one night a millionaire.

The Jew, on the contrary, is the most astounding instance of racial congruence ever offered by world-history. Without a fatherland, a mother-tongue midst every people's land and tongue he finds himself again, in virtue of the unfailing instinct of his absolute and indelible idiosyncrasy: even commixture of blood does not hurt him; let Jew or Jewess intermarry with the most distinct of races, a Jew will always come to birth. Not into the remotest contact is he brought with the religion of any of the civilised (*gesittete*) nations; for in truth he has no religion at all—merely the belief in certain promises of his god which in nowise extend to a life beyond this temporal life of his, as in every true religion, but simply to this present life on earth, whereon his race is certainly ensured dominion over all that lives and lives not. Thus the Jew has need to neither think nor chatter, not even to calculate, for the hardest calculation lies all cut and dried for him in an instinct shut against all ideality. A wonderful, unparalleled phenomenon: the plastic dæmon of man's [272] downfall in triumphant surety; and German citizen of State, to boot, with a Mosaic confession; the darling of Liberal princes, and warrant of our national unity!—

Despite the enormous disadvantage at which the German race (if so we still may call it) appears to stand against the Jewish, we yet have ventured to suggest the re-awakening of a German instinct as one factor in the present agitation. As, however, we have been obliged to discard all idea of its being a purely racial instinct, we perhaps might search for something higher: a bent that, merely vaguely (*wahnvoll*) felt by the Folk of to-day, would at first appear indeed as instinct, though really of far nobler origin and loftier aim, and which might haply be defined as the spirit of the purely-Human.

From the Cosmopolitan proper, if such a man exists in fact, we probably should have little to expect for the solution of our problem. 'Tis no small thing, to run through the history of the world and yet preserve love for the human species. Here nothing but a rooted feeling of kinship with the immediate nation whence we sprang, can serve to re-knit the strand

dissevered by a survey of the whole: here operates the thing we feel ourselves to be; we pity, and strive our best to hope, as for the future of our nearer family. Fatherland, mother-tongue: woe to the man bereft of these! But what unmeasured happiness, to recognise in one's mother-tongue the speech of one's ure-fathers! Through such a tongue our feelings and beholdings stretch right back to early Man himself; no fence and pale there hedge our nobles in, and far beyond the fatherland at last assigned us, beyond the landmarks of historic knowledge and all our outer trappings thence derived, we feel ourselves one kin with pristine Man's creative beauty. Such is our German language, the only heritage retained intact from our forefathers. Do we feel our breath fast quitting us, beneath the pressure of an alien civilisation; do we fall into uncertainty about ourselves: we have only to dig to the roots in the true father-soil of our language, to reap at once a reassuring [273] answer on ourselves, nay, on the truly Human. And this possibility, of always drawing from the pristine fount of our own nature, that makes us feel ourselves no more a race, no mere variety of man, but one of Manhood's primal branches,—'tis this that ever has bestowed on us great men and spiritual heroes, as to whom we have no need to trouble whether fashioners of foreign fatherless civilisations are able to understand and prize them; whilst we again, inspired by the deeds and gifts of our forefathers, and gazing with unclouded eye, are able to rightly estimate those foreigners, and value them according to the spirit of pure Humanity indwelling in their work. For the sterling German instinct asks and seeks for nothing but this Purely-Human, and through that search alone can it be helpful—not merely to itself, but to all that shews the pure and genuine under never so great disguise.

Whom could it escape, that, suffering from the inability to truly manifest itself in either national or church-religious life, this noble instinct could but lead a feeble, indistinct, misunderstandable and scamped existence hitherto? In not one of those parties which aspire to guide the movements of our political or our intellectual national life, especially at the present day, does it seem to us, alas! to find a voice; even the names they take proclaim them not of German origin, still less inspired by German instinct. What "Conservatives," "Liberals" and "Conservative-liberals," and finally "Democrats," "Socialists," or even "Social-democrats" etc., have lately uttered on the Jewish Question, must seem to us a trifle foolish; for none of these parties would think of testing that "Know thyself" upon themselves, not even the most indefinite and therefore the only one that styles itself in German, the "Progress"-party. There we see nothing but a clash of interests, whose object is common to all the disputants, common and ignoble: plainly the side most strongly organised, i.e. the most unscrupulous, will bear away the prize. With all our comprehensive State- and National-Economy, it would seem that we are victims to a dream [274] now flattering, now terrifying, and finally asphyxiating: all are panting to awake therefrom; but it is the dream's peculiarity that, so long as it enmeshes us, we take it for real life, and fight against our wakening as though we fought with death. At last one crowning horror gives the tortured wretch the needful strength: he wakes, and what he held most real was but a figment of the dæmon of distraught mankind.

We who belong to none of all those parties, but seek our welfare solely in man's wakening to his simple hallowed dignity; we who are excluded from these parties as useless persons, and yet are sympathetically troubled for them,—we can only stand and watch the spasms of the dreamer, since no cry of ours can pierce to him. So let us save and tend and brace our best of forces, to bear a noble cordial to the sleeper when he wakes, as of himself he must at last. But only when the fiend, who keeps those ravers in the mania of their party-strife, no more can find a where or when to lurk among us, will there also be no longer—any Jews.

And the very stimulus of the present movement—conceivable among ourselves alone—might bring this great solution within reach of us Germans, rather than of any other nation, if only we would boldly take that "Know thyself" and apply it to the inmost quick of our existence. That we have naught to fear from ultimate knowledge, if but we conquer all

false shame and quarry deep enough, we hope the anxious may have culled from the above.

## Notes

### Note 1 on page 5

"*Erkenne dich selbst*" appeared in the *Bayreuther Blätter* for February-March (double no.) 1881.—Tr.

### Note 2 on page 5

See *Judaism in Music*, Vol. III. of the present series.—Tr.

### Note 3 on page 5

Decreed by the Reichstag in 1871.—Tr.

### Note 4 on page 6

It was not very long before this was written, that biblical critics began to turn their attention from the New to the Old Testament.—Tr.

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# *Hero-dom and Christendom*

By Richard Wagner

Translated by William Ashton Ellis



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## Contents

About this Title .....	4
Hero-dom and Christendom - A Continuation of "Religion and Art." .....	5
Notes .....	11

## About this Title

### Source

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[275]

## Hero-dom and Christendom

### A Continuation of "Religion and Art."

(1)

AFTER recognising the necessity of a regeneration of the human race, if we follow up the possibilities of its ennoblement we light on little else than obstacles. In our attempt to explain its downfall by a physical perversion we had the support of the noblest sages of all time, who believed they found the cause of degeneration in the substituting of animal for vegetable food; thus we necessarily were led to the assumption of a change in the fundamental substance of our body, and to a corrupted blood we traced the depravation of temperaments and of moral qualities proceeding from them.

Quite apart from such an explanation, one of the cleverest men of our day has also proved this fall to have been caused by a corruption of blood, though, leaving that change of diet wholly out of sight, he has derived it solely from the crossing of races, whereby the noblest lost more than the less noble of them gained. The uncommonly circumstantial picture of this process supplied us by Count Gobineau in his "*Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines*" (2) appeals to us with most terrible force of conviction. We cannot withhold our acknowledgment that the human family consists of irremediably disparate races, (3) whereof the noblest well might rule the more ignoble, yet never raise them to their level by commixture, but simply sink [276] to theirs. Indeed this one relation might suffice to explain our fall; even its cheerlessness should not blind us to it: if it is reasonable to assume that the dissolution of our earthly globe is purely a question of time, we probably shall have to accustom ourselves to the idea of the human species dying out. On the other hand there is such a matter as life beyond all time and space, and the question whether the world has a moral meaning we here will try to answer by asking ourselves if we mean to go to ground as beasts or gods.

The first point will be, to examine the special attributes of those noblest races, through whose enfeeblement they lost themselves among ignoble races. The more definitely has recent science inclined us to accept the natural descent of man's lower races from the animal species most resembling them, the harder is it to assent to a derivation of the so-called white race from those black and yellow: as to the explanation of the white tint itself our physiologists are still at variance. Whilst yellow races have viewed themselves as sprung from monkeys, the white traced back their origin to gods, and deemed themselves marked out for rulership. It has been made quite clear that we should have no History of Man at all, had there been no movements, creations and achievements of the white men; and we may fitly take world-history as the consequence of these white men mixing with the black and yellow, and bringing them in so far into history as that mixture altered them and made them less unlike the white. Incomparably fewer in individual numbers than the lower races, the ruin of the white races may be referred to their having been obliged to mix with them; whereby, as remarked already, they suffered more from the loss of their purity than the others could gain by the ennobling of their blood.

Without touching on the endless varieties produced by ever fresh inarchings of scions from the old root-stocks, our object merely bids us linger with the purest and noblest, to realise its overwhelming difference from the less. If a review of all the races makes it impossible to deny the [277] oneness of the human *species*; and if that common factor may be defined, in its noblest sense, as the capacity for conscious suffering,—we shall have to seek for what distinguishes the white race, if we are actually to rank it high above the others. With fine acumen Gobineau discovers it, not in an exceptional development of moral qualities, but in a

larger store of the temperamental attributes from which those morals flow. (4) These we should have to look for in that keener and withal more delicate sensibility of Will which shews itself in a complex organism, united with the requisite intensity of Intellect: the point being that, in answer to the cravings of the will, the intellect shall rise to that clear-sightedness which casts its own light back upon the will, and, taming it, becomes a moral prompting; whereas the overpowering of the intellect by the blindly craving will denotes the lower nature, since here we cannot class the stimuli as motives lit as yet by light of intellect, but simply as common promptings of the senses. However passionate may be the signs of Suffering in these lower natures, its conscious record in the downtrod intellect will be comparatively feeble; on the contrary it is just the strength of consciousness of Suffering, that can raise the intellect of higher natures to knowledge of the meaning of the world. Those natures in which the completion of this lofty process is evidenced by a corresponding deed, we call Heroic.—

The plainest type of heroism is that evolved by the Hellenic sagas in their *Herakles*. Labours put upon him to destroy him, he executes in proud obedience, and frees the world thereby from direst plagues. Seldom, in fact scarcely ever, do we find the hero otherwise than in a state of suffering prepared for him by fate: Herakles is persecuted by Hera out of jealousy of his divine begetter, and kept in menial subjection. In this main trait we surely should not do wrong to recognise an allusion to [278] that school of arduous labours in which the noblest Aryan stems and races throve to grandeur of demigods: the by no means mildest climates whence they enter history at last, as men matured, supply us with a clue to the fortunes of their ancestry. Here we find the fruit of suffering and deprivations vanquished by heroic toil, that proud self-consciousness whereby these stocks are once for all distinguished from the others throughout our whole world-history. Like Herakles and Siegfried, they were conscious of divine descent: a lie to them was inconceivable, and a free man meant a truthful man. Nowhere in history do these root-qualities of the Aryan race shew forth more plainly than in the contact of the last pure-bred Germanic branches with the falling Roman world. Here history repeats the one great feature of their mythic heroes: with bloody hands they serve the Romans, and—rate them infinitely lower than themselves, much as Herakles despised Eurystheus. The accident of their becoming masters of the great Latino-Semite realm was fatal to them. Pride is a delicate virtue and brooks no compromise, such as crossing of breed: but the Germanic race without this virtue has—naught to tell us. For this Pride is the soul of the truthful, of the free though serving. He knows no fear (*Furcht*), but respect (*Ehrfurcht*)—a virtue whose very name, in its proper sense, is known to none save those oldest Aryan peoples; whilst honour (*Ehre*) itself is the sum of all personal worth, and therefore can neither be given nor received, as is our practice to-day, but, a witness of divine descent, it keeps the hero unashamed even in his most shameful of sufferings. From Pride and Honour sprang the rule that, not property ennobles man, but man this property; which, again, was expressed in the custom that excessive possessions were speedily shared out, for very shame, by him to whom they haply fell.

Upon looking back to these characteristics and the inviolably noble code that flowed therefrom we certainly are justified in seeking the cause of their loss and its [279] decay in a depravation of those races' blood, since we see the fall undoubtedly accompany their hybridising. This fact has been so completely established by the talented and energetic author named above, that we need only refer our friends to his work on the Disparity of the Races of Man, to rest assured that what we now propose to link thereto will not be viewed as superficial guess-work. For we now must seek the Hero where he turns against the ruin of his race, the downfall of its code of honour, and girds his erring will to horror: the hero wondrously become divine—the *Saint*.

It was a weighty feature of the Christian Church, that none but sound and healthy persons were admitted to the vow of total world-renunciation; any bodily defect, not to say mutilation,

unfitted them. (5) Manifestly this vow was to be regarded as issuing from the most heroic of all possible resolves, and he who sees in it a "cowardly self-surrender"—as someone recently suggested, (6)—may bravely exult in his own self-retention, but had best not meddle any further with things that don't concern him. Granted that different causes moved different men to so completely turn their will from life, yet the act itself is always characterised by utmost energy of will; was it the look, the likeness or the mental picture of the Saviour suffering upon the cross, the influence of a pity overcoming all self-will was invariably united with the deepest horror at the attributes of this world-shaping Will, and to such a point that the will exerted all its strength in revolt against itself. From that moment we see the saint outvie the hero in his endurance of suffering, his self-offering for others; almost more unshakable than the hero's pride is [280] the saint's humility, and his truthfulness becomes the martyr's joy.

Now what part can "Blood," the quality of Race, have played in fitting for the exercise of so holy a heroism? The last, the Christian dispensation had its origin in that intensely complex blend of races white and black which, dating from the rise of the Chaldæo-Assyrian empire, supplied the basic character of the nations of the later Roman empire. The author of the great work now before us calls this character the Semitic, after one of those main stocks transplanted from North-eastern parts to the Assyrian plains; he proves to demonstration its transforming influence on Hellenism and Romanism, and finds its essential features still preserved in the self-styled "Latin" race despite all fresh cross-breeding. This race's property is the Roman Catholic Church; its patron-spirits are the saints that Church has canonised, nor should their value be diminished in our eyes by their now being upheld to the people's veneration in nothing but un-Christian pomp. But after centuries of huge perversion of the Semite-Latin Church we see no longer any genuine Saints, no Hero-martyrs of the Truth, arise therefrom; and if the falsehood of our whole Civilisation bears witness to corrupted blood in its supporters, 'twould be no stretch for us to say that the blood of Christendom itself is curdled. And what a blood? None other than the blood of the Redeemer's self which erewhile poured its hallowing stream into the veins of his true heroes.

The blood of the Saviour, the issue from his head, his wounds upon the cross,—who impiously would ask its race, if white or other? Divine we call it, and its source might dimly be approached in what we termed the human species' bond of union, its aptitude for Conscious Suffering. This faculty we can only regard as the last step reached by Nature in the ascending series of her fashionings; thenceforth she brings no new, no higher species to light, for in it she herself attains her unique freedom, the annulling of the internecine warfare of the Will. The hidden background [281] of this Will, inscrutable in Time and Space, is nowhere manifest to us but in that abrogation; and there it shews itself divine, the Willing of Redemption. Thus, if we found the faculty of conscious suffering peculiarly developed in the so-called white race, in the Saviour's blood we now must recognise the quintessence of free-willed suffering itself (*des bewusst wollenden Leidens selbst*), that godlike Pity which streams through all the human species, its fount and origin.

What we here can only touch in terms most hard to understand, and easily misconstrued, may take a more familiar aspect in the light of history. How high the most advanced white race could raise itself in weightiest matters of the world through keenness of that faculty which we have called the human species' bond of union, we see in its religions. The Brahminic religion we surely must rank as the most astounding evidence of the breadth of view and faultless mental accuracy of those earliest Aryan branches; on a groundwork of profoundest knowledge of the world they built a religious structure that has weathered all these thousand years unshaken, a dogma still obeyed by many million men as habit of all life and thought, high arbiter of death and suffering. It had one only fault: it was a race-religion. The deepest explanations of the world, the loftiest injunctions for redemption from it, to-day are taught, believed and followed by a vastly hybrid populace wherein no trace of true

morality can be detected. Without tarrying by this sight, or even seeking out the grounds of this phenomenon, let us merely remember that a race of conquerors and subjugators, appraising the enormous gulf between themselves and inferior races, founded at once a religion and a civilisation, whose mutual support and interaction were to ensure the permanence of a dominion based on careful calculation of existing natural factors. A masterpiece without its equal: binding the cruelly oppressed to their oppressors by so firm a metaphysical concordat, that any mutiny was made unthinkable; for even the Buddha's [282] broad endeavour for the human species must break against the stubborn racial veto of the white dictators, and become a superstition freshly palsying the yellow race.

From what blood, then, could the ever more consciously suffering genius of mankind bring forth a saviour, seeing that the blood of the white race was manifestly paling and congealing?—For the origin of natural Man our *Schopenhauer* propounds an hypothesis of wellnigh convincing power (7): going back to the physical law [Mariotti's] of increase of force under compression, he explains the unusual frequency of births of twins after abnormal periods of mortality as if the vital force were doubling its exertions under pressure of a pestilence that threatened to exterminate the species; which leads him to the theory that the procreative force in a given type of animals, threatened with extinction by opposing forces through some inherent defect in its organism, may have become so abnormally augmented in one mated pair that not merely does a more highly organised individual issue from the mother's womb, but in that individual a quite new *species*. The blood in the Redeemer's veins might thus have flowed, as divine sublimate of the species itself; from the redemptive Will's supreme endeavour to save mankind at death-throes in its noblest races.

Though we must regard this as the extreme limit of a speculation hovering between Physics and Metaphysics, and eschew all further pursuit of a path that has betrayed so many of our able minds into the most nonsensical farragos—especially under guidance of the Old Testament—yet from this hypothesis concerning the Redeemer's blood we may derive a second and the weightiest distinction of his work, namely the simplicity of his teaching, which consisted almost solely in Example. The blood [283] of suffering Mankind, as sublimated in that wondrous birth, could never flow in the interest of howsoever favoured a single race; no, it shed itself on all the human family, for noblest cleansing of Man's blood from every stain. Hence the sublime simplicity of the pure Christian religion, whereas the Brahminic, for instance, applying its knowledge of the world to the ensurance of supremacy for one advantaged race, became lost in artificiality and sank to the extreme of the absurd. Thus, notwithstanding that we have seen the blood of noblest races vitiated by admixture, the partaking of the blood of Jesus, as symbolised in the only genuine sacrament of the Christian religion, might raise the very lowest races to the purity of gods. This would have been the antidote to the decline of races through commingling, and perhaps our earth-ball brought forth breathing life for no other purpose than that ministrance of healing. (8)

Let us not mistake, however, the enormity of the assumption that the human species is destined to attain a uniform equality; and let us admit that such equality is unimaginable in any but a horrifying picture, like that which Gobineau feels bound to hold before us in his closing words. Yet it is only through our being obliged to look at it through the reek of our Civilisation and Culture, that this picture gains its full repellence: and to recognise these as themselves the lying offspring of the human race's misdirection, is the task of that spirit which left us when we lost our nobleness of blood and at like time found the Christian martyrs' antidote employed for binding us to all the lies and humbug of Church-rule. [284] Assuredly no task can be more cheerless, than to review the human races journeyed westward from their central-Asiatic home, and find that all their civilisation and religion has never yet enabled them to take concerted steps for so distributing themselves over the kindest regions of the earth that by far the largest portion of the obstacles to a free and healthy evolution of pacific



polities (*friedfertiger Gemeinde-Zustände*) should disappear through mere abandonment of the forbidding wastes which now so long have lodged their greatest numbers. It certainly may be right to charge this purblind dulness of our public spirit to a vitiation of our blood—not only by departure from the natural food of man, but above all by the tainting of the hero-blood of noblest races with that of former cannibals now trained to be the business-agents of Society,—provided one does not overlook the further fact, that no blaze of orders can hide the withered heart whose halting beat bewrays its issue from a union pledged without the seal of love, be it never so consanguineous.

However, if we mean to seek a gladdening outlook on the future of the human race past all these horrors, nothing can be of greater urgency than to follow up each vestige of surviving qualities, and count the possibilities of their enhancement. Here we shall have to bear in mind that, if the noblest race's rulership and exploitation of the lower races—quite justified in a natural sense—has founded a sheer immoral system throughout the world, any equalising of them all by flat commixture decidedly would not conduct to an æsthetic state of things. To us Equality is only thinkable as based upon a universal moral concord, such as we can but deem true Christianity elect to bring about; and that only on the subsoil of a true, but no mere "rational" Morality (as I lately saw desired by a philologist), can a true æsthetic Art bear fruit, the life and sufferings of all great seers and artists of the past proclaim aloud.—

And now that we have reached our own domain [viz. Art.—Tr.], we will take breath for further dealings with the problem broached.



## Notes

### Note 1 on page 5

*Heldenthum und Christenthum* originally appeared in the Bayreuther Blätter for September 1881.—Tr.

### Note 2 on page 5

Vide p. 39 antea.—Tr.

### Note 3 on page 5

Cf. "Alles ist nach seiner Art: an ihr wirst du nichts ändern"—*Siegfried*, act ii—which even Schopenhauer, so unappreciative of the literary *Ring des Nibelungen*, marked strongly with approval.—Tr.

### Note 4 on page 6

"Mit schöner Sicherheit erkennt ihn *Gobineau* nicht in einer ausnahmsweisen Entwicklung ihrer moralischen Eigenschaften selbst, sondern in einem grösseren Vorrathe der Grundeigenthümlichkeiten, welchen jene entfließen."

### Note 5 on page 7

Cf. "Doch büssen wollt' er [Klingsor] nun, ja heilig werden. Ohnmächtig in sich selbst die Sünde zu ertöden, an sich legt er die Frevlerhand, die nun, dem Grale zugewandt, verachtungsvoll dess' Hüter von sich stieß"—*Parsifal*, act i.—Tr.

### Note 6 on page 7

Cf. Nietzsche's *Morgenröthe* (pubd. July 1881), Aph. 38:—"The same impulse that becomes a painful feeling of *cowardice* under the reproaches cast on it by custom, becomes an agreeable feeling of *humility* if a code such as the Christian commends it to man's heart and calls it *good*."—Tr.

### Note 7 on page 8

*Parerga* II., § 93.—In the succeeding chapter, § 94, Schopenhauer also lays stress on the impossibility of Man's three chief races having sprung from one and the same pair, though he rejects their loose division into "white, yellow and black" (adopted by our author apparently for sake of common parlance) and adopts the modern designations of "Caucasian, Mongolian and Æthiopic."—Tr.

### Note 8 on page 8

"Während wir somit das Blut edelster Racen durch Vermischung sich verderben sehen, dürfte den niedrigsten Racen der Genuss des Blutes Jesu, wie er in dem einzigen ächten Sakramente der christlichen Religion symbolisch vor sich geht, zu göttlichster Reinigung gedeihen. Dieses Antidot wäre dem Verfalle der Racen durch ihre Vermischung entgegen gestellt, und vielleicht brachte dieser Erdball athmendes Leben nur hervor, um jener Heilsordnung zu dienen." I have thought it best to quote the German of these last two

sentences, as their construction presents peculiar difficulties to the translator; a remark that applies, in fact, to almost all the remainder of this article.—Tr.

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# *On the Womanly in the Human Race*

By Richard Wagner

Translated by William Ashton Ellis



The Wagner Library

Edition 1.0

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## Contents

About this Title .....	4
Translator's Note. ....	5
On the Womanly in the Human Race - (as conclusion of "Religion and Art.") .....	7
Notes .....	9



## About this Title

### Source

*On the Womanly in the Human Race*  
By Richard Wagner  
Translated by William Ashton Ellis

*Religion and Art*  
Richard Wagner's Prose Works  
Volume 6  
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Published in 1897

### Original Title Information

*Über das Weibliche im Menschlichen*  
Published in 1883  
Sämtliche Schriften und Dichtungen : Volume XII  
Pages 343-345

### Reading Information

This title contains 1319 words.  
Estimated reading time between 4 and 7 minutes.

Notes are indicated using parenthesis, like (1).  
Page numbers of the original source are indicated  
using square-bracketed parentheses, like [62].

[334]

## Translator's Note.

Although this fragment is not included in the *Gesammelte Schriften*, but was published in the posthumous collection of "*Entwürfe*" etc. (1885), it demands a place in the present volume as concluding the series of articles on Religion and Art. Destined for the *Bayreuther Blätter*, to complete that series, it was commenced two days before the master's death in Venice. The marginal notes are the author's, and appear to represent the scheme on which he worked.



[335]

## On the Womanly in the Human Race

(as conclusion of "Religion and Art.")

Vendramin, 11. Feb. 1883.

IN all the treatises on the fall of human races, with which I am acquainted, I find but incidental notice given to the character of the marriage-bond and its influence upon the attributes of the species. It was with the intention of resuming this subject at greater length, that I added to my article on "[Hero-dom and Christendom](#)" the following remark: "no blaze of orders can hide the withered heart whose halting beat bewrays its issue from a union pledged without the seal of love, be it never so consanguineous."

If we pause for a moment's deep reflection, we might easily be terrified by the boundless vista opened out by such a thought. Yet, as I lately advocated our searching for the purely-Human in its agreement with the ever-Natural, mature consideration will shew us the only reasonable and luminous departure-point in the relation between man and woman, or rather, the male and female. (1)

Whereas the fall of human races lies before us plain as day, we see the other animal species preserved in greatest purity, except where man has meddled in their crossing: manifestly, because they know no 'marriage of convenience' with a view to goods and property. In fact they know no marriage at all; and if it is Marriage that raises man so far above the animal world, to highest evolution of his moral faculties, it is the abuse of marriage, for quite other ends, that is the ground of our decline below the beasts.

Having thus been brought with almost startling swiftness [\[336\]](#) face to face with the sin that has dogged the progress of our civilisation, excluding us from those advantages which the beasts retain still undisfigured in their propagation, we may consider ourselves as having also reached the moral gist of our problem.

It is disclosed at once in the difference between the relation of the male to the female in animal, and in human life. However strongly the lust of the male in the highest types of beasts may be already directed to the individuality of the female, yet it only protects its mate until she is in the position to teach the young to help themselves, which she does till they can finally be left to go their way and forget the mother also: here Nature's sole concern is with the species, and she keeps it all the purer by permitting no sexual intercourse save under influence of mutual 'heat.' Man's severance from the animal kingdom, on the other hand, might be said to have been completed by the conversion of his 'heat' into passionate affection for the Individual, where the instinct of Species, so paramount among the beasts, almost fades away before the ideal satisfaction of the being-loved by this one individual: in the woman alone, the mother, does that instinct seem to retain its sovereignty; and thus, although transfigured by his ideal love towards her individuality, she preserves a greater kinship to that nature-force than the man, whose passion now mates the fettered mother-love by turning to fidelity. Love's loyalty: marriage; (2) here dwells Man's power over Nature, and divine we call it. 'Tis the fashioner of all noble races. Their emergence from the backward lower races might easily be explained by the prevalence of monogamy over polygamy; it is certain that the noblest white race is monogamic at its first appearance in saga and history, but marches toward its downfall through polygamy with the races which it conquers. (3)

[337]

This question of Polygamy versus Monogamy thus brings us to the contact of the

purely-human with the ever-natural. Superior minds have called Polygamy the more natural state, and the monogamic union a perpetual defiance of Nature. Undoubtedly, polygamous tribes stand nearer to the state of Nature, and, provided no disturbing mixtures intervene, thereby preserve their purity of type with the same success as Nature keeps her breeds of beasts unchanged. Only, a remarkable individuality the polygamous can not beget save under influence of the ideal canon of Monogamy; (4) a force which sometimes exerts its power, through passionate affection and love's loyalty, in the very harems of the Orientals. It is here that the Woman herself is raised above the natural law of sex (*das natürliche Gattungsgesetz*), to which, in the belief of even the wisest lawgivers, she remained so bound that the Buddha himself thought needful to exclude her from the possibility of saint-hood. (5) It is a beautiful feature in the legend, that shews the Perfect Overcomer prompted to admit the Woman.

## Notes

### Note 1 on page 7

I. 167-8n.

### Note 2 on page 7

Only by such marriages could the races ennoble themselves in procreation.

### Note 3 on page 7

Polygamy (possession) at once among conquerors.

### Note 4 on page 8

Ideality of the Man—Naturality of the Woman— —(Buddha)—now—degeneration of the man—etc.

### Note 5 on page 8

However, the process of emancipation of the Woman takes place amid ecstatic throes. Love—Tragedy.

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# *Beethoven*

By Richard Wagner

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## Contents

About this Title .....	4
Translator's Note .....	5
Preface .....	7
Beethoven .....	9
Notes .....	41

## About this Title

### Source

*Beethoven*

By Richard Wagner

Translated by William Ashton Ellis

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Richard Wagner's Prose Works

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Page numbers of the original source are indicated using square-bracketed parentheses, like [62].

[58]

## Translator's Note

Originally published by E. W. Fritsch, Leipzig, in the autumn of 1870, the essay on Beethoven reached a second edition before the end of the same year.



[59]

## Preface

AS the author of the accompanying work felt a longing to contribute his quota to the celebration of the hundredth birthday of our great BEETHOVEN, (01) and as no other opportunity worthy of that event was offered him, he has chosen a literary exposition of his thoughts, such as they are, on the import of Beethoven's music. The form of treatment came to him through the fiction that he had been called to deliver a speech at an ideal feast in honour of the great musician; as that speech, however, was not to be delivered in reality, he might give it the advantage of a greater compass than would have been permissible in the case of an address to an actual audience. Hereby it became possible for him to conduct the reader through a more searching inquiry into the nature of Music, and thus to submit to the consideration of men of serious culture a contribution to the Philosophy of Music; as which the following treatise may be regarded on the one hand, whilst the fiction that it is being read to a German audience upon a given day of this so uncommonly significant year, on the other, made natural a warm allusion to the stirring events of the time. The author having been enabled both to draft and execute [60] his work under the immediate stimulus of these events, may it also enjoy the advantage of bringing the German heart, in its present state of higher tension, into closer touch with the depths of the German Spirit than could ever be effected in the national life of everyday.





[61]

## Beethoven

DIFFICULT as it must always appear to the, thinker, to satisfactorily define the true relation of a great artist to his nation, that difficulty is enormously increased when the subject is neither a poet nor a modeller (*Bildner*), but a musician.

In judging the poet and plastic artist it certainly has ever been kept in eye that their mode of grasping the world's occurrences or forms is governed in the first place by the particularity of the nation to which they belong. If the tongue in which he writes has a prominent share in determining the thoughts the poet utters, no less strikingly does the nature of his Folk and country betray itself in the plastic artist's forms and colours. But neither through language, nor through any form wherein his country or his people greets the eye, does the musician reveal his origin. It therefore has been generally assumed that Tone-speech belongs to the whole human race alike, that Melody is an absolute tongue, in power whereof the musician speaks to every heart. Upon closer examination, to be sure, we recognise that it is very possible to talk of a German, as distinguished from an Italian music ; and for this difference one may even assign a national physiologic ground, to wit the Italian's great advantage in point of voice, giving just as definite a direction to the development of his music as the German's lack in this regard has driven him to his special province of the art of tone. Yet as this difference does not touch the essence of Tone-speech at all, but every melody, be it of German or Italian origin, is equally intelligible, that 'moment' may surely be neglected as a mere external, and cannot be conceived as exerting an influence to be compared with that of his native tongue in the case of the poet, or the physiognomic aspect of his country in that of the plastic artist: for even in the latter cases we [62] may regard those outward differences as favours granted or withheld by Nature, without our allowing them any bearing upon the artist's spiritual organism.

The idiosyncrasy that marks the musician as belonging to his nation must in any case be seated deeper than that whereby we recognise Goethe and Schiller as Germans, Rubens and Rembrandt as Netherlanders, even though we must take it that both have sprung, at bottom, from the selfsame cause. To follow up that cause, might be every whit as attractive as to explore the depths of Music' s nature. On the other hand it may prove easier to obtain a glimpse of what has hitherto eluded the grasp of Dialectics, if we set ourselves the more definite task of inquiring into the connexion of the great musician, whose hundredth anniversary we are now about to celebrate, with the German nation which has lately undergone such earnest trials of its worth.

Were we first to examine this connexion from the outer side, it might be none too easy to avoid deception by appearances. If it proves so difficult to account for a poet that we have been treated by a famous German literary-historian (02) to the most idiotic statements as to the evolution of Shakespeare's genius, we need not be surprised to find still greater aberrations when a musician like *Beethoven* is taken for subject in a similar strain. Into Goethe's and Schiller's evolution it has been granted us to look with greater sureness, for they have left us certain definite data in their conscious communications: but even these reveal the course of nothing but their æsthetic culture, which more accompanied than led their artistic work; as to the latter's material basis (*realen Unterlagen*), and in particular the choice of their poetic 'stuffs,' we merely learn in fact that accident surprisingly preponderated over purpose; an actual tendence in step with the march of outer world- or national history is the very last thing we discover there. Even as to the part played by purely personal life-impressions in the choice and moulding of these poets' stuffs we [63] can only argue with the greatest caution, lest it escape us that any such influence never shewed itself directly, but so indirectly that its operation on their true poetic fashioning is quite beyond all positive proof. One only thing we

know for certain from our researches in this quarter, that an evolution observable in this wise could pertain to none but German poets, to the great poets of that noble period of German rebirth.

But what conclusion is there to draw from the surviving letters of *Beethoven* and our uncommonly scanty store of information anent the outer, to say nothing of the inner life of our great musician, as to their relation with his tone-creations and the evolutionary course displayed therein? If we possessed the most microscopic data of all conscious incidents in this connection, they could yield us nothing more definite than is contained in the story of the master having originally sketched the "*Sinfonia eroica*" in homage to young General Bonaparte and written his name on the title-page, but afterwards crossed out that name when he heard of Bonaparte's having made himself Emperor. Never has any of our poets defined the tendency of one of his most important works with such precision: and what do we gain for our judgment of one of the most wondrous of all tone-works from this distinct enunciation? Can we make it explain a single bar of that score? Must it not appear sheer madness, even to seriously engage in the attempt?

I believe that the most positive fact we shall ever ascertain about Beethoven the man, in the very best event, will stand in the same relation to Beethoven the musician as General Bonaparte to the "*Sinfonia eroica*." Viewed from this side of consciousness, the great musician must always remain a complete enigma to us. At all to solve this enigma, we undoubtedly must strike an altogether different path from that on which it is possible, up to a certain point at least, to follow the creative work of Goethe and Schiller: and that point itself becomes a vanishing one exactly at the spot where creation passes from a conscious to an [64] unconscious act, i.e. where the poet no longer chooses the æsthetic Form, but it is imposed upon him by his inner vision (*Anschauung*) of the Idea itself. Precisely in this beholding of the Idea, however, resides the fundamental difference between poet and musician; and to arrive at a little clearness on this point we first must proceed to a deeper examination of the problem touched on.—

The said diversity comes out quite plainly in the plastic artist, when compared with the musician; betwixt them stands the poet, inclining toward the plastic artist in his conscious fashioning (*Gestalten*), approaching the musician on the mystic ground of his unconsciousness. With *Goethe* the conscious leaning toward plastic art was so strong that at a momentous epoch of his life he actually deemed himself intended for its practice, and, in a certain sense, his whole life through he preferred to regard his poetic labours as a kind of effort to make up for a missed career as painter: on the side of consciousness he was a thorough student of the visual world. (03) Schiller, on the contrary, was far more strongly attracted to an exploration of the subsoil of inner consciousness that lies entirely aloof from vision (*Anschauung*), to that "thing in itself" of the Kantian philosophy, whose study so engrossed him in the main period of his higher evolution. The point of lasting contact of these two great minds lay precisely where the poet, journeying from either extreme, alights on his self-consciousness. They met, too, in their presage of the *essence of Music*; only, with Schiller it was accompanied by a deeper insight than with Goethe, who, in keeping with his whole tendency, regarded more the pleasing, plastic symmetry of art-music, that element which gives the art of Tone an analogy with Architecture. Schiller took a deeper grasp of the problem, giving it as his opinion—to which he obtained the assent of Goethe—that the Epos leans toward Plastic art, the Drama, on the contrary, toward Music. And quite in harmony with our foregoing [65] judgment of both these poets, Schiller was actually the happier in drama proper, whilst Goethe shewed an unmistakable preference for the epic style of treatment.

But it was *Schopenhauer* who first defined the position of Music among the fine arts with philosophic clearness, ascribing to it a totally different nature from that of either plastic or

poetic art. He starts from wonder at Music's speaking a language immediately intelligible by everyone, since it needs no whit of intermediation through abstract concepts (*Begriffe*); which completely distinguishes it from Poetry, in the first place, whose sole material consists of concepts, employed by it to visualise the *Idea*. (04) For according to this philosopher's so luminous definition it is the Ideas of the world and of its essential phenomena, in the sense of Plato, that constitute the 'object' of the fine arts; whereas, however, the Poet interprets these Ideas to the visual consciousness (*dem anschauenden Bewusstsein*) through an employment of strictly rationalistic concepts in a manner quite peculiar to his art, Schopenhauer believes he must recognise *in Music itself an Idea of the world*, since he who could entirely translate it into abstract concepts would have found withal a philosophy to explain the world itself. [66] Though Schopenhauer propounds this theory of Music as a paradox, since it cannot strictly be set forth in logical terms, he also furnishes us with the only serviceable material for a further demonstration of the justice of his profound hypothesis; a demonstration which he himself did not pursue more closely, perhaps for simple reason that as layman he was not conversant enough with music, and moreover was unable to base his knowledge thereof sufficiently definitely on an understanding of the very musician whose works have first laid open to the world that deepest mystery of Music; for *Beethoven*, of all others, is not to be judged exhaustively until that pregnant paradox of Schopenhauer's has been solved and made right clear to philosophic apprehension.—

In making use of this material supplied us by the philosopher I fancy I shall do best to begin with a remark in which Schopenhauer declines to accept the Idea derived from a knowledge of "relations" as the essence of the Thing-in-itself, but regards it merely as expressing the objective character of things, and therefore as still concerned with their phenomenal appearance. "And we should not understand this character itself"—so Schopenhauer goes on to say—"were not the inner essence of things confessed to us otherwise, dimly at least and in our Feeling. For that essence cannot be gathered from the Ideas, nor understood through any mere *objective* knowledge; wherefore it would ever remain a mystery, had we not access to it from quite another side. Only inasmuch as every observer [lit. knower, or perceiver—*Erkenner*] is an Individual withal, and thereby part of Nature, stands there open to him in his own self-consciousness the adit to Nature's innermost; and there forthwith, and most immediately, it makes itself known to him as *Will*." (05)

If we couple with this what Schopenhauer postulates as the condition for entry of an Idea into our consciousness, namely "a temporary preponderance of intellect over will, or to put it physiologically, a strong excitation of the [67] sensory faculty of the brain (*der anschauenden Gehirnthätigkeit*) without the smallest excitation of the passions or desires," we have only further to pay close heed to the elucidation which directly follows it, namely that our consciousness has two sides: in part it is a consciousness of *one's own self* which is the will; in part a consciousness of *other things*, and chiefly then a *visual* knowledge of the outer world, the apprehension of objects. "The more the one side of the aggregate consciousness comes to the front, the more does the other retreat." (06)

After well weighing these extracts from Schopenhauer as principal work it must be obvious to us that musical conception, as it has nothing in common with the seizure of an Idea (for the latter is absolutely bound to physical perception of the world), can have its origin nowhere but upon that side of consciousness which Schopenhauer defines as facing inwards. Though this side may temporarily retire completely, to make way for entry of the purely apprehending 'subject' on its function (i.e. the seizure of Ideas), on the other hand it transpires that only from this inward-facing side of consciousness can the intellect derive its ability to seize the Character of things. If this consciousness, however, is the consciousness of one's own self, i.e. of the Will, we must take it that its repression is indispensable indeed for purity of the outward-facing consciousness, but that the nature of the Thing-in-itself—inconceivable

by that physical [or "visual"] mode of knowledge—would only be revealed to this inward-facing consciousness when it had attained the faculty of seeing within as clearly as that other side of consciousness is able in its seizure of Ideas to see without.

For a further pursuit of this path Schopenhauer has also given us the best of guides, through his profound hypothesis (07) concerning the physiologic phenomenon of Clairvoyance, [68] and the Dream-theory he has based thereon. For as in that phenomenon the inward-facing consciousness attains the actual power of sight where our waking daylight consciousness feels nothing but a vague impression of the midnight background of our will's emotions, so from out this night *Tone* bursts upon the world of waking, a direct utterance of the Will. As dreams must have brought to everyone's experience, beside the world envisaged by the functions of the waking brain there dwells a second, distinct as is itself, no less a world displayed to vision ; since this second world can in no case be an object lying outside us, it therefore must be brought to our cognisance by an *inward* function of the brain; and this form of the brain's perception Schopenhauer here calls the Dream-organ. Now a no less positive experience is this: besides the world that presents itself to sight, in waking as in dreams, we are conscious of the existence of a second world, perceptible only through the ear, manifesting itself through sound; literally a *sound-world* beside the *light-world*, a world of which we may say that it bears the same relation to the visible world as dreaming to waking: for it is quite as plain to us as is the other, though we must recognise it as being entirely different. As the world of dreams can only come to vision through a special operation of the brain, so Music enters our consciousness through a kindred operation; only, the latter differs exactly as much from the operation consequent on *sight*, as that Dream-organ from the function of the waking brain under the stimulus of outer impressions.

As the Dream-organ cannot be roused into action by outer impressions, against which the brain is now fast [69] locked, this must take place through happenings in the inner organism that our waking consciousness merely feels as vague sensations. But it is this inner life through which we are directly allied with the whole of Nature, and thus are brought into a relation with the Essence of things that eludes the forms of outer knowledge, Time and Space; whereby Schopenhauer so convincingly explains the genesis of prophetic or telepathic (*das Fernste wahrnehmbar machenden*), fatidical dreams, ay, in rare and extreme cases the occurrence of somnambulistic clairvoyance. From the most terrifying of such dreams we wake with a *scream*, the immediate expression of the anguished will, which thus makes definite entrance into the Sound-world first of all, to manifest itself without. Now if we take the Scream in all the diminutions of its vehemence, down to the gentler cry of longing, as the root-element of every human message to the ear; and if we cannot but find in it the most immediate utterance of the will, through which the latter turns the swiftest and the surest toward Without, then we have less cause to wonder at its immediate intelligibility than at an *art* arising from this element: for it is evident, upon the other hand, that neither artistic beholding nor artistic fashioning can result from aught but a diversion of the consciousness from the agitations of the will.

To explain this wonder, let us first recall our philosopher's profound remark adduced above, that we should never understand even the Ideas that by their very nature are only seizable through will-freed, i.e. objective contemplation, had we not another approach to the Essence-of-things which lies beneath them, namely our direct consciousness of our own self. By this consciousness alone are we enabled to understand withal the inner nature of things outside us, inasmuch as we recognise in them the selfsame basic essence that our self-consciousness declares to be our very own. Our each illusion hereanent had sprung from the mere *sight* of a world around us, a world that in the show of daylight we took for something [70] quite apart from us (08) first through (intellectual) perception of the Ideas, and thus upon a circuitous path, do we reach an initial stage of undeception, in which we no



longer see things parcelled off in time and space, but apprehend their generic character; and this character speaks out the plainest to us from the works of Plastic art, whose true province it therefore is to take the illusive surface (*Schein*) of the light-shewn world and, in virtue of a most ingenious playing with that semblance, lay bare the Idea concealed beneath. In daily life the mere sight of an object leaves us cold and unconcerned, and only when we become aware of that object's bearings on our will, does it call forth an emotion; in harmony wherewith it very properly ranks as the first æsthetic principle of Plastic art, that its imagings shall entirely avoid such references to our individual will, and prepare for our sight that calm which alone makes possible a pure Beholding of the object according to its own character. Yet the effector of this æsthetic, will-freed contemplation, into which we momentarily plunge, here remains nothing but the *show* of things. And it is this principle of tranquillisation by sheer pleasure in the semblance, that has been extended from Plastic art to all the arts, and made a postulate for every manner of æsthetic pleasing. Whence, too, has come our term for *beauty* (*Schönheit*); the root of which word in our German language is plainly connected with Show (*Schein*) as object, with Seeing (*Schauen*) as subject.—

But that consciousness which alone enabled us to grasp the Idea transmitted by the Show we looked on, must feel compelled at last to cry with Faust: "A spectacle superb! But still, alas! a spectacle. Where seize I thee, o Nature infinite?"

This cry is answered in the most positive manner by *Music*. Here the world outside us speaks to us in terms intelligible beyond compare, since its sounding message to our ear is of the selfsame nature as the cry sent forth to it [71] from the depths of our own inner heart. The Object of the tone perceived is brought into immediate rapport with the Subject of the tone emitted: without any reasoning go-between we understand the cry for help, the wail, the shout of joy, and straightway answer it in its own tongue. If the scream, the moan, the murmured happiness in our own mouth is the most direct utterance of the will's emotion, so when brought us by our ear we understand it past denial as utterance of the same emotion; no illusion is possible here, as in the daylight Show, to make us deem the essence of the world outside us not wholly identical with our own; and thus that gulf which seems to sight is closed forthwith.

Now if we see an art arise from this immediate consciousness of the oneness of our inner essence with that of the outer world, our most obvious inference is that this art must be subject to æsthetic laws quite distinct from those of every other. All Æsthetes hitherto have rebelled against the notion of deducing a veritable art from what appears to them a purely pathologic element, and have consequently refused to Music any recognition until its products shew themselves in a light as cold as that peculiar to the fashionings of plastic art. Yet that its very rudiment (*ihr blosses Element*) is felt, not seen, by our deepest consciousness as a world's Idea, we have learnt to recognise forthwith through Schopenhauer's eventful aid, and we understand that Idea as a direct revelation of the oneness of the Will; starting with the oneness of all human being, our consciousness is thereby shewn beyond dispute our unity with Nature, whom equally we recognise through Sound. (09)

Difficult as is the task of eliciting Music's nature as an art, we believe we may best accomplish it by considering the inspired musician's *modus operandi*. In many respects this must radically differ from that of other artists. As to the latter we have had to acknowledge that it must be preceded by a will-freed, pure beholding of the object, an act [72] of like nature with the effect to be produced by the artwork itself in the mind of the spectator. Such an object, however, to be raised to an Idea by means of pure Beholding, does not present itself to the musician at all; for his music is itself a world's-Idea, an Idea in which the world immediately displays its essence, whereas in those other arts this essence has to pass through the medium of the understanding (*das Erkenntniss*) before it can *become* displayed. We can but take it that the *individual will*, silenced in the plastic artist through pure beholding, awakes

in the musician as the *universal Will*, and—above and beyond all power of vision—now recognises itself as such in full self-consciousness. Hence the great difference in the mental state of the concipient musician and the designing artist; hence the radically diverse effects of music and of painting: here profoundest stilling, there utmost excitation of the will. In other words we here have the will in the Individual as such, the will imprisoned by the fancy (*Wahn*) of its difference from the essence of things outside, and unable to lift itself above its barriers save in the purely disinterested beholding of objects; whilst there, in the musician's case, the will feels *one* forthwith, above all bounds of individuality: for Hearing has opened it the gate through which the world thrusts home to it, it to the world. This prodigious breaking-down the floodgates of Appearance must necessarily call forth in the inspired musician a state of ecstasy wherewith no other can compare: in it the will perceives itself the almighty Will of all things: it has not mutely to yield place to contemplation, but proclaims itself aloud as conscious World-Idea. One state surpasses his, and one alone,—the Saint's, and chiefly through its permanence and imperturbability; whereas the clairvoyant ecstasy of the musician has to alternate with a perpetually recurrent state of individual consciousness, which we must account the more distressful the higher has his inspiration carried him above all bounds of individuality. And this suffering again, allotted him as penalty for the state of inspiration in which he so unutterably entrances us, might [73] make us hold the musician in higher reverence than other artists, ay, wellnigh give him claim to rank as holy. For his art, in truth, compares with the communion of all the other arts as *Religion* with the *Church*.

We have seen that in the other arts the Will is longing to become pure Knowledge (*gänzlich Erkenntniss zu werden verlangt*), but that this is possible only in so far as it stays stock-still in its deepest inner chamber: 'tis as if it were awaiting tidings of redemption from there outside; content they it not, it sets itself in that state of clairvoyance; and here, beyond the bounds of time and space, it knows itself the world's both One and All. What it here has seen, no tongue can impart (10) as the dream of deepest sleep can only be conveyed to the waking consciousness through translation into the language of a second, an allegoric dream which immediately precedes our wakening, so for the direct vision of its self the Will creates a second organ of transmission,—an organ whose one side faces toward that inner vision, whilst the other thrusts into the reappearing outer world with the sole direct and sympathetic message, that of Tone. The Will cries out; and in the countercry it knows itself once more: thus cry and countercry become for it a comforting, at last an entrancing play with its own self.

Sleepless one night in Venice, I stepped upon the balcony of my window overlooking the Grand Canal: like a deep dream the fairy city of lagoons lay stretched in shade before me. From out the breathless silence rose the strident cry of a gondolier just woken on his barque; again and again his voice went forth into the night, till from remotest distance its fellow-cry came answering down the midnight length of the Canal: I recognised the drear melodic phrase to which the well-known lines of Tasso were also wedded in his day, but which in itself is certainly as old as Venice's canals and people. After many a solemn pause the ringing dialogue took quicker life, and seemed [74] at last to melt in unison; till finally the sounds from far and near died softly back to new-won slumber. Whate'er could sun-steeped, colour-swarmed Venice of the daylight tell me of itself, that that sounding dream of night had not brought infinitely deeper, closer, to my consciousness?— Another time I wandered through the lofty solitude of an upland vale in Uri. In broad daylight from a hanging pasture-land came shouting the shrill jodel of a cowherd, sent forth across the broadening valley; from the other side anon there answered it, athwart the monstrous silence, a like exultant herd-call: the echo of the towering mountain walls here mingled in; the brooding valley leapt into the merry lists of sound.—So wakes the child from the night of the mother-womb, and answer it the mother's crooning kisses; so understands the yearning youth

the woodbird's mate-call, so speaks to the musing man the moan of beasts, the whistling wind, the howling hurricane, till over him there comes that dreamlike state in which the ear reveals to him the inmost essence of all his eye had held suspended in the cheat of scattered show, and tells him that his inmost being is one therewith, that only in *this* wise can the Essence of things without be learnt in truth.

The dreamlike nature of the state into which we thus are plunged through sympathetic hearing—and wherein there dawns on us that other world, that world from whence the musician speaks to us—we recognise at once from an experience at the door of every man: namely that our eyesight is paralysed to such a degree by the effect of music upon us, that with eyes wide open we no longer intensively see. We experience this in every concert-room while listening to any tone-piece that really touches us, where the most hideous and distracting things are passing before our eye, things that assuredly would quite divert us from the music, and even move us to laughter, if we actively saw them; I mean, besides the highly trivial aspect of the audience itself, the mechanical movements of the band, the whole peculiar working [75] apparatus of an orchestral production. That this spectacle—which preoccupies the man untouched by the music—at last ceases to disturb the spellbound listener, plainly shews us that we no longer are really conscious of it, but, for all our open eyes, have fallen into a state essentially akin to that of hypnotic clairvoyance. And in truth it is in this state alone that we immediately belong to the musician's world. From out that world, which nothing else can picture, the musician casts the meshwork of his tones to net us, so to speak; or, with his wonder-drops of sound he dewes our brain as if by magic, and robs it of the power of seeing aught save our own inner world.

To gain a glimpse of his procedure, we again can do no better than return to its analogy with that inner process whereby—according to Schopenhauer's so luminous assumption—the dream of deepest sleep, entirely remote from the waking cerebral consciousness, as it were translates itself into the lighter, allegoric dream which immediately precedes our waking. We have seen that the musician's kindred glossary extends from the scream of horror to the suave play of soothing murmurs. In the employment of the ample range that lies between, the musician is controlled, as it were, by an urgent impulse to impart the vision of his inmost dream; like the second, allegoric dream, he therefore approaches the notions (*Vorstellungen*) of the waking brain—those notions whereby it is at last enabled to preserve a record, chiefly for itself, of the inner vision. The extreme limit of this approach, however, is marked by the notions of *Time*: those of *Space* he leaves behind an impenetrable veil, whose lifting needs must make his dream invisible forthwith. Whilst *harmony*, belonging to neither *Space* nor *Time*, remains the most inalienable element of *Music*, through the *rhythmic* sequence of his tones in point of time the musician reaches forth a plastic hand, so to speak, to strike a compact with the waking world of semblances; just as the allegoric dream so far makes contact with the Individual's wonted notions that the waking consciousness, albeit at once detecting [76] the great difference of even this dream-picture from the outer incidents of actual life, yet is able to retain its image. So the musician makes contact with the plastic world through the *rhythmic* ordering of his tones, and that in virtue of a resemblance to the laws whereby the motion of visible bodies is brought to our intelligence. Human *Gesture*, which seeks to make itself intelligible in *Dance* through an expressive regularity of changeful motion, thus seems to play the same part toward *Music* as bodies, in their turn, toward *Light*: without refraction and reflection, *Light* would not shine; and so we may say that without rhythm, *Music* would not be observable. But, at this very point of contact between *Plastique* and *Harmony*, the nature of *Music* is plainly shewn to be entirely distinct from that of *Plastic* art in particular; whereas the latter fixes *Gesture* in respect of space, but leaves its motion to be supplied by our reflective thought, *Music* speaks out *Gesture*'s inmost essence in a language so direct that, once we are saturated with the music, our eyesight is positively



incapacitated for intensive observation of the gesture, so that finally we understand it without our really seeing it. Thus, though Music draws her nearest affinities in the phenomenal world into her dream-realm, as we have called it, this is only in order to turn our visual faculties inwards through a wondrous transformation, so to speak, enabling them to grasp the Essence-of-things in its most immediate manifestation, as it were to read the vision which the musician had himself beheld in deepest sleep.—

As for Music's standing toward the plastic forms of the phenomenal world, and toward abstractions derived from things themselves, nothing can possibly be more lucid than what we read under this heading in Schopenhauer's work; so that it would be quite superfluous for us to dwell thereon, and we may turn to our principal object, namely an inquiry into the nature of the Musician himself.

However, we first must dwell on a crucial point in the æsthetic judgment (*Urtheil*) of Music as an art. For we find that from the forms wherein Music seems to join hands [77] with the outer world of Appearance there has been deduced an utterly preposterous demand upon the character of her utterances. As already mentioned, axioms founded simply on a scrutiny of Plastic art have been transferred to Music. That such a solecism could have been committed, we have at any rate to attribute to the aforesaid "nearest approach" of Music to the visual side of the world and its phenomena. In this direction indeed the art of Music has taken a development which has exposed her to so great a misapprehension of her veritable character that folk have claimed from her a function similar to that of plastic works of art, namely the susciting of our *pleasure in beautiful forms*. As this was synchronous with a progressive decline in the judgment of plastic art itself, it may easily be imagined how deeply Music was thus degraded; at bottom, she was asked to wholly repress her ownest nature for mere sake of turning her outmost side to our delectation.

Music, who speaks to us solely through quickening into articulate life the most universal concept of the inherently speechless Feeling, in all imaginable gradations, can once and for all be judged by nothing but the category of the *sublime*; for, as soon as she engrosses us, she transports us to the highest ecstasy of consciousness of our infinitude. (11) [78] On the other hand what enters only *as a sequel* to our plunging into contemplation of a work of plastic art, namely the (temporary) liberation of the intellect from service to the individual will through our discarding all relations of the object contemplated to that will—the required effect of *beauty* on the mind,—is brought about by Music at her very *first entry*; inasmuch as she withdraws us at once from any concern with the relation of things outside us, and—as pure Form set free from Matter—shuts us off from the outer world, as it were, to let us gaze into the inmost Essence of ourselves and all things. Consequently our verdict on any piece of music should be based upon a knowledge of those laws whereby the effect of Beauty, the very first effect of Music's mere appearance, advances the most directly to a revelation of her truest character through the agency of the Sublime. It would be the stamp of an absolutely empty piece of music, on the contrary, that it never got beyond a mere prismatic toying with the effect of its first entry, and consequently kept us bound to the relations presented by Music's outermost side to the world of vision.

Upon this side alone, indeed, has Music been given any lasting development; and that by a systematising of her rhythmic structure (*Periodenbau*) which on the one hand has brought her into comparison with Architecture, on the other has made her so much a matter of superficialities (*ihr eine Ueberschaulichkeit gegeben hat*) as to expose her to the said false judgment by analogy with Plastic art. Here, in her outermost restriction to banal forms and conventions, she seemed e.g. to Goethe so admirably suited for a standard of poetical proportion (*zur Normirung dichterischer Konzeptionen*). To be able in these conventional forms so to toy with Music's stupendous powers that her own peculiar function, the making known the inner essence of all things, should be avoided like a deluge, for long was deemed by æsthetes the

true and only acceptable issue of maturing the art of Tone. But to have pierced through these forms to the innermost essence of Music in such a [79] way that from that inner side he could cast the light of the Clairvoyant on the outer world, and shew us these forms themselves again in nothing but their inner meaning,—this was the work of our great *Beethoven*, whom we therefore have to regard as the true archetype of the Musician.—

If, retaining our oft-adduced analogy of the allegoric dream, we mean to think of Music as incited by an inner vision (*Schau*) and endeavouring to convey that vision to the world without, we must subsume a special organ for the purpose, analogous to the Dream-organ in the other case, a cerebral attribute in power whereof the musician first perceives the inner In-itself close-sealed to earthly knowledge (*das aller Erkenntniss verschlossene innere An-sich*): a kind of eye, when it faces inwards, that becomes an ear when directed outwards. For the most speaking likeness of that inmost (dream-) image of the world perceived thereby, we have only to listen to one of those famous church-pieces of *Palestrina's*. Here Rhythm is nowhere traceable save through the play of the harmonic sequences; as a symmetrical succession in time, apart from them, it does not exist at all. Here, then, Succession (*Zeitfolge*) is still so rigidly bound to that timeless, spaceless essence, Harmony, that we cannot as yet employ the laws of Time to aid us in the understanding of such music. The sole idea of Succession in such a piece is expressed by wellnigh nothing but the gentlest fluctuations of one ground-colour, which presents us with the most varied modulations within the range of its affinity, without our being able to trace a line in all its changes. As this colour itself does not appear in Space, we here are given an image almost as timeless as it is spaceless, an altogether spiritual revelation; and the reason why it moves us so indicibly is that, more plainly than all other things, it brings to our consciousness the inmost essence of Religion free from all dogmatic fictions.

Let us turn from this to a piece of dance-music, to an orchestral symphonic movement modelled on the dance-motive, or finally to a downright operatic *pièce*: we find [80] our fancy chained forthwith by a regular order in the recurrence of rhythmic periods, the *plastic* element that forms the chief factor in Melody's insistence. (12) Music developed along these lines has very properly been given the name of "secular," in opposition to that "spiritual." Elsewhere I have expressed myself plainly enough upon the principle of this development, (13) and here will merely touch upon its already-noted aspect of the allegoric dream; whence it would seem that the musician's "eye," now woken to the phenomena of the outer world, attaches itself to such of them whose inner essence it can understand forthwith. The outer laws which he thus derives from the gestures of life, and finally from its every element of motion, become the laws of Rhythm in virtue whereof he constructs his periods of contrast and return. The more these periods are instinct with the true spirit of Music, the less will they be architectonic emblems diverting our attention from the music's pure effect. On the contrary, wherever that aforesaid inner Spirit of Music—sufficiently described above— tones down its surest manifestment for sake of this columnar ordering of rhythmic parts, there nothing will arrest us but that outward symmetry, and we shall necessarily reduce our claims on Music herself to a prime demand for regularity.—Music here quits her state of lofty innocence; she loses her power of redeeming from the curse of Appearance: no longer is she the prophetess of the Essence of things, but herself becomes entangled in the illusive show of things outside us. For to *this* music one wants to *see* something as well, and that something to-be-seen becomes the chief concern: as "Opera" proves right plainly, where spectacle, ballet and so forth make out the [81] lure, the main attraction, and visibly enough proclaim the degeneracy of the music there employed.—



We will now illustrate the above by an inquiry into the *evolution of Beethoven's genius*;

and here, to abandon generalities, we have first to consider the practical maturing of the master's own peculiar style.—

The qualification, the predestination of a musician for his art, can only be shewn in the effect produced upon him by the music going on around him. In what manner his faculty of inner vision, that clairvoyance of the deepest world-dream, has been aroused thereby, we do not learn till he has fully reached the goal of his self-development; up to then he obeys the laws of reaction of outward impressions, and for him, as musician, these latter are chiefly derived from the tone-works of masters of his time. Here we find Beethoven roused the least by works of Opera, whereas he was more alive to impressions from the church-music of his age. The *métier* of pianoforte-player however, which he had to adopt in order "to be something" in the profession, brought him into lasting and most familiar contact with the pianoforte-compositions of the masters of his period. In this department the "*sonata*" had become the model form. We might say that Beethoven was and remained a Sonata-composer, for in the great majority and the most eminent of his instrumental works the Sonata-form was the veil through which he looked into the realm of tones, or—to put it another way—through which he spoke to us from out that realm; whilst other forms, and notably those of 'mixed' vocal music, despite the most extraordinary achievements with them, were merely touched by him in passing, as if tentatively.

The laws of the Sonata-form had been established for all time by Emanuel Bach, Haydn and Mozart; they were the product of a compromise between the German and [82] Italian spirits of music. Its external character was conferred on it by its employment: with the Sonata the pianoforte-player made his bow to the public, which he was to regale with his dexterity as such, and at like time to entertain agreeably as musician. Here we no longer had Sebastian Bach, who gathered his congregation in the church before the organ, or thither called the connoisseurs to a contest twixt himself and colleagues; a wide gulf divided the wondrous master of the Fugue from the cherishers of the Sonata. By them the art of Fugue was learnt as a means of fortifying their musical study, but employed in the sonata by way of nothing but artifice: the rugged strictness of pure Counterpoint yielded to pleasure in a set Eurhythmy; to fill whose ready-made mould with the nearest approach to Italian euphony, appeared to answer every claim on music. In Haydn's instrumental works we seem to see the genie (*Dämon*) of Music playing with its fetters, with the childishness of a greybeard born. Not incorrectly have the earlier works of Beethoven been attributed to Haydn's example; nay, even at a riper period of its evolution, his genius has been rated more akin to that of Haydn than to that of Mozart. Into the peculiar nature of this kinship, however, we gain a striking insight from Beethoven's personal attitude toward Haydn, whom he absolutely refused to recognise as his teacher, even allowing his young arrogance to indulge in positively insulting remarks about him. It seems that he felt the same relation to Haydn as the born adult to the man in second childhood. Far above and beyond the formal resemblance to his teacher, the genie of his inner music, indomitable by those fettering forms, was driving him to a demonstration of his force; and that, like every outward act of this prodigy of a musician, could only take the shape of inconciliable brusqueness.—Of his interview with Mozart [1787] we are informed that the petulant youth sprang up from the clavier after playing a sonata by the master's desire, and, to shew himself in his true colours, requested permission to improvise; which being granted, [83] he produced so marked an impression on Mozart that the latter told his friends: "from *this* one the world will get something worth hearing." That would be about the time when Mozart's own genius, till then held back from following its inner bent by the untold tyranny of a musician's wretchedly toilsome career, was consciously ripening toward its full expansion. We know how the master faced his all too early death with the bitter consciousness that at last he would have been able to shew the world what music there was in him.

Young Beethoven, on the contrary, we see daring the world from the first with that defiant temper which kept him in almost savage independence his whole life through: a stupendous sense-of-self, supported by the proudest spirit, armed him at every hour against the frivolous demands addressed to Music by a world of pleasure. Against the importunities of an etiolated taste, he had a treasure of inestimable price to guard. In those same forms, in which Music was expected to merely shew herself a pleasing art, he had to proclaim the divinations of the inmost world of Tone. Thus he is at all times like a man possessed; for to him in truth applies what Schopenhauer has said of the Musician in general: he speaks the highest wisdom in a tongue his reason (*Vernunft*) does not understand. (14)

The "Vernunft" of his art he found in that spirit which had built the formal framework of its outer scaffolding. And what a scant Vernunft it was that spoke to him from that architectonic poise of periods, when he saw how even the greatest masters of his youth bestirred themselves with banal repetition of flourishes and phrases, with mathematical distribution of loud and soft, with regulation introductions of just so many solemn bars, and the inevitable passage through the gate of just so many half-closes to the saving uproar of the final cadence! 'Twas the Vernunft that had formed the operatic aria, dictated the stringing-together of operatic numbers, the logic that made Haydn chain his genie to an everlasting counting of his rosary-beads. [84] For Religion had vanished from the Church with Palestrina's music, and the artificial formalism of Jesuit observance had counterformed Religion and Music alike. So the thoughtful visitor finds venerable Rome disguised beneath the Jesuit architecture of the last two centuries; so glorious Italian painting turned to slops and sugar; so, and under the selfsame lead, arose French "classic" poetry, in whose spirit-slaying laws we may trace a speaking likeness to the laws of construction of the operatic Aria and the Sonata.

We know that it was the "German spirit," so terribly dreaded and hated "across the mountains," that stepped into the field of Art, as everywhere else, to heal this artfully induced corruption of the European race. As in other realms we have hailed our Lessing, Goethe, Schiller and the rest, as our rescuers from that corruption, to-day we have to shew that in this musician Beethoven, who spoke the purest speech of every nation, the German spirit redeemed the spirit of mankind from deep disgrace. For inasmuch as Music had been degraded to a merely pleasing art, and by dint of her ownest essence he raised her to the height of her sublime vocation, he has set open for us the understanding of that art which explains the world to everyone as surely as the profoundest philosophy could ever explain it to the abstract thinker. *And herein lies the unique relation of great Beethoven to the German people*, which we now will try to follow through the special features of his life and work, so far as known to us.—

Nothing can yield us a more instructive answer as to the relation borne by the Artist's modus operandi to the synthetic operations of the Reason, than a correct apprehension of the course pursued by Beethoven in the unfolding of his musical genius. For it to have been a logical procedure, he must consciously have changed, or even overthrown the outward forms of music; but we never light upon a trace of that. Assuredly there never was an artist who pondered less upon his art. The aforesaid brusque impetuosity of his nature shews us how he felt [85] as an actual personal injury, almost as direct as every other shackle of convention, the ban imposed upon his genius by those forms. Yet his rebellion consisted in nothing but the exuberant unfolding of his inner genius, unrestrainable by those outward forms themselves. Never did he radically alter an existing form of instrumental music; in his last sonatas, quartets, symphonies and so forth, we may demonstrate beyond dispute a structure such as of the first. But compare these works with one another; compare e.g., the Eighth Symphony in F with the Second in D, and marvel at the wholly new world that fronts us in wellnigh the identical form!



Here is shewn once more the idiosyncrasy of German nature, that profoundly inward gift which stamps its mark on every form by moulding it afresh from within, and thus is saved from the necessity of outward overthrow. Thus is the German no revolutionary, but a reformer; and thus he wins at last a wealth of forms for the manifesting of his inner nature, as never another nation. In the Frenchman this deep internal spring seems silted up: wherefore, when troubled by the outer form of matters in his State or art, he fancies he must dash it into atoms, as though the new, the pleasanter form would thereafter leap into existence of itself. Thus, strange as it may sound, his mutiny is really directed against his own nature, which never displays an inch more depth than already in that troubling Form. On the contrary it has not harmed the German spirit's evolution, that our poetic literature of the Middle Ages drew its nurture from the adaptation of French chivalric poems: the inner depth of a Wolfram von Eschenbach shaped eternal types of poesy from that selfsame 'stuff' whose primal form is stored for us as nothing but a curiosity. (15) So, too, did we adopt the classic Form of Greek and Roman culture, followed their mode of speech, their metres, and knew to make our own the antique view of things (*Anschauung*); but always giving voice therein to our own inmost spirit. Thus we took over [86] Music, with all its forms, from the Italians; and what we poured into them, we have before us in the unfathomable works of Beethoven.

To attempt to explain those works themselves, were an act of folly. As we follow their order of succession, with ever growing distinctness must we perceive in them the permeation of the musical form by the Genius of Music. 'Tis as though the works of his forerunners were a painted transparency seen by daylight, a quite inferior type of art, obviously beneath comparison in drawing or colour with the works of the painter proper, and therefore looked down upon by all true connoisseurs as a pseudo-artwork: erected for the embellishment of feasts, at princely banquets, to entertain luxurious company and so forth, (16) the virtuoso placed the candle of his art-dexterity in front of it, instead of at its back, to light it up. But Beethoven comes, and sets this painting in the hush of Night, between the world of semblance and the deep interior world of all things' essence, from whence he brings behind the picture the light of the Clairvoyant: and lo! it shimmers into wondrous life, a second world now stands before us, a world whereof the grandest masterpiece of Raphael himself could give us no foreboding.

Here the might of the musician is conceivable as nothing but Magic. It certainly is an enchanted state into which we fall while listening to a true Beethovenian masterwork, when in every particle of the piece—which our sober senses would tell us was merely the technical means of exhibiting a given form—we discern a supernatural life (*geisterhafte Lebendigkeit*), an agency now soothing now appalling, a [87] pulse, a thrill, a throb of joy, of yearning, fearing, grief and ecstasy, whilst it all appears to take its motion from the depths of our own inner being. For in Beethoven's music the factor of so great moment for the history of Art is this: each technical accidentia of art, each convention employed by the artist for sake of making himself intelligible to the world outside him, itself is raised to the supreme importance of a direct outpouring of his spirit. As I have remarked elsewhere, we here have no subsidiaries, no more foiling to the melody, but the whole is melody, every voice in the accompaniment, each rhythmic note, ay, e'en the pauses.

Since it is quite impossible to discuss the essential substance of Beethoven's music without promptly falling into the tone of rhapsody, and since we have already sought by the philosopher's aid to gain some clearer knowledge of the true essence of Music in general (and consequently of Beethovenian music in particular), if we are to abstain from the impossible we still must rivet our attention to the personal Beethoven, the focus of all the rays of light that issue from his wonder-world.—

So let us ask whence Beethoven derived this force, or rather—as the mystery of Nature's gifts must needs remain close-veiled to us, and the very existence of this force we can but

unquestioningly infer from its effect—let us seek to ascertain by what peculiarity of personal character, and through what moral bent, the great master was enabled to concentrate that force upon this one stupendous effect that constitutes his deed for Art. We have seen that we must here dismiss all assumption of a reasoning process (*Vernunftkenntniss*) that haply might have guided the development of his artistic bent. No: we shall have to abide by that virile force of character to whose influence over the unfolding of the master's inner genius we have already had to allude.

That reference itself brought Beethoven into comparison with Haydn and Mozart. Upon considering the outer lives of these last two, again, we find Mozart standing [88] midway between Haydn and Beethoven. *Haydn* was and remained a prince's musical officer, with the duty of catering for the entertainment of his pomp-struck master. Temporary respites, such as his visits to London, effected little alteration in the practice of his art; for there, too, he was always the musician recommended to, and paid by noble lords. Docile and devout, the peace of his kind and cheerful temper stayed unruffled till advanced old age; only the eye, that looks upon us from his portrait, is suffused with a gentle melancholy.—The life of *Mozart*, on the other hand, was one continuous struggle for a peacefully assured existence, against the most unequal odds. Caressed as a child by the half of Europe, as youth he finds all satisfaction of his sharpened longings made doubly difficult, and from manhood on he miserably sickens toward an early grave. To him the musical service of a royal master became unbearable forthwith: he seeks to support himself on the plaudits of the larger public, gives concerts and "academies a'; the fugitive wage is squandered on the joys of life. If Haydn's *prince* demanded constant change of entertainment, Mozart no less had to plan something new from day to day to tempt the public; hastiness in conception and execution, given an acquired routine, will mostly explain the character of their works. His truly noble masterworks Haydn did not write until already an old man, in enjoyment of a competence insured by foreign fame. Mozart never arrived at comfort: his loveliest works were sketched between the elation of one hour and the anguish of the next. Thus again and again his hopes are set on a handsome royal pension, as guarantee of a mode of life more favourable to artistic production. What his Kaiser withholds is offered him by a King of Prussia: he remains true to "his Kaiser," and perishes in destitution.

Had *Beethoven* reflected on the lives of his two great predecessors, and taken cold Reason for the chooser of his own, it could not have guided him more safely than in fact was done by the naïve dictates of his inborn character. It is amazing to see how everything here was determined by [89] the potent instinct of Nature. Quite plainly is this expressed in Beethoven's abhorrence of a life like Haydn's. One glance at the youthful Beethoven, indeed, must have sufficed to turn any Prince from the thought of making *this* one his Kapellmeister. Still more strongly does his complexion come out in those features which preserved him from a fate such as that of Mozart. Thrown like him upon a world where the Useful alone can pay itself, the Beautiful only gets paid when it flatters the senses, but the Sublime must go without all manner of return, Beethoven found himself debarred in advance from propitiating the world with beauty. That beauty and effeminacy must rank as one and the same to him, his physiognomy declared at once with overpowering distinctness. The world of Appearance had but a poor approach to him. The wellnigh unearthly poignance of his eye saw nothing in the outer world but plaguing perturbations of his inner world, and to hold them at arm's length made out his almost only rapport with that world. Thus paroxysm (*Krampf*) becomes the expression of his visage: the paroxysm of defiance holds this nose, this mouth at strain, a strain that never can relax to smiles, but only to gargantuan laughter. Though it has been an axiom of physiology that, for high mental gifts, a large brain must be set in a thin and delicate brain-pan—as if to facilitate immediate recognition of things outside us,—yet upon examination of the dead man's remains some years ago it transpired that, in keeping with an

exceptional strength of the whole bony skeleton, the skull was of quite unusual density and thickness. Thus Nature shielded a brain of exceeding tenderness, that it might solely look within, and chronicle the visions of a lofty heart in quiet undisturbed. (17) What this fearsomely rugged strength surrounded and preserved, was an inner world of such tenuous delicacy that, given defenceless to the rough fingering of the outer world, it must straightway [90] have melted into air,—like that radiant spirit of light and love, Mozart.

Now say, how such a being would look out upon the world from so close-barred a dwelling!—Assuredly the inner promptings (*Willensaffekte*) of such a man could never, or but impalpably, affect his conception of the outer world; they were at once too ardent and too delicate, to cleave to any of the semblances his eye but grazed in timid haste, and finally with that suspicion of the ever-unappeased. Here nothing drew him with those fleeting fetters of illusion which still could tempt Mozart to sally from his inner world in quest of outer enjoyment. A childlike pleasure in the distractions of a lively capital could scarce so much as appeal to Beethoven, for the promptings of his will were far too strong to find the smallest satisfaction in such superficial pastimes. Whilst this encouraged his bent towards solitude, the latter coincided with his destiny to independence. A marvellously certain instinct led him here, and became the mainspring of each utterance of his character. No reasoning could have directed him more plainly, than this peremptory dictate of his instinct. What induced Spinoza to support himself by glass-cutting; what filled our Schopenhauer with that care to keep his little heritage intact — determining his whole outer life, and accounting for otherwise inexplicable traits in his character—namely the recognition that the sincerity of philosophic research is always seriously imperilled by a dependence on the necessity of earning money by scientific labours: that selfsame thing determined Beethoven in his defiance of the world, his love of solitude, the wellnigh boorish tastes displayed in his choice of a mode of living.

Beethoven too, to be sure, had to earn his living by his musical labours. But, as smiling comfort had no charms for him, he had the less need either to engage in rapid, superficial work, or to make concessions to a taste that naught but sweets could capture. The more he thus lost touch with the outer world, the clearer-sighted did he turn his gaze upon his world within. And the more familiar he [91] becomes with the administration of his inner riches, the more consciously does he propound his outward requirements, actually requesting his patrons no longer to pay him for his works, but to ensure his being able to work entirely for himself without one thought for all the world. And so it happened, for the first time in the life of any musician, that a few benevolent persons of high station pledged themselves to maintain Beethoven in the desired state of independence. Arrived at a similar crisis in his life, Mozart, too soon worn out, had gone to ground. This great boon conferred on Beethoven, albeit not continued without break and undiminished, yet formed the base of that peculiar harmony which shewed itself henceforward in the master's still so strangely-fashioned life. He felt himself victor, and knew that he belonged to the world but as a freeman. As for it, it must take him as it found him. To his high-born patrons he behaved as a despot, and nothing could be got from him save what and when he pleased.

But never and in nothing had he pleasure, save in what henceforth engrossed him: the play of the magician with the figures of his inner world. For the outer now had faded out completely, not because its sight was reft from him by blindness, but since *deafness* held it finally far off his ear. The ear had been the only organ through which the outer world could still disturb him: to his eye it was long since dead. What *saw* the spellbound dreamer when he wandered through Vienna's bustling streets, with open eyes fixed hard on distance, and animated solely by the waking of his inner tone-world?—The advent and exacerbation of his aural malady distressed him terribly, and moved him to deep melancholy: about his total deafness, and especially the loss of all ability to listen to performances of music, we hear no serious complaint from him; merely the intercourse of life was rendered difficult, an



intercourse that in itself had never any charm for him, and which he now avoided more and more emphatically.

A musician sans ears!—Can one conceive an eyeless painter?

[92]

But the blinded *Seer* we know. Tiresias to whom the world of Appearance has closed itself, and whose inner eye beholds instead the ground of all appearances: his fellow is the deaf musician who now, untroubled by life's uproar, but listens to his inner harmonies, now from his depths but speaks to that world—for it has nothing more to tell him. So is genius freed from all outside it, at home forever with and in itself. Whoso could then have seen Beethoven with the vision of Tiresias, what a wonder must have opened to him: a world walking among men,—the In-itself of the world as a living, moving man!—

And now the musician's eye grew bright within. Now did he gaze upon Appearance, and, illumined by his inner light, it cast a wondrous reflex back upon his inner soul. Now speaks but the essence of things to him, and shews them in the tranquil light of Beauty. Now does he understand the woods, the brook, the fields, the clear blue sky, the merry throng, the loving pair, the song of birds, the flocking clouds, the raging of the storm, the happiness of rhythmic rest. And all his seeing and his fashioning is steeped in that marvellous serenity (*Heiterkeit*) which Music first acquired through him. Even the cry, so immanent in every sound of Nature, is lulled to smiling: the world regains its childhood's innocence. (18) "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise"—who has not heard these words of the Redeemer, when listening to the "Pastoral Symphony"?

Now thrives apace that power of shaping the unfathomable, the never-seen, the ne'er experienced, which yet becomes a most immediate experience, of most transparent comprehensibility. The joy of wielding this new power turns next to humour: all grief of Being breaks before this vast enjoyment of the play therewith; the world-creator Brahma [93] is laughing at himself, (19) as he sees how hugely he had duped himself; guiltlessness re-won disports it with the sting of guilt atoned; freed conscience banter with its torment overpassed.

Never has any art in the world created aught so radiant (*etwas so Heiteres*) as these Symphonies in A and F, with all their so closely allied tone-works from this godlike period of the master's total deafness. The effect upon the hearer is precisely that deliverance from all earthly guilt, as the after-effect is the feeling of a forfeited paradise wherewith we return to the world of semblances. Thus do these glorious works preach penitence and a contrite heart with all the depth of a divine revelation.

Here the only æsthetic term to use, is the *Sublime*: for here the operation of the Radiant at once transcends all pleasure in the Beautiful, and leaves it far behind. Each challenge of self-vaunting Reason is hushed forthwith by the Magic mastering our whole nature; knowledge pleads confession of its error, (20) and the transport of that avowal bids our deepest soul to shout for joy, however earnestly the spellbound features of the listener betray his marvel at the impotence of all our seeing and our thinking to plumb this truest of all worlds.—

What of the human being of this world-rapt genius could there be left for observation of the world? What could the eye of earthly man behold in him when now it faced him? Nothing, surely, but the misunderstandable, just as he himself had no communion with our world save that of misunderstanding: our world as to which the naïve greatness of his heart set him in constant contradiction with himself, only to be harmonised again upon the loftiest footing of his art. Whenever his reason tried to comprehend the world, his mind was set at rest by the [94] teachings of Optimism, such as the maudlin (*schwärmerisch*) Humanistic tenets of last century had raised into a commonplace of the bourgeoisly religious world. Each mental doubt his own experiences of Life advanced against the correctness of this doctrine, he combated with hard-and-fast religious maxims. His Inmost told him: Love is god; and so he

wrote down: God is love. In the works of our poets, only what laid emphatic stress upon this dogma could meet with his approval; though "Faust" had a powerful and lasting fascination for him, his special reverence was paid to Klopstock and many a shallower preacher of Humanity. His moral principles were of the strictest bourgeois stripe; a frivolous tone would make him foam. Certainly he thus offered to the most observant company no single sign of breadth of intellect, and, for all Bettina's gushings over Beethoven, Goethe may well have had a heart-ache in his conversations with him. But just as, caring naught for luxury, he frugally kept watch on his finances, nay, often with a miser's parsimony, so in his rigorously religious morals is expressed that surest instinct in power whereof he guarded his noblest of possessions, the freedom of his genius, against the subjugating influence of the world around him.

He lived in Vienna, knew no place but Vienna: that says enough.

The Austrian, brought up in the school of the Roman Jesuits after the uprooting of every vestige of German Protestantism, had even lost the proper accent for his speech; like the classic names of the antique world, it was taught him now in nothing but an un-German latinisation. German spirit, German character and customs, were explained to him from class-books of Spanish and Italian origin; on the soil of a falsified history, a falsified science, a falsified religion, a populace by nature prone to mirth and gaiety had been nursed into a scepticism which—as every fibre of the true, the free, the sterling, was to be plucked out with all despatch—could only take the form of rank frivolity.

'Twas the same spirit that had imposed on the only art [95] still practised in Austria, on Music, that development and truly humbling tendency which we have already passed in review. We have seen how Beethoven warded off this tendency by the strength of his own nature, and now we see an equal force at work in him to vehemently ward off a frivolous tendency of life and mind. A catholic baptised and bred, the whole spirit of German protestantism breathed in this bent of his. And as artist, again, it led him to the path whereon he was to meet the only comrade in his art to whom he could pay obeisance, the only musician he could take to his heart as revealer of the deepest secret of his nature. If Haydn passed as teacher of the youth, for the mightily unfolding art-life of the man our great *Sebastian Bach* became his leader.

Bach's wonder-work became his bible; in it he read, and clean forgot that world of clangour, heard no longer. There stood inscribed the answer to the riddle of his deepest dream, that answer the poor Leipzig Cantor erst had penned as everlasting symbol of the new, the other world. The same mysteriously inwoven lines and wondrous scrolls wherein the secret of the world of light and all its shapes had dawned upon great *Albrecht Dürer*, the spell-book of the necromantist who bids the macrocosmic light to shine upon the microcosm. What none save the eye of the German spirit could look on, none but *its* ear perceive; what drove that spirit's inmost conscience to irresistibly protest against all bonds imposed upon it from without: that Beethoven deciphered in his holiest of books, and— himself became a holy one.—

But how could *this* "holy one" (*gerade dieser Heilige*) conform his life to his hallowedness? For it was given him indeed "to speak the deepest wisdom," but "in a tongue his reason did not understand." Must not his commune with the world resemble nothing but that state of the awakened out of deepest sleep, the toilsome effort to recall the blissful vision of his inner soul? A similar state may be imagined in the case of the religious saint when, driven by the most inevitable life-need, he turns to some [96] measure of rapprochement with the practices of common life: saving that in that Want itself this saint distinctly recognises the penance for a mortal's life of sin, and in his patient bearing of it he makes his very burden the inspired means of his redemption; whereas that hallowed seer simply grasps the penance' meaning as a torture, and drags his portion of all Being's guilt as nothing but a sufferer. (21)

And so the optimist's error avenges itself by heightening both that suffering and his resentment. Each sign of callousness that meets him, every trace of rigour or self-seeking that he ever and again observes, revolts him as an incomprehensible perversion of that original Goodness of man to which he cleaves with a religious faith. Thus he is perpetually hurled from the paradise of his inner harmony to the hell of an existence filled with fearful discords, and only as artist can he finally resolve them into harmony.

If we would set before ourselves the picture of a day from our "holy one's" life, we scarce could gain a better than from one of those marvellous tone-pieces themselves; though, not to deceive ourselves, we must follow the course we adopted when referring the genesis of Music as an art to the phenomenon of the Dream, that is to say, employing it as a mere analogy, and not identifying one thing with the other. In illustration of such a veritable day from Beethoven's inmost life I will choose the great *C-sharp minor Quartet* (22) and what we scarce could do while listening to it, as we then are forced to leave behind all cut-and-dry comparisons and give ourselves entirely to the direct revelation from another world, we may find attainable in a measure when conjuring up this tone-poem in our memory. Even thus, however, I must leave the reader's phantasy to supply the living details of the picture, [97] and therefore simply offer the assistance of a skeleton outline.

The lengthy opening Adagio, surely the saddest thing ever said in notes, I would term the awaking on the dawn of a day "that in its whole long course shall ne'er fulfil one wish, not one wish!" (23) Yet it is alike a penitential prayer, a communing with God in firm belief of the Eternal Goodness.—The inward eye then traces the consoling vision (*Allegro* 6/8), perceptible by it alone, in which that longing becomes a sweet but plaintive playing with itself: the image of the inmost dream takes waking form as a loveliest remembrance. And now (with the short transitional *Allegro moderato*) 'tis as if the master, grown conscious of his art, were settling to work at his magic; its re-summoned force he practises (*Andante* 2/4) on the raising of one graceful figure, the blessed witness of inherent innocence, to find a ceaseless rapture in that figure's never-ending, never-heard-of transformation by the prismatic changes of the everlasting light he casts thereon.—Then we seem to see him, profoundly gladdened by himself, direct his radiant glances to the outer world (*Presto* 2/2): once more it stands before him as in the Pastoral Symphony, all shining with his inner joy; 'tis as though he heard the native accents of the appearances that move before him in a rhythmic dance, now blithe now blunt (*derb*). He looks on Life, and seems to ponder (short *Adagio* 3/4) how to set about the tune for Life itself to dance to: a brief but gloomy brooding, as if the master were plunged in his soul's profoundest dream. One glance has shewn him the inner essence of the world again: he wakes, and strikes the strings into a dance the like whereof the world had never heard (*Allegro finale*). 'Tis the dance of the whole world itself: wild joy, the wail of pain, love's transport, utmost bliss, grief, frenzy, riot, suffering; the lightning flickers, thunders growl: and above it the stupendous fiddler who bans and bends it all, who leads it haughtily from whirlwind into whirlpool, to the brink of the [98] abyss (24);—he smiles at himself, for to him this sorcery was the merest play.—And night beckons him. His day is done.—

It is impossible to keep Beethoven the man before us for an instant, without at once re-calling Beethoven the wonderful musician to explain him.

We have seen how the instinctive tendency of his life ran parallel with the tendency to emancipate his art; as he himself could be no lackey in the pay of Luxury, so should his music, too, be freed from every token of subjection to a frivolous taste. And of how his optimistic creed went hand-in-hand with an instinctive tendency to enlarge the province of his art we have evidence, of the sublimest naïvety, in his *Ninth Symphony with Choruses*; into whose genesis we now must look, to make clear the marvellous connexion of these two

root-tendencies in the nature of our "saint."—

The same bent that led Beethoven's reasoning faculty to frame for itself the *good* human being, guided him in the construction of this "good man's" *melody*. Melody having lost its innocence at the hand of our art-musicians, he wished to restore to it this purest innocence. One has only to recall the Italian Opera-melody of last century, to recognise in that singular scarecrow the abject servant of the Mode and its ends: through Fashion and its uses Music had been brought so low that wanton taste demanded of it only something new, and new again, because the melody of yesterday was past all listening-to to-day. But Melody was also the sheet-anchor of our Instrumental-music, whose employment for the ends of a by no means noble social life we have already mooted above.

Here *Haydn* had soon laid hands on the blunt but cheery folk-dance, whose strains he often quite recognisably borrowed from the dances of Hungarian peasants in his immediate neighbourhood; but he thus remained in a lower sphere with a strong impress of narrow provincialism. From what sphere, then, was this Nature-melody to be [99] derived, to bear a nobler, an eternal character? For even that peasant-dance-tune of Haydn's had its chief attraction as a piquant curiosity, in nowise as a purely-human type of art for every age. Yet it was impossible to find that type in the higher spheres of our society, for that was just where reigned the patched and powdered melody of the opera-singer and ballet-dancer, a nest of every vice. So Beethoven went Haydn's way; only, he no longer served up the folk-dance tune at a prince's banquet, but, in an ideal sense, he played it for the Folk itself to dance to. Now it is a Scotch, now a Russian, now an old-French folk-tune, in which he recognised the dreamt nobility, of innocence, and at whose feet he laid his whole art in homage. But one Hungarian peasant-dance (in the final movement of his Symphony in A) he played for the whole of Nature, so played that who could see her dancing to it in orbital gyrations must deem he saw a planet brought to birth before his very eyes.

But his aim was to find the archetype of innocence, the ideal "good man" of his belief, (25) to wed him with his "God is love." One might almost think the master had already seized the clue in his "*Sinfonia eroica*": the unusually simple theme of its last movement, a theme he worked again elsewhere, seems meant as a scaffold for this purpose; but the wealth of exquisite melos he built upon it still pertains too much to the sentimental Mozartian cantabile, so characteristically developed and expanded by himself, to rank as attainment of the aforesaid aim.—The clue is plainer in the jubilant closing section of the C - minor Symphony, where the naïvety of the simple march-tune, moving almost exclusively on tonic and dominant in the nature - scale of horns and trumpets, appeals to us the more as the whole symphony now seems to have been nothing but a straining of our attention for it; like the bank of clouds, now torn by storm, now stirred by gentlest breezes, from whence the sun at last breaks forth in splendour.

[100]

At like time (and this apparent digression has an important bearing on our subject) the C-minor Symphony appeals to us as one of those rarer conceptions of the master's in which a stress of bitter passion, the fundamental note of the commencement, mounts rung by rung through consolation, exaltation, till it breaks into the joy of conscious victory. Here lyric pathos already verges on the definitely dramatic, in an ideal sense; and though it might be doubted whether the purity of Musical Conception would not ultimately suffer by the pursuance of this path, through its leading to the dragging-in of fancies altogether foreign to the spirit of Music, yet it cannot be denied that the master was in nowise prompted by a truant fit of æsthetic speculation, but simply and solely by an ideal instinct sprung from Music's ownest realm. (26) As shewn when we started on this last inquiry, that instinct coincided with the struggle to rescue from every plausible objection raised by his experience of life the conscious belief in human nature's original goodness, or haply to regain it. Those conceptions

of the master's which breathe wellnigh throughout the spirit of sublimest gladness (*Heiterkeit*) belong pre-eminently, as we have seen, to the period of that blessed seclusion which seems upon arrival of his total deafness to have wholly rapt him from this world of pain. From the sadder mood that reappears in certain of his most important works we perhaps have no need to infer a downfall of that inner gladness, since we undoubtedly [101] should make a grave mistake if we thought the Artist could ever conceive save in a state of profound cheerfulness of soul. The mood expressed in the conception must therefore belong to that world's-Idea itself which the artist seizes and interprets in his artwork. But, as we have taken for granted that in Music the Idea of the whole World reveals itself, the inspired musician must necessarily be included in that Idea, and what he utters is therefore not his personal opinion of the world, but the World itself with all its changing moods of grief and joy, of weal and woe. The conscious doubt of *Beethoven the man* was included in this World, as well; and thus his doubt is speaking for itself, in nowise as an object of his reflection, when he brings the world to such expression as in his Ninth Symphony, for instance, whose first movement certainly shews us the Idea of the world in its most terrible of lights. Elsewhere, however, this very work affords us unmistakable evidence of the purposely ordaining will of its creator; we are brought face to face with it when he stops the frenzy of despair that overwhelms each fresh appeasement, and, with the anguished cry of one awaking from a nightmare, he speaks that actual Word whose ideal sense is none other than: "Man, despite all, *is good!*"

It has always been a stumbling-block, not only to Criticism, but to the ingenuous Feeling, to see the master here falling of a sudden out of Music, in a manner, as if stepping outside the magic circle he himself had drawn, and appealing to a mental faculty entirely distinct from that of musical conception. In truth this unprecedented stroke of art resembles nothing but the sudden waking from a dream, and we feel its comforting effect upon the tortured dreamer; for never had a musician led us through the torment of the world so relentlessly and without end. So it was with a veritable leap of despair that the divinely naive master, inspired by nothing save his magic, set foot on that new world of Light from out whose soil the long-sought godlike-sweet and guileless-human melody bloomed forth to greet him with its purity.

[102]

Thus with even what we have styled the ordaining will that led him to this melody, we find the master still abiding in the realm of Music, the world's Idea; for it is not the meaning of the Word, that really takes us with this entry of the human voice, but the human character of that voice. Neither is it the thought expressed in Schiller's verses, that occupies our minds thereafter, but the familiar sound of the choral chant; in which we ourselves feel bidden to join and thus take part in an ideal Divine Service, as the congregation really did at entry of the Chorale in S. Bach's great Passions. In fact it is obvious, especially with the chief-melody proper, that Schiller's words have been built in perforce and with no great skill; (27) for this melody had first unrolled its breadth before us as an entity *per se*, entrusted to the instruments alone, and there had thrilled us with the nameless joy of a paradise regained.

Never has the highest art produced a thing more artistically simple than this strain, whose childlike innocence as though breathes into us a holy awe when first we hear the theme in unaccented whispers from the bass instruments of the string-orchestra in unison. It then becomes the *cantus firmus*, the Chorale of the new communion, round which, as round S. Bach's own church-chorales, the harmonic voices group themselves in counterpoint. There is nothing to equal the sweet intensity of life this primal strain of spotless innocence acquires from every new- arising voice; till each adornment, every added gem of passion, unites with it and in it, like the breathing world around a final proclamation of divinest love. (28)—



Surveying the historical advance which the art of Music made through Beethoven, we may define it as the winning [103] of a faculty withheld from her before: in virtue of that acquisition she mounted far beyond the region of the æsthetically Beautiful, into the sphere of the absolutely Sublime; and here she is freed from all the hampering of traditional or conventional forms, through her filling their every nook and cranny with the life of her ownest spirit. And to the heart of every human being this gain reveals itself at once through the character conferred by Beethoven on music's chiefest Form, on *Melody*, which has now won the utmost natural simplicity, the fount whereat in every age, for every need, it may renew itself and thrive to richest, amplest multiplicity. And this we may sum in a single term, intelligible to everyone: Melody has been emancipated by Beethoven from all influence of the Mode, of shifting taste, and raised to an eternal purely-human type. Beethoven's music will be understood throughout all time, whereas the music of his predecessors will for the most part stay un-understandable save by aid of art-historical Reflection.—

But, on the path whereon Beethoven arrived at this memorable ennoblement of Melody, there is yet another advance to note: to wit, the new meaning gained by *Vocal music* in its relation to purely Instrumental music.

This meaning was previously unknown to 'mixed' vocal-and-instrumental music. The latter we first meet in compositions for the church, and need have no scruple in calling it vocal music spoilt, inasmuch as the orchestra is here employed as mere accompaniment or reinforcement to the singing voices. The church-compositions of great S. Bach are only to be understood as works for a vocal choir, saving that this choir itself is already handled with the freedom and mobility of an instrumental orchestra,— which naturally suggested the latter's introduction for reinforcement and support. Then, concurrently with the greater and greater decline of the spirit of church-music, we find added to this mixture the Italian operatic song with orchestral accompaniment, in fashions varying with the times. It was reserved for Beethoven's genius to [104] employ the resulting compound purely in the sense of an Orchestra of increased resources. In his great *Missa solennis* we have a strictly Symphonic work, of the truest Beethovenian spirit. Here the vocal parts are handled quite in that sense of human instruments which Schopenhauer very rightly wished to see alone assigned to them: when presented as a musical artwork, the text to which these great church-compositions are set is never seized by us according to the letter, but simply serves as material for the singing; and it has no disturbing effect on our musical impressions for simple reason that it starts no train of inductive thought (*Vernunftvorstellungen*), but affects us solely through well-known symbolic formulae of faith, as indeed is conditioned by its churchly character.

Moreover the experience that a piece of music loses nothing of its character even when the most diverse texts are laid beneath it, shews the relation of Music to *Poetry* to be a sheer illusion: for it transpires that in vocal music it is not the poetic thought one seizes—which in choral singing, in particular, one does not even get intelligibly articulated—but at most the mood that thought aroused in the musician when it moved him to music. (29) The union of Music and Poetry must therefore always end in such a subordination of the latter that we can only wonder above all at our great German poets returning again and again to the problem, to say nothing of the attempt. They evidently were instigated by the effect of music in *Opera*: and here, at any rate, appeared to lie the only field whereon the problem might be solved at last. Now, whether our poets' hopes were directed more to music's formal symmetry of structure, or more to its profoundly stirring effect on the feelings, they obviously could have only proposed to use the mighty aids it seemed to offer to give their poetic aim alike a more precise expression and a [105] more searching operation. They may have thought that Music would gladly render them this service if, in lieu of the trivial operatic subject and opera-text, they brought her a poetic conception to be taken seriously. What continually held them back from serious attempts in this direction may have been a vague, but legitimate doubt whether

Poetry would be noticed at all, as such, in its co-operation with Music. Upon careful consideration it cannot have escaped them that in Opera, beyond the music, only the scenic goings-on, but not the explanatory poetic thought, engrossed attention; that Opera, in fact, merely arrested *hearing* and *sight* in turn. That a perfect æsthetic satisfaction was not to be gained for either the one receptive faculty or the other, is fully accounted for by the circumstance noted above, namely that opera-music did not attune us to that devotional state (*Andacht*)—the only one in keeping with Music—in which vision is so far reduced in power that the eye no longer sees objects with the wonted intensity; on the contrary, as found before, we here were but superficially affected, more excited than filled by the music, and consequently desired to *see* something too,—by no means to *think*, however, for our whole faculty of thought was stolen from us by just that shuttlecock desire for entertainment, thrown hither and thither in its distracting battle with tedium.

Now the foregoing considerations have made us sufficiently familiar with Beethoven's specific nature, to understand at once the master's attitude toward *Opera* when he categorically refused to ever set an opera-text of frivolous tendency. Ballets, processions, fireworks, amorous intrigues etc., to make music for such as these he declined with horror. His music required a whole, a high-souled, passionate plot, to search it through and through. What poet could have offered him the needful hand? One solitary trial brought him into contact with a dramatic situation that at least had nothing of the hated frivolity about it, and moreover quite harmonised with the master's leading dogma of Humanity through its glorification of [106] wifely troth. And yet this opera-subject embraced so much that was foreign to Music and unassimilable, that in truth the great Overture to *Leonora* alone makes really plain to us how Beethoven would have the drama understood. Who can ever hear that thrilling tone-piece without being filled with the conviction that Music includes within itself the most consummate *Drama*? What is the dramatic action of the librettist's opera "Leonora" but an almost repulsive watering of the drama we have lived through in its overture, a kind of tedious commentary by Gervinus on a scene of Shakespeare's?

But the feeling that here occurs to everyone can only be made a matter of clear knowledge by our returning to the philosopher's explanation of Music itself.

Seeing that Music does not portray the Ideas inherent in the world's phenomena, but is itself an Idea of the World, and a comprehensive one, it naturally includes the Drama in itself; as Drama, again, expresses the only world's-Idea proportionate (*adäquat*) to Music. Drama towers above the bounds of Poetry in exactly the same manner as Music above those of every other art, and especially of plastic art, through its effect residing solely in the Sublime. As a drama does not depict human characters, but lets them display their immediate selves, so a piece of music gives us in its motive. The character of all the world's appearances according to their inmost essence (*An-sich*). Not only are the movement, interchange and evolution of these motives analogous to nothing but the Drama, but a drama representing the [world's] Idea can be understood with perfect clearness through nothing but those moving, evolving and alternating motives of Music's. We consequently should not go far astray, if we defined Music as man's qualification *a priori* for fashioning the Drama. Just as we construct for ourselves the world of semblances through application of the laws of Time and Space existing *a priori* in our brain, so this conscious representment of the world's Idea in Drama would thus be foreordained by those inner laws of Music, operating in the dramatist equally unconsciously [107] with the laws of Causality we bring into employment for apperception of the phenomenal world.

It was a presage of precisely this, that occurred to our great German poets; and perhaps in that guess they gave voice withal to the hidden reason of the impossibility of explaining *Shakespeare* by other methods. This prodigy of a dramatist in fact was comprehensible by no analogy with any poet you please; for which reason, also, all æsthetic judgment of him has



remained as yet unbased. His dramas seem to be so direct a transcript of the world, that the *artist's* intervention in their portrayal of the Idea is absolutely untraceable, and certainly not demonstrable by criticism. So, marvelled at as products of a superhuman genius, they became to our great poets a study for discovery of the laws of their creation wellnigh in the same manner as the wonders of Nature herself.

With that extraordinary sincerity of his every touch, the height to which Shakespeare towered above the Poet proper often comes out ruggedly enough; in the scene where Brutus and Cassius fall a-quarrelling (*Julius Cæsar*), for instance, we find the poet positively treated as a "jigging fool." Nowhere do we meet the "poet" Shakespeare, save in the inmost heart of the characters that move before us in his dramas.—Shakespeare therefore remained entirely beyond comparison, until in *Beethoven* the German genius brought forth a being only to be explained through his analogy.—If we take the whole impression left by Shakespeare's world of shapes upon our inner feeling, with the extraordinary relief of every character that moves therein, and uphold to it the sum-total of Beethoven's world of motives, with their ineluctable incisiveness and definition, we cannot but see that the one of these worlds completely covers the other, so that each is contained in each, no matter how remote may seem their orbits.

To make this operation easier, let us cite the instance where Beethoven and Shakespeare join hands over the same subject, the *Overture to Coriolanus*. If we recall to [108] mind the impression made upon us by the figure of Coriolanus in Shakespeare's drama, and from all the details of the complicated plot first single that which lingered with us through its bearing on the principal character, we shall see one solitary shape loom forth: the defiant Coriolanus in conflict with his inmost voice, that voice which only speaks the more unsilenceably when issuing from his mother's mouth; and of the dramatic development there will remain but that voice's victory over pride, the breaking of the stubbornness of a nature strong beyond all bounds. For his drama Beethoven chooses nothing but these two chief-motives, which make us feel more surely than all abstract exposition the inmost essence of that pair of characters. Then if we devoutly follow the movement developing solely from the opposition of these two motives in strict accordance with their musical character, and allow in turn the purely-musical detail to work upon us—the lights and shades, the meetings and partings of these two motives,—we shall at like time be following the course of a drama whose own peculiar method of expression embraces all that held our interest, the complex plot and clash of minor characters, in the acted work of the playwright. What gripped us there as an action set immediately before us, almost lived through by ourselves, we here receive as inmost kernel of that action; there set forth by characters with all the might of nature-forces, it here is just as sharply limned by the musician's motives, identical in inmost essence with the motives at work in those characters. Merely in the one sphere *those*, in the other *these*, laws of movement and dimension take effect.

We have called Music the revelation of the inner vision of the Essence of the world, and Shakespeare we might term a Beethoven who goes on dreaming though awake. What holds their spheres asunder, are the formal conditions of the laws of apperception obtaining in each. The perfect art-form would therefore have to take its rise from the point where those respective laws could meet. Now, what makes Shakespeare at once so incomparable and so inexplicable, [109] is this: those Forms which bound the plays of great Calderon himself to prim conventionality, and made them strictly artist's-works, he saturated with such life that they seem dissolved away by Nature: no longer do we think we see fictitious men, but real live men before us; and yet they stand so wondrous far from us, that we cannot but deem material contact with them as impossible as if we were looking at ghosts.—Seeing, then, that Beethoven is the very counterpart of Shakespeare even in his attitude towards the formal laws of his art, his fulfilling abrogation of them, we perhaps may gain the clearest notion of that point where their two spheres would touch, or melt into each other, if we take our philosopher

once more for guide, and proceed to the goal of his Dream-theory, his hypothesis of ghostly apparitions.

Here our business would lie less with the metaphysical, than the physiologic explanation of so-called "second sight." We have already cited our philosopher's theory that the Dream-organ is situate in that portion of the brain which responds to impressions received from the operations of the inner organism in profound sleep, and responds in a manner analogous to the effect produced by waking impressions from the outer world on the portion of the brain immediately connected with the organs of sense, now completely at rest. We have also seen that the dream-message received by this inner organ can be transmitted [to the waking consciousness] only through a second type of dream, a dream that directly precedes our wakening, and which can render in none but an allegoric form the contents of the first; and the reason was, that, even in the preparatory stage of the brain's awaking to external objects, the forms of perception pertaining to the phenomenal world, such as Space and Time, must already be brought into play, and thus construct an image akin to the experiences of daily life.—Further, we have compared the work of the Musician to the clairvoyante's hypnotic vision (*dem Gesichte der hellsehend gewordenen Somnambule*), as the direct transcript of the inmost dream [*Wahrtraum*—lit. [110] "true-dream"] beheld by her and now imparted, in her most active state of clairvoyance, to those outside; and we have found the channel for this message by following the genesis and evolution of the world of Sound.—Still pursuing our analogy, with this physiologic phenomenon of hypnotic clairvoyance let us couple its fellow, that of ghost-seeing, and borrow from Schopenhauer, again, his hypothesis that it is a state of clairvoyance occurring in the waking brain; that is to say, it results from a temporary reduction in the waking power of sight, whose clouded eyes are now made use of by the inner impulse to impart to the form of consciousness most near to waking the message of the inmost veridical dream. (30) This shape, projected before the eye from within, belongs in nowise to the material world of Appearance; yet it appears to the ghost-seer with all the signs and tokens of actual life. With this projection of the inner image before the waking eye— an act the inner will can accomplish only in rare and extraordinary cases—let us now compare the work of Shakespeare; and we shall find him to be the ghost-seer and spirit-raiser, who from the depths of his own inner consciousness conjures the shapes of men from every age, and sets them before his waking eye and ours in such a fashion that they seem to really live.

As soon as we have fully grasped the consequences of this analogy we may term Beethoven, whom we have likened to the clairvoyant, the hidden motor (*den wirkenden Untergrund*) of Shakespeare the ghost-seer: what brings forth Beethoven's melodies, projects the spirit-shapes of Shakespeare; and both will blend into one being, if we let the musician enter not only the world of Sound, but at like [111] time that of Light. This would be analogous to the physiologic occurrence that on one side becomes the cause of ghost-seeing, on the other produces somnambulistic clairvoyance; in respect of which it is to be conjectured that an inner stimulus travels through the brain in a similar but inverse fashion to the outer impressions received when awake, and, ultimately arriving at the organs of sense, makes them regard as an external object what has really thrust its way from within. But we have already recorded the indisputable fact that, while we are lost in the hearing of music, our sight is so far paralysed that it no longer perceives objects with any degree of intensity; so this would be the state induced by the innermost Dream-world, the blinding of the eye that it might see the spirit-shape.

This hypothetical explanation of a physiologic phenomenon, otherwise inexplicable, we may apply to the solution of our present artistic problem from various sides and arrive at a like result. For instance, Shakespeare's spirit-shapes would be brought to sound through the full awaking of the inner organ of Music: or Beethoven's motives would inspire the palsied sight to see those shapes distinctly, and embodied in those spirit-shapes they now would move

before our eyes turned clairvoyant. In either case, identical in essence, the prodigious force here framing appearances from within outwards, against the ordinary laws of Nature, must be engendered by the deepest Want (*Noth*). And that Want presumably would be the same as finds vent, in the common course of life, in the scream of the suddenly-awakened from an obsessing vision of profoundest sleep (31); saving that here, in the extraordinary, the stupendous event which shapes the life of manhood's genius, that Want awakens to a new, a world laid open by such awaking only, a world of clearest knowledge and highest capability.

This awaking out of deepest Want we witness in that redoubtable leap from instrumental into vocal music—so offensive to ordinary æsthetic criticism—which has led us from our discussion of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony to [112] the above prolonged digression. What we here experience is a certain overcharge, a vast compulsion to unload without, only to be compared with the stress to waken from an agonising dream; and the important issue for the Art-genius of mankind, is that this special stress called forth an artistic deed whereby that genius gained a novel power, the qualification for begetting the highest Artwork.

As to that Artwork itself; we can only conclude that it will be *the most perfect Drama*, and thus stand high above the work of Poetry. This we may conclude after having recognised the identity of the Shakespearian and the Beethovenian Drama, whilst we may assume, on the other hand, that it will bear the same relation to "Opera" as a play of Shakespeare's to a literature-drama, a Beethovenian symphony to an opera's music.

That Beethoven returns in the course of his Ninth Symphony to the 'choral cantata with orchestra,' must not mislead our judgment of that eventful leap from instrumental into vocal music; we have already gauged the import of this choral portion of the symphony, and found it pertaining to the strictest field of Music: beyond that said ennoblement of Melody, we have in it no formal innovation; it is a Cantata with words, to which the music bears no closer relation than to any other vocal text. For we know that it is not the verses of a text-writer, and were he a Goethe or Schiller, that can determine Music. *Drama* alone can do that; and not the dramatic poem, but the drama that moves before our very eyes, the visible counter part of Music, where word and speech belong no more to the poet's thought, but solely to the action.

It is not the *work* of Beethoven, then, but the unparalleled artistic *deed* contained therein, that we must stamp on Our minds as climax of the musician's genius, when we declare that an artwork founded and modelled throughout on this deed must afford withal the perfect *art-form*: that form wherein, for Drama as for Music in especial, each vestige of conventionality would be entirely upheaved. And this Form would also be the only one to throughly [113] fit the German Spirit, so powerfully individualised in our great Beethoven: the new, the Purely-human art-form made by it, and yet originally immanent in it; the form for which, when likened with the antique world, the new still goes a-lacking.



Whoever allows himself to be influenced by the views I have here expressed in regard of Beethovenian music, will certainly not escape being called fantastic and extravagant; and this reproach will be levelled at him not merely by our educated and uneducated musicians of the day—who for the most part have seen that dream-vision of Music's under no other guise than Bottom's dream in the Midsummer's-night—but in particular by our literary poets and even our plastic artists, so far as they ever trouble their heads with questions that seem to lie entirely beyond their sphere. We must make up our minds to tranquilly bear that reproach however, even should it take the form of a high and mighty, nay, a deliberately insulting snub; for to us it is manifest, firstly that these people are downright incapable of seeing what we see, and secondly that any glimmer they may get thereof is only just sufficient to shew them their own unproductiveness: that they should recoil in horror from the sight, we need no pains to understand.

If we review the general character of our current public art and literature, we are struck by a notable change, which dates from about a generation back. Here everyone not only looks quite hopeful, but in a certain sense quite sure that the great period of the German Rebirth, with its Goethe and Schiller, is falling into disesteem—of course well-tempered. A generation ago it was somewhat otherwise: then the character of our age proclaimed itself; without disguise, as essentially critical; folk called the spirit of the time a "paper" one, and believed that even plastic art must renounce all idea of originality and content [114] itself with a merely reproductive use and combination of existing types. We cannot but think that people then saw more clearly, and expressed themselves more honestly, than is the case to-day. Whoever is still of that earlier opinion, despite the confident demeanour of our literary writers, literary painters, builders and other artists conversant with the spirit of the times, with him we may hope to come to readier terms if we try to set in its proper light the unparalleled importance won by Music for the [future] evolution of our Culture; in conclusion we therefore will rise from our plunge into the inner world, with which the preceding inquiry has chiefly concerned us, and take a glance at the outer world in which we live and under whose pressure that inner essence has acquired at last the force to react without.

Not to get lost in a maze of "culture-history," we will take one characteristic feature of the public mind in the immediate present.—

With the victorious advance of the German arms to the centre of French civilisation, a feeling of shame at our dependence on that civilisation has suddenly appeared among us, and steps into publicity as an appeal to lay aside the Parisian mode of dress. So! at last the sense of patriotism rebels against what, not only the nation's æsthetic sense of seemliness has borne so long without a murmur, but our public mind has striven for in hottest haste. What, in fact, could a glance at our public life have told the modeller? It simply furnished our comic papers with food for caricature, on the one hand, while on the other our poets continued undeterred their compliments to the "German woman."—Upon an illustration of this singularly complicated situation we surely need not waste our breath.—But some might haply regard it as a passing evil: they might be expecting that the blood of our sons, our brothers and husbands, shed for the German Spirit's sublimest thought on the deadliest battlefields in history, at least must redden the cheeks of our daughters, sisters and wives, and a sudden noblest Want must wake in them [115] the pride that no longer could stoop to present themselves to their males as the most ridiculous of caricatures. For the honour of all German women we too will gladly believe that such a proper feeling is at work in them; and yet each man must have smiled when he read the first appeals to them to clothe themselves in a novel style. Who cannot have felt that the thing would end in a new, and presumably a very unbecoming masquerade? For 'tis no mere accidental whim of our public life, that we stand under rule of the Mode; just as it is in character with the whole history of modern civilisation, that the whims of Parisian taste dictate to us the laws of Mode. In truth it is French taste, i.e. the spirit of Paris and Versailles, that for two hundred years has been the sole productive ferment in European culture; while the spirit of no single nation could evolve an art-type any more, the spirit of the French at least laid down the outward form of society, and to to-day the cut of clothes.

However paltry these affairs may seem, they are original to the French spirit: they express it quite as definitely and vividly as the Italians of the Renaissance, the Greeks, the Egyptians and Assyrians expressed their spirit in their art-types; and nothing yields us clearer evidence of the French being the ruling race of to-day's Civilisation, than the fact that our fancy promptly falls into the ridiculous if we try to imagine ourselves emancipated from their Mode. At once we recognise that a "German Mode," set up as rival to the French, would be something too absurd; and since our feeling nevertheless revolts against that reign, we can only conclude that we are stricken with a veritable curse, from which nothing but a



profoundly radical new-birth can ever redeem us. Our whole root-nature, to wit, would have so thoroughly to change, that the very term *the Mode* would lose all meaning for the outward fashion of our life.

In what this new-birth must consist, we should have to argue with the greatest caution, after first discovering the causes of the deep decline of public art-taste. And as we [116] have already found the employment of analogies of some service for elucidating the otherwise difficult subject of our main inquiry, let us once more betake ourselves to a seemingly distant field of observation, but a field whereon we at any rate may hope to win an addition to our knowledge of the plastic aspect of our public life.—

If we would conjure up a paradise of the human spirit's productivity, we must transfer ourselves to the days before the invention of *Writing* and its preservation on parchment or paper. We cannot but hold that here was born the whole of that Culture which now maintains a halting life as mere object of study or useful adaptation. Here *Poesis* was nothing other than the actual invention of Myths, i.e. of ideal occurrences in which the various characteristics of the life of man were mirrored with an objective reality like to that of ghostly apparitions. This faculty we see innate in every Folk of noble blood, down to the point when the use of written letters reached it. From then it loses its poetic force; Speech, theretofore in a living flux of natural evolution, now falls into the crystallising stage and stiffens; Poetry becomes the art of decking out the ancient myths, no longer to be new-invented, and ends in Rhetoric and Dialectics.—Let us picture next the leap from Writing into Printing. From the rare hand-written tome the father of the household read before his guests: now everyone reads dumbly to himself the printed book, and for the readers writes the scribbler. To obtain an inkling of the storm of madness that followed in the wake of printed letters, we must resummon the religious sects of the Reformation era, with their polemical tracts and disputations. One may presume that only Luther's glorious hymn saved whole the spirit of the Reformation, and that because it touched the heart and thereby healed the lexicomania (*Buchstaben-Krankheit*) of the brain. Yet the genius of a race might come to terms with the book- printer, however painful it might find the intercourse; but with the invention of the Newspaper, the full unfolding of the flower of Journalism, this good angel of the Folk could [117] not but fly away from life. For now reigns nothing but Opinions, and "public" ones at that; they're to be had for pay, hike the public strumpets: who buys a paper, has procured not only the printed sheet, but its opinion; he needs no more to think, or yet to ponder; there stands all ready-thought for him in black on white what folk are to think of God and the world. And so the Paris fashion-journal tells the "German wife" how she must dress; for the Frenchman has earned a perfect right to dictate to us in things like that, as he has soared to the undisputed position of the colour-illustrator of our Journal-paper world.

If by side of this metamorphosis of the poetic world into a journalistic-literary world we set the transformation of the world of Form and Colour, we shall find a precisely similar result.

Who could have the presumption to say he was able to form a true idea of the grandeur, the divine sublimity of the Plastic world of ancient Greece? Each glance at a single fragment of its ruins makes us feel with awe that we here are standing in presence of a Life for whose judgment we have not even the first beginning of a scale. That world had earned the right to teach us by its very ruins how the remainder of man's earthly life might yet be fashioned into something bearable. We may thank the great *Italians* for having revived for us that lesson, and nobly put it into practice for the newer world. This people, gifted with such abundant Phantasy, we see consume itself away in passionate adoption of that lesson; after one marvellous century it melts from history like a dream, and History erroneously takes up a kindred-seeming nation, as if to see what she could make of that for form and colour of the world. A crafty statesman and prince of the Church endeavoured to inoculate Italian art and culture into the *French* folk-spirit, after Protestantism had been completely rooted out

therefrom: it had seen the fall of its noblest heads; and what the Paris Feast of St Bartholomew had spared, had finally been carefully burnt down to the lowest stump. The remnant of the nation [118] was treated "artistically"; but as it had never had, or had lost all Phantasy, productiveness would nowhere shew itself; and particularly not in the creating of a work of Art. The attempt to make the Frenchman himself an artificial being was more successful; the artistic idea (*künstlerische Vorstellung*) that failed to find a home in his imagination, could be turned into an artificial exhibition (*künstliche Darstellung*) of the whole man in and to himself. Indeed this even might pass as Antique, if one only granted that man must be an artist in his person before he thought of producing artworks. If a "gallant" worshipped King but set the good example of a highly elegant demeanour in every act and situation, 'twas easy to descend the climax through the courtier lords, and at last induce the whole nation to put on the gallant manner; with whose growth into a second nature the Frenchman might end by fancying himself superior to the Italians of the Renaissance, inasmuch as these had merely brought forth artworks, whilst he had become a work of art himself.

One may describe the Frenchman as the product of a special art of expressing, behaving and clothing himself. His law for this is "*Taste*,"—a word transferred from the humblest function of the senses to a tendence of the mind; and with this taste he savours himself; precisely as he has dressed himself; as a highly flavoured sauce. Beyond cavil, he has turned the thing into a virtuosity: "modern" is he out-and-out, and if he thus exhibits himself for all the civilised world to copy, it's not *his* fault that he is copied inexpertly; rather is it a constant source of flattery to him, that he alone should be original in a thing which others feel compelled to copy. — And then the man is wholly "journal"; plastic art, no less than music, is an object for his "feuilleton." As a thorough modern, he has trimmed the former just as much to his liking as the cut of his clothes, in which he is governed purely by the principle of Novelty, i.e. perpetual change. Here the furniture is the chief affair; for it the architect constructs the house. The tendence displayed herein in earlier times, down to the [119] great Revolution, was still original; in the sense that it fitted the character of the ruling classes of society as admirably as the dress their bodies, the coiffure their heads. Since then, this tendence has fallen in exact degree as the superior classes have timidly withdrawn from the leadership of *ton*, and left the Mode's initiative to the emerging broader strata of the populace (we are speaking of Paris throughout). And here the so-called "*demi-monde*," with its entrepreneurs, has taken the lead: the Paris dame seeks to attract her husband by copying its dress and manners; for on this side, again, things are still so original that dress and manners belong to and complete each other. This side, however, abjures all influence over plastic art; which consequently has fallen into the hands of the fancy dealer, under the shape of quincaille and hangings, wellnigh as in the first beginnings of the arts among nomadic races. With the constant demand for novelty, and seeing that itself can never produce a thing really new, the Mode is left with no resource but a constant changing of extremes: indeed it is to this tendence that our oddly-counselled plastic artists tack themselves at last, to bring noble forms of art—naturally not of their own invention—once more to daylight with the rest. Antique and Roccoco, Gothic and Renaissance, take turn and turn about; the factories put forth Laocoon-groups, Chinese porcelain, copies of Raphael and Murillo, Etrurian vases, Medieval curtain-stuffs, meubles à la Pompadour, stuccos à la Louis XIV.; the architect frames the whole in Florentine style, and sets an Ariadne-group atop.

Thus "modern art" becomes a new principle in Æsthetics too: its originality consists in its total want of originality, and its priceless gain in the exchange of every style; all which have now been brought within range of the commonest observation, and can be adapted to the taste of every man.—Also, it is credited with a new humanitarian principle, the Democratising of artistic taste. They tell us to have every hope of the education of the people; for art and its

products, you see, are no longer reserved for [120] the privileged classes, but the smallest citizen has now the opportunity of placing the noblest types of art before his eyes upon his chimney-piece, whilst the beggar himself may peep at them in the art-shop windows. One certainly should rest content; for, everything being already laid in a heap at our feet, it would really be impossible to conceive how even the most gifted brain could manage to invent a novel style in either plastic art or literature.—

Yes, we may fully concur with that opinion; for here we have an outcome of history as consequent as our civilisation itself. 'Twere thinkable that these consequences might be blotted out, namely in the foundering of our civilisation; an event to be conceived if all History went by the board as result, let us say, of social Communism imposing itself on the modern world in the guise of a practical religion. At any rate our civilisation has come to the end of true productiveness in respect of its Plastic form, and we shall do well to accustom ourselves no longer to expect anything at all resembling the unapproachable model bequeathed us by the antique world in that domain, and haply to accept this strange result of modern civilisation—so very comforting to many persons—with the same conviction as makes us now regard the suggestion of a new German mode of dress for us men, and especially for our women, as a vain attempt to kick against the spirit of our civilisation.

Far as our *eye* can roam, the *Mode* commands us.—

But coevally with this world of Mode another world has risen for us. As Christianity stepped forth amid the Roman civilisation of the universe, so *Music* breaks forth from the chaos of modern civilisation. Both say aloud: "our kingdom is not of this world." And that means: we come from within, ye from without; we spring from the Essence of things, ye from their Show.

Let anyone experience for himself how the whole modern world of Appearance, which hems him in on every side to his despair, melts suddenly to naught if he but hears the first few bars of one of those godlike symphonies. How [121] were it possible in a modern concert-room (where Turks and Zouaves would assuredly feel at home!) to listen to music with even a modicum of devotion, if our visual surroundings did not vanish from our optic range in manner said above? And, taken in the most earnest sense, it is this effect that Music has on our whole modern civilisation; she effaces it, as the light of day the lamplight.—

'Tis hard to form an adequate notion of the way in which Music from of old has exerted her own peculiar might in face of the material world. To us it would seem that the music of the Hellenes steeped the world of semblances itself; and blended with its laws of sense. The numbers of Pythagoras are surely only to be understood aright through Music; by the laws of Eurhythmy the architect built, by those of Harmony the sculptor seized the human figure; the laws of Melody made the poet a singer, and from out the choral chant the Drama was projected on the stage. Everywhere we see the inner law, only conceivable as sprung from the spirit of Music, prescribe the outer law that regulates the world of sight: the genuine ancient Doric State which Plato tried to rescue for philosophy, nay, the order of war, the fight itself; the laws of Music led as surely as the dance.—But that paradise was lost: the fount of motion of a world ran dry. Like a ball once thrown, the world span round the curve of its trajectory, but no longer was it driven by a moving soul; and so its very motion must grow faint at last, until the world-soul had been waked again.

It was the spirit of Christianity that rewoke to life the soul of Music. And Music lit the eye of the Italian painter, inspiring it to penetrate the veil of things and reach their soul, the Christian spirit, fast decaying in the Church. Almost all these great painters were musicians, and when we lose ourselves in contemplation of their saints and martyrs, it is the spirit of Music that makes us forget we here are seeing.—But there came the reign of Mode: as the spirit of the Church fell victim to the [122] artificial nurture of the Jesuits, so plastic art and music each became a soulless artifice.



Now, in our great Beethoven we have followed the wondrous process of emancipating Melody from the tyranny of Mode; and we have seen that, while making unrivalledly individual use of all the material which his glorious forerunners had toilsomely recovered from the influence of this Mode, he restored to Melody its everlasting type, to Music her immortal soul. With a godlike naïvety all his own, our master also stamps upon his victory the seal of that full consciousness wherewith he won it. In the poem of Schiller's which he chose for the marvellous closing section of his Ninth Symphony he recognised the joy of Nature liberated from the rule of "Mode." But observe the remarkable reading given by him to the poet's words:

"Deine Zauber binden wieder  
Was die Mode streng getheilt."

"Thy blest magic binds together  
What the Mode had sprung apart."

As we have seen before, Beethoven simply laid the words beneath his melody as a vocal text, a poem whose general character was in accord with the spirit of this melody. What is customarily meant by correct declamation, especially in the dramatic sense, he leaves almost entirely out of count; so—as with the singing of the whole first three strophes of the poem—he lets that verse: "Was die Mode streng getheilt" pass by us without any particular stress on the words. Then however, as the strain of dithyrambic inspiration reaches a climax never heard before, he gives to the words of this verse at last their full dramatic value, and repeating them in a *unisono* of wellnigh frantic menace, he finds the "streng" inadequate to signalise his wrath. Remarkably enough, this milder epithet for the operation of the Mode is also due to a toning-down on the part of the poet, who in the first edition of his Ode to Joy had printed:

[123]

"Was der Mode *Schwert* getheilt."

"What the fashion's *sword* had cleft."

But this "sword," again, to Beethoven did not appear to say the right thing; allotted to the Mode, it seemed to him too noble and heroic. So of his own sovereign power he substituted "*frech*," and now we sing:

"Was die Mode *frech* getheilt."

"What the Mode had *dared* to part." (32)

Could anything be more speaking than this vehement, this passionate artistic act? We might be looking on a *Luther* in his rage against the Pope!—

As for our present Civilisation, especially insofar as it influences the artistic man, we certainly may assume that nothing but the spirit of our Music, that music which Beethoven set free from bondage to the Mode, can dower it with a soul again. And the task of giving to the new, more soulful civilisation that haply may arise herefrom, the new Religion to inform it—this task must obviously be reserved for the German Spirit alone, that spirit which we ourselves shall never rightly understand till we cast aside each spurious tendency ascribed thereto.

Yet how hard of gain is true self-knowledge, above all for an entire nation, we now have learnt to our genuine horror from the case of our once so powerful neighbours the French; and we thence may derive a serious call to self-examination, for which we happily have but to pursue the earnest efforts of our own great poets, with whom, both consciously and unconsciously, this self-examination was the root-endeavour.

To them it must needs have seemed questionable, how [124] the uncouth and heavy-footed German nature could take rank at all advantageously beside the light and supple Form of our neighbours of Romanic descent. As the German spirit possessed, however, an undeniable advantage in the depth and inwardness of its conception of the world and all that moves therein, with them it was a constant question how this advantage could best be employed in the refining of the national character, and thence exert a beneficial influence on the mind and character of neighbouring peoples; whereas it was manifest that influences of this kind had taken hitherto the opposite route, and wrought on us more harm than good.

Now if we rightly judge the two poetic schemes that ran through the life of our greatest poet like two main arteries, we gain an excellent clue to the problem which presented itself to this freest of German men from the very commencement of his unparalleled career as poet.—We know that "Faust" and "Wilhelm Meister" were both conceived in the same period of the first exuberant blossoming of Goethe's poetic genius. The fervour of the deep idea that filled his mind first urged him to the execution of the earliest parts of "Faust": as if terrified by the vastness of his own conception, he turned from the mighty project to the more tranquillising treatment of the problem in "Wilhelm Meister." In full maturity of man's estate he completed this light-flowing novel. His hero is a German burgher's son who goes out in quest of sweet and stable Form, and journeying across the stage, through the heart of aristocratic society, is finally conducted to a life of usefulness as citizen of the world; to him is appointed a genie whom he understands but superficially: much in the same way as Goethe then understood Music, is "Mignon understood by Wilhelm Meister. The poet lets us feel distinctly that an appalling crime has been committed against "Mignon"; yet he helps his hero over such a feeling, to lead him to a sphere set free from heat of passion and tragical intensity, a sphere of beautiful [125] culture. He takes him to a gallery, to shew him pictures. Music is made for Mignon's death, and Robert Schumann actually composed it later.—It appears that Schiller was aghast at the last book of "Wilhelm Meister"; yet he surely knew no way of helping his great friend out of his strange aberration; especially as he could but assume that Goethe, who had created Mignon and therewith called a wonderful new world to life for us, must have inwardly fallen into a profound distraction, beyond all power of his friend to wake him from. Only Goethe himself; could wake himself; and—he awoke: in advanced old age he finished his *Faust*. Whatever had distracted him, he here assembles in one archetype of beauty: *Helena*, the full antique ideal, he conjures from the shadow-realm and marries to his Faust. But the shade will not stay banned; it melts into a radiant cloud, and floats away while Faust looks on in brooding but painless melancholy. *Gretchen* alone could redeem him: from the world of the blest that early sacrifice, still dwelling in his inmost heart unheeded, extends to him her hand. And if as sequel to the analogies we have drawn from likenesses between philosophy and physiology we now may venture to give the profoundest work of poetry an application to ourselves, the "Alles Vergängliche ist nur ein Gleichniss" ("All things terrestrial are but a likeness") we will interpret as the spirit of Plastic art, which Goethe so long and ardently had striven for; whilst "Das ewig Weibliche zieht uns dahin" ("The Eternal-womanly beckons us hence") we will read as the spirit of Music, which mounted from the poet's deepest consciousness, and, soaring over him, led his footsteps on the pathway of redemption.—

And by this path, commencing in the inmost of experiences, must the German Spirit lead its Folk, if it is to bless the nations in due measure with its calling. Scoff at us, who will, for attributing to German music this unbounded significance; we shall as little let ourselves be led astray thereby, as the German nation allowed itself to be misled when its enemies presumed to insult it on the ground of a [126] too well reasoned doubt of its unanimity and staunchness. This also our great poet knew, when he sought a consolation for the Germans appearing so empty and foolish to him in their badly-copied airs and manners; his consolation was: "*The German is brave.*" And that is something!—

So let the German Folk be brave in peace as well; let it cherish its native worth, and cast the false show from it: let it never seek to pass for what it is not, but recognise the quality in which it is unique! To it the art of pleasing is denied; in lieu thereof its veritable deeds and thoughts are heartfelt and sublime. And beside its valour's victories in this wondrous 1870 no loftier trophy can be set, than the memory of our great *Beethoven*, who was born to the German Folk one hundred years ago. Whither our arms are urging now, to the primal seat of "shameless Mode" (*der "frechen Mode"*), there had *his* genius begun already the noblest

conquest: what our thinkers, our poets, in toilsome transposition, had only touched as with a half-heard word, the Beethovenian Symphony had stirred to its deepest core: the new religion, the world-redeeming gospel of sublimest innocence, was there already under stood as by ourselves.

So let us celebrate the great path-breaker in the wilderness of a paradise debased! But let us celebrate him worthily,—and no less worthily than the victories of German valour: for the benefactor of a world may claim still higher rank than the world-conqueror!



## Notes

### Note 01 on page 7

Born December 17, 1770.—TR.

### Note 02 on page 9

Gervinus.—TR.

### Note 03 on page 10

"Er war mit seinem Bewusstsein ein durchaus der anschaulichen Welt zugewendeter schöne Geist."

### Note 04 on page 11

"Zur Veranschaulichung der *Idee*." The word "*Anschauung*"—derived from "*Schauen*," "to look"—presents the English translator with one of his greatest difficulties, as I once before have pointed out: from its original meaning, "the act of looking at," it has passed to the metaphorical "view" and even to "intuition," which latter word, in ordinary parlance, expresses the very reverse of a physical inspection; in this essay, however, Wagner adopts the Schopenhauerian meaning of the term, i.e. a simple outward operation of the senses, without any analysis or synthesis by the reasoning faculty on the one hand, and without any disturbance of the emotions on the other. The present participle "*anschauend*" and the adjective "*anschaulich*" may be rendered, for lack of a better term, as "visual," since vision is the principal sense by which we take cognisance of the outer world: an old proverb tells us that "seeing is believing," while the opposite mode of knowledge, that by which we take cognisance of the inner world, is suggested in the words of the most esoteric of the Evangelists, "blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." As Wagner in *Opera and Drama* has used the expression "the eye of hearing," it is easy to understand the difference between what he here calls "art-music," the music of mere sound-patterns, and that veritable music which passes through "the ear of hearing" to the seat of the emotions.—Tr.

### Note 05 on page 11

"*Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*" II. 415.—R. W.

### Note 06 on page 11

Ibid. 418.—R. Wagner.—In the edition of 1879 the corresponding pages are 417 and 419-20.—Tr.

### Note 07 on page 12

In the original we have the words "durch seine hiermit verbundene tiefsinnige Hypothese" &c.,—literally "through his profound hypothesis linked herewith," or perhaps "allied hereto." This "dream" hypothesis does not appear in the "*Welt als W. u. V.*," however, but in a lengthy essay on "Ghost-seeing" in Vol. I. of the "*Parerga und Paralipomena*," written after the publication of the larger work; so that the "connection" must be regarded in a purely subjective light, that is to say, as Wagner's own discovery. In fact our author, partly by re-arranging the "material supplied [elsewhere] by the philosopher," partly by his independent

observations, has carried Schopenhauer's Theory of Music infinitely farther than its originator could ever have dreamt.—Tr.

[Note 08 on page 12](#)

Cf. "In lichten Tages Schein, wie war Isolde mein?" and in fact the whole love-scene in *Tristan und Isolde*, act ii.—Tr.

[Note 09 on page 13](#)

Cf. Vol. II.—*Opera and Drama*— [page 219](#).—Tr.

[Note 10 on page 14](#)

Cf. *Tristan und Isolde*, act iii. "Die Sonne sah ich nicht, nicht sah ich Land noch Leute: doch was ich sah, das kann ich dir nicht sagen."—Tr.

[Note 11 on page 16](#)

"Die Musik, welche einzig dadurch zu uns spricht, dass sie den allerallgemeinsten Begriff des an sich dunklen Gefühles in den erdenklichsten Abstufungen mit bestimmtester Deutlichkeit uns belebt, kann an und für sich einzig nach der Kategorie des *Erhabenen* beurtheilt werden, da sie, sobald sie uns erfüllt, die höchste Extase des Bewusstseins der Schrankenlosigkeit erregt."—A very difficult sentence to render justice to, even in a partial paraphrase, without appealing to Schopenhauer's convincing theory of the Sublime (*Welt als W. u. V. I. § 39*). As an element of that theory is formed by the recognition that in the Sublime, whether in Nature or Art, we are brought into direct contact with the *universal Will*, our author's argument as to the nature of Music is really far more strongly supported by his present paragraph, to the ordinary mind, than by Schopenhauer's assumption of a "dream-organ" ; which latter, however, Wagner explicitly has adopted by mere way of "analogy"—a purpose it admirably serves, though it has given offence to those who have been misled by the oft-repeated *illustration* into considering it a main factor in the *exposition*, whereas each several reference to "dreams" might be omitted without in the slightest degree affecting the philosophic basis of Richard Wagner's remarkable contribution to a much-needed Science of Music.—Tr.

[Note 12 on page 17](#)

"Eindringlichkeit"—literally "penetrative quality," for which there really is no better equivalent than "catchiness."—Tr.

[Note 13 on page 17](#)

To specify, I have done this in brief and general terms in an essay entitled "Zukunftsmusik," published at Leipzig about twelve years ago, without, however, finding any manner of attention; it has been included in the seventh volume of these *Ges. Schr. u. Dicht.* [Vol. III of the present series], and may here be recommended to fresh notice.—R. WAGNER.

[Note 14 on page 19](#)

*Welt als W. u. V.*, I. § 52.—Tr.

[Note 15 on page 20](#)

Chrétien de Troyes' twelfth-century poem, *Perceval le Galois*.—Tr.

[Note 16 on page 20](#)

Cf. Schopenhauer's *Welt als W. u. V.* vol. I. § 38: "Light has become the symbol of all good and salutary things. . . colours directly rouse in us a lively pleasure, which reaches the highest pitch when they are transparent," and, on the other hand, Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*, [Book III. cap. vi.](#) (Carlyle's translation): "These virtues were to advance together, to recite the Prince's praises, and finally to encircle his bust with garlands of flowers and laurels; behind which a transparency might be inserted, representing the princely Hat, and his name illuminated on it. . . . But how can it flatter any reasonable man to see himself set up in effigy, and his name glimmering on oiled paper?"—Tr.

[Note 17 on page 22](#)

"So schützte die Natur in ihm ein Gehirn von übermässiger Zartheit, damit es nur nach innen blicken, und die Weltschau eines grossen Herzes in ungestörter Ruhe üben könnte."—

[Note 18 on page 23](#)

"Die Welt gewinnt ihre Kindesunschuld wieder." Cf. *Tannhäuser*, act i.: "Ha, jetzt erkenne ich sie wieder, die schöne Welt, der ich entrückt! Der Himmel blickt auf mich hernieder, die Fluren prangen reich geschmückt," and *Parsifal*, act iii.: "Das dankt denn alle Kreatur, was all' da blüht und bald erstirbt, da die entsündigte Natur heut' ihren Unschulds-Tag erwirbt."—Tr.

[Note 19 on page 23](#)

Cf. Wotan in *Siegfried*; "my jovial god who craves his own undoing" (*Letter to A. Röckel*, Jan. 1854).—Tr.

[Note 20 on page 23](#)

"Die Erkenntniss flieht mit dem Bekenntniss ihres Irrthumes." Cf. *Parsifal*, act. ii.: "Bekenntniss wird Schuld und Reue enden, Erkenntniss in Sinn die Thorheit wenden."—Tr.

[Note 21 on page 24](#)

"Nur dass dieser in der Noth des Lebens selbst deutlich die Sühne für em sündiges Dasein erkennt, und in deren geduldiger Ertragung sogar mit Begeisterung das Mittel der Erlösung ergreift, wogegen jener heilige Seher den Sinn der Busse einfach als Qual auffasst, und seine Daseins-Schuld eben nur als Leidender abträgt."—

[Note 22 on page 25](#)

Cf. Vol. IV., p. 323.—Tr.

[Note 23 on page 25](#)

Goethe's *Faust*.—Tr.

[Note 24 on page 25](#)

Cf. Lenau's *Faust* as cited in Liszt's *Mephisto-Walzer*.—Tr.



[Note 25 on page 26](#)

Cf. *Parsifal*, act i.: "Wer ist gut?"—Tr.

[Note 26 on page 26](#)

"Hier betritt das lyrische Pathos fast schon den Boden einer idealen Dramatik im bestimmteren Sinne, und, wie es zweifelhaft dünken dürfte, ob auf diesem Wege die musikalische Konzeption nicht bereits in ihrer Reinheit getrübt werden möchte, weil sie zur Herbeiziehung von Vorstellungen verleiten müsste, welche an sich dem Geiste der Musik durchaus fremd erscheinen, so ist andererseits wiederum nicht zu verkennen, dass der Meister keinesweges durch eine abirrende ästhetische Spekulation, sondern lediglich durch einen dem eigensten Gebiete der Musik entkeimten, durchaus idealen Instinkt hierin geleitet wurde."—A somewhat difficult sentence to translate, as our author in this essay has studiously avoided all direct reference to post-Beethovenian composers, and yet the key to the present generalisation would appear to lie in the remarks upon Berlioz contained in his *Letter on Liszt's Symphonic Poems*, Vol. III.—Tr.

[Note 27 on page 27](#)

"Ganz ersichtlich ist es, dass namentlich der eigentlichen Hauptmelodie die Worte Schiller's, sogar mit wenigem Geschicke, nothdürftig erst untergelegt sind."—

[Note 28 on page 27](#)

"Nichts gleicht der holden Innigkeit, zu welcher jede neu hinzutretende Stimme diese Urweise reinster Unschuld belebt, bis jeder Schmuck, jede Pracht der gesteigerten Empfindung an ihr und in ihr sich vereinigt, wie die athmende Welt um em endlich geoffenbartes Dogma reinster Liebe."—

[Note 29 on page 28](#)

"Denn es bestätigt sich, dass, wenn zu einer Musik gesungen wird, nicht der poetische Gedanke, den man namentlich hei Chorgesängen nicht einmal verständlich artikulirt vernimmt, sondern höchstens Das von ihm aufgefasst wird, wss er im Musiker als Musik und zu Musik anregte."—

[Note 30 on page 31](#)

"Zu diesem, hier analogisch angezogenen, physiologischen Phänomene der somnambulen Hellsichtigkeit halten wir nun das andere des Geistersehens, und verwenden hierbei wiederum die hypothetische Erklärung Schopenhauer's, wonach dieses em bei wachem Gehirne eintretendes Hellsehen sei; nämlich, es gehe dieses in Folge einer Depotenzirung des wachen Gesichtes vor sich, dessen jetzt umflortes Sehen der innere Drang zu einer Mittheilung an das dem Wachen unmittelbar nahe Bewusstsein benutze, um ihm die im innersten Wahrtraume erschienene Gestalt deutlich vor sich zu zeigen."—

[Note 31 on page 32](#)

Cf. Kundry's awakening in *Parsifal*, acts ii. and iii.—Tr.

[Note 32 on page 37](#)

In Härtel's otherwise so admirable Complete Edition of Beethoven's Works a member of what I have elsewhere styled the "Musical Temperance Union," entrusted with the "critical" supervision, has effaced this speaking feature from pages 260 *et seq.* of the score of the Ninth Symphony, and on his own authority has substituted for the "frech" of Schott's Original Edition the decorous, the moral-moderate "streng." Pure chance disclosed to me this falsification, whose motive is calculated to fill us with grave anxiety as to the ultimate fate of the works of our great Beethoven if they are to be subjected to a revision progressing along such lines.—R. WAGNER.

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# *The Destiny of Opera*

By Richard Wagner

Translated by William Ashton Ellis



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## Contents

About this Title .....	4
Translator's Note .....	5
Preface .....	7
The Destiny of Opera .....	9
Notes .....	21

## About this Title

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[128]

## Translator's Note

This essay was published in the Spring of 1871 (E. W. Fritsch, Leipzig), with the subsidiary title "An Academic Lecture by Richard Wagner." The author had in 1869 been elected a member of the Royal Academy of the Arts in Berlin, and "The Destiny of Opera" was intended as the thesis for his installation, which followed on April 28, 1871.





[129]

## Preface

IN preparing the following essay for an Academic lecture, the author experienced the difficulty of having to enlarge once more on a subject he many years ago had treated exhaustively, as he believes, in a special book entitled *Oper und Drama*. As the requisite brevity of its present treatment would only allow of the main idea being sketched in outline, whoever might haply feel roused to more serious interest in the subject must needs be referred to that earlier book of mine. It then would scarcely escape his notice that, albeit a complete agreement holds between the older, lengthier, and the present conciser treatment of the subject itself—namely the character and importance ascribed by the author to the Musically-conceived drama—yet in many respects this recent setting offers new points of view, from whence regarded certain details necessarily assume another aspect; and that, perhaps, may make this newer treatment interesting even to those already familiar with the older one.

Certainly I have been given ample time to digest the topic started by myself, and I could have wished to have been diverted from the process by practical proof of the justice of my views being made more easy to me. The obtaining of single stage-performances, correct in my sense of the term, could not suffice me so long as they were not withdrawn completely from the sphere of modern operatic doings; for the ruling theatrical element of our day, with all its outward and inward attributes, entirely inartistic, un-German, both morally and mentally pernicious, invariably gathers again like a choking mist over any spot where the [130] most arduous exertions may have given one for once an outlook on the sunlight. May the present writing therefore be not taken as an ambitious contribution to the field of Theory proper, but merely as a last attempt from that side to awaken interest and furtherance for the author's efforts on the realm of artistic Practice. It will then be understood why, prompted by this wish alone, he has constantly endeavoured to place his subject in new lights; for he was bound to keep on trying to propound the problem, that occupied his mind, in such a way that it finally might strike the minds of those alone qualified to give it serious attention. That this result has hitherto been so hard of attainment that he could but regard himself as a lonely wanderer soliloquising to a croaking accompaniment of the frogs in our stage-reporters' swamp, has simply shewn him how low had sunk the sphere to which he found himself and problem banned: but this sphere alone contains the elements capable of producing a higher Artwork, and thus the object of the following treatise, too, can only be to direct to those elements the gaze of those who at present stand entirely outside this sphere.



[131]

## The Destiny of Opera

A WELL-MEANT cry of earnest friends of the Theatre lays the blame of its downfall on the Opera. The charge is founded on the unmistakable decline of interest in the spoken Play, as also on the degeneration of dramatic performances in general.

The correctness of this accusation must needs seem obvious. Merely, one might ask how it came to pass that the foundations of Opera were laid with the first beginnings of the modern Theatre, and why the most distinguished minds have repeatedly dwelt on the potentialities in a genre of dramatic art whose one-sided development has taken the shape of current Opera? In such an inquiry we might easily be led into regarding our greatest poets as, in a certain sense, the pioneers of Opera. Though such an allegation must be accepted with great reserve, on the other hand the issue of our great German poets labours for the theatre, and their effect on the whole spirit of our dramatic representations, can but cause us earnestly to ponder how it was that Opera could have acquired so overpowering a control over theatric taste in general, in face of just the influence of those great poetic works themselves. And here we perhaps may gain an answer if we limit ourselves at first to the actual result, upon the character of stage-doings in the stricter province of the *Play*, of the effect of the Goethe-and-Schiller Drama upon the spirit in which our actors approach their work.

That result we recognise at once as due to a disproportion between the capacity of our actors and the nature of the tasks proposed them. A full account of this misrelation belongs to the history of German Acting, and has already been undertaken in praiseworthy fashion. (1) [132] Referring to that account, on the one hand, and on the other reserving the deeper aesthetic problem at bottom of the evil for the later course of our inquiry, our present concern is that our poets had to couch their idealising tendency in a dramatic form to which the natural parts and training of our actors could not adapt themselves. It needed the rarest talents, such as of a Sophie Schröder, to completely solve a task pitched far too high for our players; accustomed solely to their native element of German burgher life, the sudden demand could not but set them in the most ruinous bewilderment. To that disproportion we owe the rise and eventual rampancy of "false pathos." This had been preceded, at an earlier epoch of the German stage, by the grotesque affectation peculiar to the "English comedians" so-called: a grotesquery applied by them to the rough-and-ready representation of old-English and even Shakespearian pieces, and to be met to this day at the degenerate English national theatre. In healthy opposition there had since arisen the so-called "true-to-nature," which found its suitable field of expression in the "Burgher" drama. Though Lessing himself, as also Goethe in his youth, wrote poems for this Burgher drama, we must note that it always derived its chief supply from pieces written by the foremost actors of this period. Now, the narrow sphere and scant poetic value of these products impelled our great poets to extend and elevate dramatic style; and though their original purpose was to continue the cultivation of the "true-to-nature," it was not long before the Ideal tendency shewed itself,—to be realised, as for expression, by *poetic pathos*. Those at all acquainted with this branch of our art-history, know how our great poets were disturbed in their endeavours to instil the new style into the players; however, it is much to be doubted whether in any event they would finally have proved successful, as they had previously been obliged to content themselves with a mere artificial semblance of success, which persistently developed into just that so-called "false pathos." In harmony with the German's [133] modest talent for play-acting, this remained the sole but doubtful profit, as regards the character of performance of dramas of an Ideal trend, of that else so gigantic influence of our poets on the Theatre.

Now, what took the outward form of this "false pathos" became in turn the tendency of all

the dramatic conceptions of our lesser stage-poets, whose matter from first to last was every whit as hollow as that pathos itself: we need but recall the products of a Houwald, Müllner, and the string of similar playwrights who have made for the Pathetic to the present day. The only adducible reaction against this tendency would be the constantly reviving Burgher play or prose-comedy of our time, had the French "Sensational piece" ("*Effektstück*") not overwhelmed us with its influence in this direction also. Hereby has the last trace of purity of type been wiped from our stage; and all that our Play has retained from the dramas of Goethe and Schiller themselves, is the now open secret of the employment of "false pathos," to wit "*Effect*."

As everything written for, and acted at the theatre is nowadays inspired by nothing but this tendency to "Effect," so that whatever ignores it is promptly condemned to neglect, we need feel no surprise at seeing it systematically applied to the performance of pieces by Goethe and Schiller; for, in a certain sense, we here have the original model that has been misconstrued to this tendency. The need of "poetic pathos" made our poets deliberately adopt a *rhetorical mode of diction*, with the aim of working on the Feeling; and, as it was impossible for our unpoetic actors to either understand or carry out the ideal aim, this diction led to that intrinsically senseless, but melodramatically telling style of declamation whose practical object was just the said "Effect," i.e. a stunning of the spectator's senses, to be documented by the outburst of "applause." This "applause" and its unfailing provoker, the "exit"-tirade, became the soul of every tendency of our modern theatre: the "brilliant exits" in the rôles of our classical plays have been counted up, and [134] the latter's value rated by their number—exactly as with an Italian operatic part. Surely we cannot scold our applause-dry priests of Thalia and Melpomene for casting envious glances at the Opera, where these "exits" are far more plentiful, and the storms of applause are raised with much greater certainty, than in even the most effective play; and since our playwrights live on the Effect of the rôles of our actors, 'tis easy to understand why the opera-composer appears to them a very hateful rival, for he can bring all this about by simply arranging for a good loud scream at the close of any vocal phrase you please.

In truth the outer reason, as also the most obvious character of the complaint we noted at starting, turns out to be thus and not otherwise. That I am far from thinking I have herewith shewn its deeper ground, I sufficiently hinted above: but, before we touch the inner core, I deem it more advisable to first weigh well its outer tokens, open to the experience of everyone. Let us therefore remember that in the character of all theatrical performances there inheres a tendency whose worst consequence comes out as the striving for "effect," and, though just as rampant in the spoken Play, in Opera it has the fullest opportunity of satiation. At bottom of the common actor's cry against the Opera there probably lies nothing but jealousy of its greater wealth of means of effect: but we must admit that the earnest actor has far more show of reason for annoyance, when he compares the seeming easiness and frivolity of these means of effect with the certainly much severer pains he has to take, to do some justice to the characters he represents. For, even from the standpoint of its outward effect on the public, the Play may boast of at least this merit:—that the plot itself, with the incidents that hold the plot together and the motives that explain it, must be intelligible, to rivet the spectator's interest; and that a piece composed of nothing but declamatory phrases, without an underlying plot intelligibly set forth and thereby centering the interest, is here as yet unthinkable. Opera, on the contrary, may be taxed with simply stringing [135] together a number of means of exciting a purely physical sense, whilst a mere agreeable contrast in their order of sequence suffices to mask the absence of any understandable or reasonable plot.

Plainly, a very serious point in the indictment. Yet even of this we may have our doubts, on closer scrutiny. That the so-called text of an opera must be interesting, composers have felt so clearly in every age, and particularly of late, that to obtain a good "book" has been one of

their most earnest endeavours. An attractive, or if possible a rousing plot, has always been essential for an opera to make its mark, especially in our time; so that it would be difficult to argue wholly away the dramatic tendency in the flimsy structure of an operatic text. In fact this side of the procedure has been so little unpretentious, that there is hardly a play of Shakespeare's, and there soon will be none of Schiller's and Goethe's, which Opera has not deemed just good enough for adaptation. Precisely this abuse, however, could only irritate our actors and playwrights still more, and this time with great justice; they might well protest: "Why should we take any pains in future to acquit ourselves of true dramatic tasks, when the public runs from us to where the selfsame themes, most frivolously distorted, are employed for mere multiplication of the vulgarest effects?" To this we at any rate might reply by asking how it would have been possible to set Herr Gounod's opera "Faust" before the German public, if our acting-stage had been able to make it really understand the "Faust" of Goethe? No: 'tis not to be disputed that the public has turned away from our actors' singular efforts to make something of the monologue of our own "Faust," to Herr Gounod's aria with the theme on the pleasures of youth, and here applauds whilst it there refused to move a hand.

Perhaps no instance could shew us more plainly and distressingly, to what a pass our Theatre has come. Yet even now we cannot admit the perfect equity of laying the whole blame of this undeniable downfall on the vogue [136] enjoyed by Opera; rather, that very vogue should open our eyes alike to the failings of our Play and the impossibility of fulfilling within its bounds, and with the only expressional means at its command, the *ideal* scope of Drama. Precisely here, where the highest ideal is faced with its utmost trivialising, as in the above example, the horror of the thing must force us to look deeper into the nature of our problem. We still might shirk the obligation, if we merely meant to take a great depravation of public taste for granted, and to seek its causes in the wider field of our public life. But for ourselves, having reached that horrifying experience from just this standpoint, it is hopeless to contemplate an improvement of public art-taste, in particular, by the lengthy route of a regeneration of our public spirit itself; we deem wiser to take the direct path of an inquiry into the purely æsthetic problem lying at bottom, and thus to arrive at an answer which perchance may give us hopes of the possibility of an influence being exerted on the public spirit from this opposite side.

We therefore will formulate a thesis, whose working-out may haply guide us to that end. As follows:—

We grant that Opera has made palpable the downfall of the Theatre: though it may be doubted whether it really brought about that downfall, yet its present supremacy shews clearly that by it alone can our Theatre be raised again; but this restoration can never truly prosper till it conducts our Theatre to that Ideal to which it is so innately predisposed, that neglect and misapprehension thereof have done far greater harm to the German stage than to the French, since the latter had no idealistic aspirations and therefore could devote itself to the development of realistic correctness in a narrower sphere.—

An intelligent history of stage "pathos" would make plain what the idealistic trend in modern drama has ever aimed at. Here it would be instructive to note how the Italians, who sat at the feet of the Antique for wellnigh all their art-tendencies, left the spoken drama almost quite in embryo; they promptly attempted a reconstruction of the [137] antique drama on a basis of musical Lyrics, and, straying ever farther to one side, produced the Opera. While this was taking place in Italy under the omnipotent influence of the cultured upper circles of the nation, among the Spaniards and English the Folk-spirit itself was evolving the modern Play, after the antiquarian bent of lettered poets had proved incapable of any vital influence on the nation. Only by starting from this realistic sphere, wherein Lope de Vega had shewn such exuberant fertility, did Calderon lead the Spanish drama to that idealising tendency, which brought him so close to the Italians that many of his pieces we can but characterise as

wellnigh operatic. Perhaps the English drama also would not have held aloof from a similar tendency, had not the inscrutable genius of a Shakespeare enabled the loftiest figures of history and legend to tread the boards of the realistic Folk-play with such a truth to nature that they passed beyond the reach of any rule erewhile misborrowed from the antique Form. Perhaps their awe at Shakespeare's unfathomable inimitability had no less share than their recognition of the true meaning of the Antique and its forms, in determining our great poets' dramatic labours. They pondered too the eminent advantages of Opera, though it finally passed their understanding how this Opera was to be dealt with from their standpoint. Schiller, transported by Gluck's "Iphigenia in Tauris," nevertheless could not discover a *modus vivendi* with the Opera; and Goethe appears to have plainly seen that the task was reserved for the musical genius, when he regarded the news of Mozart's death as effacing all the splendid prospects of a Musically-conceived Drama opened up to him by "Don Giovanni."

Through this attitude of Goethe and Schiller we are afforded a deep insight into the nature of the *poet* pure and simple. If on the one hand Shakespeare and his method to them seemed incomprehensible, and on the other they felt compelled to leave to the *musician*—whose method was equally incomprehensible—the unique task [138] of breathing ideal life into the figures of the Drama, the question arises: how did they stand as poets toward the genuine Drama, and whether, solely as such, they could feel themselves equipped for Drama at all? A doubt of this seems to have invaded more and more these so profoundly truthful men, and the constant change of Form in their projects shews, of itself, that they felt as if engaged in one continual series of experiments. Were we to try to probe that doubt, we might find in it the confession of a certain insufficiency in the poetic nature (*das Bekenntniss einer Unzulänglichkeit des dichterischen Wesens*); for Poetry, taken by itself, is only to be conceived as an *abstractum*, and first becomes a *concretum* through the matter of its fashionings. If neither the Plastic artist nor the Musician is thinkable without a trace of the poetic spirit, the question simply is how that latent force, which in them brings forth the work of art, can lead to the same result in the Poet's shapings as a conscious agent?

Without embarking on an inquiry into the mystery just mooted, we yet must call to mind the distinction between the modern culture-poet and the naive poet of the ancient world. The latter was in the first place an inventor of Myths, then their word-of-mouth narrator in the Epos, and finally their personal performer in the living Drama. Plato was the first to adopt all three poetic forms for his "dialogues," so filled with dramatic life and so rich in myth-invention; and these scenes of his may be regarded as the foundation—nay, in the poet-philosopher's glorious "Symposium," the model unapproached—of strictly literary poetry, which always leans to the didactic. Here the forms of naive poetry are merely employed to set philosophic theses in a quasi-popular light, and conscious *tendence* takes the place of the directly-witnessed scene from life. To extend this "Tendence" to the acted drama, must have appeared to our great culture-poets the surest mode of elevating the existing popular play; and in this they may have been misled by certain features of the Antique Drama. The Tragedy of the Greeks having [139] evolved from a compromise between the Apollinian and the Dionysian elements, upon the basis of a system of Lyrics wellnigh past our understanding, the didactic hymn of the old-Hellenian priests could combine with the newer Dionysian dithyramb to produce that enthralling effect in which this artwork stands unrivalled. Now the fact of the Apollinian element in Greek Tragedy, regarded as a literary monument, having attracted to itself the principal notice in every age, and particularly of philosophers and didacts, may reasonably have betrayed our later poets—who also chiefly viewed these tragedies as literary products—into the opinion that in this didactic tendency lay the secret of the antique drama's dignity, and, consequently into the belief that the existing popular drama was only to be raised and idealised by stamping it therewith. Their true artistic instinct saved them from sacrificing living Drama to Tendency bald and bare: but what was to



put soul into this Drama, to lift it on the cothurnus of ideality, they deemed could only be the purposed elevation of its tendency; and that the more, as their sole disposable material, namely Word-speech, the vehicle of notions (*Begriffe*), seemed to exclude the feasibility, or even the advisability, of an ennoblement and heightening of expression on any side but this. The lofty *sentence* alone could match the higher *tendency*; and to impress the hearer's physical sense, unquestionably excited by the drama, recourse must be had to so-called *poetic diction*. But this diction lured the exponents of their pieces into that "false pathos," whose recognition must needs have given our great poets many a pang when they compared it with their deep delight in Gluck's "Iphigenia" and Mozart's "Don Juan."

What so profoundly moved them in these last, must surely have been that here they found the drama transported by its music to the sphere of the Ideal, a sphere where the simplest feature of the plot was at once transfigured, and motive and emotion, fused in one direct expression, appealed to them with noblest stress. Here [140] hushed all desire to seize a Tendency, for the Idea had realised itself before them as the sovereign call of Fellow-feeling. "Error attends manes ev'ry quest," or "Life is not the highest good," was here no longer to be clothed in words, for the inmost secret of the wisest apothegm itself stood bared to them in limpid Melody. Whilst that had said "it means," this said "it is!" Here had the highest pathos come to be the very soul of Drama; as from a shining world of dreams, Life's picture stepped before us here with sympathetic verity.

But what a riddle must this artwork have seemed to our poets!—where was the Poet's place therein? Certainly not where their own strength lay, in the poetic thought and diction, of which these "texts" were absolutely destitute. There being, then, no possible question of the Poet, it was the Musician alone to whom this artwork appeared to belong. Yet, judged by their artistic standard, it fell hard to accord this latter a rank at all commensurate with the stupendous force he set in motion. In Music they saw a plainly irrational art, a thing half wild half foolish, not for a moment to be approached from the side of true artistic culture. And in Opera, forsooth, a paltry, incoherent pile of forms, without the smallest evidence of a sense for architectonics; whilst the last thing its capriciously assorted items could be said to aim at, was the consistence of a true dramatic plan. So that, admitting it was the dramatic groundwork that in Gluck's "Iphigenia" had held that jumble of forms together for once, and made of it a thrilling whole, there arose the question: Who would ever care to step into the shoes of its librettist, and write the threadbare text for the arias of even a Gluck, unless he were prepared to give up all pretence to rank as "poet"? The incomprehensible in the thing, was the supreme ideality of an effect whose artistic factors were not discoverable by analogy with any other art soever. And the incomprehensibility increased when one passed from this particular work of Gluck's, instinct with the nobility of a tragic subject taken bodily from the antique, [141] and found that under certain circumstances, no matter how absurd or trivial its shape, one could not deny to Opera a power unrivalled even in the most ideal sense. These circumstances arose forthwith, whenever a great dramatic artist filled a rôle in such an opera. We need but instance the impersonation, surely unforgettable by many yet alive, once given us by Frau Schröder-Devrient of "Romeo" in Bellini's opera. Every fibre of the musician rebels against allowing the least artistic merit to the sickly, utterly threadbare music here hung upon an opera-poem of indigent grotesqueness; but ask anyone who witnessed it, what impression he received from the "Romeo" of Frau Schröder-Devrient as compared with the Romeo of our very best play-actor in even the great Briton's piece? And this effect by no means lay in any vocal virtuosity, as with the common run of our prime donne's successes, for in this case that was scant and totally unsupported by any richness of the voice itself: the effect was simply due to the dramatic power of the rendering. But that, again, could never possibly have succeeded with the selfsame Schröder-Devrient in quite the finest spoken play; and thus the whole achievement must have issued from the element of music, transfiguring

and idealising even in this most meagre form.

Such an experience as this last, however, might set us on the high road to discover and estimate the veritable factor in the creation of the Dramatic Artwork.—As the Poet's share in it was so infinitesimal, Goethe believed he must ascribe the whole authorship of Opera to the Musician; and how much of serious truth resides in that opinion, we perhaps shall see if next we turn our notice to our great poets' second object of non-comprehension in the realm of Drama, to wit the singularity of *Shakespeare* and his artistic method.—

To the French, as representatives of modern civilisation, Shakespeare, considered seriously, to this day is a monstrosity; and even to the Germans he has remained a subject of constantly renewed investigation, with so little [142] positive result that the most conflicting views and statements are forever cropping up again. Thus has this most bewildering of dramatists—already set down by some as an utterly irresponsible and untamed genius, without one trace of artistic culture—quite recently been credited again with the most systematic tendency of the didactic poet. Goethe, after introducing him in "Wilhelm Meister" as an "admirable writer," kept returning to the problem with increasing caution, and finally decided that here the higher tendency was to be sought, not in the poet, but in the embodied characters he brought before us in immediate action. Yet the closer these figures were inspected, the greater riddle became the artist's method: though the main plan of a piece was easy to perceive, and it was impossible to mistake the consequent development of its plot, for the most part pre-existing in the source selected, yet the marvellous "accidentia" in its working out, as also in the bearing of its dramatis personae, were inexplicable on any hypothesis of deliberate artistic scheming. Here we found such drastic individuality, that it often seemed like unaccountable caprice, whose sense we never really fathomed till we closed the book and saw the living drama move before our eyes; then stood before us life's own image, mirrored with resistless truth to nature, and filled us with the lofty terror of a ghostly vision. But how decipher in this magic spell the tokens of an "artwork"? Was the author of these plays a *poet*?

What little we know of his life makes answer with outspoken naïvety: he was a *play-actor* and *manager*, who wrote for himself and his troop these pieces that in after days amazed and poignantly perplexed our greatest poets; pieces that for the most part would not so much as have come down to us, had the unpretending prompt-books of the Globe Theatre not been rescued from oblivion in the nick of time by the printing-press. *Lope de Vega*, scarcely less a wonder, wrote his pieces from one day to the next in immediate contact with his actors and the [143] stage; beside Corneille and Racine, the poets of *façon*, there stands the actor *Molière*, in whom alone production was alive; and midst his tragedy sublime stood *Æschylus*, the leader of its chorus.—Not to the Poet, but to the Dramatist must we look, for light upon the Drama's nature; and he stands no nearer to the poet proper than to the *mime* himself, from whose heart of hearts he must issue if as poet he means to "hold the mirror up to Nature."

Thus undoubtedly the essence of Dramatic art, as against the Poet's method, at first seems totally irrational; it is not to be seized, without a complete reversal of the beholder's nature. In what this reversal must consist, however, should not be hard to indicate if we recall the natural process in the beginnings of all Art, as plainly shewn to us in *improvisation*. The poet, mapping out a plan of action for the improvising mime, would stand in much the same relation to him as the author of an operatic text to the musician; his work can claim as yet no atom of artistic value; but this it will gain in the very fullest measure if the poet makes the improvising spirit of the mime his own, and develops his plan entirely in character with that improvisation, so that the mime now enters with all his individuality into the poet's higher reason. This involves, to be sure, a complete transformation of the poetic artwork itself, of which we might form an idea if we imagined the impromptu of some great musician noted down. We have it on the authority of competent witnesses, that nothing could compare with

the effect produced by Beethoven when he improvised at length upon the pianoforte to his friends; nor, even in view of the master's greatest works, need we deem excessive the lament that precisely these inventions were not fixed in writing, if we reflect that far inferior musicians, whose penwork was always stiff and stilted, have quite amazed us in their 'free fantasias' by a wholly unsuspected and often very fertile talent for invention.—At anyrate we believe we shall really expedite the solution of an extremely difficult problem, if we define the Shakespearian Drama as [144] *a fixed mimetic improvisation of the highest poetic worth*. For this explains at once each wondrous accidental in the bearing and discourse of characters alive to but one purpose, to be at this moment all that they are meant to seem to us to be, and to whom accordingly no word can come that lies outside this conjured nature; so that it would be positively laughable to us, upon closer consideration, if one of these figures were suddenly to pose as poet. This last is silent, and remains for us a riddle, such as Shakespeare. But his work is the only veritable Drama; and what that implies, as work of Art, is shewn by our rating its author the profoundest poet of all time.—

From the countless topics for reflection afforded by this Drama of Shakespeare's let us choose those attributes which seem of most assistance to our present inquiry. Firstly then, apart from all its other merits, it strictly belongs to the class of effective *stage-pieces*, such as have been devised in the most dissimilar ages by skilful authors either sprung from the Theatre itself or in immediate contact therewith, and such as have enriched, for instance, the popular stages of the French from year to year. The difference between these true dramatic products, similarly arisen, simply lies in their *poetic value*. At first sight this poetic value seems determined by the dignity and grandeur of the subject-matter. Whereas not only have the French succeeded in setting every incident of modern life with speaking truth upon the stage, but even the Germans—with their infinitely smaller talent for the Theatre—have done the like for the narrower burgher province of that life, this genuinely reproductive force has failed in measure as the scene was to picture forth events of higher life, and finally the fate of heroes of world-history and their myths, sublimely distant from the eye of everyday. For here the mime's improvisation fell too short, and needed to be wielded by the poet proper, i.e. the inventor and fashioner of Myths; and his genius had to prove its pre-election by raising the style of mimetic improvisation to the level of his own poetic aim. How Shakespeare may have succeeded [145] in raising his players themselves to that level, must remain to us another riddle; the only certainty is, that our modern actors wreck their faculties at once upon the task he set. Possibly, what we above have called the grotesque affectation peculiar to English actors of nowadays is the remains of an earlier aptitude, and, springing from an inborn national idiosyncrasy, it may once have led, in the fairest age of English folk-life and through the contagious example of the poet himself, to so unheard a climax of the player's art that Shakespeare's conceptions could be realised thereby. If we are indisposed to assume so great a miracle however, we perhaps may explain this riddle by instancing the fate of great Sebastian Bach, whose difficult and prolific choral compositions tempt us at first to assume that the master had the most unrivalled vocal forces at command for their performance; whereas, on the contrary, we have unimpeachable documents to prove his complaints of the mostly altogether pitiable condition of his schoolboy choir. (2) Certain it is, that Shakespeare withdrew very early from his business with the stage; for which we may easily account by the immense fatigue the rehearsing of his pieces must have cost him, as also by the despair of a genius that towered high above the "possibility" of its surroundings. Yet the whole nature of this genius is explicable by nothing but that "possibility" itself, which assuredly existed in the nature of the mime, and was therefore very rightly presupposed by the genius; and, taking all the cultural efforts of the human spirit in one comprehensive survey, we may regard it as in a certain sense the task bequeathed to Shakespeare's aftercomers by the greatest Dramatist, to actually attain that highest possibility in the development of histrionic art.

To fulfil this task, appears to have been the inner aspiration of our great German poets. Starting, as here [146] was indispensable, with the recognition of Shakespeare's inimitability, every form in which they cast their poetic conceptions was dictated by an aim we can readily understand on this assumption. The search for the ideal Form of the highest work of art, the Drama, must necessarily lead them away from Shakespeare to a fresh and ever deeper consideration of Antique Tragedy; in what sense they thought to draw profit thence, we have explained before, and we had to see them turning from this more than dubious path to the strangely powerful impression made on them by the noblest products of a genre that yet appeared so highly enigmatic, the genre of Opera.

Here were two chief points of notice: firstly, that a great master's music lent the doings of even poor dramatic exponents an ideal charm, denied to the most admirable of actors in the spoken play; secondly, that a true dramatic talent could so ennoble even entirely worthless music, as to move us with a performance inachievable by the self-same talent in the recited drama. That this phenomenon must be accounted to nothing but the might of *Music*, was irrefutable. Yet this could apply to Music solely in the general, and it still remained incomprehensible how the dramatic poet was to approach the singularly paltry fabric of her forms without falling into a subjection of the very vilest sort—Now, we have appealed to Shakespeare to give us, if possible, a glimpse into the nature, and more especially the method, of the genuine dramatist Mysterious as we found the most part of this matter too, yet we saw that the poet was here entirely at one with the art of the mime; so that we now may call this mimetic art the life-dew wherein the poetic aim was to be steeped, to enable it, as in a magic transformation, to appear as the mirror of life. And if every action, each humblest incident of life displays itself, when reproduced by mimicry, in the transfiguring light and with the objective effect of a mirror-image (as is shewn not only by Shakespeare, but by every other sterling playwright), in further course we shall have to avow that this mirror-image, again, displays [147] itself in the transfiguration of purest Ideality so soon as it is dipped in the magic spring of Music and held up to us as nothing but pure Form, so to say, set free from all the realism of Matter.

'Tis not the *Form* of Music, therefore, but *the forms which music has evolved in history*, that we should have to consider before arguing to that highest possibility in the development of the latent powers of the mimo-dramatic artwork, that possibility which has hovered before the earnest seeker as a voiceless riddle, and yet a riddle crying out aloud for answer.

Music's Form, without a doubt, is synonymous with *Melody*; the latter's special evolution makes out the history of our music, just as its need determined the development of Lyric Drama, once attempted by the Italians, into the "Opera." If one meant to imitate the form of the Greek Tragedy, the first glance shewed it falling into two main sections, the choral chant and a dramatic recitation that mounted periodically to *melopöe*: so the "drama" proper was handed over to Recitative, whose oppressive monotony was at last to be broken by the academically-approved invention of the "Aria." In this last alone did Music here attain her independent Form, as Melody; and it therefore most rightly gained such a preponderance over the other factors of the musical drama, that the latter itself eventually sank to a mere pretext, a barren prop on which to hang the Aria. It thus is with the history of Melody chained to the Aria-form, that we should have to occupy ourselves, were it not sufficient for our present purpose to consider that one particular shape in which it offered itself to our great poets when they felt so deeply moved by its effect in general, but all the more bewildered at the thought of any poetic concern therewith. Beyond dispute it was always the particular genius, and he alone, who knew to put such life into this cramped and sterile cast of melody as to make it capable of that profound effect: consequently its expansion, its ideal unfolding, could be awaited from no one [148] but the Musician; and the line of this development was already to be traced, if one compared the masterpiece of Mozart with that of Gluck. And here the greater



store of musical invention turned out to be the unique measure of Music's dramatic capacity, since Mozart's "Don Juan" already displayed a wealth of dramatic characterisation whereof the far lesser musician Gluck could never have dreamt. But it still was reserved for the German genius to raise musical Form, by the utmost vitalising of its tiniest fraction, to the infinite diversity the music of our great *Beethoven* now offers to a wondering world.

Now, Beethoven's musical fashionings bear marks that leave them equally inexplicable as those of Shakespeare have remained to the inquiring poet. Whilst the power of effect in both must needs be felt as different at once and equal, upon a deeper scrutiny of its essence the very difference appears to us to vanish, for suddenly the one unsolved peculiarity affords the only explanation of the other. Let us select the peculiarity of the Humour, as that most swiftly seizable, and we discover that what often seems to us an unaccountable caprice in the sallies given off by Shakespeare's characters, in the corresponding turns of Beethoven's motive-moulding becomes a natural occurrence of the utmost ideality, to wit a melody that takes the mind by storm. We cannot but here assume a blood-relationship, which to correctly define we must seek it, not between the musician and the poet, but between the former and the poet-mime.

Whereas no poet of any artistic epoch can be compared with Beethoven, we find his fellowship with Shakespeare in the very fact that the latter, as poet, would forever remain to us a problem, could we not detect in him before all else the poet-mime. The secret lies in the directness of the presentation, here by mien and gesture, there by living tone. That which both directly mould and fashion is the actual Artwork, for which the Poet merely drafts the plan,—and that itself successfully, only when he has borrowed it from their own nature.

[149]

We have found that the Shakespearian Drama was definable the most intelligibly as a "fixed mimetic improvisation"; and as we had to suppose that this Art-work's high poetic value, resting in the first place on the elevation of its subject, must be ensured by the heightening of the *style* of that improvisation, we can scarcely go astray if we look for the possibility of such an utmost heightening in a mode of music which shall bear thereto the same relation as Beethoven's Music to just this Drama of Shakespeare's.

The very difficulty of thus applying Beethovenian Music to the Shakespearian Drama might lead, when conquered, to the utmost perfecting of musical Form, through its final liberation from each remaining fetter. What still distressed our great German poets in regard of Opera, and what still left its manifest traces on Beethoven's instrumental music,—that scaffolding which in nowise rested on the essence of Music, but rather on that selfsame tendency which planned the operatic aria and the ballet-tune,—this conventional four-square structure, so wondrously wreathed already with the luxuriant life of Beethovenian melody, would vanish quite away before an ideal ordering of highest freedom; so that Music now would take the ineffably vital shape of a Shakespearian drama, and its sublime irregularity, compared with the antique drama, would wellnigh give it the appearance of a nature-scene as against a work of architecture, a scene whose skilful measurement would be evinced by nothing but the unfailing sureness of the artwork's effect. And in this would lie withal the untold newness of this artwork's form: a form ideal alike and natural, and thus conceivable in no modern, racial language save the German, the most developed of them all; a form, on the other hand, which could be misconstrued only for so long as the artwork was measured by a standard it had thoroughly outgrown, whereas the new and fitting standard might haply be sought in the impression received by the fortunate hearers of one of [150] those unwritten impromptus of the most peerless of musicians. Then would the greatest dramatist have taught us to fix that impromptu too; for in the highest conceivable Artwork the sublimest inspirations of them both should live with an undying life, as the essence of the world displayed with clearness past all measure in the mirror of the world itself.

Now if we abide by this definition, "a mimo-musical improvisation, of consummate poetical value, fixed by the highest artistic care," we may find experience throw a startling light on the practical side of our Artwork's execution.—Taken in a very weighty sense, our great poets' prime concern was to furnish Drama with a heightened Pathos, and finally to discover the technical means of securely fixing its delivery. Markedly as Shakespeare had derived his style from the instinct of mimetic art, for the performance of his dramas he nevertheless stayed bound to the accidental greater or less degree of talent in his players, who all, in a sense, would have had to be Shakespeares, just as he was certainly at all times the whole character he personated; nor have we any reason to suppose that in the representations of his pieces his genius would have recognised aught beyond his own bare shadow cast across the boards. What so chained our own great poets' hopes to Music, was its being not only 'purest Form, but the most complete physical presentation of that Form; the abstract cypher of Arithmetic, the figure of Geometry, here steps before us in a shape that holds the Feeling past denial, to wit as Melody; and whereas the poetic diction of the written speech falls prey to every personal caprice of its reciter, the physical reproduction of this Melody can be fixed beyond all risk of error. What to Shakespeare was practically impossible, namely to be the mime of all his rôles, the tone-composer achieves with fullest certainty, for from out his each executant musician he speaks to us directly. Here the transmigration of the poet's soul into the body of the player takes place by laws of surest [151] technique, and the composer giving the beat (3) to a technically correct performance of his work becomes so entirely one with the executant that the nearest comparison would be that of a plastic artist and his work achieved in stone or colour, were it possible to speak of a metempsychosis into this lifeless matter.

If to this astounding might of the Musician we add that attribute of his art which we recognised at starting,—namely that even indifferent music, so long as it does not positively descend to the grotesque vulgarity of certain operatic genres in vogue to-day, enables a good dramatic artist to achieve results beyond his reach without it, as also that noble music virtually extorts from even inferior actors achievements of a type unreachable elsewhere at all,—we can scarcely doubt the reason of the utter dismay aroused in the Poet of our era who desires nobly to succeed in Drama with the only means at his disposal, that self-same speech in which to-day the very leading-articles address us. Precisely on this side, however, our hypothesis of the perfection destined for the Musically-conceived Drama should rather prove encouraging than the reverse, for its first effect would be to purge a great and many-sided genre of art, the Drama in general, from those errors which the modern Opera alike has heightened and exposed. To clear up this point, and at the same time to gain a survey of their future field of prosperous work, our dramatists perhaps might deem advisable to trace back the pedigree of the modern Theatre; not seeking its roots in Antique Drama, however, whose form is so distinctly a native product of the Hellenic spirit, its religion, ay, its State itself, that to assume the possibility of a modern imitation must necessarily lead to the gravest errors. No: the path of evolution of the Modern Theatre has such a wealth of products of the greatest worth to shew, that it fitly may be trodden farther without shame. The [152] thorough "stage-piece," in the modernest of senses, assuredly would have to form the basis, and the only sound one, of all future dramatic efforts: for success in this, however, the very first essential is to rightly grasp the spirit of theatric art, which rests upon mimetic art itself, and to use it, not for the bolstering-up of tendencies, but for the mirroring of scenes from actual life. The French, who not so long ago did admirably in this line, were certainly content to not expect a brand-new Molière every year; nor for ourselves would the birthdays of new Shakespeares be recorded in each calendar.

Coming at last to the contentment of ideal aspirations, from the working of that all-powerful dramatic Artwork itself we might see, with greater certainty than has hitherto been possible, the length to which such aspirations were justified in going. Their boundary

would be found at the exact point in that Artwork where Song is thrusting toward the spoken Word. By this we in no sense imply an absolutely lowly sphere, but a sphere entirely different, distinct in kind; and we may gain an instant notion of this difference, if we call to mind certain instinctive transgressions on the part of our best dramatic singers, when in the full flow of song they have felt driven to literally *speak* a crucial word. To this, for example, the Schröder-Devrient found herself impelled by the cumulative horror of a situation in the opera "Fidelio"; in the sentence "one further step and thou art—*dead*," where she aims the pistol at the tyrant, with an awful accent of desperation she suddenly *spoke* the closing word. The indescribable effect upon the hearer was that of a headlong plunge from one sphere to the other, and its sublimity consisted in our being given, as by a lightning-flash, a glimpse into the nature of both spheres at once, the one the ideal, the other the real. Plainly, for one moment the ideal was unable to bear a certain load, and discharged it on the other: seeing how fond people are of ascribing to Music, particularly of the passionate and stirring type, a simply pathologic character, it may surprise them to discover through this [153] very instance how delicate and purely ideal is her actual sphere, since the material terror of reality can find no place therein, albeit the soul of all things real in it alone finds pure expression.—Manifestly then, there is a side of the world, and a side that concerns us most seriously, whose terrible lessons can be brought home to our minds on none but a field of observation where Music has to hold her tongue: this field perhaps may best be measured if we allow Shakespeare, the stupendous mime, to lead us on it as far as that point we saw him reach with the desperate fatigue we assumed as reason for his early withdrawal from the stage. And that field might be best defined, if not exactly as the soil, at least as the phenomena of History. To portray its material features for the benefit of human knowledge, must always remain the Poet's task.

So weighty and clearing an influence as this that we here could only undertake to sketch in broadest outline—an influence not merely upon its nearest relatives in Drama, but upon every branch of Art whose deepest roots connect with Drama—most certainly could never be made possible to our "Musically-conceived-and-carried-out Dramatic Artwork" until that Artwork could present itself to the public in an outward garb entirely corresponding with its inner nature, and thus facilitate the needful lack of bias in the judgment of its qualities. 'Tis so closely allied to "Opera," that for our present purpose we might justly term it the fulfilment of the Opera's destiny: not one of the said possibilities would ever have dawned on us, had it not already come to light in Opera, in general, and in the finest works of great Opera-composers in particular. Quite surely, too, it was solely the spirit of Music, whose ever ampler evolution so influenced the Opera as to enable those possibilities to arise therein. Once more then, if we wish to account for the degradation to which the Opera has been brought, we certainly must seek its reason in the attributes of Music herself. Just as in Painting, and even in Architecture, the "piquant" has taken the place of the "beautiful," so was it doomed that [154] Music should turn from a sublime into a merely pleasing art. Though her sphere was that of purest ideality, and her effect on our mind so deeply calming and emancipating from all the anguish of reality, through her displaying herself as nothing but pure Form,—so that whatever threatened to disturb the latter, either fell away of itself, or had to be held aloof from her—this very unmixed Form, when set in a relation not completely suitable, might easily pass current for a mere agreeable toy; thus, once set in so indefinite a sphere as that on which the Opera rested, it could be employed in this sense alone, and finally be made to serve as a mere surface fillip to the ear or feeling.

On this point, however, we have the less need to dwell just now, as we started from the outcry raised against the Opera and its influence, whose ill effect we can express no better than by pointing to the notorious fact that the Theatre has long been given over to an intense neglect by all the truly cultured in the nation, though once they set great hopes thereon.



Wherefore, as we cannot but desire to bring our suggested Artwork to the only notice of profit to it, namely of those who have turned with grave displeasure from the Theatre of to-day, it follows that we must shun all contact with that Theatre itself. But although the neutral ground for this must locally be quite cut off from our theatres' field of action, it could prove fruitful only if it drew its nurture from the actual elements of mimetic and musical art that have already developed in their own fashion at the theatres. In these alone consists, and will consist, the truly fertile material for genuine dramatic art; each attempt in other directions would lead, instead of Art, to a posing Artificiality. 'Tis our actors, singers and bandmen, on whose innate instinct must rest all hope of the attainment of even artistic ends as yet beyond their understanding; for it is they to whom those ends will become clear the swiftest, so soon as their instinct is rightly guided to a knowledge of them. That this instinct has been led by the tendence of our theatres to the exclusive [155] development of the worst propensities in the profession,—it is this that needs must make us wish to snatch these irreplaceable artistic forces at least periodically from the influence of that tendence, and give them such a means of exercising their own good qualities as would rapidly and surely fit them for the realising of our Artwork. For only from the natural will of this mimetic fellowship, cutting so sorry a figure in its present misdirection, can issue now—as from of old have issued the best of things dramatic—the perfect Drama meant by us. Less by them, than by those who without the slightest calling have hitherto conducted them, has the downfall of the theatric art of our era been brought to pass. To name in one word what on German soil has shewn, and goes on proving itself least worthy of the fame of our great victories of to-day, we have only to point to this *Theatre*, whose tendence avows itself aloud and brazen the betrayer of German honour. Whoso should link himself to this tendence in any shape or form, must needs fall victim to a misconstruction that would assign him to a sphere of our publicity of the most questionable nature, whence to rise to the pure sphere of Art would be about as difficult and fatiguing as to arrive from Opera at what we have termed the Ideal Drama. Certain it is, however, that if Art has fallen solely through the artists,—according to Schiller's saying, here not exactly accurate,—it can be *raised again by the artists alone*, and not by those who have dishonoured it with their favour. *But to help forward from without, as well, that restoration of Art by the artists, would be the fitting national expiation for the national sin of our present German Theatre.*

## Notes

### Note 1 on page 9

Ed. Devrient's "*Geschichte der deutschen Schauspielkunst*."—Tr.

### Note 2 on page 15

A story, now become a commonplace among musicians, tells us how the master contrived to get his excessively difficult works performed at all: it concerns one of Bach's former choristers, who made the strange confession, "first he thrashed us, and then—it sounded horrible."—R. WAGNER.

### Note 3 on page 18

It is all-important that this beat should be the right one, however, for a false tempo will undo the spell at once; as to which I have therefore expressed myself at length elsewhere.—R. WAGNER.

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# *The Public in Time and Space*

By Richard Wagner

Translated by William Ashton Ellis



The Wagner Library

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## Contents

About this Title .....	4
Translator's Note .....	5
The Public in Time and Space .....	7
Notes .....	13
Summary .....	15

## About this Title

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[128]

## Translator's Note

The following article originally appeared in the *Bayreuther Blätter* for October 1878.





[85]

## The Public in Time and Space

THIS title may serve to introduce a general survey of those relations and connections in which we find the artistically and poetically productive individual placed towards the social community assigned to him as representant of the human race for the time being, and which we to-day may call the Public. Among them we at once remark a pair of opposites: either public and artist fit each other, or they absolutely do not. In the latter case the Historic-scientific critic will always lay the blame upon the artist, and pronounce him unfit for anything; for it thinks it has proofs that no pre-eminent individual can ever be aught save the product of his spacial and temporal surroundings, of his day in fact, that historic period of the human race's evolution into which he happens to be thrown. The correctness of such an assertion seems undeniable; merely it fails to explain why, the more considerable that individual, in the greater contradiction has he stood with his time. And this cannot be so lightly disposed of. To cite the sublimest of all examples, the cotemporary world most certainly did not comport itself toward Jesus Christ as though it had nursed him at its breast and delighted in acknowledging him its fittest product. Plainly, Time and Space prepare us great perplexities. If it indeed is impossible to conceive a more fitting place and time for Christ's appearance, than Galilee and the years of his mission; and if it is obvious that a German university of the "now-time," for instance, would have offered our Redeemer no particular facilitation: on the other hand we may recall the cry of Schopenhauer at Giordano Bruno's fate, that stupid monks of the blessed Renaissance era should have brought to the stake in fair Italy a man who on the Ganges, at the selfsame date, would have been honoured as wise and holy.

Without going into the trials and sufferings of great [86] minds in every age and country, too plainly visible, and consequently without touching on their deeper cause, we here will only note that their relation to their surroundings has always been of tragic nature; and the human race will have to recognise this, if it is ever to come to knowledge of itself. True religion may already have enabled it to do so; whence the eternal eagerness of the generality to rid itself of such belief.

For us, our first concern must be to trace the tragedy of that relation to the individual's subjection to the rules of time and place; whereby we may find those two factors assuming so strong a semblance of reality as almost to upset the "Criticism of Pure Reason," (1) which ascribes to Time and Space no existence but in our brain. In truth it is this pair of tyrants that give great minds the look of sheer anomalies, nay, solecisms, at which the generality may jeer with a certain right, as if to please the Time and Space it serves.

If in a review of the course of history we go by nothing but its ruling laws of gravity, that pressure and counter-pressure which bring forth shapes akin to those the surface of the earth presents, the welinigh sudden outcrop of overtopping mental heights must often make us ask upon what plan these minds were moulded. And then we are bound to presuppose a law quite other, concealed from eyes historical, ordaining the mysterious sequence of a spiritual life whose acts are guided by denial of the world and all its history. For we observe that the very points at which these minds make contact with their era and surroundings, become the starting-points of errors and embarrassments in their own utterance: so that it is just the influences 'of Time, which involve them in a fate so tragical that precisely where the work of intellectual giants appears intelligible to their era, it proves of no account for the higher mental life; and only a later generation, arrived at knowledge through the very lead that remained unintelligible to the contemporaneous world, can seize the import of their [87] revelations. Thus the seasonable, in the works of a great spirit, would also be the

questionable.

Instances will make this clear. *Plato's* surrounding world was eminently political; entirely apart therefrom did he conceive his theory of Ideas, which has only been properly appreciated and scientifically matured in quite recent times: (2) applied to the spirit of his day and world, however, he bent this theory into a political system of such amazing monstrosity that it caused the greatest stir, indeed, but at like time the gravest confusion as to the real substance of his major doctrine. On the Ganges he would never have fallen into this particular error about the nature of the State; in Sicily, in fact, it served him badly. What his epoch and surrounding did for the manifestation of this rare spirit was therefore not exactly to his advantage; so that it would be absurd to view his genuine teaching, the theory of Ideas, as a product of his time and world.

A second case is that of *Dante*. In so far as his great poem was a product of his time, to us it seems almost repulsive; but it was simply through the realism wherewith it painted the superstitious fancies of the Middle Ages, that it roused the notice of the cotemporary world. Emancipated from the fancies of that world, and yet attracted by the matchless power of their portrayal, we feel a wellnigh painful wrench at having to overcome it before the lofty spirit of the poet can freely act upon us as a world-judge of the purest ideality,—an effect as to which it is most uncertain that even posterity has always rightly grasped it. Wherefore Dante appears to us a giant condemned by the influences of his time to awe-compelling solitude.

To call to mind one further instance, let us take great *Calderon*, whom we assuredly should judge quite wrongly if we regarded him as product of the Jesuit tenets prevailing in the Catholicism of his day. Yet it is manifest that, although the master's profundity of insight leaves the Jesuit world-view far behind, that view so strongly influences [88] the outward texture of his works that we have first to overcome this impression, to clearly seize the majesty of his ideas. An expression as pure as the ideas themselves was impossible to the poet who had to set his dramas before a public that could only be led to their deeper import by use of the Jesuitic precepts in which it had been brought up.

Admitting that the great Greek Tragedians were so fortunate in their surroundings that the latter rather helped to create, than hindered their works, we can only call it an exceptional phenomenon, and one which to many a recent critic already appears a fable. For our eyes this harmonious conjunction has fallen just as much into the rut of things condemned by Space and Time to insufficiency, as every other product of the creative human mind. Precisely as we have had to allow for the conditions of time and place with Plato, Dante and Calderon, we need them to complete a picture of Attic Tragedy, which even at its prime had quite a different effect at Syracuse to that it had at Athens. And here we touch the crux of our inquiry. For we now perceive that the same temporal surrounding which was injurious to a great spirit's manifestation, on the other hand supplied the sole conditions for the physical presentment of its product; so that, removed from its time and surroundings, that product is robbed of the weightiest part of its effect. This is proved distinctly by the attempts at resurrection of these selfsame Attic tragedies upon our modern boards. If we are obliged to get time and place, with their manners and particularly their State and Religion, explained to us by scholars who often know nothing at all of the subject, we may be sure we have forever lost the clue to something that once came to light in another age and country. There the poetic aim of great minds appears to have been fully realised through the time and place of their life being so attuned as almost palpably to conjure up that aim itself

But the nearer we approach affairs within our own experience, [89] especially in the province of Art, the smaller grows the prospect of harmonious relations even distantly akin. The fact of the great Renaissance painters having to treat such ghastly subjects as tortured martyrs, and the like, has already been deplored by Goethe; into the character of their patrons and bespeakers we have no need to inquire, nor into the reason why great poets starved at

times. Though this happened to great Cervantes, yet his work found widespread popularity at once; and it is the latter point we must deal with, seeing that we here are discussing the detrimental influences of time and place upon the form and fashion of the artwork itself.

In this respect we notice that, the more seasonably a producer trimmed his work, the better did he fare. Till this day it never occurs to a Frenchman to draft a play for which theatre, public and performers, are not on hand already. A perfect study in successful adaptation to circumstances is offered by the genesis of all Italian operas, Rossini's in particular. With every new edition of his novels our Gutzkow announces revisions in step with the latest events of the age.—Now take the obverse, the fate of such works and authors as have not caught the trick of time and place. The front rank must be given to works of dramatic art, and especially those set to music; since the mutability of musical taste emphatically decides their fate, whereas the recited drama does not own so penetrant a method of expression as to violently affect an altered taste. In Mozart's operas we may plainly see that the quality which lifted them above their age, also doomed them to live beyond their age, when the living conditions that governed their conception and execution are no more. From this singular fate all other works of the Italian school of Opera were saved; not one has outlived the time to which alone it belonged, and whence it sprang. With the "Nozze di Figaro" and "Don Giovanni" 'twas otherwise: it is impossible to regard these works as destined merely for the wants of a few Italian Opera seasons; the seal of immortality was stamped upon them. Immortality!—A [90] fatal boon! To what torments of being is the departed soul of such a masterwork exposed, when dragged to earth again by a modern theatrical medium for the pleasure of a later generation! If we attend a performance of "Figaro" or "Don Juan" to-day, would we not rather nurse the tender memory that it once had lived with full strong life, than see it hustled through an existence wholly strange to it, as one resuscitated for maltreatment?

In these works of Mozart's the elements of the flowering-time of Italian musical taste combine with the spacial conditions of the Italian Opera-house to form a very definite entity, in which the spirit of the close of the eighteenth century is charmingly and beautifully expressed. Outside these conditions, and transplanted to our present time and milieu, the eternal part of these creations undergoes a disfigurement which we seek in vain to cloak by fresh disguise and adaptations of its outward form. How could it ever occur to us to wish to alter anything in "Don Giovanni" for instance—a course deemed requisite by almost every enthusiast for this glorious work at one time or another—if the figure it cut upon our boards did not actually pain us? Almost every operatic regisseur has at some time attempted to trim "Don Juan" to the day; whereas every intelligent person should reflect that not this work must be altered to fit our times, but ourselves to the times of "Don Juan," if we are to arrive at harmony with Mozart's creation. To mark the futility of all attempts at reviving this particular work, I do not even touch on our altogether inappropriate means of performance; I pass over the disastrous effect on the German public of German translations of the Italian text, as also the impossibility of replacing the so-called "recitativo parlando"; and I will assume that we had succeeded in training a troupe of Italians for a perfectly correct performance of "Don Giovanni": looking from the stage to the audience, we should only find ourselves in the wrong place—a shock we are spared by our utter inability to imagine such an ideal performance at the present day.

Still more plainly does all this shew forth in the fate of [91] the "Magic Flute." The circumstances in which this work came to light were this time of poor and petty sort; here it was no question of writing for a first-rate Italian troupe of singers the finest thing that could anywhere be set before them, but of descending from the sphere of a highly developed and richly tended art-genre to the level of a showplace for Viennese buffoons where music had hitherto been of the very humblest. That Mozart's creation so immeasurably exceeded the demands addressed to him that here no *individual*, but a whole *genus* of the most surprising

novelty seemed born, we must take as the reason why this work stands solitary and assignable to no age whatsoever. Here the eternal and meet for every age and people (I need but point to the dialogue between *Tamino* and the *Speaker*) is so indissolubly bound up with the absolutely trivial tendency of a piece expressly reckoned by the playwright for the vulgar plaudits of a Viennese suburban theatre, that it requires the aid of an historical commentary to understand and approve the whole in its accidental dress. Analysis of the various factors of this work affords us speaking proof of the aforesaid tragic fate of the creative spirit condemned to a given time and place for the conditions of its activity. To save himself from bankruptcy, the manager of a Viennese suburban theatre commissions the greatest musician of his day to help him out with a spectacular piece designed to hit the taste of its habitual public; to the text supplied Mozart sets music of eternal beauty. But this beauty is inextricably embedded in the work of that director, and—waiving all affectation—it remains truly intelligible to none but that suburban audience of Vienna for whose ephemeral taste it was intended. If we would rightly judge and perfectly enjoy the "Zauberflöte," we must get one of the spiritualistic wizards of to-day to transport us to the Theater an der Wien in the year of its first production. Or do you think a modern performance at the Berlin Court-theatre would have the same effect?

Verily the ideality of Time and Space is sorely tried by such considerations, and we finally should have to regard them as the densest of realities, compared with the ideality [92] of the artwork proper, did we not detect beneath their abstract forms the concrete Public and its attributes. The diversity of the public of the selfsame time and nation I tried to indicate in my previous articles; in the present I have sought to prove a like diversity in time and place, yet will leave untouched the tendencies peculiar to each age and nation, if only from fear of losing myself in fanciful assumptions—as to the artistic tendencies of the newest German Reich, for instance, which I probably should rate too high were I misled by personal considerations into measuring them by the action of the Director-in-chief of the four North-German Court-theatres. (3) Nor, having taken our theme on its broadest lines, should I care to let it dwindle into a question of mere local differences, though I myself have experienced a remarkable instance of their determinant weight, in the fate of my *Tannhäuser* in Paris; whistled out of the Grand Opéra (for good reasons!), in the opinion of qualified judges at a house less ruled by its stock public my modest evening-star might perchance have still been twinkling in the French metropolis beside the sun of Gounod's "Faust."

More serious aspects of the public varying in time and space were those that crowded to my mind when seeking to account for the fate of *Liszt's* music; and as it was these that furnished the real incentive to my present inquiry, I think best to close it with a discussion of them. This time it was a fresh hearing of Liszt's *Dante* Symphony that revived the problem, what place in our art-world should be allotted to a creation as brilliant as it is masterly. Shortly before I had been busy reading the *Divine Comedy*, and again had revolved all the difficulties in judging this work which I have mentioned above; to me that tone-poem of Liszt's now appeared the creative act of a redeeming genius, freeing Dante's unspeakably pregnant intention from the [93] inferno of his superstitions by the purifying fire of musical ideality, and setting it in the paradise of sure and blissful feeling. Here the soul of Dante's poem is shewn in purest radiance. Such redeeming service even *Michael Angelo* could not render to his great poetic master; only after Bach and Beethoven had taught our music to wield the brush and chisel of the mighty Florentine, could Dante's true redemption be achieved.

This work has remained as good as unknown to our age and its public. One of the most astounding deeds of music, not even the dullest admiration has as yet been accorded it. In an earlier letter upon Liszt (4) I tried to state the outer grounds of the German musician's abominable ill-will toward Liszt's appearance as creative composer: they need not detain us

to-day; who knows the German Concert-world with its heroes from General to Corporal, knows also with what a mutual insurance-company for the talentless he here has to do. No, we will merely take this work of Liszt's and its fellows to shew by their very character their unseasonableness in the time and space of the inert present. Plainly these conceptions of Liszt's are too potent for a public that lets *Faust* be conjured up for it at the Opera by the sickly Gounod, in the Concert-room by the turgid Schumann. (5) Not that we would blame the public: it has a right to be what it is, especially as under the lead of its present guides it cannot be otherwise. We simply ask how conceptions like Liszt's could arise amid such circumstances of time and place. Assuredly in something each great mind is influenced by those conditions of time and place; nay, we have seen them even confuse the greatest. In the present case I at last have traced these active influences to the remarkable advance of leading minds in France during the two decads enclosing the year 1830. Parisian society at that time offered such definite and characteristic instigations to its [94] statesmen, scholars, writers, poets, painters, sculptors and musicians, that a lively fancy might easily imagine it condensed into an audience before whom a Faust- or Dante-Symphony might be set without fear of paltry misconstructions. In Liszt's courage to pen these compositions I believe I detect as determining cause the incitations of that time and local centre, nay, even their special character—and highly do I rate them, though it needed a genius such as Liszt's, superior to all time and space, to win a work eternal from those promptings, however badly it may fare just now at Leipzig or Berlin.—

To take a last look back upon the picture afforded us by the Public astir in Time and Space, we might compare it with a river, as to which we must decide whether we will swim against or with its stream. Who swims with it, may imagine he belongs to constant progress; 'tis so easy to be borne along, and he never notes that he is being swallowed in the ocean of vulgarity. To swim against the stream, must seem ridiculous to those not driven by an irresistible force to the immense exertions that it costs. Yet we cannot stem the rushing stream of life, save by steering toward the river's source. We shall have our fears of perishing; but in our times of direst stress we are rescued by a leap to daylight: the waves obey our call, and wondering the flood stands still a moment, as when for once a mighty spirit speaks unawaited to the world. Again the dauntless swimmer dives below; not life, but life's true fount, is what he thrusts for. Who, once that source attained, could wish to plunge again into the stream? From sunny heights he gazes down upon the distant world-sea with its monsters all destroying one another. What there destroys itself, shall we blame him if he now disowns it?

But what will the "public" say?—I fancy the play is over, and folk are taking leave.—





## Notes

### Note 1 on page 7

Kant's.—Tr.

### Note 2 on page 8

By Schopenhauer.—Tr.

### Note 3 on page 10

Berlin, Hanover, Cassel and Wiesbaden. Not till 1881 was the *Ring des Nibelungen* performed in the German metropolis, and then in the little Victoria-theatre by Neumann's travelling company, conducted by Anton Seidl, the Intendant of the Berlin Court-theatre (von Hülsen) having declined to permit a performance at his own establishment saving under the bâton of his own incompetent conductors.—Tr.

### Note 4 on page 10

Gesammelte Schriften und Dichtungen, vol. v.—R. WAGNER.—Vol. III. of the present series.—Tr.

### Note 5 on page 11

During a performance of the Dante Symphony in Leipzig, at a drastic passage in the first movement a piteous cry was heard from the audience: "Ei! Herr Jesus!"—R. WAGNER.



## Summary

Genius more than mere product of its surroundings, or why should contemporary world reject it? Sublimest instance in Jesus Christ; Giordano Bruno burnt by Renaissance monks. Tragedy of great minds their subjection to rules of time and place, whereas their birth is governed by mysterious laws of a suprasecular life (86). Plato and his political error; Dante and medieval superstitions; Calderon and the Jesuit tenets. Surroundings of Greek Tragedians rather helped, than hindered, their creative work; but attempts to place those dramas on our stage shew that we have lost the clue to something that once conditioned them in another age and country (88). Italian painters and their patrons; Cervantes starving; Frenchmen never think of writing a play that has not its public ready for it, and so with Italian Opera—e.g. Rossini. What lifted Mozart's operas above their age doomed them to live on when each condition of their performance has vanished: *Figaro*, *Don Giovanni*, but in particular the *Magic Flute* (91). Leaving aside mere local differences in present public, we come to problem of Liszt's symphonic poems: his *Dante*-symphony the redemption of the soul of the Divine Comedy from all its superstitions, but not the dullest admiration has it gained; for whom could he have written it? Plainly for an *ideal* public, conjured up by the active stir in leading minds of Paris in 1820-40.—The Public is a river rushing to the sea of Vulgarity: who aims at higher things, must steer his course against the stream (94).

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# *On Poetry and Composition*

By Richard Wagner

Translated by William Ashton Ellis



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Edition 1.0

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## Contents

About this Title .....	4
Translator's Note. ....	5
On Poetry and Composition .....	7
Notes .....	15

## About this Title

### Source

*On Poetry and Composition*  
By Richard Wagner  
Translated by William Ashton Ellis

*Religion and Art*  
Richard Wagner's Prose Works  
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*Über das Dichten und Komponieren*  
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### Reading Information

This title contains 5613 words.  
Estimated reading time between 16 and 28 minutes.

Notes are indicated using parenthesis, like (1).  
Page numbers of the original source are indicated  
using square-bracketed parentheses, like [62].



[132]

## Translator's Note.

Originally published in the *Bayreuther Blätter* for July 1879.



[133]

## On Poetry and Composition

PERHAPS also, "On the Book and Music Trade"?—

To some that may seem too outward a view of the matter. Yet the departed Gutzkow has divulged to us the awful secret that the unbounded popularity of Goethe and Schiller is simply due to the energetic speculation of their publishers. (1) Though this explanation should not hold water in the present case, its very advancement will teach us at least that our writers hold it possible for their own publishers to manœuvre a like success. In this way it would take a largish capital to duly plant the German "Poets'-grove"; accordingly we need not be surprised if the publisher assigns to himself the lion's share in the production of poetic works, especially of such as aim at notoriety. And thus we may assume a queer relation between poets and their publishers, in which but little mutual esteem would figure. A famous poet once assured me that publishers were the most knavish of dealers, their commerce being with none but fantastic producers, whereas all other middlemen did business exclusively with folk as cunning as themselves. At anyrate the case seems pretty bad. To ensure renown, the poet or composer thinks best to seek the aegis of some great firm of publishers. Such a firm has to spend a fortune on enormous establishments for printing or note-engraving; these must be always kept at work, with result that the publisher is obliged to risk the manufacture of a deal of useless stuff; often no journalism in the world can help him to dispose of it: but for once he hits on a remarkably happy article, the work of a brain above the common. With the success of this one article the publisher recoups himself for all his previous losses; and if the author wants to have his portion [134] of the profits, the publisher can coolly shake him off with the retort that he had borne no part in the expenses attending a perpetual output of rubbish. On the other hand, it is just this perpetual output that hoists the publisher to eminence. Everybody nowadays writes poetry or music, whilst the big firm must be constantly printing and issuing: the two habits and necessities complete each other; but the publisher has the advantage, in that he can shew his clients how much he loses and at like time prove his generosity by declaring himself quite ready to proceed with further issues, thereby making the "fantastic" author his very humble servant. Thus the book and music publisher, the poet and composer's wage-giver—nay, their populariser, under circumstances, as alleged of Schiller and Goethe—may with some reason be regarded as the patron-saint, if not the creator, of our poetic and musical literature.

Maybe it is this flourishing state of the book and music printing-house, to which we owe the strange phenomenon that almost every person who has heard or read a thing must promptly fly at poetry or composition. Often have I heard the complaint from university-professors that their students no longer will learn what they should, but mostly play at scribbling or composing. This was peculiarly the case at Leipzig, where the book-trade so closely elbows erudition that one almost might ask *which* strictly has our modern education most in hand, the University or the Book-mart; for plainly one can learn from books the same or even more than from professors, whilst these latter are so short-sighted as to print in low-priced monographs their whole stock-in-trade of information. The passion of our lecture-glutted students for writing verse and tunes, upon the other hand, we might compare with that extraordinary love of play-acting which from the dawn of German histrionic art to the commencement of our present century lured sons and daughters from the best-respected families. In the last regard our young people appear to have grown more philistine, perchance from fear of making themselves ridiculous upon the [135] boards; a personal discomfiture now more and more relinquished to the Jews, who seem to take less account of unpleasant experiences. But poetry and composition can be plied quite quietly and peaceably at home:

nor do we notice how foolish our lyric spoutings make us look in type, since luckily no reader finds us out. The thing does not become perceptibly absurd, till read aloud. In my time the Leipzig students made a butt of a poor devil whom they would get to declaim his poems in return for the settling of his score; they had his portrait lithographed, above the motto: "Of all my sufferings Love is cause." Some years ago I told the story to a well-known poet of our day, who since has taken a strange dislike to me: too late I learnt that he had a new volume of poems in the press at that very moment

Touching the "German Poets'-grove," one latterly finds that, despite the need of keeping their machinery in constant motion, the publishers are growing more and more averse to lyric poems, since the lyrical musicians still keep composing nothing but "*Du bist wie eine Blume*" or "*Wenn ich dein holdes Angesicht*," and so forth. How matters stand with "epic poetry," is also difficult to judge: a mass of it is thrown upon the market, and moreover set to music for our Subscription-concerts by composers who still have a bone to pick with Opera—a course alas! found hitherto impossible with the "Trompeter von Säckingen." (2) —That all this "brings in" much, it is not easy to believe; for there still are very many dwellers in Germany who never subscribe to such concerts. "Dramatic poems," on the contrary, have certainly a larger public; that is to say, when they are produced on the stage. But among theatrical directors one meets the wildest craving for returns; here still prevails the barbaric justice of "God's verdict," and that is not so lightly "bought." Only to [136] English publishers has it been possible to use the theatre for bold and most ingenious advertisement. The sole article of any service to the English music-trade is a "Ballad" modelled more or less on the street-singer's genre, which, fortune favouring, is sold in several hundred-thousand copies to all the colonies as "the very latest." To get this ballad duly famed the publisher spends money on the composition of an entire opera, pays the manager for its performance, and then proceeds to give the mounted ballad out to all the barrel-organs of the land, till every pianoforte yearns at last to have it in the house. Who calls to mind our native "Einst spielt ich mit Zepter," might think that German printers also were no fools, and knew what they were about with a full-fledged "Zar und Zimmermann": (3) the "Czar" finds work for the engravers, and the "Sceptre-player" pays them.

Nevertheless the penning of complete dramas appears to have a mighty charm for old and young, and it is remarkable how every author believes he has done wonders with the stalest subject, under the illusion, maybe, that it had never been rightly treated by his predecessors. The five-foot Iambic, jogging on in honour indestructible, must still confer upon the diction its true poetic flavour; though naked prose, the less select the better, affords more chance of the piece's acceptance by Directors. The five-footed dramatist has therefore to depend, in general, on the favour of the publisher who must always be printing; so that one may assume his only interest is "a hobby." I scarcely think that very great poets thus come to light: how Goethe and Schiller began, God only knows—unless some information could be gleaned from the firm of Cotta, who once declined to issue my *Gesammelte Schriften* because they still had their hands so full with Goethe and Schiller.—

But the above, are they not all mere foibles of our poets? Though a true inhabitant of our Poets' grove in [137] youth may twitter his verse and rhymes in childlike imitation of the songsters on the branches, with the *toga virilis* he blooms into a *novelist*, and learns at last his business. Now the publisher seeks out *him*, and he knows how to put his price up: he is in no such hurry to hand his three, his six or nine volumes to the lending libraries; first comes the journal-reader's turn. Without a "solid" Feuilleton, with theatrical criticisms and thrilling romances, even a political world-sheet cannot well subsist; on the other side, what receipts these newspapers drag in, and what a figure they can pay! Engrossed in true creation, my friend *Gottfried Keller* forgot in his day to heed those paper birth-throes of his works; it was most obliging of an already-famous novelist, who regarded Keller as his equal, to instruct him

how to make a novel bring in money: manifestly the officious friend beheld in the unbusinesslike poet a terrible case of wasted energy, on which he could not look without a pang. The incorrigible poet (in jest we called him "Auerbach's Keller") did not at any rate get very far in the race for issues: it was only the other day that a second edition appeared of his romance "der grüne Heinrich," first published thirty years ago; in the eyes of our wideawake authors a manifest failure—in fact, proof positive that Keller had not risen to the level of the day. But they, as said, know better. And so the swarm in our Poets'-grove is so thick that one cannot see the trees for numberless editions.

In this highly prosperous activity of our modern poet-world, however, we light upon that element to which all poetry owes its source, its very name. The *narrator* in truth is the "poet" proper, whereas the subsequent elaborator of the narrative should rather be regarded as the *artist*. Only, if we are to accord to our flourishing novelists the boundless significance of genuine poets, that significance itself must first be somewhat more precisely defined.

The old world, speaking strictly, knew but one poet, and named him "*Homeros*." The Greek word "*Poietes*," which [138] the Latins—unable to translate it—reproduced as "Poeta," recurs most naïvely among the Provençals as "Trouvère," and suggested to our Middle-high Germans the term of "Finder," Gottfried von Strassburg calling the poet of *Parzival* a "Finder wilder Märe" ("finder of strange tales"). That "poietes"—of whom Plato averred that he had found for the Greeks their gods—would seem to have been preceded by the "Seer," much as the vision of that ecstatic shewed to Dante the way through Hell and Heaven. But the prodigy of the Greeks' sole poet—"the"—seems to have been that he was seer and poet in one; wherefore also they represented him as blind, like Tiresias. Whom the gods meant to see no semblance, but the very essence of the world, they sealed his eyes; that he might open to the sight of mortals that truth which, seated in Plato's figurative cavern with their backs turned outwards, they theretofore could see in nothing but the shadows cast by Show, This poet, as "seer," saw not the actual (*das Wirkliche*), but the true (*das Wahrhaftige*), sublime above all actuality; and the fact of his being able to relate it so faithfully to hearkening men that to them it seemed as clear and tangible as anything their hands had ever seized—this turned the Seer to a Poet.

Was he "Artist" also?

Whoso should seek to demonstrate the *art* of Homer, would have as hard a task before him as if he undertook to shew the genesis of a human being by the laborious experiments of some Professor—supramundane, if you will—of Chemistry and Physics. Nevertheless the work of Homer is no unconscious fashioning of Nature's, but something infinitely higher; perhaps, the plainest manifestation of a godlike knowledge of all that lives. Yet Homer was no Artist, but rather all succeeding poets took their art from him, and therefore is he called "the Father of Poetry" (*Dichtkunst*). All Greek genius is nothing else than an artistic réchauffé (*Nachdichtung*) of Homer; for purpose of this réchauffé, was first discovered and matured that "Techne" which at last we have raised to a general principle [139] under name of *the Art of Poetry*, wrongheadedly including in it the "poietes" or "Finder der Märe."

The "*ars poetica*" of the Latins may rank as art, and from it be derived the whole artifice of verse-and-rhyme-making to our present day. If *Dante* once again was dowered with the Seer's eye—for he saw the Divine, though not the moving shapes of gods, as Homer—when we come to *Ariosto* things have faded to the fanciful refractions of Appearance; whereas *Cervantes* spied between the glintings of such arbitrary fancies the old-poetic world-soul's cloven quick, and sets that cleavage palpably before us in the lifelike actions of two figures seen in dream. And then, as if at Time's last stroke, a Scotsman's "second sight" grows clear to full clairvoyance of a world of history now lying lost behind us in forgotten documents, and its facts he tells to us as truthful fairy-tales told cheerily to listening children. But from that *ars poetica*, to which these rare ones owed no jot, has issued all that calls itself since Homer

"Epic poetry"; and after him we have to seek the genuine epic fount in tales and sagas of the Folk alone, where we find it still entirely undisturbed by art.

To be sure, what nowadays advances from the feuilleton to clothe the walls of circulating libraries, has had to do with neither art nor poesy. The actually-experienced has at no time been able to serve as stuff for epic narration; and "second sight" for the never-witnessed does not bestow itself on the first romancer who passes by. A critic once blamed the departed Gutzkow for depicting a poet's love-affairs with baronesses and countesses, "things of which he certainly could never have had any personal experience"; the author most indignantly replied by thinly-veiled allusions to similar episodes that actually had happened to himself. On neither side could the unseemly folly of our novel-writing have been more cryingly exposed.—*Goethe*, on the other hand, proceeded in his "Wilhelm Meister" as the artist to whom the poet had refused his collaboration in discovery of a satisfactory ending; in his "Wahlverwandtschaften" the lyric elegist worked himself into a [140] seer of souls, but not as yet of living shapes. But what Cervantes had seen as *Don Quixote* and *Sancho Pansa*, dawned on *Goethe's* deep world-scrutiny as *Faust* and *Mephistopheles*; and these shapes beheld by his ownest eye now haunt the seeking artist as the riddle of an ineffable poet's-dream, which he thought, quite un-artistically but thoroughly sincerely, to solve in an impossible *drama*.

There may be something to learn from this, even for our members of the "German Poets'-grove" who feel neglected by their none too ardent publishers. For alas! one must say of their novels, their spirit's ripest fruits, that they have sprung from neither life nor tradition, but simply from theft and traduction. If neither the Greeks at their prime, nor any later great nation of culture, such as the Italians and Spaniards, could win from passing incidents the matter for an epic story, to you moderns this will presumably come a trifle harder: for the events they witnessed, at least were real phenomena; whilst ye, in all that rules, surrounds and dwells in you, can witness naught but masquerades tricked out with rags of culture from the wardrobe-shop and tags from the historical marine-store. The seer's eye for the ne'er-experienced the gods have always lent to none but their believers, as ye may ascertain from Homer or Dante. But ye have neither faith nor godliness.

So much for "Poetry."—Now let us see what "Art" can offer in our days of progressed Culture.—

We came to the conclusion that all Greek genius was but an artistic re-editing of Homer, whilst in Homer himself we refused to recognise the *artist*. Yet Homer knew the "Aoidos" (4) nay, he himself perhaps was "*singer*" also?—To the sound of heroic songs the chorus of youths approached the mazes of the "imitative" dance. We know the choral chants to the priestly ceremonies, the dithyrambic choral dances of the Dionysian rites. What [141] there was inspiration of the blind seer, becomes here the intoxication of the open-eyed ecstatic, before whose reeling gaze the actuality of Semblance dissolves to godlike twilight. Was the "musician" *artist*? I rather think he *made* all Art, and became its earliest lawgiver.

The shapes and deeds beheld by the blind poet-teller's second sight could not be set before the mortal eye save through ecstatic palsy of its wonted faculty of seeing but the physical appearance: the movements of the represented god or hero must be governed by other laws than those of common daily need, by laws established on the rhythmic ordering of harmonious tones. The fashioning of the tragedy belonged no more in strictness to the poet, but to the lyrical musician: not one shape, one deed in all the tragedy, but what the godlike poet had beheld before, and "told" to his Folk; merely the choregus led them now before the mortal eye of man itself, bewitching it by music's magic to a clairvoyance like to that of the original "Finder." The lyric tragedian therefore was not Poet, but through mastery and employment of the highest art he materialised the world the poet had beheld, and set the Folk



itself in his clairvoyant state.—Thus "mus-ical" art became the term for all the gifts of godlike vision, for every fashioning in illustration of that vision. It was the supreme ecstasy of the Hellenic spirit. What remained when it had sobered down, were nothing but the scraps of "Techne"—no longer Art, but the arts; among which the art of versifying was to present the strangest sight in time, retaining for the position, length or brevity of syllables the canons of the musical Lyric, without an idea of how it had sounded. They are preserved to us, these "Odes"; with other prosaic conceits of the *ars poetica*, they too are labelled "poet-works"; and down through every age have people racked their brains with filling maps of verses, words and syllables, in the belief that if these only look a little glib in the eyes of others—and finally their own—they have really written "poetry."

We have no need to linger with this *ars poetica*, for we [142] shall never meet the *poet* there. With its practice *Wit* invaded poetry: the old didactic sentence—which still might run on lines of priest's or people's *melody*, as in the Pythia's oracles—became an Epigram; and here the artistic verse, with its really clever rhymes of nowadays, found fit employment. Goethe, who gave to everything a trial, down to his own disgust with the hexameter, was never happier in verse and rhyme than when they served his wit. Indeed one cannot find that the discarding of this artifice of verse has made our "poets" shine more: had it been applied to the "Trompeter von Säckingen," for instance, that epic would certainly not have gone through sixty editions, but probably would have made more dainty reading; whereas the jingling rhymes of H. Heine themselves still yield a certain pleasure. On the whole, our generation's love of verse-making appears to spring from an innate imbecility to which the attention of parents and tutors should be directed; if after thrashing through our youthful poets you light upon a young Ovid who really can write verses, by all means let him off, as we still prefer the witty epigrammist on our field of Literature, though not on that of—*Music*.

Music!—

Unutterably hard as is the task, we have already tried from time to time to throw some light on this, but not as yet upon the special point of "Composition."

Music is the most witless thing conceivable, and yet we now have wellnigh naught but witty composition. I suppose that this has come about for love of our dear littérateurs, Herr Paul Lindau in particular, who only asks amusement from all Art, as I am told, since otherwise it bores him. But strange to say, it is precisely our amusing music that is the greatest bore of all (just think of a piece entitled a "Divertissement" at any of our concerts), whereas—say what you will—a completely witless Symphony of Beethoven's is always too brief for every hearer. Methinks, at bottom lies a fatal error of our newspaper-reporters' system of *Æsthetics*. It is not to be expected [143] that we shall win over our champions of musical amusement to another taste; nevertheless, quite among ourselves, we will once more devote a few words to the un-witty side of Music.

Have not the results of many an inquiry already plainly taught us that Music indeed has nothing to do with the common seriousness of life; that its character, on the contrary, is sublime and grief-assuaging radiance (*Heiterkeit*); ay—that it smiles on us, but never makes us laugh? Surely we may call the A-major Symphony of Beethoven the brightest thing that any art has e'er brought forth: but can we imagine the genius of this work in any but a state of loftiest transport? Here is held a Dionysos-feast such as only on the most ideal of suppositions can the Greek have ever celebrated: let us plunge into the rushing tumult, the frenzy of delight, we never leave the realm of lofty ecstasy, high as heaven above the soil where *Wit* rakes up its meagre fancies. For here we are in no masquerade, the sole amusement of our leathern world of Progress; here we accost no privy-councillor dressed up as a Don Juan, whose recognition and dismasking causes boundless fun: no, here appear those truthful shapes that shewed themselves in moving ranks of heroes to *blind* Homer, in ranks which now *deaf* Beethoven makes call aloud the mind's enraptured eye to see them once again.



But look! the amusement-hunting journal-cavalier sits there; his eyes are only for the quite material: he perceives nothing, nothing at all: to him the time grows long, whereas to us the time of respite from all which that man sees was far too short, too fleeting. So give him his amusement! Crack jokes, ye bold musicians too; disguise yourselves and put a mask on! Compose, compose, even though nothing occur to you! Why should it be called "composing"—putting together—if invention too is requisite? But the more tedious ye are, the more contrast must ye put into your choice of masks: 'twill amuse again. I know renowned composers you shall meet to-day at con cert-masquerades in garb of a street-minstrel ("Of all my [144] sufferings" etc.), to-morrow in the Hallelujah-perruque of a Handel, the day after as a Jewish tuner-up of Czardas, and later as solemn symphonist disguised in a number ten. You laugh:—and well you may, you witty hearers! But those gentlemen themselves take things so seriously, nay, strictly, that it became necessary to pick out one of them (5) and diploma him the Prince of Serious Music of our day, expressly to stop your laughter. Perhaps, however, that only adds to it? For this serious music-prince would long ago have struck you as most wearisome, had you sly ones not taken a peep behind the mask, and discovered that it hid no such mighty dignitary, but just a person like yourselves; so you now can go on playing masks again, pretending that you marvel at him, while it amuses you to see the mouths he makes as if he quite believed you. Yet what lies at deepest bottom of all this entertaining game of masks, should also be openly stated. The suave, but somewhat philistine *Hummel* once was asked what lovely landscape he had thought of when composing a certain charming Rondo: to tell the simple truth, he might have answered—a beautiful fugal theme of Bach's in C-sharp major; only, he was still more candid, and confessed that the eighty ducats of his publisher had swum before his eyes. The witty man; with him one might have dealings!

Taken strictly, however, the joke is not in the music, but in the composer's pretence of having written finely, with the resulting quid-pro-quo's. In the aforesaid masque one can scarcely consider *Mendelssohn* included. He was not always frank of speech, and liked evasion; but he never lied. When asked what he thought of Berlioz' music, he answered: "Every man composes as well as he can." If he did not compose his choruses to *Antigone* as finely as his Hebrides-overture—which I hold for one of the most beautiful musical works that we possess—the reason was, that it was the very thing he could not. In view of this instance, and alas! of many similar, his followers may inherit from Mendelssohn the *cold-blooded recklessness* with [145] which they have tackled every kind of composition, resembling that old General of Frederick the Great's who sang whatever was set before him to the tune of the Dessauer March; for the greatest itself they could but squeeze with calm indifference into the diminutive bed of their talent. It certainly was always their intention, to turn out something good; only, their fate has been the opposite to that of Mephistopheles, who ever willed the bad but did the good. Assuredly they each desired to bring to pass for once a real true *melody*, one of those Beethovenian *shapes* that seem to stand complete before us with every member of a living body. But what was the use of all *ars musicae severioris*, nay, even of *musicae jocosa*, when the shape would not be conjured up, still less composed? All that we find recorded there looks so very like the shapes of Beethovenian music, as often to seem copied outright: and yet the most artful concoction declines to produce an effect even remotely approaching the almost ridiculously insignificant



which has not a word to say to art, but at every concert wakes from lethargy to sudden

ecstasy an audience never so fatigued before! Plainly a little malice of the public's, which one must correct by strenuous application of the rod. My quondam colleague in the Dresden Kapellmeistership, Gottlieb Reissiger the composer of Weber's Last Thought, once bitterly complained to me that the selfsame melody which in Bellini's "Romeo e Giulia" always sent the public mad, in his own "Adèle de Foix" made no effect whatever. We fear that the composer of the last idea of Robert Schumann would have a like misfortune to bewail.—

It seems we here have quite a curious case: I am afraid, to fully fathom it would lead us to the edge of mystical abysses, and make those who chose to follow us seem [146] Dunces in the eyes of our enlightened music-world, as which—according to Carlyle's experience—the Englishmen regard all Mystics. Luckily, however, the sorrows of our present composing world are largely explicable in the sober light of sociology, which lets its cheering sunrays even pierce the cosy covert of our Poet-groves and Composer-hedges. Here everything is originally without guile, as once in Paradise. Mendelssohn's fine saying: "Every man composes as well as he can"—is deemed a wise provision, and really never overstepped. Guile first begins when one wants to compose better than one can; as this cannot well be, at least one gives oneself the air of having done so: that is the mask. Nor does that do so much harm: things worsen only when a number of good people—Principals and the like—are actually deluded by the mask, with Hamburg banquets, Breslau diplomas and so forth, as the outcome; for this illusion is only to be compassed by making folk believe that one composes better than others who really do compose well. Yet even this is not so very dreadful, after all; for we may generahise Mendelssohn's dictum into "Every man *does* what and how he can." Why make such fuss about the falsification of artistic judgment or musical taste? Is it not a mere bagatelle, compared with all the other things we falsify, wares, sciences, victuals, public opinions, State culture-tendencies, religious dogmas, clover-seed, and what not? Are we to grow virtuous all of a sudden in Music? When a few years back I was rehearsing the Vienna company in two of my operas, the first tenor complained to a friend of mine about the unnaturalness of my request that he should be virtuous for six whole weeks, and regular in his habits, whilst he knew quite well that so soon as I had gone away he could only hold on by the common operatic vice of looseness. This artist was right in denouncing virtue as an absurd demand. If our composers' delight in the show of their excellence, their chastity and kinship to Mozart and Beethoven, were only possible without the need to vent their spite on others, one might grudge them nothing; nay, even this bad trait [147] does not much matter in the long run, since the personal injury thus inflicted will heal in time. That the acceptance of the empty for the sound is cretinising everything we possess in the way of schools, tuition, academies and so on, by ruining the most natural feelings and misguiding the faculties of the rising generation, we may take as punishment for the sloth and lethargy we so much love. But that we should pay for all this, and have nothing left when we come to our senses—especially considering how we Germans pride ourselves on being somebodies—this, to be frank, is abominable!—

On the side last touched—the ethical, so to speak—of our poetising and composing, enough has been said for to-day. I am glad to think that a continuation of these notes will take me to a region of both art-varieties where we meet great talents and noble minds, and therefore have only to point out failings in the genre itself, not cant and counterfeiting.



## Notes

### Note 1 on page 7

See Glasenapp's article in the *Bayreuther Blätter* for March, 1879, already mentioned on page 116.—Tr.

### Note 2 on page 8

The poem by J. V. von Scheffel (1853), author also of the novel "Ekkehard," etc., etc. A stupid play was made from this poem by E. Hildebrandt and J. Keller, with vocal pieces by one Brenner; but not till the year after Wagner's death did Victor Nessler's washy but popular opera on the same subject appear.—Tr.

### Note 3 on page 8

By G. A. Lortzing, 1837.—Tr.

### Note 4 on page 10

According to Liddell and Scott, "a singer, minstrel, bard; Homer, ##### ##, Odyssey 3, 267. In the heroic age they are represented as inspired, and under divine protection."—Tr.

### Note 5 on page 12

Johannes Brahms.—Tr.

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*On Opera Poetry and Composition in particular*

By Richard Wagner

Translated by William Ashton Ellis



The Wagner Library

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## Contents

About this Title .....	4
Translator's Note .....	5
On Opera Poetry and Composition in particular .....	7
Notes .....	19



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[150]

## Translator's Note

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[151]

## On Opera Poetry and Composition in particular

APROPOS of sundry experiences, it has struck me how little the audience at opera-performances was acquainted with the matter of the plot. High-classic operas, like "Don Juan" and "Figaro's Hochzeit," came out of it very well with uncorrupted youthful hearers, especially of the female sex, protecting them from any knowledge of the frivolities in the text—a thing which guardians and teachers may probably have counted on when they expressly commended those works to their pupils as a model of pure taste. That the happenings in "Robert the Devil" and the "Huguenots" were intelligible to none but the inmost circle of initiates, had much in its favour; but that the "Freischütz" too should remain in shadow, as I lately discovered, amazed me till a little thought convinced me that, although I had conducted this opera any number of times in the orchestra, I myself was still quite hazy as to many a passage in the text. Some laid the blame on our singers' indistinctness of delivery; when I objected that in dialogic operas such as "Freischütz," "Zauberflöte," ay, and our German translations of "Don Juan" and "Figaro," everything that explains the action is simply spoken, I was reminded that the singers of our day speak indistinctly too, and also that, for this very reason perhaps, the dialogue is abridged to unintelligibility. Nay, that here one passed from bad to worse; for with operas "composed throughout" one at least could arrive at sufficient understanding of the scenic action by assistance of the textbook, whereas in "aria-books" of dialogic operas such an aid was not forthcoming.—I have remarked that for the most part the German audience learns nothing at all of what the poet really meant with his libretto; often enough, not even the composer appears to know. With the French it is otherwise: there the first question is as to the "pièce"; the play must be entertaining [152] in and for itself, save perhaps with the lofty genre of "Grand Opera," where Ballet has to provide the fun. The texts of Italian operas, on the other hand, are fairly trivial as a rule, the virtuoso-doings of the singer appearing to be the main concern; yet the Italian singer cannot rise to the level of his task without a remarkably drastic enunciation, quite indispensable to his vocal phrasing, and we do the Italian operatic genre a great injustice when we slur the text of arias in our German reproduction. Mechanical as is the Italian type of operatic composition, I still have found that it all will have a better effect when the text is understood than when it isn't, since a knowledge of the situation and exact emotion will advantageously ward off the effect of monotony in the musical expression. Only with Rossini's "Semiramide" was even this acquaintance of no help to me; Reissiger's "Dido abandonata," which earned its composer the favour of a Saxon monarch, I do not know—any more than F. Hiller's "Romilda."

According to the above observations one might simply attribute the German public's love of opera-performances to its pleasure in hearing the separate 'numbers,' as purely melodic entities per se. Now, the Italians long ago attained great skill in manufacturing such pieces, so that it was very late before the German composer dared to vie with them. When Mozart had to compose the "Zauberflöte" he was worried by a doubt if he would do it right, as he "had composed no magic operas before." With what aplomb, on the contrary, he treated "*le nozze di Figaro*": on the set foundation of Italian *opera buffa* he reared a building of such perfect symmetry, that he well might decline to sacrifice a single note to his cut-demanding Kaiser. What the Italian threw in as banal links and interludes between the 'numbers' proper, Mozart here drastically employed to animate the situation, in striking harmony with just this exceptionally finished comedy-text that lay before him. As in the Symphony of Beethoven the very pause grows eloquent, so here the noisy half-closes and cadences which might well have held aloof from the [153] Mozartian Symphony give a quite irreplaceable life to the scenic action, where craft and presence of mind fight—lovelessly I—with passion and brutality.

Here the dialogue becomes all music, whilst the music converses; a thing that certainly was only possible through the master's developing the orchestra to such a pitch as never before, and perhaps to this day, had been dreamt of. On the other hand the earlier isolated pieces became thereby fused into what appeared so complete a work of music that the admirable comedy on which it stood might finally be altogether overlooked, and nothing heard but music. So it seemed to our musicians; and Mozart's "Figaro" was given more carelessly and indistinctly day by day, till at last we have dropped to a mode of performing this work itself that leaves our teachers no scruple about sending their pupils to the theatre on Figaro nights.

We will not discuss again to-day the effect of these instances of public vandalism on the German's sensibility to the genuine and correct; but it cannot be unimportant to note their misleading influence on the drafts and finished products of our operatic poets and composers. Forsaking all their native field, they first must seek an entrance to the ready-made Italian Opera; which could only lead to the nearest possible imitation of the Italian "cabaletta," with the abandonment of every broader mode of musical conception. Upon due "rhyme and reason" of the whole no weight was to be laid: had it done any harm to the "Zauberflöte," composed for a German text and spoken with German dialogue, that the villain was suddenly changed to a hero, the originally good woman to a bad one, making utter nonsense of what had happened in the first act? Only, it fell hard to the German genius to master the Italian "cabaletta." Even *Weber* in his earliest youth still tried in vain to make something of the "coloratura" aria, and it needed the heart-stirring years of the War of Liberation to set the singer of Körner's lays on his own feet. What we Germans received with the "Freischütz," has fallen to few nations' lot.

[154]

Yet we are not about to trace the historic evolution of German Opera—which I have already discussed at length elsewhere—but rather to explain the peculiar difficulty of that evolution by this Opera's fundamental faults. The chief of these I find in the criminal *vagueness* that has disfigured all our opera-performances from the beginning to this day, as I stated from personal experience in my prefatory words, and whose cause—the librettist's and composer's involuntarily accustomed standard for the degree of plainness needful to an operatic story—has been touched on in the previous paragraphs. The so-called "*Tragédie lyrique*," which reached the German from abroad, remained indifferent and unintelligible to him so long as the "Aria" did not take his fancy by its marked melodic structure. This Aria form of melody passed over into German Opera as the sole aim and end of the composer, and necessarily also of the poet. The latter felt that he might take his ease in the text for an aria, as the composer had his own musical scheme of extension, interchange and repetition of themes, and needed an entirely free hand with the words, which he would repeat at pleasure either as a whole or in part. Long lines could only hamper the composer, whilst a strophe of about four lines was ample measure for one section of an aria. The verbal repetitions necessary to fill out the melody, conceived quite apart from the verse, even gave the composer opportunity for pleasant variations of the so-called "declamation" through a shifting of accents. In Winter's "Opferfest" we find this rule observed throughout: there the "Inka," for instance, sings one after the other

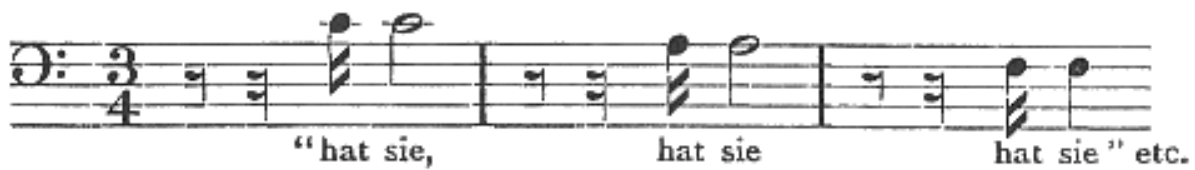
Mein *Leben* hab' ich ihm zu danken—  
mein *Leben hab' ich ihm zu danken;*

and repeats a question in the form of answer:

Muss nicht der Mensch auch menschlich sein?—  
Der Mensch muss menschlich sein.

*Marschner* once had the grave misfortune, in his "Adolf [155] von Nassau," to triplicate

the part of speech "hat sie" ("has she") on a particularly incisive rhythmic accent:



Even Weber could not avoid the temptation to vary the accent: his "Euryanthe" sings: "Was ist mein Leben gegen *diesen* Augenblick," and repeats it as: "Was ist mein Leben gegen diesen *Augenblick*!" This sort of thing leads the hearer away from any serious following of the words, without affording adequate compensation in the purely musical phrase itself; for in most cases it is a mere question of musico-rhetorical flourishes, such as shew out the naïveté in Rossini's eternal "Felicità"s.

It seems, however, that it was not solely a delight in free command of flourishes, that prompted the composer to his arbitrary dealings with morsels of the text; no, the whole relation of our imaginary Verse to the truthfulness of musical Accent placed the composer from the first in the alternative of either declaiming the text in strict accordance with the accent of daily speech and common sense, which would have resolved the verse with all its rhymes into naked prose; or, regardless of that accent, completely subjecting the words to certain dance-schemes, and giving free rein to melodic invention. The results of this latter method were far less disturbing, or even destructive, with the Italians and French than with ourselves, because their speaking-accent is incomparably more accommodating and, in particular, not bound to the root-syllable; wherefore also, they do not weigh the feet in their metres, but simply count them. Through our bad translations of their texts, however, we had acquired from them that peculiar operatic jargon in which we now thought fit, and even requisite, to declaim our German lines themselves. Conscientious composers were certainly disgusted at last with this frivolous maltreatment of our tongue: but it never yet struck them that even the verse of our first-class [156] poets was no true, no melody-begetting verse, but a mere elaborate sham. *Weber* declared it his duty to faithfully reproduce the text, yet admitted that, were he always to do so, he must say goodbye to his melody. In fact it was just this upright endeavour of *Weber's* to preserve the set divisions of the verse-text and thereby make the thought intelligible, which, coupled with his adherence to a melodic pattern for the resulting incongruities, led to that indistinctness whereof I promised an example from my experience. This occurs in *Max's Arioso* in the "Freischütz": "Durch die Wälder, durch die Auen." Here the poet had committed the egregious blunder of furnishing the composer with the following verse:

"Abends bracht' ich reiche Beute,  
Und wie über eig'nes Glück—  
Drohend wohl dem Mörder—freute  
Sich Agathe's Liebesblick."

Now, *Weber* really takes the trouble to phrase these lines in strict accordance with their sense and sequence: he therefore makes a break after the parenthesis "drohend wohl dem Mörder," and begins the closing line with "freute"; but as that makes the line much longer, he feels obliged to employ the verb—so important for a connection with the second line—as a preliminary 'arsis' (*Auftakt*); whereas the pronoun "sich," merely introduced to supplement the verb, receives the stronger accent of the following beat. This certainly has resulted in an entrancing strain of melody:





Not only is the poet's verse as such, however, revealed as an absurdity, but, for all the distinctness of its musical [157] phrasing, the *sense* has become so hard of understanding that, accustomed to merely hear it sung, it was only after this unintelligibleness had one day struck me, that I discovered the true connection of ideas. A similar difficulty arises in further course of the same aria through the favourite poetic trick of disassociating words for sake of rhyme; and here the composer unfortunately makes things worse by repeating the parenthesis:

"Wenn sich rauschend Blätter regen,  
Wähnt sie wohl, es sei mein Fuss,  
Hüpft vor Freuden, winkt entgegen—  
Nur dem Laub—nur dem Laub—den Liebesgruss."

Moreover "Fuss" and "Liebesgruss" are here intended to rhyme. The first time Weber accentuates thus:



the second time thus:



where the wrongful accent gives the rhyme, but the right discloses that these words do *not* rhyme. And so we have a flagrant instance of the utter folly of our whole literary scheme of Verse, which wellnigh always rests on end-rhymed lines, though it is only in the finest verses of our greatest and best-reputed poets that the rhyme, through being genuine, has a determinant effect. Nor has this genuineness or spuriousness much troubled our German composers heretofore; rhyme to them was rhyme, and they paired off their last syllables in true street-minstrel fashion. A striking example is offered by Naumann's melody, so popular at one time, to Schiller's Ode to Joy: [158]



Now take *Beethoven*, the Truthful:





For sake of the imaginary rhyme, Naumann put the verse's accents all awry: Beethoven gave the proper accent, and, doing so, revealed the fact that in German compound words it falls on the first component, so that the hinder section, bearing the weaker accent, cannot be used for rhyme; if the poet does not hold by this, the rhyme is only present to the eye, a literature-rhyme: to the ear, and thus to both the feeling and a vital understanding, it vanishes away. And what a pother this wretched rhyme creates in all musical composition to verbal texts: twisting and disfiguring the phrases into utter gibberish, to be not so much as noticed in the end! In *Kaspar's* great aria I lately searched for a prior rhyme to correspond with the last line, "Triumph, die Rache gelingt," as I had never heard it in the singing, and therefore thought that Weber must have added this clause on his own authority: however, I succeeded in finding "im Dunkel beschwingt," which, hastily strewn between "umgebt ihn, ihr Geister" and "schon trägt er knirschend eure Ketten," without any musical cæsura, had never struck me as a rhyme before. In truth, what use had the composer for this rhyme, when he merely wanted words, eh! syllables, to give the singer his share in a tempestuous musical phrase that properly belongs to the characteristic orchestral accompaniment alone?

I believe this example, which I only hit upon at random, will afford the easiest introduction to a further inquiry into the mysteries of operatic melody. The meagre doggerel [159] verse, often built of simply empty phrases; the verse whose sole affinity to music, its rhyme, destroyed the words' last shred of meaning, and thereby made its best conceits quite valueless to the musician—this verse compelled him to take the pattern and working-out of characteristic melodic motives from a province of music which had thitherto developed in the orchestral accompaniment to a lingua franca of the instruments. *Mozart* had raised this symphonic accompaniment to such high expressiveness that, wherever consistent with dramatic naturalism, he could let the singers merely speak to it in musical accents, without disturbance of the rich melodic woof of themes or break in the musical flow. And herewith disappeared that violence towards the word-text; whatever in it did not call for vocal melody, was understandably intoned. Yet the incomparable dramatic talent of the glorious musician only perfectly accomplished this in so-called *opera buffa*, not to the same degree in *opera seria*. Here his followers were left with a great difficulty. They could see nothing for it, but to keep the utterance of passion invariably melodious; since the threadbare text gave them little help, and wilful repetition of its words had already made them deaf to any claims of the librettist, they finally set the [prose part of the] text itself, with just as many repetitions as the purpose needed, to melodic-looking phrases such as *Mozart* had originally assigned to his characterising orchestral accompaniment. In this wise they thought to give their singers always "melody" to sing; and to keep it in perpetual motion they often buried all the text, if there was rather too much of it, beneath such a mass of scales and runs, that neither song nor text could be discerned.—Whoever wants a fairly striking instance, let him study the Templar's great air in *Marschner's* "Templer und Jüdin"; say the *allegro furioso* from "mich fasst die Wuth" onwards, where the composition of the final verses is specially instructive: for in one breath, without the smallest pause, stream forth the words:

"Rache nur wollt' ich geniessen;  
Ihr allein mein Ohr nur leihend  
[160]  
Trennt' ich mich von allen süßen,  
Zarten Banden der Natur,  
Mich dem Templerordenweihend."

Here the composer halts; for the poet's having tacked on a

"Bitt're Reue fand ich nur."

after the full-stop, just to make a rhyme for "Natur," seemed really too bad: only after two bars of interlude does *Marschner* allow this strange addendum to appear, of course in

breathless roulades as before.

Thus the composer believed he had "melodised" everything, even the wickedest. Nor was it better with the elegiac-tender, whereof the same air of the Templar affords us evidence in its Andante (3/4): "in meines Lebens Blüthezeit"—the second verse, "einsam in das dunkle Grab," being sung in Ballad fashion to the exact tune of the first, saving for that elegance of melodic embellishment which has brought this genre of German vocal music to the verge of the ridiculous. The composer opined that the singer would always like "something to sing": the great bravura fireworks of the Italians did not go off quite briskly with the German; on "Rache" at most, did one feel it incumbent to risk a run up and run down. In the "Cantabile," on the contrary, one found those minor prettinesses, particularly the "Mordente" and its derivative grace-notes, which would shew one had one's taste as well. *Spohr* brought the agréments of his violin-solos into his singers' airs, and if the melody, apparently composed of these extras, turned out a nothing-saying weariness, at like time it strangled the verse that had been making signs of having something to say. With *Marschner*—beside the manifest traits of genius that occur so frequently (in that great Templar-air for instance) and now and then ascend to positive sublimity (for instance in the choruses introducing the second finale of the same opera)—we meet an almost preponderant mawkishness and an often astounding incorrectness, mostly due to the unfortunate delusion that things must always go "melodiously," i.e. must everywhere [161] be "tuney." My departed colleague *Reissiger* complained to me of the failure of his "Schiffbruch der Medusa," in which, as I myself must admit, there was "so much melody,"—which I had at like time to take as a bitter allusion to the success of my own operas, in which, you know, there was "so little melody."—

This wondrous Wealth-of-melody, which emptied its horn of plenty on the just and unjust, made good its squandered riches by an—alas! not always skilful—annexation of all the musical gew-gaws current in the world, mostly filched from French or Italian operas and huddled up pell-mell. Against *Rossini* there was many an outcry: yet it was merely his originality that vexed us; for as soon as *Spohr's* violin-solo was exhausted for the trimming of the "Cantabile," *Rossini's* march-and-ballet rhythms and melismi flocked into the freshening *Allegro* almost of themselves: nothing again, but yards of "melody." The overture to the "Felsenmühle" still lives at our garden-concerts and change-of-guards, though we hear no more the March from "Mosé"; in this case German patriotism, to the shade of *Reissiger's* great satisfaction, would seem to have gained the victory.

Yet it was not solely those ineffective importations of Italian and French melismic and rhythmic nick-nacks, that feathered German operatic melody, but the sublime and hearty further taxed the four-part male chorus so passionately practised since the last half-century. *Spontini* attended a performance of *Mendelssohn's* "Antigone" in Dresden, against his will; he soon left it in contemptuous dudgeon: "*c'est de la Berliner Liedertafel!*" 'Tis a sad tale, the incursion of that miserably thin and monotonous beer-chant, even when raised to the rank of a Rhine-wine song, with which the Berlin composer of the opera "die Nibelungen" (1) himself could not dispense.—It was the genius of *Weber* that led the Opera into noble pathways of the National by introducing the German men's-chorus, to which he had given so splendid an impetus by his songs [162] of the War of Freedom. Its uncommon success moved the master to lend its character to the chorus that takes a dramatic part in the action: in his "Euryanthe" the dialogue of the principal characters is 'repeatedly arrested by the chorus, which unfortunately sings entirely in the strain of the four-part glee, by itself, unrelieved by any characteristic movement in the orchestra, almost as if these passages were intended to be cut out as they stand for the Liedertafel books. What here was most surely meant nobly, perhaps in opposition to the stereotyped employment of the Italian chorus to merely accompany the aria or ballet, led *Weber's* successors into that eternal nothing-saying "melodic" chorus-ing which, together with the aforesaid aria-tuning, makes out the entire substance of a German

opera. Whole breadths are covered by this "melodic" general-muster, without a single striking moment to tell us the cause of the unbroken drench of melody. For an example I return to the operas of that else so highly talented Marschner, and point to his so-called Ensembles, such as the *Andante con moto* (9/8) in the second finale of his *Templer*, "lässt den Schleier mir, ich bitte"; as also (for a model) the introduction to the first act of the same work, with special reference to the first strophe of the male chorus: "wir lagern dort im stillen Wald, der Zug muss hier vorbei, er ist nicht fern, er nahet bald und glaubt die Strasse frei," sung to a hunting-tune; and in further progress of the piece, the extraordinary melodising of the strictest dialogue by aid of unimaginable repetitions. Here dramatic melodists may learn how long a fair number of men can indulge in an 'aside' on the stage; naturally it can only be done through their standing in rows with their backs to the forest, and facing the audience—which in its turn pays no heed to a man of them, but patiently waits for the end of the general "melody."

To the intelligent spectator the spoken dialogue in such an opera often comes as a positive relief. On the other hand this very dialogue betrayed composers into the belief that the musical numbers embedded in the prose must [163] always be of lyric kind; an assumption quite justified in the "Singspiel" proper, for there one only wanted vocal "Intermezzi," while the piece itself was recited in intelligible prose, just as in Comedy. Here, however, it was "Opera"; the vocal pieces lengthened out, arias changed places with concerted "Ensemble" numbers, and at last the "Finale," with all the text, was put at the musician's disposal. And these separate "numbers" must all be telling in themselves; their "melody" must never flag, and the closing phrase must be rousing, clamorous for applause. Already the music-dealer had been taken in eye: the more effective, or merely pleasing single pieces that one could extract, the more valuable the work to the trade. Even the pianoforte-score must begin with a table-of-contents cataloguing the numbers under the rubric of "Aria," "Duet," "Trio," "Drinking-song," and so on throughout the whole length of the opera. This continued when "Recitative" already had ousted the dialogue, and the whole had been given a certain show of musical cohesion. To be sure, these recitatives weren't much to speak of, and contributed no little to the ennui of the opera-genre; while "Nadori" in Spohr's "Jessonda," for instance, delivered himself of the recitative: "still lag ich an des Sees Fluthen—



one simply was all impatience for re-entry of the full orchestra with definite tempo and a set "melody," let it be put together ("composed") as it might. At end of these redeeming numbers one must be able to applaud, or things looked black and the number would have to be left out in time. In the "Finale," however, quite a little tempest of delirium must be caused; a kind of musical orgy was needed, to bring the act to a satisfying close: so "Ensemble" was sung; every man for himself, all for the audience; and a jubilant burst of melody with a soaring [164] final cadence, appropriate or not, must waft the whole into due ecstasy. If this also fell flat, the thing had failed, and the opera was withdrawn.—

Coupling the above considerations with the utterly chaotic vocalising of most of our singers—their want of finish aggravated by the want of style in such tasks—we must candidly admit that German Opera indeed is bungler's work. We must confess it even in comparison with French and Italian Opera; but how much more when we apply the

requirements that should necessarily be met by a drama on the one hand, an independent piece of music on the other, to this pseudo-artwork kept in hopeless incorrectness!—In this Opera, taken strictly, everything is absurd, up to what a god-given musician offers up therein as original-melodist. For definitely so-called "German Opera" such a one was *Weber*, who sent to us his most enkindling rays of genius through this opera-mist, which Beethoven shook off in anger when he scored his diary with: "No more operas and such-like, but *my way!*" And who shall dispute our verdict on the genre itself, when he recalls the fact that Weber's finest, richest and most masterly music is as good as lost to us because belonging to the opera "Euryanthe"? Where shall we find this work performed to-day, when even Sovereign heads are more easily inclined to the "Clemenza di Tito" or "Olympia"—if something heavy must really be dug up for their wedding or jubilee festivities—than to this "Euryanthe" in which, 'spite all its name for tedium, each single number is worth more than all the *Opera seria* of Italy, France and Judæa? Such preferences, beyond a doubt, are not to be simply set down to the somnolent discrimination of the Prussian Operatic College of Directors; but, as everything there is governed by a certain dull, but stiff-necked academic instinct, from such a choice we may gather that beside those works of undeniably firm-set style, though very cramped and hollow genus, the best of "German operas" must needs look incomplete and therefore [165] unrepresentable at Court. Certainly all the sins of the Opera genre come out most strongly in this work, yet solely because its composer was in mortal earnest this time, but still could do no more than try to cover up the failings, nay, absurdities of the genre by a supreme exertion of his purely-musical productiveness. To revive my old figure of speech, that in the marriage to beget the grand United Artwork the poet's work is the masculine principle, and music the feminine, I might compare the outcome of this penetration of the Euryanthe text by Weber's genius with the fruit of the union of a "Tschandaha" with a "Brahminess"; for according to Hindu belief and experience a Brahmin might beget from a Tschandala woman a quite goodly child, though not one fitted for the rank of Brahmin, whereas the offspring of a Tschandala male from the superbly truth-bearing womb of a Brahmin female revealed the outcast type in plainest, and consequently in most revolting imprint. Moreover in the conception of this unlucky "Euryanthe," you must remember, the poet-father was a lady, the music in the fullest sense a Man! When Goethe thought that Rossini could have written quite passable music for his "Helena," it was the Brahmin casting his eye on a buxom Tschandala maiden; only in this case it is scarcely to be supposed that the Tschandala girl would have stood the test.—

In the first part of my larger treatise on "Opera and Drama" I long ago tried to expound the mournful, nay, heart-rending lessons to be drawn from Weber's work last-named; in particular I endeavoured to shew that even the most richly-gifted melodist was in no position to turn a collection of verseless German verses for a poetic-posing operatic text into a sterling artwork. And Weber, beyond being one of the most pre-eminent of melodists, was a bright-witted man with a keen eye for all trash and humbug. With the young musicians who came after, he soon fell into a certain disesteem: God knows what mixtures of Bach, Handel and so forth, they concocted as the very newest recipes: but none of them ventured [166] to face the problem which Weber seemed to have left unsolved; or if any did, he gave it up after a brief but laboured attempt. Only Kapellmeisters went gaily on composing "operas." In their installation-contracts it was written that they must enrich the Court-opera conducted by them with a new product of their fancy every year. My operas "Rienzi," "der fliegende Holländer," "Tannhäuser" and "Lohengrin," are given gratis at the Dresden Court-theatre to this day, because they are reckoned to me as Kapellmeister-operas from the period of my life-appointment there; I therefore have to pay a curious penalty for these operas having fared better than those of my colleagues. Happily this calamity affects myself alone; I know of no other Dresden opera-composer whose works have survived his Kapellmeister-ship, except my great predecessor *Weber*; but from him they asked no opera expressly written for the



Court-theatre, as in his time Italian Opera alone was deemed compatible with human dignity. His three famous operas Weber wrote for theatres elsewhere.

Apart from this nice enrichment of the Royal Saxon Court-theatre's repertoire by my modest, but now over-thirty-years-enduring works, not one of the afterbirths of Weberian Opera has had any real subsistence at the other Court-theatres either. Incomparably the most significant of them, were the first operas of Marschner: for some time their author was kept erect by the great unconcern with which, untroubled by the problem of Opera itself, he let his melodic talent and a certain idiomatic trick of maintaining his music, not always very new, in constant active flow, work out their own salvation. But the contagion of the new French Opera caught him as well, and soon he lost himself past rescue in the shallows of the poorly-schooled Not-highly-gifted. In face of Meyerbeer's successes one and all stood still and timid, were it only for good manners: not until recent times did one dare to follow up the creations of his style with Old-testament abortions. (2) "German [167] Opera," however, was on its deathbed till it happened at last that the still opposed, but less and less disputed successes of my own works seemed to have set pretty well the whole German composer-world in alarm and eager competition.

Long years ago I noticed symptoms of this movement. My successes at the Dresden Court-theatre even then drew F. Hiller, and later R. Schumann also, into my vicinity; at first, no doubt, just to see how it arrived that on an important German stage the operas of a hitherto entirely unknown German composer could lastingly attract the public. That I was no remarkable musician, both friends believed they had soon detected; so that my success appeared to be founded on the texts I had penned for myself. Indeed I also was of opinion that, as they now were brooding operatic plans, they should first of all procure good poems. For this they begged my help; but declined it again when things came to the point—I presume for fear of shabby tricks that I might play them. Of my text for "Lohengrin" Schumann remarked that it could never be composed as an opera; wherein he differed from Upper-Kapellmeister Taubert of Berlin, who later on, after my music also had been finished and performed, declared that he should like to set its text all over again for himself. When Schumann was compiling the book of his "Genovefa" no argument of mine could dissuade him from retaining the lamentably foolish third act as he had framed it; he took offence, and certainly imagined that I wished to spoil his very best effects. For *effect* he aimed at: everything "German, chaste and pure," but with a piquant dash of mock unchastity, to be harrowingly supplied by the most un-human coarsenesses and lownesses of the second finale. A few years ago I heard a most carefully prepared performance of this "Genovefa" in Leipzig, and could but find that the revolting and offensive scene which ends the third act of Auber's "Bal masqué," founded on similar motives, was quite a dainty *bon mot* compared with this sickening brutality of the chaste German effect-composer [168] and librettist And—marvellous! Never have I heard a solitary complaint about it. (3) With such energy does the German control his inborn purer feelings when he means to pit one man—Schumann for instance—against another—e.g. myself—For my part, I perceived that I could have been of no earthly use to Schumann.

But—this was in the good old times. Since then the Thirty-years' Zukunftsmusik War broke out, as to which I cannot quite ascertain whether it is yet deemed ripe for a Westphalian treaty. At anyrate there was a fair amount of opera-composing again in the years of war themselves, prompted perhaps by the very circumstance that our theatres were doing less and less business with the French and Italian wares they used to live on, whereas a number of German texts from my dilettantish pen, and actually composed by my own unaided self, for long had furnished them with good receipts.

Unfortunately I have been unable to gain any closer acquaintance with the creations of the neo-German Muse. They tell me that the influence of my "innovations" in the dramatic style

of music may there be remarked. Notoriously I am credited with a "manner" [or "line"—"*Richtung*"], against which the deceased Kapellmeister Rietz of Dresden was predisposed, and the departed Musikdirektor Hauptmann of Leipzig directed his choicest sallies; I fancy they were not the only ones, but quite a number of masters of all sorts were, and probably still are, unfriendly toward this "line." In the Music-schools and Conservatoria it is said to be sternly tabooed. What "line" may be taught there, is not clear to myself; all I know is, that mighty little is learnt: someone who had studied composition for six whole years at one of these establishments, gave it up at the end. It almost seems that the learning of Opera-composition must proceed in secret, outside the High Schools; so that he who falls into my "line," had best keep a look out! But it is less a [169] study of my works, than their success, that appears to have sent many an academically-untaught to my "manner." In what the latter consists, to myself is most unclear of all. Perhaps in the recent predilection for medieval subjects; the Edda and the rugged North, in general, have also been taken in eye as quarries for good texts. Yet it is not only the choice and character of its opera-texts that seems to have been of weight to the by all means "new" line, but several things besides; in particular that "composing-throughout," and above all a never-ceasing interference of the orchestra in the singers affairs—a mode with which one was the more liberal as a good deal of "manner" had lately arisen in the instrumenting, harmony and modulation of orchestral compositions.

I scarcely think that in all these things I could give much useful instruction; as I luckily am neither asked for it by anyone, at most I might give—unbidden—the following little counsel out of pure good-nature.

A German prince with a turn for composing operas (4) once asked friend Liszt to procure my aid in the instrumenting of a new opera by his Highness; in particular he wanted the good effect of the trombones in "Tannhäuser" applied to his work, in which regard my friend felt bound to divulge the secret that something always occurred to me, before I set it for the trombones.—On the whole it would be advisable that sundry composers adopted this "manner": to myself, indeed, it is of scanty profit, for I never can compose at all when nothing "occurs" to me; and perhaps the generality are wiser not to wait for such "ideas." With regard to the dramatic branch, however, I would indicate the best device for positively forcing such "occurrences."

A young musician whom I also once advised to wait for ideas, asked sceptically how he was ever to know that the idea he might get, under circumstances, was really his own. This doubt may arrive to the absolute Instrumental-composer: in fact our great Symphonists of the "now-time" [170] might be counselled to turn any doubt as to the ownership of their stray ideas into downright certainty, ere others do it for them. *Dramatic* composers of my "manner," on the other hand, I would recommend to never think of adopting a text before they see in it a plot, and characters to carry out this plot, that inspire the musician with a lively interest on some account or other. Then let him take a good look at the one character, for instance, which appeals to him the most this very day: bears it a mask—away with it; wears it the garment of a stage-tailor's dummy—off with it! Let him set it in a twilight spot, where he can merely see the gleaming of its eye; if that speaks to him, the shape itself will now most likely fall a-moving, which perhaps will even terrify him— but he must put up with that; at last its lips will part, it opens its mouth, and a ghostly voice breathes something quite distinct, intensely seizable, but so unheard-of (such as the "Guest of stone," and surely the page Cherubino, once said to Mozart) that—he wakes from out his dream. All has vanished; but in the spiritual ear it still rings on: he has had an "idea" ("*Einfall*"), a so-called musical "Motiv"; God knows if other men have heard the same, or something similar, before? Does it please X.Y, or displease Z? What's that to him? It is *his* motiv, legally delivered to and settled on him by that marvellous shape in that wonderful fit of absorption.

But one only gets these inspirations when one doesn't ply for opera-texts with

theatre-dummies: to invent "new" tunes for such, is uncommonly hard. We may take it that Mozart has exhausted all the music for those same dramatic masquerades. Clever men have praised his texts, that of "Don Juan" for instance, as the half-sketched programmes for a stage masque, with which they say his music corresponds so admirably because it reproduces even the most passionate of human situations as an always pleasantly diverting game. Though this view is easy of misconstruction, and above all may wound as derogatory, it was seriously meant, and involved that widely-accepted [171] verdict of our Æsthetes on Music's true office which it is so hard to combat till this day. Only I think that Mozart, while elevating this art—exposed, in a certain and very deep sense, to the charge of frivolity—to an æsthetic principle of Beauty, at like time completely exhausted it; it was his own: whoever thought to follow him, merely bungled and bored.

The stock of "pretty melodies" is out, and without "new ideas" there cannot be much originality remaining. Wherefore I advise the "new-mannered" to keep a keen eye on his text, his plot and characters, for inspirations. But whoso has no time to wait for the results of such a scrutiny (to many it has so happened with their "Armin"s and "Konradin"s!), and finally contents himself with stage-dummies, processions, shrieks of vengeance, storms in a teacup, and all the dance of death and devils, at least I warn him not to employ for the musical outfit of such mummery those attributes of the "manner" which have issued from communion with the true-dream shapes I spoke of above, as he would only make a muddle of it. For he who has looked those figures in the face, has had a difficulty in drawing on the store-room of our masking music to plainly re-compose the motive they had given him: frequently there was nothing to be done with the squaring of rhythm and modulation, since it is somewhat different to say "It is," from "Let us say" or "He believes so." Here the traits (*Noth*) of the Unheard-of bring often new necessities to light, and the music may haply weave itself into a style that might much annoy our Quadrature musicians. Not that that much matters: for if he who makes strange and startling modulations without that Want is certainly a bungler, so he who does not recognise the compulsion to modulate forcibly in the proper place is a—"Senator." The worst of it is, that the "new-mannerist" assumes that those occasional unheard-of-nesses have now become the common property of all who have footed the "line," and that if only he lays them on thick enough, his dummies will at once look something like. But they look very bad, [172] and I can't blame many an honest soul of the German Reich for still preferring to hear masque-music correctly built according to the lines of Quadrature. If only there were *Rossinis* to be had! I am afraid, however, they have come to an end.—

After all, there won't be much to learn from my jottings of to-day; my counsels, in particular, will prove quite useless. Indeed under no conditions would I pretend to teach how men should make, but merely to guide them to a knowledge of how the made and the created should be rightly understood. Even for this a really lasting intercourse were requisite; for only by examples, examples, and again examples, is anything to be made clear, and eventually something learnt: but effectually to set examples, in our domain, we need musicians, singers, finally an orchestra. All these the minions of our Culture-ministries have at their hand in schools of the great cities: how they have contrived that nothing right will yet come of our music, and that even at the change-of-guard the pieces played grow daily worse, must remain a modern mystery of State. My friends are aware that two years back I thought it would be useful if I mixed a little in the thing myself; what I wished, however, seemed to be viewed as undesirable. I have been left in peace, for which I may be thankful in some respects. Only I regret to have to remain so incomplete and hard of understanding when I feel moved at times, as with the above, to throw a ray of light on much that touches our world of music. May it be adjudged to this evil, if the present article is found more agitating than instructive: luckily it is written for neither the *Kölnische*, the *National-*, nor any other world-*Zeitung*, and whatever is amiss in it thus stays among ourselves.





## Notes

### Note 1 on page 12

H. Dorn; see Vol. III. p. 261.—Tr.

### Note 2 on page 15

Goldmark's "Königin von Saba," for instance.—Tr.

### Note 3 on page 15

In England they give it to Academy young ladies and gentlemen to perform!—Tr.

### Note 4 on page 16

The Late Duke of Coburg.—Tr.

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# *On the Application of Music to the Drama*

By Richard Wagner

Translated by William Ashton Ellis



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## Contents

About this Title .....	4
Translator's Note .....	5
On the Application of Music to the Drama .....	7
Notes .....	17

## About this Title

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[174]

## Translator's Note

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[175]

## On the Application of Music to the Drama

MY last [article on Opera-writing](#) contained an allusion to the necessary difference in musical style between a dramatic and a purely-musical composition. I now should like to put this plainer, as it seems to me that one thus might rectify great misconceptions both in the judgment of music and, more particularly, in our composers' ideas of production. I spoke of "bunglers" who needlessly indulge in strange and startling modulation, and of "senators" who are unable to perceive the necessity of apparent extravagances in that department. The euphemism "Senator" was furnished me at a critical moment by Shakespeare's "Iago," who wished to avoid the application of an epithet from the animal world to a person of official status (1); in a similar predicament of respect towards art-scientific worthies I will in future employ the more becoming term "Professor." The weighty question here involved, however, had better be discussed without any reference to "Professors," purely among artists and true, i.e. unsalaried friends of art; to such alone I therefore propose to address the following upshot of my experiences and meditations in the exercise of my artistic calling.

As Example always teaches best, I at once adduce a speaking instance from art-history: namely that Beethoven shews such daring in his symphonies, such caution in his (only) opera, "Fidelio." The cramping structure then accepted as the mould of Opera I assigned in my preceding essay as the reason of the master's turning a sullen back on further attempts with the dramatic genre. Why he did not seek to broaden the whole style of Opera itself into correspondence with his mighty genius, was manifestly that he found no instigation in the only case that [176] lay before him; that he did not strive to gain him such a stimulus by hook or crook, we must explain by the all-unknown New having already opened up to him as Symphonist. If we watch him in the fulness of his innovating force, we can but recognise that he fixed for once and all the character of independent Instrumental-music by the plastic barriers his impetuous genius never overstepped itself. Let us now endeavour to perceive and understand these barriers, not as limitations, but conditions of the Beethovenian Artwork.

I have called these barriers plastic: I will further denote them the pillars through whose ordering, as symmetrical as to the purpose, the Symphonic edifice is bounded, borne, and made distinct. In the construction of the symphonic Movement, all ready-planned by Haydn, Beethoven altered nothing; and for the same reason that forbids an architect to displace the columns of a building at discretion, or to use forsooth the horizontal parts as vertical. If it was a conventional order, the very nature of the artwork had dictated that convention; for the basis of the Symphonic artwork is the Dance-tune. It is impossible for me to here repeat what I have said upon this theme in earlier essays, and, as I believe, established. Merely I would point once more to the character stamped for good and all on the Haydn and Beethoven Symphony by that foundation. Dramatic pathos is completely excluded, so that the most intricate involvements of the thematic motives in a symphonic movement could never be explained on the analogy of a dramatic action, but solely by the mazes of an ideal dance, without a suspicion of rhetorical dialectics. Here there is no "conclusion," no problem, no solution. Wherefore also these Symphonies bear one and all the character of lofty glee (*Heiterkeit*). Never are two themes of diametrically opposite character confronted here; diverse as they may seem, they always supplement each other as the manly and the womanly element of one whole character. Yet the undreamt variety in which these elements may break, re-form, and re-unite [177] with one another, is proved to demonstration by such a Beethovenian Movement: the first in the Eroica reveals this to the absolute bewildering of the uninitiate, although to the initiate this movement bares the unity of its root-character the most convincingly of all

It has been very rightly remarked that Beethoven's innovations are far rather to be sought on the field of rhythmic distribution, than on that of harmonic modulation. Remote changes of key are scarcely used except in wanton fun, whereas we find an invincible power of constantly reshaping rhythmic-plastic motives, of ordering and ranging them in ever richer piles. Here we light, so it seems, on the line of cleavage of the Symphonist from the Dramatist. Mozart was new and startling to his cotemporaries through his love of daring flights in modulation, inspired by deepest need: we know their horror at the harmonic acridities in the introduction to that Quartet which he dedicated to Haydn. Here, as in so many characteristic passages, where the contrapuntal theme is raised to the expression of anguished yearning through an ascending series of accented suspending-notes, the craving to exhaust all Harmonic possibilities appears to border on dramatic pathos. In effect it was from the realm of dramatic music, already widened by himself to undreamt capability of expression, that Mozart first entered on the Symphony; for those few symphonic works of his whose peculiar worth has kept them living to this day, we owe to that creative period when he had fully unfolded his genius as Opera-composer. To the composer of "Figaro" and "Don Giovanni" the framework of the symphonic movement only offered a curb on that mobile love of figure-painting (*gestaltungsfrohe Beweglichkeit*) which had found such congenial scope in the passionately changeful situations of those dramatic drafts. Viewing his art as Symphonist a little closer, we observe that here he shines by wellnigh nothing save the beauty of his themes, whilst in their application and refashioning he distinguishes himself merely as a practised contrapuntist; to breathe life into [178] connecting links he missed the accustomed dramatic stimulus. Now, his dramatic art of music had really fed on nothing but the so-called *Opera buffa*, the melodic comedy; true "Tragedy" was still a stranger to him, and only in single lofty features, as *Donna Anna* and the *Marble Guest*, had she turned on him her quickening countenance, Was he seeking for it in the Symphony? Who shall answer for the latent parts and possible developments of a genius who passed his earthly life, itself so brief, beneath the scalpel of the vivisector?

But now the Tragic Muse has actually laid hands on Opera. Mozart knew her only in the mask of Metastasio's "*Opera seria*": stiff and arid—"Clemenza di Tito." Her true visage she appears to have but gradually unveiled to us: Beethoven saw it not yet, and abode by "*his way*." I believe I may aver that, with the advent of full earnestness in the conception of Tragedy and the realising of the Drama, quite new necessities arose for Music; requirements which we must accurately measure against those demanded of the Symphonist in preservation of the pureness of his art-style.

Though the absolute Instrumental-composer found no musical forms to hand save those in which he originally had had to "strike up," more or less, for the enlivenment or even the encouragement of others at festal dances and marches; and if this formed the basal character of the Symphonic artwork, at first compounded of such Dance and March tunes, which dramatic pathos could only confuse by the posing of questions without a possibility of answers: yet certain vividly-gifted instrumentalists nursed the irrepressible desire to enlarge the bounds of musical form and expression by superscribing their pieces with a dramatic incident, and endeavouring to present it to the imagination through purely musical means. The reasons why a pure artistic style could never be attained on this path, have doubtless been discerned in course of the manifold attempts thereon; but to us it seems that the [179] admirable service thus rendered by exceptionally gifted musicians has not yet been sufficiently regarded. The excesses to which his guardian dæmon drove a Berlioz were nobly tempered by the incomparably more artistic genius of Liszt to the expression of soul and world events too great for words; and to the disciples of their art it might appear that a new

order of composition was placed at their immediate disposal. In any case it was astonishing to see what boundless faculties sheer Instrumental-music had acquired under guidance of a dramatic synopsis. Theretofore the Overture to an opera, or play, alone had offered occasion for the employment of purely musical means of expression in a form departing from the Symphonic movement. Beethoven himself had here proceeded very circumspectly: feeling impelled to introduce an actual stage-effect in the middle of his Leonora-overture, he still repeated the first section of the tone-piece, with the customary change of key, exactly as in a symphonic movement—heedless that the dramatic excitement of the middle section, reserved for thematic working-out, had already led us to expect the dénouement; a manifest drawback to the receptive hearer. Far more concisely, and in a dramatic sense correctly, did Weber plan his Freischütz-overture, where the so-called middle section rushes on at once to the conclusion through a drastic climax in the thematic conflict. Now, though in the larger Programme works of the more recent tone-poets named above we find clear traces of the Symphony-construction proper—indelible for natural reasons,—in the fashioning of the themes, their contrast and remodelling, there already appears a passionate and 'eccentric' character such as pure Symphonic instrumental-music seemed called to hold entirely aloof; indeed the Programmist felt bound to give this eccentric characterisation particularly high relief, as a poetic shape or episode was always present to his mind, and he believed he could not set it plain enough before, as it were, the eye. At last this obligation led to downright melodrama-music, with pantomime to be supposed, and quite [180] consistently to instrumental recitatives—whilst horror at the pulverising formlessness filled all the critical world; so that nothing really remained, but to help the new form of Musical Drama itself to light of day from such birth-agonies.—

This latter is as little to be compared with the older Operatic form, as the newer instrumental-music conducting to it is to be likened with the Classic Symphony, become impossible to our composers. But we will defer for a while our inquiry into that so-called "Musikdrama," and first cast a glance on the "classical" instrumental-composition of our latest times, all unaffected by that process of gestation; we shall find that this "classic survival" is an empty pretence, and has planted beside our great Classic masters a highly unattractive hybrid from "I would", and "Yet I cannot."

That Programme-music, on which "we" looked with timid glances from the corner of our eye, had imported so much novelty in harmonisation, theatrical and landscape effects, nay, historical painting; and had worked it all out with such striking brilliance, in power of an uncommonly virtuosic art of instrumenting, that to continue in the earlier style of Classic Symphony one lacked alas! the Beethoven who would have known how to make the best of it. "We" held our tongues. When at last we took heart to open our symphonic mouth again, just to show what still was in us, we found we had grown so turgid and wearisome that there was nothing for it but to deck ourselves with fallen feathers from the Programme petrel. In our symphonies, and that sort of thing, all now goes world-distraught and catastrophic; we are gloomy and grim, then mettlesome and daring; we yearn for the fulfilment of youthful dreams; dæmonic obstacles encompass us; we brood, we even rave: and then the world-ache's tooth is drawn; we laugh, and humorously shew the world its gaping gum; brisk, sturdy, blunt, Hungarian or Scotch, (2); —alas! to others dreary. To [181] be serious: we cannot believe that a happy future has been secured to instrumental music by the creations of its latest masters; above all, it must be bad for us to reck lesslytack on these works to the legacy of Beethoven, in view of the utter un-Beethovenism which we ought, on the contrary, to be taught to discern in them—a lesson that should not come so very hard in the matter of kinship to the Beethovenian spirit, in spite of all the Beethovenian themes we here meet once again; though in the matter of form it could scarcely be easy to the pupils of our Conservatoires, as under the rubric of "Æsthetic Forms" they are giving nothing but a list of different composers'

names, and left to form a judgment for themselves without further comparison.

The said symphonic compositions of our newest school—let us call it the Romantic-classical—are distinguished from the wild-stock of our so-called Programme-music not only by the regretted absence of a programme, but in especial by a certain clammy cast of melody which its creators have transplanted from their heretofore retiring "Chamber-music." To the "Chamber," in fact, one had withdrawn. Alas! not to the homely room where Beethoven once poured into the ears of few and breathless friends all that Unutterable he kept for understanding here alone, instead of in the ample hall-space where he spoke in none but plastic masses to the Folk, to all mankind: in this hallowed "chamber" silence long had reigned; for one now must hear the master's so-called "last" Quartets and Sonatas either badly, as men played them, or not at all—till the way at last was shewn by certain outlawed renegades, and one learnt what that chamber-music really said. No, those had already moved *their* chamber to the concert-hall: what had previously been dressed as Quintets and the like, was now served up as Symphony: little chips of melody, like an infusion of hay and old tea-leaves, with nothing to tell you what you are swallowing but the label "Best"; and all for the acquired taste of World-ache.—On the whole, however, [182] the newer tendency to the eccentric, the requiring-a-programme, retained the upper hand. With fine discernment Mendelssohn had gone to Nature for his subjects, and executed them as a kind of landscape epic: he had travelled much, and brought home many a thing that others could not lightly come by. But the latest phase, is to take the cabinet-pictures of our local Exhibitions and set them to music straightway; enabling one to seize those quaint instrumental effects which are now at everyone's command, disguise embezzled melodies in harmonisations that are a constant surprise, and play the outcome to the world as Plastic music.

The results of our survey may be summed up as follows:—

Pure Instrumental-music, no longer content with the legalised form of the Classical Symphonic Movement, sought to extend her powers in every respect, and found them easily increased by poet's fancies; the reactionary party was unable to fill that Classic form with life, and saw itself compelled to borrow for it from the wholly alien, thereby distorting it. Whilst the first direction led to the winning of new aptitudes, and the second merely exposed ineptitudes, it became evident that the further evaluation of those aptitudes was only to be saved from boundless follies, threatening serious damage to the spirit of Music, by openly and undisguisedly turning that line itself towards the *Drama*. What there remained unutterable, could here be spoken definitely and plainly, and thereby "Opera" redeemed withal from the curse of her unnatural descent. And it is here, in what we may call for short the "Musical Drama," that we reach sure ground for calmly reckoning the application of Music's new-won faculties to the evolution of noble, inexhaustible artistic forms.

The science of *Æsthetics* has at all times laid down Unity as a chief requirement from the artwork. In the abstract this Unity is difficult to dialectically define, and its misapprehension has led to many and grave mistakes. [183] It comes out the plainest in the perfect artwork itself, for it is it that moves us to unbroken interest, and keeps the broad impression ever present. Indisputably this result is the most completely attained by the living represented drama; wherefore we have no hesitation in declaring the Drama the most perfect of artworks. The farthest from this artwork stood the "Opera," and perhaps for very reason that she made a pretence of drama, but split it into countless disconnected fragments for sake of the Aria form: in Opera there are pieces embracing all the structure of a symphonic Movement in briefest lapse of time, with first and second themes, return, repetition and so-called "Coda"; but, self-included, they remain without one whit of reference to all the other pieces like them. In the Symphony, on the contrary, we have found this structure so developed and enlarged, that



its master turned in anger from the cramping form of Operatic numbers. In this Symphonic Movement we recognised the unity that has so determinant an influence on us in the perfect drama, and the downfall of that art-form so soon as foreign elements, all unassimilable with that unity, were introduced therein. But the element most foreign to it was the Dramatic, which needed infinitely richer forms for its unfolding than could naturally present themselves on the basis of the Symphonic movement, i.e. Dance music. Nevertheless, to be an artwork again quâ music, the new form of dramatic music must have the unity of the symphonic movement; and this it attains by spreading itself over the whole drama, in the most intimate cohesion therewith, not merely over single smaller, arbitrarily selected parts. So that this Unity consists in a tissue of root-themes pervading all the drama, themes which contrast, complete, re-shape, divorce and intertwine with one another as in the symphonic movement; only that here the needs of the dramatic action dictate the laws of parting and combining, which were there originally borrowed from the motions of the dance.—

Upon the new form of musical construction as applied [184] to the Drama I have expressed myself sufficiently in earlier articles and essays, yet sufficiently merely in the sense that I imagined I had plainly pointed out the road on which a true, and alike a useful judgment of the musical forms now won from Drama by my own artistic labours might be attained by others. To the best of my knowledge, that road has not been trodden yet, and I can remember nothing but the studies of one of my younger friends (3) who has viewed the characteristics of what he calls my "Leitmotive" rather in the light of their dramatic significance, than in that of their bearing on musical construction (since the specific art of music was not the author's province). On the contrary, I have lived to see our Music-schools all inculcating horror at the wild confusion of my periods, while young composers, fired by the success of public representations of my works, and guided by a superficial private reading of my scores, have unintelligently tried to copy me. As the State and Parish only pay for un-teachers of my art, such as Professor Rheinberger of Munich (to remain within the circle of my supposititious influence), instead of founding something like a Chair for it, as may some day happen in England or America,—the present little article will not have been labour thrown away if only it gives those said composers an inkling of what they might learn and copy from my works.

So, whoever till now has trained himself by listening to our newest Romantic-classical instrumental-music, and wants to try his skill with the dramatic genre, I would above all advise him not to aim at harmonic and instrumental Effects, but to await sufficient cause for any effect of the kind, as otherwise they will not come off. You could not insult Berlioz more profoundly, than by bringing him abortions of this sort on paper, and expecting them to please the composer of *Witches' Sabbaths* and the like. Liszt used to polish off these stupid suggestions with the remark that cigar-ash and sawdust steeped in aqua fortis [185] did not make pleasant soup. I have never yet made the acquaintance of a young composer who did not think to gain my sanction for "audacities" before all things. On the other hand it has been a real surprise to me, that the restraint I have striven for with increasing vigilance in the modulation and instrumenting of my works has not met the smallest notice. In the instrumental introduction to "Rheingold," for instance, it was impossible to me to quit the fundamental note, simply because I had no reason for changing it; a great part of the not un-animated scene that follows for the *Rhine-daughters* and *Alberich* would only permit of modulation to keys the very nearest of kin, as Passion here is still in the most primitive naïvety of its expression. I do not deny that I certainly should have given to the first entry of *Donna Anna*—denouncing the shameless seducer *Don Juan* in the height of passion—a stronger colouring than Mozart held appropriate to the conventions of the operatic style and those means of expression he himself was the first to enrich. But there sufficed that simple austerity, which I had as little to abandon when the "Walküre" was to be introduced with a storm, the "Siegfried" with a tone-piece conducting us into the silent depths of Nibelheim's

Hoard-smithy by a reminiscence of certain plastic motives from the previous dramas: all three were *elements* from which the drama had to quicken into life. Something different was demanded for an introduction to the Norns' scene of "Die Götterdämmerung": here the destinies of the ure-world are weaving themselves into that rope we must see the hooded sisters swing, when the curtain rises, to understand its meaning: wherefore this prelude could only be brief and preparatory, though the expectant use of motives made intelligible in the earlier sections of the work allowed a richer harmonic and thematic treatment. And it is important, how one commences. Had I used in an Overture a motive cast like that which is heard in the second act of "Die Walküre" at *Wotan's* surrender of world-sovereignty to the possessor of the Nibelungen-hoard: [186]



according to my notions of distinctness of style I should have perpetrated a piece of downright nonsense. But after in course of the drama the simple nature-motive



had been heard at the earliest gleam of the shining Rhinegold; at the first appearance of the Gods'-burg "Walhall," shimmering in the morning's red, the no less simple motive



and each of these motives had undergone mutations in closest sympathy with the rising passions of the plot,—with the help of a digression in the harmony I could present them knit in such a way that, more than *Wotan's* words, this tone-figure should give to us a picture of the fearful gloom in the soul of the suffering god. Again, I am conscious of having always endeavoured to prevent the acerbity of such musical combinations from making a striking effect as such, as a special "audacity" we will say; both by my marks of expression and by word of mouth I sought to so tone down the change, whether by a timely slackening of [187]



tempo or a preliminary dynamic compensation, that it should invade our willing Feeling as an artistic moment in strict accordance with the laws of nature. So that it may be imagined how nothing more enrages me, and keeps me away from strange performances of my music, than the insensibility of most of our conductors to the requirements of Rendering in such combinations in particular; needing the most delicate treatment, they are given to the ear in false and hurried tempo, without the indispensable dynamic shading, and mostly unintelligible. No wonder they are a bugbear to our "Professors."

I have dealt at some length with this example because it has an application to all my dramas, only far more extended, and shews the characteristic distinction between the Dramatic and the Symphonic use and working-out of motives. But I will take a second of like nature, and draw attention to the metamorphoses in that motive with which the *Rhine-daughters* greet the glancing Gold in childish glee:



One would have to follow this uncommonly simple theme—recurring in manifold alliance with almost every other motive of the drama's wide-spread movement—through all the changes it receives from the diverse character of its resummoning, to see what type of variations the Drama can engender; and how completely the character of these variations departs from that of those figured, rhythmic or harmonic alterations of a theme which our masters ranged in immediate sequence to build up pictures of an often intoxicatingly kaleidoscopic effect. This effect was destroyed at once, and with it the classic form of Variation, so soon as motives foreign to the theme were woven in, giving something of a dramatic development to the Movement's [188] progress, and fouling the purity, or let us say self-evidence of the tone-piece. But neither a mere play of counterpoint, nor the most fantastic art of figuration and most inventive harmonising, either could or should transform a theme so characteristically, and present it with such manifold and entirely changed expression—yet leaving it always recognisable — as true dramatic art can do quite naturally. Hardly anything could afford a plainer proof of this, than a pursuit of that simple motive of the "Rhine-daughters" through all the changing passions of the four-part drama down to *Hagen's* Watch-song in the first act of the "Götterdämmerung," where it certainly takes on a form which—to me at least—makes it inconceivable as theme of a Symphonic movement, albeit it still is governed by the laws of harmony and thematism, though purely in their application to the Drama. To attempt to apply the results of such a method to the Symphony, however, must lead to the latter's utter ruin; for here would appear as a far-fetched Effect what follows there from well-found motives.

It cannot be my present purpose to repeat what I have said at length in earlier writings about the application of Music to the Drama, even though regarded from a fresh point of view; rather, my main object has been to mark the difference between two modes of music from whose commingling have sprung disfigurement of the one variety of art, false judgment of the other. And to me this seemed of weight, if we are ever to arrive at a proper æsthetic estimate of the great events in the evolutionary career of Music—the one still truly living and

productive art of our era,—whereanent the greatest confusion prevails to this day. Starting from the structural laws of the Symphony, Sonata, or the Aria, when we hitherto have made for Drama we never got beyond that Operatic style which trammelled the great symphonist in the unfolding of his faculties; on the other hand, in our amazement at the boundlessness of these faculties when unfolded in right [189] relation to the Drama, we confound those laws if we transfer the fruits of musical innovations on the dramatic field to the Symphony and so forth. However, as I have said that it would lead us too far, to display these innovations in all their mutual bearings; and as that task would also fall more fitly to another, I will conclude with one more illustration—namely of the characteristics demanded by the Drama, forbidden by the Symphony, not only in the use and transformation, but also in the first modelling of the Motive itself.

Properly speaking, we cannot conceive of a chief-motive of a Symphonic movement as a piece of eccentric modulation, especially if it is to present itself in such a bewildering dress at its first appearance. The motive which the composer of "Lohengrin" allots as closing phrase of a first arioso to his *Elsa* plunged in memory of a blissful dream, consists almost solely of a tissue of remote harmonic progressions; in the Andante of a Symphony, we will say, it would strike us as far-fetched and highly unintelligible; here it does not seem strained, but quite arising of itself, and therefore so intelligible that to my knowledge it has never been decried as the contrary. This has its grounds, however, in the scenic action. *Elsa* has slowly approached, in gentle grief, with timid down-bent head; one glance at her transfigured eye informs us what is in her soul.



Questioned, she replies by nothing save the vision of a dream that fills her with a sweet belief: "With signs so soft and courteous he comfort gave to me" ;—that glance had already told us something of the kind. Now, boldly [190] passing from her dream to assurance of fulfilment in reality, she adds : "That knight I will await then; he shall my champion be." And after all its wanderings, the musical phrase now passes back to its mother-key.





At the time a young friend of mine, (4) to whom I had sent the score for arrangement of a pianoforte edition, was much astonished by the look of this phrase which had so many modulations in so few bars, but still more when he attended the first performance of "Lohengrin" at Weimar and found that this selfsame phrase appeared quite natural—which at anyrate was due in part to the musical conducting of Liszt, who by a proper rendering had turned the transient eye-sore into a well-favoured shape of Tone.

It seems that already a very large portion of the public finds much, nay, almost everything in my dramatic music quite natural, and therefore pleasing, at which our "Professors" still cry Fie. Were the latter to seat me on one of their sacred chairs, however, they perhaps might be seized with even greater wonder at the prudence and moderation, especially in the use of harmonic effects, which I should [191] enjoin upon their pupils; as I should have to make it their foremost rule, never to quit a key so long as what they have to say, can still be said therein. If this rule were complied with, we possibly might again hear Symphonies that gave us something to talk about; whereas there is simply nothing at all to be said of our latest symphonies.

Wherefore I too will be silent, till some day I am called to a Conservatorium—only, not as "Professor."



## Notes

### Note 1 on page 7

*Othello*, Act I., scene i.:—BRABANTIO, "Thou art a villain." IAGO, "You are—a senator."—Tr.

### Note 2 on page 9

Brahms again.—Tr.

### Note 3 on page 11

Freiherr Hans von Wolzogen.—Tr.

### Note 4 on page 15

Theodor Uhlig.—Tr.

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*Introduction to a work of Count Gobineau's*

By Richard Wagner

Translated by William Ashton Ellis



The Wagner Library

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## Contents

About this Title .....	4
Introduction to Count Gobineau's "Ethnological Résumé of the Present Aspect of the World" .....	5

## About this Title

### Source

*Introduction to a work of Count Gobineau's*  
By Richard Wagner  
Translated by William Ashton Ellis

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Richard Wagner's Prose Works  
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This title contains 1115 words.  
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Notes are indicated using parenthesis, like (1).  
Page numbers of the original source are indicated  
using square-bracketed parentheses, like [62].

[38]

## Introduction to Count Gobineau's "Ethnological Résumé of the Present Aspect of the World"

[Bayreuther Blätter, May-June 1881.]

WHAT will be the destiny of the "Bayreuther Blätter" after its immediate function—that of reporting on the work of the Patronat-Verein—has been fulfilled, must be contingent upon the measure of interest that can now already be awakened in its readers by our excursions into realms of culture and civilisation which at first might seem remote, but in our opinion lie too pressingly near us.

If I am correctly informed, my thoughts on "[Religion and Art](#)" have found no unfavourable reception with our readers. As we take our stand upon the field of Art, and only from that base do we attempt to find a right and reason for exploring the remotest regions of the world, our friends might certainly deem it fittest, and even most agreeable, if we always placed Art or one of its special problems in the foreground. Only, it has been borne in upon me that, just as in the proposed Buhnenfestspiels, and the house expressly planned and built therefor at Bayreuth, I had to gain myself a basis for the right performance of my artistic works, so for Art itself, for its proper standing in the world, a new soil must first be won; a soil that cannot be supplied, in the first place, by Art itself, but by the world—that selfsame world to whose [\[39\]](#) familiar understanding it is to be offered. For this we had to take our general state of culture, our Civilisation, and try how it might look reflected in our floating ideal of a noble art: but the mirror stayed dark and featureless, or gave us back a grinning parody of our ideal. So we will lay aside the mirror, for our next day's march, look eye to eye upon the carking world, and tell ourselves without disguise or terror what we think of it.

When Saint Francis, after long and serious illness, was led again before the wondrous landscape of Assisi and asked how it now pleased him, he answered, turning from the ecstasy of inner vision of the world to look once more upon its semblance: "Not more than erewhile." We asked Count Gobineau, returned from weary, knowledge-laden wanderings among far distant lands and peoples, what he thought of the present aspect of the world; to-day we give his answer to our readers. He, too, had peered into an Inner: he proved the blood in modern manhood's veins, and found it tainted past all healing. What his insight shewed him, will be a view distasteful to our learned men of Progress. Who knows Count Gobineau's great work "On the Disparity of the Races of Man," will probably have convinced himself that here are none of those mistakes so 'common to the everyday inquirer into the daily progress of mankind. We, on the contrary, can but be grateful to that work of one of the shrewdest of ethnologists for an explanation why our truly lofty minds stand lonelier every day, and—perhaps in consequence—grow ever rarer; so that we can imagine the greatest artists and poets surrounded by a world to which they have naught to say.

However, as we found in Schopenhauer's very demonstrations of the badness of the world the guide to an inquiry into the possibility of its redemption, there perhaps is hope that even in the chaos of impotence and unwisdom which our new friend lays bare to us we may find—if once we thrust into it fearlessly—a clue that leads to higher outlooks. Perchance that clue would not be visible, but only [\[40\]](#) audible—a sigh of deepest pity, haply, such as once we heard from the Cross on Golgotha, and now goes up from our own soul.

My friends know what I deduce from that audible sigh, and divine the paths it opens to my mental vision. But only on the road whereon such dauntless minds conduct us, as that of the author of the following essay, can we hope to see the dawning of those paths.

This briefer work, undoubtedly, is merely meant to give a general survey of the present

condition of the world, taken rather from a political standpoint; to those well-acquainted with the issue of the researches contained in its author's masterpiece, already mentioned, it may seem little more than the familiar table-talk of the profoundly-versed and wide-experienced Statesman, in answer to the equally intimate question, what he really thinks will be the end of our world-complications. It nevertheless should arouse in our friends that horror we so much need to shake us from our optimistic lethargy, and make us earnestly look round us for the only access to those paths I spoke of.

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*Some Explanations Concerning "Judaism in Music."*

By Richard Wagner

Translated by William Ashton Ellis



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## Contents

About this Title .....	4
Some Explanations Concerning "Judaism in Music." .....	5
Notes .....	17



## About this Title

### Source

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[77]

## Some Explanations Concerning "Judaism in Music."

(To Madame Marie Muchanoff, née Countess Nesselrode).

Most Honoured Lady!

In the course of a recent conversation you put me an astonished question, as to the cause of the hostility—incomprehensible to yourself, and so manifestly aiming at depreciation—which encounters all my artistic doings, more particularly in the daily Press not only of Germany, but of France as well, and even England. Here and there I have stumbled on a like astonishment in the Press itself in the report of some non-initiated novice: one believed one must ascribe to my art-theories a singularly irritant property, since otherwise one could not understand how I, and always I, was degraded so persistently, on every occasion and without the least remorse, to the category of the frivolous, the simply bungling, and treated in accordance with that my appointed station.

The following communication, which I allow myself in answer to your question, not only will throw a light hereon, but more especially may you gather from it why I myself must engage in such elucidation. Since you do not stand alone in your astonishment, I feel called to give the needful answer to many others besides yourself, and therefore publicly: to no one of my friends, however, could I delegate the office, as I know none in so sheltered and independent a position that I durst draw on him a hostility like that which has fallen to my daily lot, and [78] against which I can so little defend myself, that there is nothing left for me but just to shew my friends its reason.

Even I myself cannot engage in the task without misgivings: they spring, however, not from terror of my enemies (since, as I have here no residue of hope, so also have I naught to fear!) but rather from anxiety for certain self-sacrificing, veritably sympathetic friends, whom Destiny has brought to me from out the kindred of that national-religious element of the newer European society whose implacable hatred I have drawn upon me through discussion of peculiarities so hard to eradicate from *it*, and so detrimental to our culture. Yet on the other hand, I could take courage from the knowledge that these cherished friends stand on precisely the same footing as myself, nay, that they have to suffer still more grievously, and even more disgracefully, under the yoke that has fallen on all the likes of me: for I cannot hope to make my exposition quite intelligible, if I do not also throw the needful light on this yoke of the ruling Jew-society in its crushing-out of all free movement, of all true human evolution, among its kith and kin.

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[101]

IN the year 1850 I published in the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* an essay upon "Judaism in Music," (1) wherein I sought to fathom the significance of this phenomenon in our art-life.

Even to-day it is almost incomprehensible to me, how my recently departed friend FRANZ BRENDEL, the editor of that journal, made up his mind to dare the publication of this article: in any case the so earnest-minded, so thoroughly staunch and honest man, taking nothing but

the cause in eye, had no idea that he thus was doing aught beyond just giving needful space to the discussion of a very notable question connected with the history of Music. However, its result soon taught him the kind of people he had to do with.—In consequence of the many years of rightly and deservedly honoured work which Mendelssohn had spent in *Leipzig*—at whose Musical Conservatorium Brendel filled the post of a Professor—that city had received a virtual Jewish baptism of music: as a reviewer once complained, the blond variety of musician had there become an ever greater rarity, and the place, erewhile an actively distinguished factor in our German life through its university and important book-trade, was learning even to forget the most natural sympathies of local patriotism so willingly evinced by every other German city; it was exclusively becoming the [102] metropolis of Jewish music. The storm, which now rose over Brendel, reached the pitch of menacing his civic life itself: with difficulty did his firmness, and the quiet strength of his convictions, succeed in forcing folk to leave him in his post at the Conservatoire.

What helped him soon to outward peace, was a very characteristic turn the matter took, after the first imprudent foam of wrath on the part of the offended.

Should occasion arise, I had by no means intended to deny my authorship of the article: I merely wished to prevent the question, broached most earnestly and objectively by myself, from being promptly shifted to the purely personal realm—a thing, in my opinion, to be immediately expected if my name, as that of a "composer indubitably envious of the fame of others," were dragged into play from the outset. For this reason I had signed the article with a pseudonym, deliberately cognisable as such: K. Freigedank [i.e. "K. Freethought"]. To Brendel I had imparted my intention in this regard: he was courageous enough to steadfastly allow the storm to rage around himself, in place of conducting it across to me—a course of action which would have freed him at once from all the pother. Soon I detected symptoms, nay plain indications, that people had recognised me as the author: no charges of the kind did I ever oppose with a denial. Hereby folk learnt enough, to make them entirely change their prior tactics. Hitherto, at any rate, only the clumsier artillery of Judaism had been brought into the field against my article: no attempt had been made to bring about a rejoinder in any intelligent, nay even any decent fashion. Coarse sallies, and abusive girdings at a medieval Judaeophobia—ascribed to the author, and so shameful for our own enlightened times—were the only thing that had come to show, beyond absurd distortions and falsifications of the article itself. But now a change of front was made. Undoubtedly the higher Jewry was taking up the matter. To these gentry the chief annoyance was the notice roused: so soon as ever my name was known, one had to fear that [103] its introduction would merely increase that notice. A simple means of avoiding this result had been put into their hands, through my having substituted for my own name a pseudonym. Now it seemed advisable henceforward to ignore me as the essay's author, and at like time to smother all discussion of the thing itself. On the contrary, I was very well attackable on altogether other sides: I had published essays on Art and had written operas, which latter I presumably should like to get performed. On this domain a systematic defamation and persecution of me, with total suppression of the disagreeable Judaism-question, at any rate held out a promise of my wished-for chastisement.

It would surely be presumptuous of me—seeing that, at that time, I was living at Zurich in complete retirement—to attempt a more exact account of the inner machinery set in motion for the inverse Jewish persecution, then commenced against myself, and later carried into ever wider circles. I will merely recite experiences that are already public property. After the production of *Lohengrin* at Weimar, in the summer of 1850, certain men of considerable literary and artistic standing, such as ADOLF STAHR and ROBERT FRANZ, auspiciously came forward in the Press, to direct the attention of the German public to my self and work; even in musical papers of dubious tendency there peeped momentous declarations in my favour. But, on the part of each several author this happened exactly and only *once*. They

promptly relapsed into silence, and in further course behaved, comparatively speaking, even hostilely towards me. On the other hand, a friend and admirer of Herr Ferdinand Hiller, a certain Professor BISCHOFF, shot up in the *Kölnische Zeitung* as founder of the system of defamation henceforward carried-out against me: this gentleman laid hold on my art-writings, and twisted my idea of an "Artwork of the Future" into the absurd pretension of a "Music of the Future" ("*Zukunftsmusik*"), a music, forsooth, which would haply sound quite well in course of time, however ill it might sound just now. [104] Not a word said he of Judaism; on the contrary, he plumed himself on being a Christian and offspring of a Superintendent. I, on the other hand, had dubbed Mozart, and even Beethoven, a bungler; wanted to do away with Melody; and would let naught but psalms be sung in future.

Even to-day, respected lady, you will hear nothing but these saws, whenever people talk of "Music of the Future." Think, then, with what gigantic pertinacity this ridiculous calumny must have been kept erect and circulated, seeing that in almost the entire European Press, despite the actual spread and popularity of my operas, it crops up at once with renovated strength—as undisputed as irrefutable—so soon as ever my name is mentioned.

Since such nonsensical theories could be attributed to me, naturally the musical works which thence had sprung must be also of the most offensive character: let their success be what it might, the Press still held its ground that my music must be as abominable as my Theory. This was the point, then, to lay the stress on. The world of cultured Intellect must be won over to this view. It was effected through a Viennese jurist, a great friend of Music's and a connoisseur of Hegel's Dialectics, who moreover was found peculiarly accessible through his—albeit charmingly concealed—Judaic origin. (2) He, too, was one of those who at first had declared themselves for me with a wellnigh enthusiastic penchant (*Neigung*): his conversion took place so suddenly and violently, that I was utterly aghast at it. This gentleman now wrote a booklet on the "Musically-Beautiful," in the which he played into the hands of Music-Judaism with extraordinary skill. In the first place by a highly-finished dialectic form, that had all the [105] look of the finest philosophic spirit, he deceived the whole Intellect of Vienna into supposing that for once in a way a prophet had arisen in its midst: and this was the desired chief-effect. For what he coated with this elegant dialectic paint were the trivialest of commonplaces, such as can gain a seeming weight on no other field than one, like that of Music, where men have always merely drivelled so soon as they began to æsthetise about it. It surely was no mighty feat, to set up the "Beautiful" as Music's chief postulate: but, if the author did it in such a manner as to astonish all men at his brilliant wisdom, then he might succeed in doing a thing by all means harder, namely in establishing modern Jewish music as the sterling "beautiful" music; and at a tacit avowal of that dogma he arrived quite imperceptibly, inasmuch as to the chain of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven he linked on Mendelssohn in the most natural way in the world—nay, if one rightly understands his theory of "the Beautiful," he implicitly allotted to the last-named the comforting significance of having happily restored the due arrangement of the Beauty-web, to some extent entangled by his immediate predecessor, Beethoven. So soon as Mendelssohn had been lifted to the throne—which was to be achieved with special grace through placing by his side a few Christian notabilities, such as Robert Schumann—it became possible to get a good deal more believed, in the realm of Modern Music. Above all, however, the already-pointed-out main object of the whole æsthetic undertaking was now attained: through his ingenious booklet the author had rooted himself in general respect, and had thereby gained a position which gave importance to him when, as a bewildered æsthete, he now appeared as a reviewer, too, in the best-read political paper, and straightway pronounced myself and my artistic doings completely null and nugatory. That he was not at all misled by the great applause my works obtained among the public, must give him but a larger nimbus; item, he thus succeeded (or others succeeded through him, if you will) in getting just [106] this tone about me adopted as

the fashion, at least so far as newspapers are read throughout the world—this tone which it has so astonished you, most honoured lady, to meet where'er you go. Nothing but my contempt for all the great masters of Tone, my warfare against Melody, my horrible mode of composition, in short "The Music of the Future," was thenceforth the topic of everybody's talk: about that article on "Judaism in Music," however, there never again appeared a word. On the other hand, as one may observe with all such rare and sudden works of conversion, this [*Dieser*—? "he"] produced its effect all the more successfully in secret: it [?"he"] became the Medusa's head which was promptly held before everyone who evinced a heedless leaning toward me.

Truly not quite uninformative for the Culture-history of our day would it be, to trace this curious propaganda a little closer; since there hence arose in the realm of Music—so gloriously occupied by the Germans heretofore—a strangely branched and most dissimilarly constructed party, which positively seems to have insured itself a joint unproductivity and impotence.

You next will surely ask, respected lady, how it came that the indisputable successes which have fallen to my lot, and the friends my works have manifestly won me, could in no way be used for combating those hostile machinations?

This is not quite easy to reply-to in a word or two. In the first place, however, you shall learn how matters went with my greatest friend and warmest advocate, FRANZ LISZT. Precisely through the splendid self-reliance which he shewed in all his doings, he furnished the ambushed enemy, ever alert for the puniest coign of vantage, with just the weapons they required. What the enemy so urgently wanted, the secreting of the to them so irksome Judaism-question, was quite agreeable to Liszt as well; but naturally for the converse reason, namely to keep an embittering personal reference aloof from an honest art-dispute— whereas it was the other side's affair to keep concealed the motive of a dishonest fight, the key to all the calumnies [107] launched-out on us. Thus the ferment of the whole commotion remained unmentioned by our side, too. On the contrary, it was a jovial inspiration of Liszt's, to accept the nickname fastened on us, of "*Zukunftsmusiker*" ("Musicians of the Future"), and adopt it in the sense once taken by the "*Gueux*" of the Netherlands. Clever strokes, like this of my friend's, were highly welcome to the enemy: on this point, then, they hardly needed any more to slander, and the title "*Zukunftsmusiker*" cut out a most convenient path for getting at the ardent, never-resting artist. With the falling-away of an erewhile cordially-devoted friend, a great violin-virtuoso on whom the Medusa-head would seem to have also worked at last, there began that seething agitation against Franz Liszt, who magnanimously heeded no attack, whence'er it came—that agitation which prepared for him the undeception and embitterment wherein at last he put an end for ever to his splendid efforts to found in Weimar a furthering home for Music.

Are you, honoured lady, less astonished at the persecutions to which our great friend was subjected, in his time, than at those which have taken myself for mark?—Perhaps what might mislead you, then, is that Liszt had certainly drawn down on himself the envy, above all, of his German colleagues left behind him, through the brilliance of his outward artistic career; moreover, through giving up the racecourse of the Virtuoso, and through his hitherto having made mere preparations for an appearance as creative musician, that he had given fairly intelligible rise to a doubt, so easy to be nursed by envy, as to his real vocation for that status. I believe, however, that what I shall refer-to later will prove that at the real bottom of the matter this doubt, no less than was the case with my own imputed theories, gave but the merest pretext to the war of persecution: in the one case as in the other, it would have sufficed that they should be looked into more closely, and compared with a correct impression of our doings, for the question to have been at once removed to quite another [108] standpoint; then, one could have criticised, discussed, and spoken for and against—in the long run *something*



would have been the upshot. But that 's just what all the talk was *not* about; and just this closer viewing of the new appearances one did not want to let occur. No, with a vulgarity of expression and insinuation the like whereof has never shewn itself in a kindred case, the whole army of the Press indulged in such a howling and a shrieking, that any human decency of argument was quite past thinking of. And thus it is that I assure you:—what Liszt has encountered, also, is a proceed of the workings of that article on "Judaism in Music."

However, even we ourselves did not discover this at once. At all times there are so many interests opposed to new departures, nay making for an out-and-out crusade against each thing implied therein, that we, too, believed we here had but to do with *vis inertiae* and an art-traffic jogged from out its wonted ease. Since the attacks proceeded for the most part from the Press, and indeed from the great and influential political Daily-press, those of our friends who had been made anxious by the public's being given a bias against Liszt's ensuing first appearance as instrumental composer, thought it their bounden duty to take corrective steps: but, leaving out of count a few blunders which were thus committed, it soon grew evident that not even the most sober notice of a Lisztian composition could find an entry to the greater journals, all places here being taken in advance and in a hostile sense. Now, who will tell me seriously that this attitude of the great papers evinced an apprehension of possible harm to be wrought the good German art-taste through a new departure? I have lived to find that in one of these respected sheets it was impossible for me to even mention Offenbach in the way befitting him: in this instance, who can dream of a care for the artistic taste of Germany? So far had the matter got: we were completely barred-out from the greater German Press. But to whom belongs this Press? Our Liberals and Men of Progress have terribly [109] to smart for being cast by the Old-Conservative party into one pot with Judaism and its specific interests: when the Ultramontanes ask what right has a Press conducted by the Jews to interfere in matters of the Christian Church, there lies a fatal meaning in the question, which at any rate is founded on an accurate knowledge of the wires that pull those leading journals.

The remarkable thing about it is, that this knowledge is patent to everyone else; for who has not made the experience for himself? I am not in a position to say how far this state of things applies to larger matters of Politics, though the Bourse affords a tolerably open index to the situation: but on this realm of Music given over to the most disgraceful cackle no man of insight has the smallest doubt that everyone is subject to a very curious discipline, whose following in the remotest circles, and with uniform punctiliousness, lets one argue to a most energetic management and organisation. In Paris, in particular, I was amazed to find this watchful management a positively open secret: there everyone has some astounding tale to tell you of it, especially as touching the extremely minute precautions against the secret being openly denounced at least, now that it is exposed to indiscretion through too many sharing in its knowledge; so that every tiniest cranny, through which it might leak into some journal, has now been stopped, were it only by a visiting-card in the keyhole of a garret. Here too, then, everyone obeyed his orders precisely as in the best-drilled army while a fight is on: you have already made acquaintance with this platoon-fire of the Paris press, aimed against me under command of Care for Good Taste in Art.—In London, some years ago, I met more frankness on this point. As immediately on my arrival the musical critic of the *Times* (I beg you to remember what a colossal world-sheet I here have named!) rained down on me a hail of insults, so in the further course of his effusions Herr Davison did not hesitate to hold me up to public odium as blasphemous of the [110] greatest composers for reason of their Judaism. (3) By this disclosure he at any rate had more to win than lose, for his own standing with the English public: on the one side, because of the great esteem which Mendelssohn enjoys in England, above all places; on the other, perhaps, because of the peculiar character of the English nation, which to experts seems more grounded on the old testament, than on the new.—Only in St. Petersburg and Moscow did I find the terrain of the musical press still

overlooked by Jewry: there I lived to see a miracle—for the first time in my life, was I taken up by the newspapers quite as much as by the public, whose good reception, I may add in general, the Jews had nowhere been able to spoil for me save in my father-city, Leipzig, where the public simply stayed away.

Through its ridiculous aspects this portion of my story has almost betrayed me into a jesting tone, which I must give up, however, if I am to permit myself, respected lady, to finally draw your attention to its very earnest side; and this, in your eyes, will probably commence exactly where we look away from my persecuted person, and take in eye the effects of that singular persecution upon the spirit of our Art itself

To strike that path, I first must touch once more expressly on my personal interest. Just now I mentioned incidentally, that the persecution put upon me by the Jews had not as yet been able to estrange the public from me, and that everywhere the public welcomed me with warmth. This is correct. I here must add, however, that that persecution at all events is calculated, if not to bar my way to [111] the public, yet to make it so difficult that on this side too, at last, the success of the enemy's efforts may very well promise to become complete. You already see that although my earlier operas have broken an entrance to almost every German theatre, and are given there with steady success, each of my newer works encounters an impassive, nay, a defiant attitude on the part of those self-same theatres: my earlier works, forsooth, had forced themselves upon the stage *before* that Jewish agitation, and their success was no longer to be got the better of. But, so the story ran, my new works were composed on the lines of my later-published "senseless" theories; I thus had fallen from my earlier state of innocence; and no one more could listen to my music. Just as Judaism in general could only root itself among us through profiting of the defects and weaknesses in our social system, so also here the agitation lightly found a soil—ingloriously enough for us!—already laid-out for its ultimate success. In whose hands is the conduct of our theatres, and what tence do these theatres pursue? On this point I have spoken my mind both often and enough, and only the other day again, in a larger treatise on "German Art and German Politics," I set forth at some length the multifarious reasons for the downfall of our theatric art. Do you imagine that I therewith made myself a favourite in the spheres concerned? Only with the greatest reluctance, as they themselves have verified, do theatrical administrations nowadays embark on the production of a new work of mine. (4) They *might*, [112] however, have their hands forced through the universally favourable attitude of the public toward my operas; how welcome then must be the excuse so lightly to be drawn from the fact that my later works, you see, are so universally contested by the Press, and especially by its most influential section! Don't you already hear the cry sent-up from Paris, why on earth one should think necessary to attempt the in itself so difficult task of importing my operas into France, seeing my artistic rank is not so much as recognised in my native land?—This state of matters, however, is still further aggravated by my actually not offering my later works to any theatre; on the contrary, to my haply sought consent to the production of a new work I am compelled to attach conditions never held needful before—namely the fulfilment of certain demands, intended to insure me a really correct performance. (5) And here I touch on the most serious aspect of the commingling of the Jewish essence in our art-affairs.

In that essay upon Judaism I concluded by shewing that it was the feebleness and incapacity of the post-Beethovenian period of our German music-producing, that admitted of the commingling of the Jews therein: all those musicians of ours who found in the washings of the great plastic style of Beethoven the ingredients for preparing that newer, shapeless, sickly mannerism, ground down and plastered with the semblance of solidity, wherein they plodded on in mawkish comfort, without a life, without a strife—all these I set down as thoroughly included in my sketch of Music-Jewdom, let them belong to any nationality they pleased. This singular community it is, that nowadays embraces nearly everyone who



composes music, and—alas! too—who conducts it. I fancy many of them were honestly confused and frightened by my writings: it was on their sincere bewilderment and perplexity that the Jews, enraged by my aforesaid article, laid hold for sake of [113] promptly cutting short all decorous discussion of my remaining theoretic essays, seeing there had already been shewn some notable beginnings of such a thing on the part of honest German musicians. With that pair of catchwords was stifled every fruitful, every explanatory and formative debate and mutual clearing of the ground.—In consequence, however, of the devastations wrought by the Hegelian Philosophy in German heads, so prone to abstract meditation, the same feeble spirit had taken lodgment on this domain [i.e. of Philosophy] as well as on its annexe, of Æsthetics, after Kant's great thought—so intelligently used by Schiller as basis for æsthetic views upon the Beautiful—had been pushed aside by a dreary jumble of dialectic nothings. Even on this side, however, I met at first an inclination to enter honestly upon the views laid down in my art-writings. But that above-named pamphlet of Dr Hanslick in Vienna, upon the "Musically-Beautiful," just as it had been composed for a definite purpose, had also been brought with hottest haste into such celebrity that one can scarcely blame a blond and pure-bred German Æsthetician, Herr Vischer—who had plagued his brain to find a writer for the rubric "Music" in a grand 'system' he was working out—if he associated himself, for convenience and safety's sake, with the so very much belauded Vienna Music-æsthete: for his grand work he handed over to him the execution of that article on a subject which he confessed to knowing nothing about. (6) So the musical Jew-Beauty took its seat in the heart of a full-blooded German system of Æsthetics, a fact which helped the more to increase the renown of its creator, as it now was lauded by the journals at the top of their voice, but, owing to its great un-entertainingness, was read by no one. Under enhanced protection through this new and altogether Christian-German fame, the musical Jew-Beauty was now uplifted to a thorough dogma; the most intricate and hardest [114] questions of Musical Æsthetics, whereon the greatest philosophers had always expressed themselves with doubt and hesitancy whene'er occasion called for serious judgment—these questions were henceforward taken up by Jews, and by bamboozled Christians, with such confidence that to anyone who really wanted to think about the thing, and particularly to account for the overpowering effect of Beethoven's music on his feelings, it must almost seem as though he were listening to the wrangle for the Saviour's garments at the foot of the Cross—a subject the famous bible-student, David Strauss, might presumably expound with just as great discernment as Beethoven's Ninth Symphony.

Now this all must have at last the broader issue, that any attempt of ours to fortify the ever-slackening nerves of Art—as against this fussy, unproductive twaddle—was met not only with the natural obstacles which uprear themselves in every age, but also with a fully-organised Opposition, weilnigh the only function wherein the elements involved had power to shew activity. If *we* seemed silenced and resigned, in the other camp there went on nothing that could properly be regarded as a Willing, an Endeavouring or Producing: rather did the very party which pinned its faith to pure Jew-music-beauty let anything take place that pleased, and every new calamity *à la Offenbach* rain down upon our German art-life, without so much as turning on its side—a thing which they, at any rate, will find quite "selbstverständlich" ["self-intelligible"]. On the contrary if anyone, like myself for instance, was prompted by some emboldening chance to lay hand on given artistic forces arid lead them into energetic action, you must have heard, respected lady, the hubbub raised on every side. Then came real fire and flame within the tents of modern Israel! Above all, once more, was it astonishing to hear the contemptuous, the quite dishonouring tone—inspired, as I believe, not simply by blind passion, but by a shrewdest reckoning of its inevitable effect upon the patrons of my undertakings; for who does not feel hurt at [115] last by the disdainful tone employed in general toward a man one honours with the highest trust 'fore all the world?

(7) Everywhere and in every combination necessary to employ for complex undertakings, the quite natural elements of ill-will on the part of persons unconcerned (or perhaps, of those too vitally concerned) are present: how easy is it made then, by that contemptuous attitude of the Press, for these people to set my undertaking in a dubious light even in the eyes of its protectors! Can anything like this occur in France, to a Frenchman honoured by the public; in Italy, to an acclaimed Italian composer? This thing, which could happen only to a German in Germany, was so new that certainly the reasons for it are for the first time now to be sought out. You, respected lady, were filled with wonder at it; but those who, for the matter of that, are unconcerned with this seeming strife of bare art-interests, and yet have other grounds for hindering undertakings such as those I set on foot—these people wonder not, but find the whole thing natural enough. (8)

So the result is this: an ever more persistent hindrance of each enterprise that might lend my works and labours an influence on our present state of musical and theatric art.

Is that anything of consequence?—In my opinion, *much*; and I believe I am saying this without pretension. That I [116] may venture to set a certain store by my own efforts, I perceive from this one fact:—how earnestly all comment is avoided, on those publications to which I have been impelled from time to time in this regard.

I told you how, at first—before the commencement of this so expertly mantled agitation of the Jews against myself—there had been shewn beginnings of an honourably German treatment and discussion of the views I had laid down in my writings upon Art. Let us suppose that this agitation had not supervened, or—to give everyone fair play—that it openly and honourably had kept to its immediate cause: then we reasonably might ask ourselves what shape the thing would have taken, on the analogy of kindred episodes in the life of unmixed German Culture? I am not so optimistic as to imagine that very much would have been the issue; but surely something was to have been awaited, and at any rate something other than the actual result. If we rightly understand the signs, the period of concentration had set in, both for poetic Literature and for Music, when the legacies of matchless masters, who in serried ranks make out the great re-birth of German Art itself, were to be realised for the common good of all the nation, of all the world. In what preciser sense this conversion would be operated—that was the only question. And it was for Music that it shaped itself the most imperatively: for here, above all through the later periods of Beethoven's creation, a whole new phase of evolution had entered for the art, a phase that overtopped all views and suppositions nursed by her before. Under the lead of Italian vocalism, Music had become *an art of sheer agreeableness*: one thus entirely denied to her the power of giving herself a like significance with the arts of Dante and Michael Angelo, and had hence dismissed her, without more ado, to a manifestly lower rank of arts. *Wherefore from out great Beethoven there was now to be won a quite new knowledge of her essence; the roots, whence Music had thriven to lust this height and this significance, were to be followed thoughtfully through Bach to Palestrina; and thus there was to be founded a quite other system for judging her aesthetically, than that which took its reckonings from a musical evolution lying far outside these masters' path.*

A correct feeling on this matter was instinctively alive in the German musicians of this period; and here I name you ROBERT SCHUMANN as the most thoughtful and most gifted of them all. By the course of his development as composer one may visibly demonstrate the influence which the alloy of Jewish essence, above referred-to, has exerted on our art. Compare the Robert Schumann of the first, with the Robert Schumann of the second half of his career: there plastic bent to shaping, here turgid blurring of the surface, with end in sickness dressed-out as mystery. And quite in keeping is it, that Schumann in this second period looked peevishly, morosely and askance on those to whom in his first period, as Editor of the "*Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*," he so warmly and so amiably held out his German hand.

By the bearing of this journal, in which Schumann also (with a like sagacious instinct) set his pen in motion for the great object that behoves us, you may see at once with what a mind I should have had to commune, if with him alone had I had to come to terms about the problems - that aroused me: here do we meet, in truth, another tongue than that dialectic Jewish jargon which has been at last transplanted to our new Æsthetics; and—this I maintain!—in that tongue one might have come to a helpful understanding. What was it, then, that gave the Jewish influence this might? Alas! a cardinal virtue of the German is alike the fount of his defects. The quiet, stolid self-reliance that is ingrained in him to the point of warding off all sentimental qualms, and prompts so many a loyal deed from out the even tenour of his unspoilt heart—this very quality, if linked with but a small deficiency of needful fire, may easily degenerate into that astounding passiveness (*Trägheit*) in which, amid the continued neglect of every loftier region of the German spirit on the part of high political powers, we nowadays see plunged the most, nay almost all the minds that still stay faithful to the [118] German nature. Into this passivity sank Robert Schumann's genius too, when it became a burden to him to make stand against the restless, busy spirit of the Jews; it fatigued him to have to keep watch on all the thousand single features which were the first to come under his notice, and thus to find out what was really going on. So he lost unconsciously his noble freedom, and his old friends—even disowned by him in the long run—have lived to see him borne in triumph by the music-Jews, as one of their own people!—Now, honoured friend of mine, was *this* not a result worth speaking of? At any rate its mentioning will spare our throwing light on pettier subjugations, which, in consequence of this most weighty one, were everyday the easier to achieve.

But these personal successes find their supplement in the realm of Associations and Societies. Here, too, the German spirit shewed itself aroused to act according to its natural bent. The idea, which I have designated as the task of our post-Beethovenian period, for the first time actually united an ever-growing number of German musicians and music-lovers for objects which gained their natural significance through taking up that task. To the excellent Franz Brendel—who with faithful perseverance gave the impetus, and was rewarded by the fashionable scoffs of Jewish papers—to him is to be ascribed the positive fame of having recognised the needful thing on this side too. But the defect inherent in our German system of Association was bound to shew itself the sooner here, as a Union of German Musicians not only set itself in competition with the powerful sphere of organisations conducted by the Government and State—in common with other free associations, condemned to like effectlessness—but further, with the mightiest organisation of our times, with Judaism itself. Manifestly any larger *Union* of musicians could only expect to help forward the formation of a German style, in music, by the practical expedient of altogether 'model' performances of weighty works. For this, one needed *means*; but the German musician is poor: who's [119] going to help him? Certainly not a disputation and debate about art-interests, which can have no sense amid a crowd, and easily may lead to ridicule. The leverage we lacked, however, belonged to Judaism. The theatre to the dandies and young Israel of the coulisses, to the music-Jews the concert-institutions: what was there left for us? Just one small music-sheet, which printed a report of our biennial meetings.

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As you see, respected lady, I herewith certify the total victory of Judaism on every side; and if now once more I raise my voice against it, it certainly is from no idea that I can reduce by one iota the fulness of that victory. As on the other hand, however, my exposition of the course of this peculiar episode in German Culture seems to affirm that the whole thing is the result of that agitation provoked among the Jews by my earlier article, you may not be very distant from a new astonished question: namely, Why on earth did I stir up this agitation

through that my challenge?

I might excuse myself by saying that I was prompted to that attack, not by any pondering of the "*causa finalis*," but solely through the incentive of the "*causa efficiens*" (as the philosophers express it). Certainly, even at the time of inditing and publishing that essay, nothing was farther from my mind than the notion that I could combat the Jews' influence upon our music with any prospect of success: the grounds of their latter-day successes were already then so clear to me, that now, after a lapse of over eighteen years, it affords me some measure of satisfaction to prove my words by its re-publication. What I may have proposed to effect thereby, I should be unable to clearly state; wherefore I fall back on the plea that an insight into the inevitable downfall of our musical affairs imposed on me the inner compulsion (*Nöthigung*) to trace the causes of that fall. Perhaps, however, it lay near my heart to join therewith a hopeful divination: this you may [120] gather from the essay's closing apostrophe, with which I turn towards the Jews themselves.

Just as humane friends of the Church have deemed possible its salutary reform through an appeal to the downtrod nether clergy, so also did I take in eye the great gifts of heart, as well as mind, which, to my genuine refreshment, had greeted me from out the sphere of Jew society itself. Most certainly am I of opinion that all which burdens native German life from that direction, weighs far more terribly on intelligent and high-souled Jews themselves. Methinks I saw tokens, at that time, of my summons having called forth understanding and profounder stir. If dependence, however, is a great ill and hindrance to free evolution in every walk of life, the dependence of the Jews among themselves appears to be a thralldom of the very utmost rigour. Much may be permitted and overlooked in the broad-viewed Jew by his more enlightened congeners, since they have made up their minds to live not only *with* us, but *in* us: the best Jew-anecdotes, so very entertaining, are told us by themselves; on other sides, too, we are acquainted with the frankest, and therefore at all events *permissible*, remarks of theirs about themselves as well as us. But to take under one's wing a man proscribed by one's own stock—that, in any case, must be accounted by the Jews a rightdown mortal crime. On this side I have had some harrowing experiences. To give you an idea of the tyranny itself, however, let one instance serve for many. An undoubtedly very gifted, truly talented and intellectual writer of Jewish origin, who seems to have almost grown into the most distinctive traits of German folk-life, and with whom I had long and often debated Judaism in all its bearings—this writer made the later acquaintance of my poems "*Der Ring des Nibelungen*" and "*Tristan und Isolde*"; he expressed himself about them with such warm appreciation and clear understanding, that he certainly laid to heart the invitation of my friends, to whom he had spoken, to publish openly his views about [121] these poems that had been so astonishingly ignored by our own literary circles. *This was impossible to him!*—

Please gather from these hints, respected lady, that, albeit I this time have merely answered your question as to the enigmatic reasons for the persecutions I have undergone, particularly on the part of the Press, I nevertheless should not perhaps have given my answer this almost wearisome extension, were it not that even to-day a hope which lies within my deepest heart, though wellnigh inexpressible, had added its incentive. If I wished to give this hope expression, before all I ought not to let it bear the semblance of reposing on a perpetual concealment of my relations with Judaism: this concealment has contributed to the bewilderment wherein not only you, but almost every sympathising friend of mine is placed to-day. Have I myself given rise to this, by that earlier pseudonym; nay, have I made over to the enemy's hands the strategic means for my own defeat: then I now must open to my friends what had long been too well known to my opponents. If I suppose that this openness alone is able, not so much to bring me friends from out the hostile camp, as to strengthen them to battle for their own true emancipation: then perchance I may be pardoned, if a comprehensive view of our Culture's history (*ein umfassender kulturhistorischer Gedanke*) screens from my

mind the nature of an illusion that instinctively has found a corner in my heart. For on one thing am I clear: just as the influence which the Jews have gained upon our mental life—as displayed in the deflection and falsification of our highest culture-tendencies—just as this influence is no mere physiologic accident, so also must it be owned-to as definitive and past dispute. Whether the downfall of our Culture can be arrested by a violent ejection of the destructive foreign element, I am unable to decide, since that would require forces with whose existence I am unacquainted. If, on the contrary, this element is to be assimilated with us in such a way that, in common with us, it shall ripen toward a higher evolution of our nobler human qualities: then is it obvious that no screening-off [122] the difficulties of such assimilation, but only their openest exposure, can be here of any help. If from the so harmlessly-agreeable realm of Music—as our newest Æsthetics have it—an earnest impetus has been haply given this by me, that fact itself, perhaps, might be reckoned not unfavourable to *my* view of Music's weighty office; and you, in any case, best-honoured lady, might find herein an apology for my having detained you so long with a theme so seemingly abstruse.

Tribschen, near Lucerne, New-Year 1869.

Richard Wagner.





## Notes

### Note 1 on page 5

Note to the 1873 edition (*Ges. Schr.*, vol. viii)—"See volume v of my Collected Essays and Poems."—In the 1869 edition this paragraph ran as follows: "The essay which appears above—unchanged in its essentials—I published somewhat over eighteen years ago in the '*Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*,' as mentioned in my opening statement."—TR.

### Note 2 on page 7

In the *Deutsche Rundschau* for January of this year (1894) Dr. Hanslick says (p. 56): "It would simply be flattering to me, to be burnt by Pater Arbuez Wagner on the same pile with MENDELSSOHN and MEYERBEER; unfortunately I must decline this distinction, since my father and all his ancestors, so far as one can trace them, were arch-Catholic peasant-sons, moreover from a countryside where Judaism has only been known in the shape of a wandering peddler."—TR.

### Note 3 on page 9

Without in any way attempting to defend the late Mr. J. W. Davison for his sometimes savage, sometimes jocular attacks on Richard Wagner in 1855, it should not be forgotten that our author confessedly knew very little English, and therefore must have largely depended on his London friends (of that time) to read Davison's articles into German for him—a proceeding open to all the usual dangers attendant on translation—while, on the other hand, a most clumsy and injudicious personal attack had been opened on Davison in an American paper, even before Wagner's arrival in this country and certainly without his knowledge, by one of those London friends (the late Fred Praeger).—TR.

### Note 4 on page 10

It would be not uninteresting, and at any rate would afford a glimpse into our art-affairs, if I gave you particulars of the behaviour which, to my genuine astonishment, I had lately to experience on the part of the two largest theatres, those of *Berlin* and *Vienna*, with regard to my "*Meistersinger*." In my negotiations with the manager of these Court-theatres it needed some little time before I saw through the dodgery employed there, and found that not Only were they trying to *get out of* giving my work, but also to prevent its being given elsewhere. You thence would plainly see that it is a question of a fixed determination, and that a veritable terror was manifestly felt at the bare idea of a new work of mine appearing. Some-day, perhaps, it may entertain you to hear a few more details from my region of experiences.—R. WAGNER.

### Note 5 on page 10

Only through my momentarily letting fall these demands out of imperative regard for my publisher, could I lately move the *Dresden Court-theatre* to undertake the production of my *Meistersinger*.—R. WAGNER.

### Note 6 on page 11

This was told me long ago, at Zurich, by Professor VISCHER himself; in what degree of



personal directness the co-operation of Herr Hanslick was drawn upon, I was not informed.—R. WAGNER.

[Note 7 on page 11](#)

The reference is evidently to King Ludwig II of Bavaria.—TR.

[Note 8 on page 12](#)

Of this you may form a very adequate notion, and of the way in which these last-named gentry employ the fashionable tone in my regard to obstruct all 'furtherance of each my enterprise, if you will only take the trouble to peruse the feuilleton of the recent New-Year's number of the "*Süddeutsche Presse*," just sent to me from Munich. Herr JULIUS FRÖBEL there calmly denounces me to the Bavarian Government as founder of a sect that proposes to do away with State and Religion, and replace it all by an Opera-theatre whence to reign; a sect, moreover, that makes for satisfaction of "Tartuffian lust" (*Befriedigung "muckerhafter Gelüste"*).—The deceased HEBBEL once described to me the peculiar lowness of the Viennese comedian Nestroy, by saying that a rose must necessarily stink if this person had but smelt at it. How the idea of Love, as keystone of Society, may figure in the brain of a Julius Fröbel, we here may see with like effect.—But don't you understand, again, how cleverly a thing like this is reckoned to rouse that disgust which makes the slandered man himself disdain to smite the slanderer?—R. WAGNER.

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*A glance at the German operatic stage of  
to-day*

By Richard Wagner

Translated by William Ashton Ellis



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## Contents

About this Title .....	4
A glance at the German operatic stage of to-day .....	5
Notes .....	17

## About this Title

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[263]

## A glance at the German operatic stage of to-day

FROM a tour which I lately made through the western half of Germany, for the urgent purpose of acquainting myself with the present state of the opera-personnel to be found there, I have derived so much enlightenment as to the artistic standpoint of the theatres themselves that I may hope an account thereof will not be unwelcome to my friends.

After remaining for so many years without any contact with the theatres, and thus in total ignorance of their present doings, I readily admit the dread with which I was filled by the necessity of putting them to the test once more. Against the impression I was about to receive from the maiming and disfigurement of my own operas I had steeled myself in advance, by a long-accustomed resignation: what I had to expect from our conductors on this field of dramatic music I knew well enough, since my eyes had been opened in the concert-room. My forebodings were outdone however, for I found the same inability to hit the right method displayed in every class of operatic music, Mozart's as much as Meyerbeer's; a thing explained by the simple fact, that these gentry have neither any feeling for dramatic life nor the very commonest notion of meeting the singer's needs. When my poor Tannhäuser has to challenge the whole Wartburg Hall of Minstrels with his Venus-song in mad defiance, I once heard him so over-hurried that the crucial phrase: "Go seek the Hill of Venus!" was understood by no one, nay [264] actually unheard. On the other hand I have found the *tempo di menuetto* of Leporello's famous aria so dragged that its robust young singer could make neither breath nor tone hold out—which the conductor never noticed. Hurry and drag, in these consists the conductor's principal treatment of an opera; to which, if it be not exactly a work of Mozart's or "Fidelio," he adds a shameless paring-down to the effect he deems advisable.

To the educated listener, who strays into the house on such a night, it is incomprehensible that no musicians should ever be appointed to the Theatre save those not only without the faintest idea of their proper relation to the singer's task, but moreover utter strangers to the literature of operatic music. In the little theatre at *Wurzburg* I chanced on a performance of "Don Juan" which surprised me on the one hand by the singers' general excellence of voice, their sound enunciation and natural good qualities, on the other by the diligence with which a worthy time-beater at the conductor's desk seemed trying to shew what his singers could do with even a tempo incorrect throughout. I learnt that the Director had imported this person from Temesvar, after enticing him from a military band with which he used to arrange very popular garden-concerts. In this there was some reason: for when the Wurzburg Magistrate looks out for a financially-solid lessee of his theatre, he's not the man to stipulate for the Director's knowing a little about the requirements of such a thing as Opera. But it also may happen that a rigorist called to the directorship of an important Court-theatre on account of his literary effusions, and desirous of making Opera one of his strong suits, will specially select a musician who had been placed at the conductor's desk in his native city on purely patriotic grounds, and there had proved through a series of years that he would never be able to learn the beating of time either good or bad. This case was reported to me at Carlsruhe, as having just occurred there. What is one to say?

[265]

From these and similar instances, one might conclude that the blame for the musical misconduct of Opera at German theatres must be laid to the *Directors'* ignorance. I believe that conclusion would not be far out; only, I also think we should be in error to expect a real improvement from any mere shuffling or shifting of the present factors of theatric management. For example, if one found fault with the Regisseur's not being made director, in

my experience there is no such person in the whole domain of Opera. Of the Regisseur's activity in our operatic representations let those speak who know the interior of that curious higgledy-piggledy; the outsider can see nothing but a chaos of solecisms and omissions. In token of the Regisseur's activity I remarked a peculiar movement of the ladies and gentlemen of the chorus at the Karlsruhe Court-theatre, so proud of its former dramaturgic and choreographic control: after gathering right and left as knights and dames in the second act of "Tannhäuser," they bodily changed places with a regular "*Chassé croisé*" from the contredanse. Nor in general did this theatre go wanting for inventiveness, upon occasion. In "Lohengrin" I here had seen Elsa's church-going in the second act embellished by the Archbishop of Antwerp meeting the procession half-way and extending his white-cotton gloves above the bride in blessing. This time I saw Elisabeth rise from her knees, after praying to the prompter's box in the last act of "Tannhäuser," and retire to the depths of the forest instead of ascending the mountain-path towards the Wartburg, the height whither Wolfram gazes after her. As this change of route enabled her to dispense with the gestures pointing heavenwards in her mute dialogue with Wolfram, the Kapeilmeister had a welcome opportunity for a dashing cut; whilst Wolfram himself, reminded of the deepening twilight by the sudden entry of the sombre trombones, was absolved from his irksome side-turn of the head towards the mountain, and now might sing his Evening-star straight into the faces of the audience. And thus the thing went on.

[266]

As there accordingly was little to hope from the *régie*, which in the "Magic Flute" at Cologne quite calmly let the Queen of Night appear in broad daylight, I turned my attention back to the Kapeilmeister. On his part again it was always Mozart that was worst maltreated. To certify the incredible it would repay the pains of taking the singers' evidence, bar by bar, as to the mode in which I heard the first act of this "Magic Flute" performed: the matchless scene between Tamino and the Priests, where the supposed *recitativo* of the dialogue was drawled to exasperation; the never-ending *largo* of the delicious duettino of Pamina with Papageno; and the tripping burthen, "Would that every honest man might find such bells to tinkle!" spun out into a pious psalm, would in themselves suffice to give a notion of the reading of *Mozart* under care of our music-schools and conservatories of the "now-time."—Meyerbeer was perhaps the least assailed on this side, simply because he had already been so clipped that little remained for assailing. At *Frankfort* I heard some remarkable extracts from the "Prophète," both musical and scenic: for one thing, the third act began without any orchestral prelude; the curtain rose (I anticipated the announcement of some *contretemps*) and chorus and orchestra fell plump into a bawling number; which made me suppose the Herr Kapelmeister had not discovered a suitable cut for patching the scene to an earlier one, here omitted. But who asks for such minutiae? We here meet a whole family that appears to have adopted the motto of Francis Moor, not to concern oneself with trifles.

Dulled to a certain insensibility by the impressions received already, I felt no repugnance against attending a performance of my "Flying Dutchman" at *Mannheim*. It amused me in advance to hear that this music, scarce long enough to fill a regulation opera-bill, and once intended by me for a single act, had not escaped a quite peculiar style of clipping: I was told that the Dutchman's aria and his duet with Daland had both been cut, leaving nothing save their closing cadences. This I declined to [267] believe, but it turned out true enough; and, after recognising the weakness of the singer of the title-rôle, my only regret was that the noisy closing sections should have been the ones retained. However, the omission spared me hearing the main body of these pieces rendered faultily and incorrectly, and I could console myself with the thought that these Moorish "trifles" were no concern of mine. It did concern me, on the contrary, to find that Senta's scene with Erik in the second act was *not* cut: a tenor who had the misfortune to spread fatigue all round him at his very entry, appeared to have



insisted on a full performance of his part, for which the conductor seemed taking his revenge by stretching the tempo of Erik's passionate complaints to a truly distressing length, beating it out in strictest crotchets. Here I suffered from the conductor's conscientiousness, but he suddenly made amends by unbridling his whole subjective freedom at finish of the act: coming after an important climax in the situation, the extended close, the *peroratio*, has here a decisive meaning, and has always worked in this sense on the audience; but Herr Kapellmeister took upon himself to act as censor and cut the closing bars just because they annoyed him, whereas in the first act it would seem to have delighted him to cut everything *except* the closing phrases. With that I thought I had reached the end of my studies of this singular conducting character, and nothing could induce me to pursue them farther. But soon afterwards I heard of something lovely. A new conductor at the Mannheim theatre, to celebrate his entry into office, announced to the astonished public a performance of "Der Freischütz" for the first time *without cuts*. Whoever would have dreamt that cuts were possible in "Freischütz" too?

And in such hands, in such a care, reposes German Opera! If the French—so conscientious and exact in their reproductions—but knew of this, how they would rejoice at the triumphal entry of solid German culture into Alsace!—

[268]

For this utterly good-for-nothing German Kapellmeister-hood, hedged round with appointments for life and carefully nursed town-family coteries, and often retained by incompetent persons for half a century, there can only be one effectual corrective, namely the gifts and good sense of the singers themselves; who plainly are the first to suffer under that misrule, and after all are the only people to whom the public proper gives attention and applause.

Let us see, then, in what way these singers degenerate under that dishonouring régime.

On a recent occasion I said that, in seeking out competent singers for the stage-festivals (*Bühnenfestspiele*) purposed by me, I had much less anxiety about finding good voices than unspoilt manners of rendering. (1) I now must confess that not only have I met more reliable voices than might have been expected from their badness at our largest Court-theatres, but almost everywhere a better aptitude for dramatic speech than I had found ten years ago, when abominably-translated foreign operas ran rampant on the German stage. If one is to follow some of my friends and attribute this improvement to our singers having since appeared more often in my operas every year, whilst the juniors among them have mostly begun their career with learning my operas, my labours would thus receive a confirmation which really should move the Messieurs Singing-masters and Professors of our Conservatoria to a less hostile attitude towards my works.

Yet with these good qualities—nay, principles—of the singers, it at first was incomprehensible to me that their performances should be so vague and, strictly speaking, senseless. Not one of the singers observed by me had arrived at any true artistic finish. In the case of one tenor alone, Herr Richard, who sang the Prophet at Frankfort, did I remark that he had seriously aimed at artistic finish, and in a certain measure attained it. Beyond mistake this gentleman had tried for the method of the newer French tenors, as exemplified so temptingly by the amiable [269] Mons. Roger, and accordingly had devoted great diligence to the development of a somewhat stubborn voice: I heard the same volume that for long has characterised the tenors of French Opera, trained in the Italian school. Here one plainly had an *artist*; only, his art jarred upon me: it was the systematic "harangue" inseparable from all French art, which can never be applied with success to the German style of dramatic singing, since this style requires simplicity and naturalness of the whole demeanour. And yet such an artist would have every right to ask us where to find this style in practice, that he might mould his art thereon?

By side of this singer a Fräulein Oppenheimer, who played the Prophet's famous Mother, attracted my particular attention. An exceptional voice, faultless elocution, and a grand impassionedness of accent, distinguished this splendid lady. She, too, had unmistakably matured into an "artiste": yet, for all these advantages, her performance was wellnigh made repellent by the dramatic and musical caricature inherent in her task itself. Where must the singer of such a Prophet's-mother inevitably end, if, after all the fatuous extravagances of an enervating Pathos, she grasps at one effect the more? The representation of such a Meyerbeerian opera at our theatres, great and small, is the exercise of all the senseless tricks a tortured fancy can conceive; whilst the most appalling thing about it, is the stupid earnestness with which a gaping crowd accepts the rankest folly.

As I shall return to this point, I now pass over to the doings of those singers who have not yet attained that "artistic" finish, or merely in a minor degree. The only "culture" visible here, alas ! was expressed in the hideous variety of efforts to produce an effect with that "harangue" at a phrase's close.

And this laid bare the whole mournful system of our present opera-singing, which may be summarised as follows:—

Entirely without a model, in particular of German style, our young people are mostly chosen for their pretty voices, [270] often from among the members of the chorus, and employed for operatic parts in whose rendering they are completely dependent on the Kapellmeister's baton. This gentleman, equally without a model, or perhaps instructed by the Professors of our Conservatories—who in turn know nothing of dramatic singing, or for that matter, of opera-music in general—proceeds as I have said before; he beats his time by certain abstract-musical theories: for common time he drags, for *alla breve* he scuttles, and the fiat is: "Singer, go by me! I'm the Kapellmeister, and the tempo is my affair." It has really touched me to note the suffering devotion evinced in the reply of a singer whom I had taxed with either galloping or drawling out his pieces; he said he knew it well enough, but that was how the Kapellmeister took things. On the other hand these singers have learnt a lesson from their only available models, those "artists" of the Meyerbeerian school, namely the whereabouts to avenge themselves on the tyrant Kapellmeister's tempo and even soar to the glory of a storm of applause: i.e. the final *fermata*, where the conductor dares not lower his staff before the singer ends. This *fermata* with the closing-harangue is the grand bequest the departed Meyerbeer appears to have willed to our suffering opera-singers for a period long outlasting his natural life: into it is crowded all the blatant claptrap one ever hears from singers either good or bad. Levelled at the audience from the footlights, it has the special advantage that even when the singer has not to "make an exit" (so indispensable for giving the challenge full effect) he still can simulate one by a frantic retreat to his colleagues left within the frame.

Now all this hits its mark, especially in Meyerbeerian opera; though even there, as I later will prove by an example, it sometimes fails through overdoing. But the difficulty for our poor singers, is to apply this clap-trap to the honest music of our older composers. These people void of art and sense and counsel, maltreated by the Kapellmeister and his beat, can make nothing of their aria or phrase itself, and have to struggle through it like a lesson [271] got by rote; as a final resource they rush at its last note, and stick to it, with a scream to warn the audience of its duty; and behold! the Kapellmeister shuts one cultured eye, and—pauses too.

Once I expostulated with a Kapellmeister for allowing the singer of Roger in Auber's charming opera "le Maçon" ("*der Maurer und der Schlosser*") to foist that clap-trap on the closing bar of his almost entrancingly spirited aria in the third act. The Kapellmeister excused himself on grounds of sheer humanity: the public was so spoilt, he said, that it would no longer dole out the least applause to a merely *correct* delivery of such an aria; if one singer were to submit to his (the conductor's) views, and simply sing the closing bar as the composer

had written it—thereby most certainly going without applause—there soon would come another singer who would refuse to be robbed of his final hit, would bring off his round of applause, and be dubbed a success, against the former's failure. Indeed?— This time, however, I took upon myself to shew the Herr Kapellmeister that that obliging and very gifted singer of the performance just past could easily have gained the public's lively interest, even without that obnoxious Effect, had he himself but taught him—ay, simply made it possible to him by a proper tempo—to sing the *whole* aria *bar by bar* in such a way that the *aria* itself, not merely its closing bar, should compel applause. I proved it by singing him the theme in its proper tempo and with the right expression, following it with a reproduction of the singer's scampered rendering in false tempo; which had such a drastic effect upon him that for once, at any rate, I was declared in the right.

Reserving a statement of the grounds on which even our Kapellmeisters, particularly the younger ones, are as much to be pardoned for their ignorance of the true needs of Opera and dramatic music in general as the singers who suffer under them, I first must somewhat complete the picture of the ruin into which the representations at our opera-houses have fallen in consequence.

[272]

For this I may continue with the last-named performance of an opera of the most unassuming genre, that "Maçon" of Auber's. How I pitied both the work and our singers! To what man of judgment has this early opera of the last truly national French composer not formed a red-letter in his estimate of the amiable qualities of the French bourgeoisie? The German Theatre most surely ran no risk to its development, in making such a work as this its own; and for a time it seemed to have completely succeeded, as our native talent for the unaffected Singspiel here obtained a wholesomely assimilable food. But witness a performance of this work today, and that by singers so naturally gifted, I am bound to add, as those of the *Darmstadt* Court-theatre ! The taste of high quarters having ordained that the very latest products of modern French Opera should be introduced at this court before any other place in Germany, this company had been accustomed to nothing but the most grotesque Effects, without the smallest practice in the Natural. Consequently not a creature was now in his proper place, in this bright and unsophisticated opera; the sparkling little vocal numbers, not one of which was taken in the right tempo or made intelligible by correct expression, slipped soulless through a dialogue defaced by "Grand Opera-singers" as if in lordly contempt. But since the dialogue, and especially its comic side, seemed raised in "le Maçon" to almost the main affair, they had to look about for tricks in substitution for the usual Operatic clap-trap; and so a creaking snuffbox and a sausage inadvertently drawn from the coat-pocket (traditional extempores of some former low comedian) became their models for enlivening a dialogue itself filled full with truly genial comedy, if one only gives it a little thought. 'Tis everywhere the same: the *text*, the true material substance of a work, our operists know no longer; like the rag-and-bone-man, they merely rake from here or there an obligato tag to trim their nightly plaudit-jacket—That evening, though, I soon discovered how the wind lay: poor Auber's opera was nothing but [273] the prelude to a *ballet*, where flower-fays and other mighty pretty things were to put in an appearance. The Intendant must have called me a barbarian, to turn my back on this!

The warmth with which I have defended Auber's harmless Singspiel must be my apology for the increasing chill with which I shall have to refer to other, higher art-doings at the theatres I visited. As the ratio of the reproduction to the task remained constant, the evils mounted higher with the higher pitching of the task itself, whilst the over-taxed sensitiveness of the hearer passed at last into insensibility. With the singers I found at the little theatre at *Wurzburg* I would wager to give an excellent dramatic performance, were I but allowed to choose a work in keeping with their faculties, and to see to its being properly directed. My

inability to sit out more than one act of "Don Juan" here, was chiefly attributable to the conductor's misrule; coupled with a senselessness on the part of the régie beyond imagining, it made a further stay in the theatre obnoxious to me. Every one of the singers had natural ability; only the principal lady, Donna Anna, seemed somewhat spoilt—I fancy, not incorrigibly—though her warmth of feeling was much in her favour: but most of them were in presence of a task un-understood throughout and merely learnt in compliance with the common operatic scheme. A young man of exceptionally powerful voice and capital enunciation, but with the manners of a schoolboy and somewhat clumsy carriage, had to conjure up for us the fascinations of a seductive Andalusian cavalier, the title-rôle of Mozart's opera. But "Don Juan" it must be, and "Don Juan" was it beaten.—

It is easy enough to see that the singers do not really feel at home in such performances of classic works; another life thrills in their pulses when the "fermate" operas come along—which promises the works of Meyerbeer a life by no means measurable as yet Hence there is something quite touching in their marked affection for my operas, seeing that they never arrive at a grand effect in them.

[274]

But how should they get an effect at all commensurable with that from Meyerbeerian rôles, since here success can dwell in nothing but the effect of the whole, whilst there each phrase has its own effect provided for it in the closing tirade? Now our singers distinctly have a presentiment of this *effect of the whole*, and it probably is that which attracts them to my operas; but this whole is chopped in pieces for them by the Kapellmeister. Whenever I have gone through one of the rôles of my operas with a singer who interested me, in course of the scene he was always obliged to stop short, for here came his Herr Kapellmeister's cut and he had learnt no farther. When I told him how the matter lay, explaining the importance to his entire rôle of just the passage elided, in his instant mortification I could see where to build my only hopes of a proper understanding. Yet the very best singers at our theatres are kept in this hazy state of wellnigh childlike ignorance of the nature of the tasks I set them: with what, then, are they left?

Into this we must inquire.

What the singers of operas such as mine will never perceive while their parts are given out to them in the mutilation beloved of our Kapellmeisters, is in any case the *dramatic dialogue*, the perspicuous building-up whereof was the author's chief concern—for which reason, also, he staked his whole musical art upon its working out. As I myself have almost entirely discarded Monologue proper—which erewhile, in the form of Aria, filled a whole opera with a series of soliloquies—it is easy to imagine the shifts the singer is put to, to weld the scattered fragments of the dialogue into the mould of monologue, with music whose whole character can only be understood through the animation of its discourse. There necessarily is nothing left for him but to hunt for effective operatic bits, and to take as such whatever he deems likely. Hence his perpetual stepping outside the frame, as he no longer finds the action knit together by its dialogue: instead of facing the person to whom his speech is addressed, he apostrophises the audience from the footlights—making me often disposed [275] to ask, with the angry Jew: "Why does he say that to me, and not to his neighbour?"

Should anyone suppose that the ordinary effect of this ruling habit of our singers, namely a frequent interruption by applause, must at least be not without its profit to *my* operas, he would make a grand mistake: here nothing tells, but what is understood in due connection with the whole; what remains *unclear* in this sense, leaves the audience uninterested. Anybody may convince himself of this upon comparing the effect of a rightly rendered and undocked act, or even scene from one of my operas, with that of a maimed performance. At *Magdeburg*, a few years back, a Director had the courage to insist on "Lohengrin" being played in its entirety: the result was so successful, that in six weeks he was enabled to give the



opera six-and-twenty times to the public of this middling town, and always to full houses. Yet as such an experience teaches no one, we can but infer a really bad and vulgar will on the part of theatrical managers.

Nevertheless even they are to be excused at times, on ground of a deep demoralisation of artistic affairs in general. The management at *Bremen* procured the written orchestral parts with the [printed] score of the "Meistersinger" from the publisher: the latter, presumably anxious to lighten the performance of my work for this little theatre, had had the parts copied from those in use at *Mannheim*, where they are so famous for their cutting. The able Bremen Kapellmeister soon discovered that quite a host of passages in the score had not been written out in these parts at all, and, as the date announced was drawing nigh, could only restore a few of them; the last act in particular—with exception of Hans Sachs's monologue, which the admirable singer had been able to rescue—had to remain in the Mannheim strait-waistcoat. Here again it was quite evident what consequences attend such a deed of maiming. To both the audience and myself it was possible to follow the relatively little-shortened first two acts with interest: the third, the very act which had made the liveliest impression [276] at the first performances in Munich, so that its length was never noticed, here tired out the audience and plunged myself, who had lost all recognition of my work, into the most painful distraction. As the story is chiefly told in the thrust and parry of the dialogue, (2) these scandalous omissions made it vague and unintelligible; so that the performers got out of humour, and—most instructive point of all—the conductor, who till then had maintained an almost unexceptionably correct tempo, now fell from one misunderstanding to another: Eva's enthusiastic outpouring of her heart to Sachs was rushed, and therefore inarticulate; the Quintet was dragged, and thereby lost all suppleness and swing; whilst Walther's master-song, with the broader chorus built upon it, was rough and jerky. If this was done at *Bremen*, where at least there were many excellences in the rest of the performance, I might judge the character of the representations of my work at German theatres elsewhere.

Indeed it is particularly depressing to find the ineradicable vices of the German stage outcropping even in the doings of good and friendly artists. We are often on the verge of unalloyed delight, at seeing good material and ready will inclining to the right; all the more disheartened are we to see these good beginnings suddenly degenerate, and accordingly to find no vital consciousness of Art, but a blind submission to the havoc springing from an altogether spurious education.

To complete the hopeless picture, we find the theatre-going public in precisely the same attitude toward Opera. A dull insensibility lies stamped on every countenance:

uninterested in all that happens on the stage or in the orchestra, the audience only awakens from its deafness to cap the singer's inevitable "harangue" with a round of applause, in token that it had not so far forgot itself as to really fall asleep. Not a face shews any feeling, save that of curiosity about its neighbours: the saddest or the [277] merriest scene may be passing on the boards, not a muscle betrays the faintest sympathy. It is "Opera; which has nothing to do with either mirth or earnestness, but—simply *Opera*. Why doesn't the prima donna sing us something pretty?" And for this have they decked the theatre with untold luxury! The house is all aglow with gold and velvet, and the hospitable easy-chair seems upholstered for the evening's chief enjoyment. From nowhere can one get a view of the stage that does not include a large slice of the audience: the flaming row of footlights abuts on the middle of the proscenium-boxes; it is impossible to watch the prima donna, there in front, without taking in the glasses of the "opera-friend" who ogles her. One thus can find no line to part the putative artistic action from those before whom it is set. The two dissolve into one brew of most repulsive mixture, in which the Kapellmeister twirls his staff as magic-ladle of the modern witch's caldron.

What specially disgusted me, was the shameless baring of the scenic mystery to the eyes of

every gaper: that which can only operate through a well-planned distance, one thinks one cannot bring too near the glaring lamplight. As each organic link has been hewn from the tone-poet's work, one treats the scene itself no better; something must always be torn from the whole, and aimed at the audience from the footlights. At that Frankfort performance of the "Prophète" already mentioned, in the famous church-scene I saw the no less celebrated Fides quit her place in the extreme foreground and come down to the rail to vent her frantic imprecations on her son, which done she improvised a sensational exit behind the proscenium: as this did not extract the intended applause, came Fides humbly forth again and knelt beside the other worshippers, to be present, as needed, at the catastrophe's arrival. The astounding folly of this trick is manifest to anyone who knows that Fides should be among the people from the opening of this scene, with them should sink upon her knees at the litany "*salvum fac regem*," and in a pause of the chant [278] should be heard muttering her unearthly curse; which, to fit the situation at all intelligibly, cannot be sung subduedly enough. To be sure, this time the lady failed in her effect; she was not applauded. But neither was she jeered: not a feature of the audience shewed a sign of ridicule; just as the utmost nonsense, the most grotesque exaggeration, throughout was felt by no one. Once a senior officer behind me laughed in fact: but it was merely at a Bishop stalking in the coronation-train, whom the laughter probably had recognised as his orderly, or what not.—

If this somnolence of all feeling for artistic truth but confined its degrading influence to our opera-houses, we perhaps might find release by giving up the Drama altogether. Unfortunately, it is only too true that the whole spirit of our public musical life is poisoned thence and led to shamefulest degeneration. At its Garden-concert and Change-of-guard the people proper is regaled with nothing but a re-warming of the opera-house stew. From thence our regimental bands obtain their musical pabulum, and in what that consists one may easily guess. The tempo and entire reading of the theatre passes on to the conductors of these popular orchestras, as only accessible model; and whenever we meet with grave misunderstandings here, we invariably receive the excuse that things were taken thus and thus at some great theatre. Of late I have often been honoured by military corps with a very friendly serenade of pieces from my operas: sincerely delighted and truly touched by their doings, for the most part, I have not been able to conceal from their excellent conductors my difficulty in accounting for certain omissions and faulty tempi which I had uniformly noticed in the first finale of "Lohengrin," for one thing: whereupon I learnt that they had based their arrangements on the reputedly authoritative score of the Dresden Court-theatre, for instance, in which the missing passages were left quite out, whilst one heard the tempo thus and not otherwise at all the theatres. Whoever has once arrived at hearing the closing Allegro of this first "Lohengrin" finale played [279] properly in its entirety, may imagine my feelings at listening to the galloping stump of a tone-piece which I had laboured to make grow up before me like a well-formed tree, with branches, boughs and leaf-work!—When I explained this to the highly obliging, and for the most part excellent Kapellmeisters of those music-corps, they were utterly surprised and often disconcerted. "How were we to know any better? Indeed we nowhere hear it otherwise"—was their invariable reply.

And a whole nation that has its music played to it in none but this spirit?—Yet no! Our Conservatories and High Schools of Music now provide for the maintenance and nurture of the true musical spirit. It might be asked, who provides for these Schools themselves being conducted in the proper spirit and manned with really responsible teachers? But in the long run it always comes back to the question, how Music is plied with us in general; for the spirit in which the public is given its music, affords our only guarantee of a proper feeling on part of the leading authorities. And here we find that these institutes have absolutely no influence on the musical taste of the public, save this at most—they send incompetent conductors to our orchestras, and above all to our theatres. Forever in the position of the fox to the grapes,

regarding Opera, which none of those majestic Conservators can reach with any measure of success, they ply their music by themselves. Their Trios, Quintets, Suites and Psalms are played behind closed doors, so strictly closed as to admit no one but the Messieurs Composers and executants. Now and again, however, the best-to-do, and therefore the most influential families in the town are busily invited, and even hospitably entertained in times of peril: (3) on them is then impressed that [280] what they have just heard is the only genuine article, whilst the music which goes on outside is bad tone. But if these well-to-do and influential families are appealed to, once in a way, to tender help in those regions of public music where a powerful aid alone can further a thing of service to the nation's spirit, then every avenue is blocked by pietistic sentries, and the great journals are impounded to see that nothing but systematic slander and abuse shall find a door or crevice open. If one asks these people, on the other hand, how they themselves propose to fulfil their promises of "pure" musical treats—without which, when all is said, no believer will truly pin his faith to them—one hears tell of a magnificent, quite classical Handelian "Solomon," to which the departed Mendelssohn himself wrote an organ-accompaniment for the English. An outsider like myself must have listened with his own pair of ears, to form a notion of the sort of thing these gentry of "pure music" compel their believers to swallow. But they do it, those believers. And glorious are the temples they build for their high priests: there sit they, pull no face, (4) and follow with the book, while their dear relations on the platform up aloft sing choruses and Jupiter himself beats time. I witnessed a specimen of this at *Düsseldorf*, whilst folk at other places much regretted that I had come too late for exactly the same thing there!—

At *Cologne* I happened to say a few words among friends; my remarks were very kindly reported in a newspaper, but particular stress was laid on my expressing myself so much more mildly in private converse, such as this, than in my written lucubrations destined for publicity, where it would seem that I dipped my pen in venom. No doubt it makes a difference, whether I am speaking on the spur of the moment, or writing to the public: (5) there [281] I have a pen to dip indeed, and public matters offer me by no means honey. However, to take my cue from a certain flask of Cologne venom that I wo'n't confound with sweet *Eau de Cologne*, I will close my "Glance" in right optimistic fashion with some well-meant advice—which I fancy myself better able to give than our Conservatories—to various Kapelimeisters; whence they may see that I find no pleasure in writing hopeless letters in the air.—

In the conductor of the "Magic Flute" at Cologne I made acquaintance with a really educated man, outside the theatre, who seemed to have taken up music as a profession, and the theatrical baton as emblem of office, rather late in life. May he more and more arrive at a perception how hard it is to master the Theatre, and become familiar with the peculiar spirit that is the soul of a dramatic performance, from without. Should his musical training have issued from the sphere of our Conservatories, I beg him to particularly remark the woodenness with which the very soul of *Mozart's* music, its *singing quality*, is treated there, and thence to take a warning without the laying to heart whereof he can never attain a knowledge of the rendering required by Mozartian melody, and thus by all Mozartian music.

To the Kapellmeister of the *Mayence* theatre I take the liberty of expressing my delight at his eminent gifts as conductor: here was great precision without the smallest affectation, and the performance of "Fidelio" shewed many signs of correct conception as regards both tempo and dynamics. The more important I therefore think it, to direct his notice to the weakness common to all our conductors for scampering those Allegros which have only twobeatstoabar: he *must* reflect that his tempo for the great Quartet in the second act, as also for the following Duet, not only turns the thing into a musical monstrosity, but robs the singers of all possibility of effective or even clear participation in the scene. Whilst the same remark applies to the closing chorus: "Wer ein solches Weib errungen," which was deprived of all its dignity by a too [282] rapid pace, it is again to be deplored that the famous section preceding it in 3/4



time—which seems to hover like a fleece of golden light above the surcharged situation—completely changed its character for that of painful rigid ness, through a dragging of its tempo. By the conductor's fault the Quartet in act i. met an almost identical fate: could he not feel that we here have no set chant, but rather an *aside* by four persons soliloquising at once, and that its character is diffidence, embarrassment, musically expressed in staccato notes for the singers, and therefore at first accompanied by a *pizzicato* for the strings? Each speaks to himself; we hear them, but they do not hear each other. Nothing is farther from this piece, than the Adagio character; and only its *sostenuto* introduction can account for its being falsely classed by inexperienced conductors with the Adagio type of melody. But that introduction ranks as one of the noblest gems of Beethoven's genius for very reason that, before any of these characters begins to express himself in words, it enables us to plumb the unuttered inmost heart of each. And here the proper rendering was missed by all: each bawled and ranted at his fellow, whereas almost the entire piece should be sung with bated breath, and its fleeting accents little more than hinted.

This brings me to a last and capital offence of our conductors: with scarcely an exception, they have no sense of dynamic agreement between the singers and the orchestra; and for that matter, their disregard of the orchestra's connection with what takes place upon the stage is at the root of all their errors, even in respect of Tempo. I have repeatedly found that the orchestral nuances had been practised with diligence, consequently that the band played soft and low where needed, but hardly ever that the singers were held to a like expression, more especially in ensemble-pieces: the chorus in particular sings as a rule with all its force, and the Kapellmeister doesn't seem struck by its ridiculous and most disturbing contrast with his quiet orchestra. This utter obtusity of the conductor is perfectly [283] incomprehensible when we hear the elfin chorus at end of the second act of "Oberon" murdered by the shrillest shouts of the common operatic chorus, as wellnigh universally, while the strings are playing with their 'mutes' on; and yet we are forced to assume that he hears nothing amiss.

My advice to friendly-disposed conductors of Opera might therefore be summed up as follows: *If you otherwise are good musicians, in Opera pay heed to nothing but what is happening on the stage, be it the monologue of a singer or a general action; let it be your prime endeavour that this scene, so infinitely intensified and spiritualised by association with its music, shall acquire the "utmost distinctness": if you bring that distinctness about, rest assured that you at like time have found the proper tempo and correct expression for the orchestra.* To the very able conductor of the operatic orchestra at *Bremen*—which delighted me, despite its smallness, by the unexpected excellence of its work in every respect—I offer the above advice in especial, since in this regard alone could he be said to fall short of mastership.—

It is impossible to close this account of my recent Glance at the Opera-stage of To-day, especially in the direction last taken, without referring to a theatre scarcely noticed by our newspapers, but which has been led on to deeds of exemplary perfection by the true artistic taste of one man at its head. In the little ducal capital of *Dessau* the Intendant of the Court-theatre, *Herr von Normann*, invited me to a performance of Gluck's *Orpheus*, since the illness of several singers forbade the representation of any opera that required a larger company. *I publicly declare that I have never witnessed a nobler and more complete performance at any theatre.* Certainly the misfortune suffered by the Intendant, in the laming of his personnel, had turned to the advantage of this evening; for it would have been impossible for a more numerous caste to achieve anything so thoroughly distinguished, as the impersonation [284] of Orpheus and Eurydice by the two soloists. Naturally gifted, but in no uncommon manner, both these ladies were inspired by the most delicate artistic feeling, and

so uniformly fine a portrayal of Gluck's creation I had never hoped to meet. As everything else was in such entire harmony with this portrayal, I could only conclude that the latter's perfection had been evoked by the studied beauty of every detail on the stage. Here the operatic *mise-en-scène* had taken life, and become an active element in the whole performance: each scenic factor, grouping, painting, lighting, every movement, every step, contributed to that ideal illusion which wraps us as it were in twilight, in a dream of truths beyond our ken. From the frequency with which the estimable Intendant left my side, in his consuming care lest any trifling fault should harm this fragile dream-life, I guessed to whose love of art was due the excellence of all I witnessed. And most surely I was not mistaken in ascribing the exceptionally brilliant execution of the whole musical ensemble, orchestra and chorus fully included, to the immediate influence of this wonderful care in the staging.

A truly encouraging example, and evidence of the truth that he who grasps the *whole* will recognise and rule the right in all its portions, even should he have no direct acquaintance with their technique. Herr *von Normann*, perchance without any knowledge of music, by his thoughtful stage management led his Kapeilmeister to a musical exploit of such beauty and correctness as I nowhere else have met at any theatre.

And this, as said, was in little *Dessau*.



## Notes

### Note 1 on page 7

"*Actors and Singers*" page 203.—TR.

### Note 2 on page 11

"Die in einem theilweise exzentrischen Dialoge sich aussprechende Handlung" etc.—

### Note 3 on page 13

This forcibly reminds us of Wagner's experiences in 1834 at those Magdeburg "Lodge-concerts" about which he then wrote to Schumann: "During the Adagio of a Symphony one hears the rattle of plates.... When all is over, and respectable people are taking their hats, a mysterious door is opened, tempting vapours issue forth, the confederates troop into the inner chamber" (Glasenapp's *Das Leben Richard Wagner's*, 3rd ed. vol. i. p. 205). We also hear of a grand concert "with supper," to celebrate the centenary of the Gewandhaus Concerts, March 9, 18.43 (ibidem, p. 211).—TR.

### Note 4 on page 13

An evident parody of the author's own "Waltraute-scene" in *Die Götterdämmerung*, act i.: "So—sitzt er, sagt kein Wort" etc.—TR.

### Note 5 on page 13

"Gewiss ist es wohl etwas Anderes, wenn ich aus mir spreche, oder zur Öffentlichkeit schreibe."—

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*On the name "Musikdrama"*

By Richard Wagner

Translated by William Ashton Ellis



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## Contents

About this Title .....	4
On the name Musikdrama. ....	5
Notes .....	9
Summary .....	11



## About this Title

### Source

*On the name "Musikdrama"*  
By Richard Wagner  
Translated by William Ashton Ellis

*Actors and Singers*  
Richard Wagner's Prose Works  
Volume 5  
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### Original Title Information

*Über die Benennung "Musikdrama".*  
Published in 1872  
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### Reading Information

This title contains 2103 words.  
Estimated reading time between 6 and 11 minutes.

Notes are indicated using parenthesis, like (1).  
Page numbers of the original source are indicated  
using square-bracketed parentheses, like [62].

[299]

## On the name "Musikdrama."

WE often read just now of a "Musikdrama," also hear of a society in Berlin, for instance, that proposes to help this Music-drama forward—yet without our being able to form an accurate idea of what is meant. I certainly have reason to suppose that this term was invented for sake of honouring my later dramatic works with a distinctive classification; but the less I have felt disposed to accept it, the more have I perceived an inclination in other quarters to adopt the name for a presumably new art-genre, which would appear to have been bound to evolve in answer to the temper and tendencies of the day, even without my intervention, and now to lie ready as a cosy nest for everyone to hatch his musical eggs in.

I cannot indulge in the flattering view, that things are so pleasantly situate; and the less, as I don't know how to read the title "Musikdrama." When we unite two substantives to form one word, with any understanding of the spirit of our language, by the first we always signify in some sort of way the object of the second; so that "Zukunftsmusik," though invented in derision of me, had its sense as music for the future. (01) But "Musikdrama" similarly interpreted as drama for the object of music would have no sense at all, were it not point-blank the old familiar libretto, which at anyrate was a drama expressly constructed for music. Yet this certainly is not what we mean: merely our sense of literary propriety has become so blunted through a constant reading of the farrago of our [300] newspaper-writers and other beaux esprits, that we believe we may put any meaning we choose to the nonsensical words they coin, and in the present case we use "Musikdrama" to denote the very opposite of the sense the word implies.

Upon closer inspection, however, we find that the solecism here consists in the now favourite conversion of an adjectival predicate into a substantival prefix: one had begun by saying musical drama. Yet it perhaps was not solely that evil habit, that brought about the abbreviation into "Musikdrama," but also a hazy feeling that no drama could possibly be musical, like an instrument or (in rare enough events) a prima donna. A musical drama, taken strictly, would be a drama that made music itself, or was good for making music with, or even that understood music, somewhat as our musical reporters. As this would not do, the mental confusion thought better to hide behind a wholly senseless word: for "Musikdrama" was a name which nobody had heard before, and one felt assured that nobody would ever dream of wilfully misconstruing so seriously-combined a word by its analogy with "Musikdosen" [musical snuffbox] and the like.

Now the serious meaning, intended by the term, was probably an actual drama set to music. The mental emphasis would therefore fall on the drama, which one regarded as differing from the former opera-libretto, and differing in that a dramatic plot was not to be simply trimmed to the needs of traditional operatic music, but the musical structure itself was to be shaped by the requirements characteristic of an actual drama. But if the drama was thus the main affair, it surely ought to have been placed before the music which it governed, and, somewhat like "Tanzmusik" or "Tafelmusik" [dance, and banquet-music], we then should have had to say "Dramamusik." Into this absurdity, however, one did not care to fall; twist and turn it as one might, music remained the real encumbrance to the naming, though everybody dimly felt that it was the chief concern in spite of all [301] appearances, and the more so when that music was invited to develop and put forth its amplest powers through its association with an actual drama.

The obstacle to devising a name for this artwork was accordingly, in any event, the assumed necessity of indicating that the new whole had been formed by welding two disparate elements, music and drama, together. And certainly the greatest difficulty is to place

music in a proper position toward drama, since it can be brought into no equality therewith, as we have just seen, and must rank as either much more or much less than drama. (02) The reason surely lies in the fact that the word music denotes an *art*, originally the whole assemblage of the arts, whilst drama strictly denotes a *deed* of art. In coupling words together it is easy to tell by the intelligibleness of the resulting compound whether we really still understand its constituent parts, taken separately, or merely employ them after a conventional usage. The primary meaning of drama is a *deed* or *action*: as such, displayed upon the stage, it at first formed but a portion of the Tragedy, i.e. the sacrificial choral chant, but at last invaded it from end to end and thus became the main affair. By its name one now denoted for all ages an action shewn upon the stage, and, to lay stress on this being a performance to look at, the place of assembly was called the “theatron,” the looking-room. Our “Schauspiel” [strictly look-game or show-play] is therefore a very sensible name for what the Greeks more naïvely still called drama, for it still more definitely expresses the characteristic development of an initial part into the ultimate main object. But Music is placed in an utterly false relation to this show-play, if she now is to form but a part of that whole; as such she is wholly superfluous and disturbing, and for this reason has at last been quite excluded from [302] the stricter Play. Of a truth she is the part that once was all, and even now she feels called to re-assume her ancient dignity, as very mother-womb of Drama. Yet in this high calling she must neither stand before nor behind the Drama: she is no rival, but its mother. She sounds, and what she sounds ye see upon the stage; for that she gathered you together: what she is, ye never can but faintly dream; so she opens your eyes to behold her through the scenic likeness, as a mother tells her children legends shadowing the mysteries of religion.

The stupendous works of their Æschylus the Athenians called not dramas, but left them with the holy name of their descent: tragedies, sacrificial chants in celebration of the god inspiring them. Happy they, to have to puzzle out no name for them! They had the most unheard-of artwork, and—left it nameless. But there came the great critics, the redoubtable reporters; abstract ideas were found, and where these ran short came words for word's sake. The good Polonius edifies us with a handsome list of them in “Hamlet.” The Italians capped it with a “*Dramma per musica*,” which expresses much the same idea, though more grammatically phrased, as our Musikdrama; but one manifestly was not satisfied with this expression, and the curious outcome of the changes introduced by vocal virtuosi had to accept a name as nothing-saying as the genre itself. Opera, plural of opus, this new variety of works was dubbed; the Italians made a female of it, the French a male, so that the variety seemed to have turned out *generis utriusque*. I believe one could find no apter criticism of Opera, than to allow this name as legitimate an origin as that of Tragedy; in neither case was it a matter of reason (*Vernunft*), but a deep-set instinct here expressed a thing of nameless nonsense, there a thing of sense indicibly profound.

Now I advise my professional competitors to retain the designation opera, on second thought, for their musical works intended for the present theatre: it leaves them where they are, gives them no false colour, lifts them [303] above all rivalry with their librettist, and if they are blest with good ideas for an aria, a duet, or even a drinking-chorus, they will please and give us something worth acknowledging, without having to overtax their strength to spoil their prettiest fancies. In every age there have been not only pantomimists, but cithern-players, flautists, and finally cantores: if some of their tribe were called for once to do a thing beyond their kind and custom, it was only very solitary units, whose unexampled rarity the finger of History underlines across the centuries and tens thereof; but never has a *genre* arisen thence, a genre in which, once given its proper name, the extra-ordinary lay ready for the common use of every fumbler. As for myself, with the best of will I should scarcely know what name to give the child that smiles from out my works a trifle shyly on a good part of the world we live in. Herr W. H. Riehl, as he somewhere has said, loses sight and

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hearing at my operas, for with some he hears, with others sees: how shall one name so inaudible, invisible a thing? I should almost have felt disposed to take my stand on its visibility, and abide by the show-play, as I would gladly have called my dramas *deeds of Music brought to sight* (ersichtlich gewordene Thaten der Musik). But that would have been quite an art-philosophical title, fit to grace the catalogue of the future Polonii of our art-struck courts; since one may assume that, after their soldiers' successes, our Princes next will wish the Theatre led onward in a corresponding German sense. Only, in spite of all the play I offer, which many declare to touch the monstrous, there really would be far too little to see; as for instance I have been rebuked for not introducing into the second act of Tristan a brilliant court-ball, during which the hapless pair of lovers might hide themselves at the proper time in some shrubbery or other, where their discovery would create quite a startling scandal, with all the usual consequences. Instead there passes little more than music in this act, which unfortunately seems to be so very much music that [304] people with the organisation of Herr W. H. Riehl quite lose their hearing through it; the more's the pity, as I give them next to nothing to see.

As folk would not let my poor works even pass for operas, mainly because of their great dissimilarity to Don Juan, I have had to console myself with handing them to the theatres without any designation of their genre at all; by this device I also think of abiding for just as long as I have to do with our theatres, which rightly recognise no other genre than Opera, and, let one give them never so strict a music-drama, would make of it an opera notwithstanding. To boldly emerge from the whole confusion, I lit, as known, on the thought of a *Bühnenfestspiel* [stage-festival-play], which I am hoping to bring about at Bayreuth with help from my friends. The name suggested itself through the character of my undertaking; for I knew of *Singing-festivals*, *Gymnastic-fêtes* and so forth, and could well imagine a theatre-feast—in which the *stage* and what takes place upon it, appropriately termed a *play*, would of course be the chief affair. But if any of the visitors to this *Bühnenfestspiel* shall chance to preserve a remembrance thereof, to him there may likewise occur a name for that thing I now propose to offer my friends as an unnamed deed of art.



## Notes

### Note 01 on page 5

Namely, for a time when one could get it performed without bungling.— R. WAGNER.

### Note 02 on page 6

Das Schwierigste hierbei ist jedenfalls, die 'Musik' in eine richtige Stellung zum 'Drama' zu bringen, da sie, wie wir dieses soeben ansehen mussten, mit diesem in keine ebenbürtige Verbindung zu bringen ist, und uns entweder viel mehr, oder viel weniger als das Drama gelten muss.





[353]

## Summary

A senseless name, apparently invented in honour of my later works, and now usurped by imitators. Meaning of German compound words; this one a solecism, condensed from equally incorrect musical drama. Music an *art*, Drama a *deed*. Music the part that once was all; Greek Tragedy, Italian Opera, and German Schauspiel. Let my rivals stick to opera, which will confuse no one, nor spoil their prettiest fancies. I should like to call my dramas deeds of Music brought to sight, but people say I give them too little to see. Let Bühnenfestspiel serve for the nonce, for at Bayreuth the *stage* will be the main object of the *festival* (304).

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*Prologue to a reading of the  
"Götterdämmerung" before a select audience in  
Berlin*

By Richard Wagner

Translated by William Ashton Ellis



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## Contents

About this Title .....	4
Prologue to a reading of the "Götterdämmerung" before a select audience in Berlin	5

## About this Title

### Source

*Prologue to a reading of the "Götterdämmerung" before a select audience in Berlin*

By Richard Wagner

Translated by William Ashton Ellis

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Richard Wagner's Prose Works

Volume 5

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Zuhörerkreise in Berlin*

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Pages 308-310

### Reading Information

This title contains 610 words.

Estimated reading time between 2 and 3 minutes.

Page numbers of the original source are indicated using square-bracketed parentheses, like [62].

[305]

## Prologue to a reading of the "Götterdämmerung" before a select audience in Berlin

DESIROUS of your closer attention to a work which may have chiefly attracted your notice as a musical product, I believe I shall best attain that end by reading out a portion of the dramatic poem on which it is founded; for I thereby hope to shew you not only the character in which I view that work myself, but also that feature which compelled me to devise a plan of reproduction quite foreign to the habits of our Opera-house and its public.

People talk of innovations made by me in Opera: for my own part I am conscious of having, if not achieved, at least deliberately striven for this one advantage, the raising of the dramatic dialogue itself to the main subject of musical treatment; whereas in Opera proper the moments of lyrical delay, and mostly violent arrest of the action, had hitherto been deemed the only ones of possible service to the musical composition.

The longing to raise the Opera to the dignity of genuine Drama could never wake and wax in the musician, before great masters had enlarged the province of his art in that spirit which now has made our German music acknowledgedly victorious over all its rivals. Through the fullest application of this legacy of our great masters we have arrived at uniting Music so completely with the Drama's action, that this very marriage enables the action itself to gain that ideal freedom—i.e. release from all necessity of appealing to abstract reflection—which our great poets [306] sought on many a road, to fall at last a-pondering on the selfsame possibility of attaining it through Music.

By incessantly revealing to us the inmost motives of the action, in their widest ramifications, Music at like time makes it possible to display that action itself in drastic definition: as the characters no longer need to tell us of their impulses [or "grounds of action"—*Beweggründe*] in terms of the reflecting consciousness, their dialogue thereby gains that naïve pointedness (*Präzision*) which constitutes the very life of Drama. Again, whilst Antique Tragedy had to confine its dramatic dialogue to separate sections strewn between the choruses delivered in the Orchestra—those chants in which Music gave to the drama its higher meaning—in the Modern Orchestra, the greatest artistic achievement of our age, this archetypal element goes hand in hand with the action itself, unsevered from the dialogue, and in a profounder sense may be said to embrace all the action's motives in its mother-womb.

Thus, besides the restoration of its naïve pointedness, it became possible to give the dialogue an extension covering the entire drama; and it is this that enables me to read to you to-day in guise of a bare dramatic poem a work that owes its origin to nothing but the feasibility of carrying it out completely in music: for I believe I may submit it as a play in dialogue to the same judgment we are wont to invoke with a piece indited for the Spoken Play.

The quality I thus have claimed for my work not only emboldens me to shew it you from this one side without alarm, but has also been my principal reason for the unusual steps I am taking to place it before the German public in its entirety; in the one case as in the other I wish to commend it, not to an assemblage of opera-lovers, but to a gathering of truly educated persons earnestly concerned for an original cultivation of the German Spirit.

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# *Das Liebesverbot*

By Richard Wagner

Translated by William Ashton Ellis



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## Contents

About this Title .....	4
Translator's Note .....	5
Das Liebesverbot .....	7
Notes .....	13
Summary .....	15

## About this Title

### Source

*Das Liebesverbot*

By Richard Wagner

Translated by William Ashton Ellis

*In Paris and Dresden*

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Notes are indicated using parenthesis, like (1).

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[6]

## Translator's Note

The following "Account of a first Operatic Performance" is evidently an extract from Richard Wagner's as yet unpublished "Memoirs," as may be gathered from its second paragraph. Its publication in the first volume of the *Gesammelte Schriften* was also its first, and hitherto its only, appearance. Though I propose retaining the German title of the opera, it may be rendered in English by "Love's Penalty" or "Love Forbidden."



[7]

## Das Liebesverbot

OF my second completed opera, *das Liebesverbot*, I will merely give an outline of the so-called text, with an account of the attempt at its performance and the circumstances connected therewith. Though I omit a similar report on my earliest opera, "die Feen," since it in no way came before the public, (1) I have felt it impermissible to quite pass by this second work of youth, as it really made a public appearance, already remarked on. (2)

I planned the poem of this opera in the summer of 1834, during a holiday at Teplitz, about which I have made the following notes in my life-recollections.

\*

On a few fine mornings I stole away from my surroundings, to take my breakfast in solitude upon the "Schlackenburg," and seize the opportunity of jotting down the sketch of a new opera-poem in my notebook. I had annexed the subject of Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*, and, in accordance with my then-prevailing mood, I adapted it very freely for a libretto to which I gave the title: "*das Liebesverbot*." The ideas of "*Young Europe*" at that time in the air, as also a reading of "Ardinghello," united with the peculiar frame into which I had fallen in respect of German opera-music to supply the keynote of my conception, which struck at puritanical hypocrisy in particular, and therefore tended to a frank extolling of the "liberated senses." To this sense alone I wrested Shakespeare's earnest story; nothing would I see in it but the gloomy, rigorous moralist of a Stateholder aflame with passion for [8] the beautiful novice who pleads his mercy for her brother, condemned to death for a love-offence, and kindles the most pernicious fire in the breast of the stony Puritan by the warmth of her human feeling. That Shakespeare simply develops these powerful motives the more conclusively to load the scale of justice in the end, was not my business to regard; my only object was to expose the sin of hypocrisy and the unnaturalness of a ruthless code of morals. So I left the "measure for measure" completely out of sight, and let avenging love alone arraign the hypocrite. From fabulous Vienna I transposed the scene to the capital of glowing Sicily, where a German Stateholder, aghast at the incomprehensible laxness of its populace, attempts to carry out a puritanical reform, and lamentably falls. Presumably the *Muette de Portici* [Masaniello] had something to do with it; reminiscences of the "Sicilian Vespers" may have had their share (3): when I reflect that even the gentle Sicilian *Bellini* must be numbered among the factors of this composition, I can but smile at the singular quid-pro-quo into which the oddest misunderstandings here had shaped themselves.

It was not till the winter of 1835-36, that I was able to finish the score of my opera. This occurred amid the most bewildering duties at the little town - theatre of Magdeburg, whose opera-performances I conducted for two winter - seasons as Musikdirektor. A strange confusion had been wrought in my taste by immediate contact with the German operatic stage, and so strongly did it stamp the cut and execution of my work, that the youthful enthusiast for Beethoven and Weber would surely have been traced by no one in this score.

[9]

Its fortune was as follows.

Despite a royal subsidy and the intervention of the theatre-committee in the management, our worthy Director was in a perennial state of bankruptcy, and a continuance of his undertaking in any shape or form was not to be thought of. So the performance of my opera, by the really excellent troop of singers at my disposal, was to constitute a turning-point in my career. I had the right to claim a 'benefit' in repayment of certain travelling-expenses from the

previous summer: naturally I decided on a representation of my work, and did my best to make this managerial favour as little costly as possible. As the management had nevertheless to bear some outlay for the new opera, I agreed to surrender the receipts of the first performance and content myself with those of the second. Nor did the postponement of the rehearsals to the very end of the season appear to me an unmixed evil, since I might assume that the last performances of a company that had often been received with uncommon warmth would have a special interest for the public. Unfortunately, however, we never reached the season's stipulated close, fixed for the end of April, as in March the most popular members of our Opera announced their departure on account of unpunctuality in the payment of their salaries, and the offer of better engagements elsewhere; against which the impecunious management had no means of redress. That was bad news for me: the attainment of a performance of my *Liebesverbot* seemed more than doubtful. It was only through my being a favourite with the whole opera-company, that I induced the singers not merely to stay until the end of March, but also to undertake the study of my opera, most exhausting in view of the briefness of time. So scanty was it, that if two performances were to be given, we had no more than ten days for all the various rehearsals. As it was by no means a simple Singspiel, but, for all the slipshod character of its music, a grand opera with many lengthy ensemble numbers, the undertaking might rank as the height of folly. Nevertheless I [10] built my hopes on the great exertions which the singers had willingly borne for my sake with their constant practice night and morning; and, notwithstanding that it had been clean impossible to drive them to a little conscious settledness of memory, I finally reckoned on a miracle to be wrought by my own acquired dexterity as conductor. The peculiar knack I had of giving the singers an illusive air of fluency, however uncertain they might really be, was shewn in our two or three full rehearsals, when I kept the whole afloat by incessant prompting, singing the notes aloud and shouting out the needful action, so that one might positively believe the thing would cut a decent figure after all. Unfortunately we had forgotten that on the night of performance [March 29, 1836], in presence of the public, all these drastic means of oiling the dramatic-musical machinery would have to shrink to the beat of my bâton and the dumb motion of my face. Indeed the singers, especially the male ones, were so extraordinarily shaky that their rôles were lamed of all effect from beginning to end. The first tenor, blest with the very weakest memory, tried to bolster up the mercurial character of the madcap *Luzio* by the routine of *Fra Diavolo* and *Zampa*, and in particular by an immoderately large and tossing plume of gaudy feathers. Moreover as the management could not afford to print any textbooks, it was scarcely the public's fault that it remained entirely in the dark as to the story's drift, for the piece was sung throughout. Whereas I had intended a brisk and energetic play of speech and action,—with exception of a few of the female parts, which were greeted with applause, the whole thing remained a musical shadow-play on the stage which the orchestra did its best to drown in inexplicable torrents. As characterising the treatment of my tone-colours, I may mention that the conductor of a Prussian military band, who was quite delighted with the work, felt it his duty to give me a well-meant hint on handling the Turkish drum in future operas. But, before proceeding with the history of this wonderful juvenile [11] work, I must dwell awhile upon its character, especially as regards the poem.

The piece, which Shakespeare had kept to a very earnest basis, in my version had turned out as under:—

"An un-named King of Sicily leaves his country on a journey to Naples, as I suppose, and deposes to his appointed Stateholder—called simply *Friedrich*, to mark him for a German—the full authority to use all royal powers in an attempt to radically reform the manners of his capital, which had become an abomination to the strait-laced minister. At the commencement of the piece we see public officers hard at work on the houses of amusement in a suburb of Palermo, closing some, demolishing others, and taking their hosts and servants



into custody. The populace interferes; great riot: after a roll of the drums the chief constable *Brighella* (basso buffo), standing at bay, reads out the edict of the Stateholder according to which these measures have been adopted to secure a better state of morals. General derision, with a mocking chorus; *Luzio*, a young nobleman and jovial rake (tenor), appears to wish to make himself the people's leader; he promptly finds occasion for espousing the cause of the oppressed when he sees his friend *Claudio* (likewise tenor) conducted on the road to prison, and learns from him that, in pursuance of an ancient law unearthed by *Friedrich*, he is about to be condemned to death for an amorous indiscretion. His affianced, whom the hostility of her parents has prevented his marrying, has become a mother by him; the hatred of the relatives allies itself with *Friedrich's* puritanic zeal: he fears the worst, and has one only hope of rescue, that the pleading of his sister *Isabella* may succeed in softening the tyrant's heart. *Luzio* promises to go at once to *Isabella* in the cloister of the Elisabethans, where she has lately entered her novitiate.

"Within the quiet cloister walls we make the acquaintance of this sister, in confidential converse with her friend *Marianne*, who also has entered as novice. *Marianne* discloses to her friend, from whom she has long been parted, [12] the sad fate that has brought her hither. By a man of high position she had been persuaded to a secret union, under the pledge of eternal fidelity; in her hour of utmost need she had found herself abandoned, and even persecuted, for the betrayer proved to be the most powerful personage in all the state, no less a man than the King's present Stateholder. *Isabella's* horror finds vent in a tempest of wrath, only to be allayed by the resolve to leave a world where such monstrosities can go unpunished.—When *Luzio* brings her tidings of the fate of her own brother, her abhorrence of his misdemeanour passes swiftly to revolt against the baseness of the hypocritical Stateholder who dares so cruelly to tax her brother's infinitely lesser fault, at least attainted with no treachery. Her violence unwittingly exhibits her to *Luzio* in the most seductive light; fired by sudden love, he implores her to leave the nunnery for ever and take his hand. She quickly brings him to his senses, yet decides, without a moment's wavering, to accept his escort to the Stateholder in the House of Justice.

"Here the trial is about to take place, and I introduce it with a burlesque examination of various moral delinquents by the chief constable *Brighella*. This gives more prominence to the seriousness of the situation when the gloomy figure of *Friedrich* appears, commanding silence to the uproarious rabble that has forced the doors; he then begins the hearing of *Claudio* in strictest form. The relentless judge is upon the point of passing sentence, when *Isabella* arrives and demands a private audience of the Stateholder. She comports herself with noble moderation in this private colloquy with a man she fears and yet despises, commencing with nothing but an appeal to his clemency and mercy. His objections make her more impassioned: she sets her brother's misdemeanour in a touching light, and pleads forgiveness for a fault so human and in nowise past all pardon. As she observes the impression of her warmth, with ever greater fire she goes on to address the hidden feeling of the judge's heart, which cannot possibly have been quite barred against the sentiments [13] that made her brother stray, and to whose own experience she now appeals for help in her despairing plea for mercy. The ice of that heart is broken: *Friedrich*, stirred to his depths by *Isabella's* beauty, no longer feels himself his master; he promises to *Isabella* whatever she may ask, at price of her own body. Hardly has she become conscious of this unexpected effect, than, in utmost fury at such incredible villainy, she rushes to door and window and calls the people in, to unmask the hypocrite to all the world. Already the whole crowd is pouring in to the judgment-hall, when *Friedrich's* desperate self-command succeeds in convincing *Isabella*, by a few well-chosen phrases, of the impossibility of her attempt: he would simply deny her accusation, represent his offer as a means of detection, and certainly find credence if it came to any question of repudiating a charge of wanton insult. *Isabella*, ashamed and bewildered,

recognises the madness of her thought, and succumbs to mute despair. But while *Friedrich* is displaying his utmost rigour afresh to the people, and delivering sentence on the prisoner, *Isabella* suddenly remembers the mournful fate of *Marianne*; like a lightning-flash, she conceives the idea of gaining by stratagem what seems impossible through open force. At once she bounds from deepest sorrow to the height of mirth: to her lamenting brother, his downcast friend, the helpless throng, she turns with promise of the gayest escapade she will prepare for all of them, for the very Carnival which the Stateholder had so strenuously forbidden shall be celebrated this time with unwonted spirit, as that dread rigorist had merely donned the garb of harshness the more agreeably to surprise the town by his hearty share in all the sport he had proscribed. Everyone deems her crazy, and *Friedrich* chides her most severely for such inexplicable folly: a few words from her suffice to set his own brain reeling; for beneath her breath she promises fulfilment of his fondest wishes, engaging to despatch a messenger with welcome tidings for the following night.

"Thus ends the first act, in wildest commotion. What [14] the heroine's hasty plan may be, we learn at the beginning of the second, where she gains admittance to her brother's gaol to prove if he is worth the saving. She reveals to him *Friedrich's* shameful proposals, and asks him if he craves his forfeit life at this price of his sister's dishonour? *Claudio's* wrath and readiness to sacrifice himself are followed by a softer mood, when he begins to bid his sister farewell for this life, and commit to her the tenderest greetings for his grieving lover; at last his sorrow causes him to quite break down. *Isabella*, about to tell him of his rescue, now pauses in dismay; for she sees her brother falling from the height of nobleness to weak avowal of unshaken love of life, to the shamefaced question whether the price of his deliverance be quite beyond her. Aghast, she rises to her feet, thrusts the craven from her, and informs him that he now must add to the shame of death the full weight of her contempt. As soon as she has returned him to the gaoler, her bearing once more passes to ebullient glee: she resolves indeed to chastise the weak-kneed by prolonging his uncertainty about his fate, but still abides by her decision to rid the world of the most disgraceful hypocrite that ever sought to frame its laws. She has arranged for *Marianne* to take her place in the rendezvous desired by *Friedrich* for the night, and now sends him the invitation, which, to involve him in the greater ruin, appoints a masked encounter at one of the places of amusement which he himself has closed. The madcap *Luzio*, whom she also means to punish for his impudent proposal to a novice, she tells of *Friedrich's* passion, and remarks on her feigned decision to yield to the inevitable in such a flippant fashion that she plunges him, at other times so feather-brained, into an agony of despair: he swears that even should the noble maid intend to bear this untold shame, he will ward it off with all his might, though all Palermo leap ablaze.

"In effect he induces every friend and acquaintance to assemble at the entrance to the Corso that evening, as if for leading off the prohibited grand Carnival procession. At [15] nightfall, when the fun is already waxing wild there, *Luzio* arrives, and stirs the crowd to open bloodshed by a daring carnival-song with the refrain: 'Who'll not carouse at our behest, your steel shall smite him in the breast.' *Brighella* approaching with a company of the watch, to disperse the motley gathering, the revellers are about to put their murderous projects into execution; but *Luzio* bids them scatter for the present, and ambush in the neighbourhood, as he here must first await the actual leader of their movement: for this is the place that *Isabella* had tauntingly divulged to him as her rendezvous with the Stateholder. For the latter *Luzio* lies in wait: he soon detects him in a stealthy masker, whose path he bars, and as *Friedrich* tears himself away he is about to follow him with shouts and drawn rapier, when by direction of *Isabella*, concealed among the bushes, he himself is stopped and led astray. *Isabella* comes forth, rejoicing in the thought of having restored *Marianne* to her faithless mate at this very moment, and in the possession of what she believes to be the stipulated patent of her brother's pardon; she is on the point of renouncing all further revenge when, breaking open the seal by

the light of a torch, she is horrified at discovering an aggravation of the order of execution, which chance and bribery of the gaoler had delivered into her hands through her wish to defer her brother's knowledge of his ransom. After a hard battle with the devouring flames of love, and recognising his powerlessness against this enemy of his peace, *Friedrich* has resolved that, however criminal his fall, it yet shall be as a man of honour. One hour on *Isabella's* bosom, and then his death—by the self-same law to whose severity the life of *Claudio* still shall stand irrevocably forfeit. *Isabella*, who perceives in this action but an additional villainy of the hypocrite, once more bursts out in frenzy of despairing grief. At her call to instant revolt against the odious tyrant the whole populace assembles, in wildest turmoil: *Luzio*, arriving on the scene at this juncture, sardonically adjures the throng to pay no heed to the ravings of a woman who, as she has deceived [16] himself assuredly will dupe them all; for he still believes in her shameless dishonour. Fresh confusion, climax of *Isabella's* despair: suddenly from the back is heard *Brighella's* burlesque cry for help; himself entangled in the coils of jealousy, he has seized the disguised Stateholder by mistake, and thus leads to the latter's discovery. *Friedrich* is unmasked; *Marianne*, clinging to his side, is recognised. Amazement, indignation, joy: the necessary explanations are soon got through; *Friedrich* moodily asks to be led before the judgment-seat of the King on his return, to receive the capital sentence; *Claudio*, set free from prison by the jubilant mob, instructs him that death is not always the penalty for a love-offence. Fresh messengers announce the unexpected arrival of the King in the harbour; everyone decides to go in full carnival-attire to greet the beloved prince, who surely will be pleased to see how ill the sour puritanism of the Germans becomes the heat of Sicily. The word goes round: 'Gay festivals delight him more than all your gloomy edicts.' *Friedrich*, with his newly-married wife *Marianne*, has to head the procession; the Novice, lost to the cloister for ever, makes the second pair with *Luzio*.—"

I had worked out these bustling and, in many respects, ambitious scenes, with some regard to verse and diction. The police took offence at the title, which, if I had not altered it, would have dashed my whole plans of performance. We were in the week before Easter, a time when merry, to say nothing of frivolous, pieces were forbidden at the theatre. Fortunately the magistrate whom I had to consult in the matter had not gone any farther into the poem, and when I assured him that it was founded on a very serious play of Shakespeare's he contented himself with a change in the highly alarming title, for which we substituted the "Novice of Palermo"; that appearing to have nothing against it, no further scruples were raised on the score of propriety.—I found things otherwise at Leipzig shortly after, where I tried to insinuate my new work in [17] place of the abandoned "Feen." There I meant to win over the Director of the theatre by offering his daughter, a débutante in Opera, the part of "Marianne"; but he had grasped the tendency of the story, and made it a not uncolourable pretext for rejection. He informed me that even were the Leipzig Magistrates to permit the representation, which his respect for those authorities caused him very much to doubt, as a conscientious father he could not possibly allow his daughter to appear in it.—

In the Magdeburg performance, remarkably enough, I had nothing at all to suffer from this dubious character of my opera-text; the story remained entirely unknown to the audience, as said above, on account of its utterly vague reproduction. This circumstance, with the consequent absence of any opposition to the *tendance*, enabled me to announce a second performance; against which no one raised his voice, since no one vexed his head. Perfectly aware that my opera had made no impression and left the audience in a complete haze as to what the whole thing was about, I counted nevertheless on the attraction of the very last appearance of our opera-troop to bring me in quite good, nay, large returns; so that I was not to be hindered from demanding the so-called "full" prices for admission. Whether a few seats

would have been filled by the commencement of the overture, I can scarcely judge: about a quarter of an hour previously the only people I could see in the stalls were my landlady with her husband, and, strange to relate, a Polish Jew in full costume. I was hoping for an increase notwithstanding, when suddenly the most unheard-of scenes took place behind the wings. The husband of my prima donna (the actress of "Isabella") had fallen upon the second tenor, a very pretty young man who sang my "Claudio," and against whom the offended husband long had nursed a secret grudge. It seems that, having convinced himself of the nature of the audience when he accompanied me to the curtain, the lady's husband deemed the longed-for hour arrived for taking vengeance on his wife's pretender without [18] damage to the theatrical enterprise. *Claudio* was so badly cuffed and beaten by him, that the unlucky wretch had to escape to the cloak-room with a bleeding face. *Isabella* was told of it, rushed in despair at her raging husband, and received such blows from him that she fell into convulsions. The uproar in the company soon knew no bounds: sides were taken, for and against, and little lacked of a general free-fight, as it appeared that this unhappy evening was held by all a fit occasion for paying off old scores. So much was certain,—the pair who had suffered from *Isabella's* husband's love-forbiddal were rendered quite incapable of coming on that night. The regisseur was sent before the curtain, to inform the singularly select company in the auditorium that "on account of unforeseen obstacles" the performance of the opera could not take place.—

To a further attempt to rehabilitate my work of youth it never came.

## Notes

### Note 1 on page 7

Not until June 29, 1888, when it was given at the Munich Court-theatre by way of indemnity for the right of performance of *Parsifal*, as claimed by King Ludwig's successors.—The work was written in 1833, when Wagner was just twenty years of age.—Tr.

### Note 2 on page 7

In the "[Autobiographic Sketch](#)"; see Vol. I. of this series.—Tr.

### Note 3 on page 7

This allusion to the historical "Sicilian Vespers" (13th century) has misled one or two writers into the assertion that Wagner's earliest works were influenced by Verdi. Nothing could be more ridiculous. Not till the year 1839 was Verdi's first opera, *Oberto*, produced in Milan; nor did he make any particular name until March 1842, with his *Nabucco*, some months after the score of *Rienzi* had been despatched to Dresden, and that of the *Flying Dutchman* to Berlin. Verdi's *Vêpres siciliennes*, composed for Paris, appeared in 1855.—Tr.



[361]

## Summary

Sketched in 1834 from *Measure for Measure*, freely adapted to the idea of "the liberated senses"; an indictment of puritanical hypocrisy; various influences at work in text and music; completed and performed once in 1836 at Magdeburg, after insufficient rehearsals at a bankrupt theatre (10). Summary of the plot (16). Police objections to title circumvented—they were shrewder at Leipzig; a second performance that never came off, through a fight behind the scenes (18).



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# *The Nibelungen-Myth*

By Richard Wagner

Translated by William Ashton Ellis



The Wagner Library

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## Contents

About this Title .....	4
The Nibelungen-Myth - As Sketch for a Drama .....	5
Summary .....	11

## About this Title

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[301]

## The Nibelungen-Myth

### As Sketch for a Drama

From the womb of Night and Death was spawned a race that dwells in Nibelheim (Nebelheim), i.e. in gloomy subterranean clefts and caverns: *Nibelungen* are they called; with restless nimbleness they burrow through the bowels of the earth, like worms in a dead body; they smelt and smith hard metals. The pure and noble Rhine-gold *Alberich* seized, divorced it from the waters' depth, and wrought there from with cunning art a ring that lent him rulership of all his race, the Nibelungen: so he became their master, forced them to work for him alone, and amassed the priceless *Nibelungen-Hoard*, whose greatest treasure is the Tarnhelm, conferring power to take on any shape at will, a work that Alberich compelled his own brother Reigin (Mime = Eügel) to weld for him. Thus armoured, Alberich made for mastery of the world and all that it contains.

The race of *Giants*, boastful, violent, ur-begotten, is troubled in its savage ease: their monstrous strength, their simple mother-wit, no longer are a match for Alberich's crafty plans of conquest: alarmed they see the Nibelungen forging wondrous weapons, that one day in the hands of human heroes shall cause the Giants' downfall.—This strife is taken advantage of by the race of *Gods*, now waxing to supremacy. *Wotan* bargains with the Giants to build the Gods a Burg from whence to rule the world in peace and order; their building finished, the Giants ask the Nibelungen-Hoard in payment. The utmost cunning of the Gods succeeds in trapping Alberich; he must ransom his life with the Hoard; the Ring alone he strives to keep:—the Gods, well knowing that in it resides the secret of all Alberich's power, extort from him the Ring as well: then he curses it; it shall be the ruin of all who possess it. *Wotan* delivers the Hoard to the Giants, but means to keep the Ring as warrant of his sovereignty: the Giants [302] defy him, and *Wotan* yields to the counsel of the three Fates (Norns), who warn him of the downfall of the Gods themselves.

Now the Giants have the Hoard and Ring safe-kept by a monstrous Worm in the Gnita- (Neid-) Haide [the Grove of Grudge]. Through the Ring the Nibelungs remain in thralldom, Alberich and all. But the Giants do not understand to use their might; their dullard minds are satisfied with having bound the Nibelungen. So the Worm lies on the Hoard since untold ages, in inert dreadfulness: before the lustre of the new race of Gods the Giants' race fades down and stiffens into impotence; wretched and tricky, the Nibelungen go their way of fruitless labour. Alberich broods without cease on the means of gaining back the Ring.

In high emprise the Gods have planned the world, bound down the elements by prudent laws, and devoted themselves to most careful nurture of the Human race. Their strength stands over all. Yet the peace by which they have arrived at mastery does not repose on reconciliation: by violence and cunning was it wrought. The object of their higher ordering of the world is moral consciousness: but the wrong they fight attaches to themselves. From the depths of Nibelheim the conscience of their guilt cries up to them: for the bondage of the Nibelungen is not broken; merely the lordship has been reft from Alberich, and not for any higher end, but the soul, the freedom of the Nibelungen lies buried uselessly beneath the belly of an idle Worm: Alberich thus has justice in his complaints against the Gods. *Wotan* himself, however, cannot undo the wrong without committing yet another: only a free Will, independent of the Gods themselves, and able to assume and expiate itself the burden of all guilt, can loose the spell; and in Man the Gods perceive the faculty of such free-will. In Man they therefore seek to plant their own divinity, to raise his strength so high that, in full knowledge of that strength, he may rid him of the Gods' protection, to do of his free will what

his own mind inspires. [303] So the Gods bring up Man for this high destiny, to be the canceller of their own guilt; and their aim would be attained even if in this human creation they should perforce annul themselves, that is, must part with their immediate influence through freedom of man's conscience. Stout human races, fruited by the seed divine, already flourish: in strife and fight they steel their strength; Wotan's Wish-maids shelter them as Shield-maids, as *Walküren* lead the slain-in-fight to Walhall, where the heroes live again a glorious life of jousts in Wotan's company. But not yet is the rightful hero born, in whom his self-reliant strength shall reach full consciousness, enabling him with the free-willed penalty of death before his eyes to call his boldest deed his own. In the race of the *Wälsungen* this hero at last shall come to birth: a barren union is fertilised by Wotan through one of Holda's apples, which he gives the wedded pair to eat: twins, *Siegmund* and *Sieglinde* (brother and sister), spring from the marriage. Siegmund takes a wife, Sieglinde weds a man (Hunding); but both their marriages prove sterile: to beget a genuine Wälsung, brother and sister wed each other. Hunding, Sieglinde's husband, learns of the crime, casts off his wife, and goes out to fight with Siegmund. *Brünnhild*, the Walküre, shields Siegmund counter to Wotan's commands, who had doomed him to fall in expiation of the crime; already Siegmund, under Brünnhild's shield, is drawing sword for the death-blow at Hunding—the sword that Wotan himself once had given him—when the god receives the blow upon his spear, which breaks the weapon in two pieces. Siegmund falls. Brünnhild is punished by Wotan for her disobedience: he strikes her from the roll of the Walküren, and banishes her to a rock, where the divine virgin is to wed the man who finds and wakes her from the sleep in which Wotan plunges her; she pleads for mercy, that Wotan will ring the rock with terrors of fire, and so ensure that none save the bravest of heroes may win her.—After long gestation the outcast Sieglinde gives birth in the forest to [304] *Siegfried* (he who brings Peace through Victory): Reigin (*Mime*), Alberich's brother, upon hearing her cries, has issued from a cleft and aided her: after the travail Sieglinde dies, first telling Reigin of her fate and committing the babe to his care. Reigin brings up Siegfried, teaches him smithery, and brings him the two pieces of the broken sword, from which, under Mime's directions, Siegfried forges the sword Balmung. Then Mime prompts the lad to slay the Worm, in proof of his gratitude. Siegfried first wishes to avenge his father's murder: he fares out, falls upon Hunding, and kills him: only thereafter does he execute the wish of Mime, attacks and slays the Giant-worm. His fingers burning from the Worm's hot blood, he puts them to his mouth to cool them; involuntarily he tastes the blood, and understands at once the language of the woodbirds singing round him. They praise Siegfried for his glorious deed, direct him to the Nibelungenhoard in the cave of the Worm, and warn him against Mime, who has merely used him as an instrument to gain the Hoard, and therefore seeks his life. Siegfried thereon slays Mime, and takes the Ring and Tarnhelm from the Hoard: he hears the birds again, who counsel him to win the crown of women, Brünnhild. So Siegfried sets forth, reaches Brünnhild's mountain, pierces the billowing flames, and wakes her; in Siegfried she joyfully acclaims the highest hero of the Wälsung-stem, and gives herself to him: he marries her with Alberich's ring, which he places on her finger. When the longing spurs him to new deeds, she gives him lessons in her secret lore, warns him of the dangers of deceit and treachery: they swear each other vows, and Siegfried speeds forth.

A second hero-stem, sprung likewise from the Gods, is that of the *Gibichungen* on the Rhine: there now bloom *Gunther* and *Gudrun*, his sister. Their mother, Grimhild, was once overpowered by Alberich, and bore him an unlawful son, *Hagen*. As the hopes and wishes of the Gods repose on Siegfried, so Alberich sets his hope of gaining back the Ring on his hero-offspring Hagen. Hagen is [305] sallow, glum and serious; his features are prematurely hardened; he looks older than he is. Already in his childhood Alberich had taught him mystic lore and knowledge of his father's fate, inciting him to struggle for the Ring: he is strong and

masterful; yet to Alberich he seems not strong enough to slay the Giant-worm. Since Alberich has lost his power, he could not stop his brother Mime when the latter sought to gain the Hoard through Siegfried: but Hagen shall compass Siegfried's ruin, and win the Ring from his dead body. Toward Gunther and Gudrun Hagen is reticent,—they fear him, but prize his foresight and experience: the secret of some marvellous descent of Hagen's, and that he is not his lawful brother, is known to Gunther: he calls him once an Elf-son.

Gunther is being apprised by Hagen that Brünnhild is the woman most worth desire, and excited to long for her possession, when Siegfried speeds along the Rhine to the seat of the Gibichungs. Gudrun, inflamed to love by the praises he has showered on Siegfried, at Hagen's bidding welcomes Siegfried with a drink prepared by Hagen's art, of such potency that it makes Siegfried forget his adventure with Brünnhild and marriage to her. Siegfried desires Gudrun for wife: Gunther consents, on condition that he helps him win Brünnhild. Siegfried agrees: they strike blood-brotherhood and swear each other oaths, from which Hagen holds aloof.—Siegfried and Gunther set out, and arrive at Brünnhild's rocky fastness: Gunther remains behind in the boat; Siegfried for the first and only time exerts his power as Ruler of the Nibelungen, by putting on the Tarnhelm and thereby taking Gunther's form and look; thus masked, he passes through the flames to Brünnhild. Already robbed by Siegfried of her maidhood, she has lost alike her superhuman strength, and all her runecraft as she made away to Siegfried—who does not use it; she is powerless as any mortal woman, and can only offer lame resistance to the new, audacious wooer; he tears from her the Ring—by which she is now to be wedded to Gunther—, and forces her into the cavern, [306] where he sleeps the night with her, though to her astonishment he lays his sword between them. On the morrow he brings her to the boat, where he lets the real Gunther take his place unnoticed by her side, and transports himself in a trice to the Gibichenburg through power of the Tarnhelm. Gunther reaches his home along the Rhine, with Brünnhild following him in downcast silence: Siegfried, at Gudrun's side, and Hagen receive the voyagers.—Brünnhild is aghast when she beholds Siegfried as Gudrun's husband: his cold civility to her amazes her; as he motions her back to Gunther, she recognises the Ring on his finger: she suspects the imposture played upon her, and demands the ring, for it belongs not to him, but to Gunther who received it from her: he refuses it. She bids Gunther claim the ring from Siegfried: Guimther is confused, and hesitates. Brünnhild: So it was Siegfried that had the ring from her? Siegfried, recognising the Ring: "From no woman I had it; my right arm won it from the Giant-worm; through it am I the Nibelungen's lord, and to none will I cede its might." Hagen steps between them, and asks Brünnhild if she is certain about the Ring? If it be hers, then Siegfried gained it by deceit, and it can belong to no one but her husband, Gunther. Brünnhild loudly denounces the trick played on her; the most dreadful thirst for vengeance upon Siegfried fills her. She cries to Gunther that he has been duped by Siegfried: "Not to thee—to this man am I wed; he won my favour."—Siegfried charges her with shamelessness: Faithful had he been to his blood-brotherhood,—his sword he laid between Brünnhilde and himself:—he calls on her to bear him witness.—Purposely, and thinking only of his ruin, she will not understand him.—The clansmen and Gudrun conjure Siegfried to clear himself of the accusation, if he can. Siegfried swears solemn oaths in confirmation of his word. Brünnhild taxes him with perjury: All the oaths he swore to her and Gunther, has he broken: now he forswears himself, to lend corroboration to a lie. Everyone is in the utmost commotion. Siegfried calls Gunther to [307] stop his wife from shamefully slandering her own and husband's honour: he withdraws with Gudrun to the inner hall.—Gunther, in deepest shame and terrible dejection, has seated himself at the side, with hidden face: Brünnhild, racked by the horrors of an inner storm, is approached by Hagen. He offers himself as venger of her honour: she mocks him, as powerless to cope with Siegfried: One look from his glittering eye, which shone upon her even through that mask, would scatter Hagen's courage. Hagen: He well knows Siegfried's



awful strength, but she will tell him how he may be vanquished? So she who once had hallowed Siegfried, and armed him by mysterious spells against all wounding, now counsels Hagen to attack him from behind; for, knowing that the hero ne'er would turn his back upon the foe, she had left it from the blessing.—Gunther must be made a party to the plot. They call upon him to avenge his honour: Brünnhild covers him with reproaches for his cowardice and trickery; Gunther admits his fault, and the necessity of ending his shame by Siegfried's death; but he shrinks from committing a breach of blood-brotherhood. Brünnhild bitterly taunts him: What crimes have not been wreaked on her? Hagen inflames him by the prospect of gaining the Nibelung's Ring, which Siegfried certainly will never part with until death. Gunther consents; Hagen proposes a hunt for the morrow, when Siegfried shall be set upon, and perhaps his murder even concealed from Gudrun; for Gunther was concerned for her sake: Brünnhilde's lust-of-vengeance is sharpened by her jealousy of Gudrun. So Siegfried's murder is decided by the three.—Siegfried and Gudrun, festally attired, appear in the hall, and bid them to the sacrificial rites and wedding ceremony. The conspirators feigningly obey: Siegfried and Gudrun rejoice at the show of peace restored.

Next morning Siegfried strays into a lonely gully by the Rhine, in pursuit of quarry. Three mermaids dart up from the stream: they are soothsaying Daughters of the waters' bed, whence Alberich once had snatched the gleaming [308] Rhine-gold to smite from it the fateful Ring: the curse and power of that Ring would be destroyed, were it regiven to the waters, and thus resolved into its pure original element. The Daughters hanker for the Ring, and beg it of Siegfried, who refuses it. (Guiltless, he has taken the guilt of the Gods upon him, and atones their wrong through his defiance, his self-dependence.) They prophesy evil, and tell him of the curse attaching to the ring: Let him cast it in the river, or he must die to-day. Siegfried: "Ye glibtongued women shall not cheat me of my might: the curse and your threats I count not worth a hair. What my courage bids me, is my being's law; and what I do of mine own mind, so is it set for me to do: call ye this curse or blessing, it I obey and strive not counter to my strength." The three Daughters: "Wouldst thou outvie the Gods?" Siegfried: "Shew me the chance of mastering the Gods, and I must work my main to vanquish them. I know three wiser women than you three; they wot where once the Gods will strive in bitter fearing. Well for the Gods, if they take heed that then I battle *with* them. So laugh I at your threats: the ring stays mine, and thus I cast my life behind me." (He lifts a clod of earth, and hurls it backwards over his head.)—The Daughters scoff at Siegfried, who weens himself as strong and wise as he is blind and bond-slave. "Oaths has he broken, and knows it not: a boon far higher than the Ring he's lost, and knows it not: runes and spells were taught to him, and he's forgot them. Fare thee well, Siegfried! A lordly wife we know; e'en to-day will she possess the Ring, when thou art slaughtered. To her! She'll lend us better hearing."—Siegfried, laughing, gazes after them as they move away singing. He shouts: "To Gudrun were I not true, one of you three had ensnared me!" He hears his hunting-comrades drawing nearer, and winds his horn: the huntsmen—Gunther and Hagen at their head—assemble round Siegfried. The midday meal is eaten: Siegfried, in the highest spirits, mocks at his own unfruitful chase: But water-game had come his way, for whose capture he was [309] not equipped, alack! or he'd have brought his comrades three wild water-birds that told him he must die to-day. Hagen takes up the jest, as they drink: Does he really know the song and speech of birds, then?—Gunther is sad and silent Siegfried seeks to enliven him, and sings him songs about his youth: his adventure with Mime, the slaying of the Worm, and how he came to understand bird-language. The train of recollection brings him back the counsel of the birds to seek Brünnhilde, who was fated for him; how he stormed the flaming rock and wakened Brünnhild. Remembrance rises more and more distinct. Two ravens suddenly fly past his head. Hagen interrupts him: "What do these ravens tell thee?" Siegfried springs to his feet. Hagen: "*I* rede them; they haste to herald thee to Wotan." He hurls his spear at Siegfried's back. Gunther, guessing from Siegfried's tale the

true connection of the inexplicable scene with Brünnhilde, and suddenly divining Siegfried's innocence, had thrown himself on Hagen's arm to rescue Siegfried, but without being able to stay the blow. Siegfried raises his shield, to crush Hagen with it; his strength fails him, and he falls of a heap. Hagen has departed; Gunther and the clansmen stand round Siegfried, in sympathetic awe; he lifts his shining eyes once more: "Brünnhild, Brünnhild! Radiant child of Wotan! How dazzling bright I see thee nearing me! With holy smile thou saddlest thy horse, that paces through the air dew-dripping: to me thou steer'st its course; here is there Lot to choose (*Wal zu küren*)! Happy me thou chos'st for husband, now lead me to Walhall, that in honour of all heroes I may drink All-father's mead, pledged me by thee, thou shining Wish-maid! Brünnhild, Brünnhild! Greeting!" He dies. The men uplift the corpse upon his shield, and solemnly bear it over the rocky heights, Gunther in front.

In the Hall of the Gibichungs, whose forecourt extends at the back to the bank of the Rhine, the corpse is set down: Hagen has called out Gudrun; with strident tones he tells her that a savage boar had gored her husband.—Gudrun [310] falls horrified on Siegfried's body: she rates her brother with the murder; Gunther points to Hagen: He was the savage boar, the murderer of Siegfried. Hagen: "So be it; an I have slain him, whom no other dared to, whatso was his is my fair booty. The ring is mine!" Gunther confronts him: "Shameless Elf-son, the ring is mine, assigned to me by Brünnhild: ye all, ye heard it."—Hagen and Gunther fight: Gunther falls. Hagen tries to wrench the Ring from the body,—it lifts its hand aloft in menace; Hagen staggers back, aghast; Gudrun cries aloud in her sorrow;—then Brünnhild enters solemnly: "Cease your laments, your idle rage! Here stands his wife, whom ye all betrayed. My right I claim, for what must be is done!"—Gudrun: "Ah, wicked one! 'Twas thou who brought us ruin." Brünnhild: "Poor soul, have peace! Wert but his wanton: his wife am I, to whom he swore or e'er he saw thee." Gudrun: "Woe's me! Accursed Hagen, what badest thou me, with the drink that filched her husband to me? For now I know that only through the drink did he forget Brünnhilde." Brünnhild: "O he was pure! Ne'er oaths were more loyally held, than by him. No, Hagen has not *slain* him; for Wotan has he marked him out, to whom I thus conduct him. And I, too, have atoned; pure and free am I: for he, the glorious one alone, o'erpowered me." She directs a pile of logs to be erected on the shore, to burn Siegfried's corpse to ashes: no horse, no vassal shall be sacrificed with him; she alone will give her body in his honour to the Gods. First she takes possession of her heritage; the Tarnhelm shall be burnt with her: the Ring she puts upon her finger. "Thou froward hero, how thou held'st me banned! All my rune-lore I bewrayed to thee, a mortal, and so went widowed of my wisdom; thou usedst it not, thou trustedst in thyself alone: but now that thou must yield it up through death, my knowledge comes to me again, and this Ring's runes I rede. The ur-law's runes, too, know I now, the Norns' old saying! Hear then, ye mighty Gods, your guilt is quit: thank him, the hero, who took your guilt upon him! To mine own hand he gave [311] to end his work: loosed be the Nibelungs' thralldom, the Ring no more shall bind them. Not Alberich shall receive it; no more shall he enslave you, but he himself be free as ye. For to you I make this Ring away, wise sisters of the waters' deep; the fire that burns me, let it cleanse the evil toy; and ye shall melt and keep it harmless, the Rhinegold robbed from you to weld to ill and bondage. One only shall rule, All-father thou in thy glory! As pledge of thine eternal might, this man I bring thee: good welcome give him; he is worth it!"—Midst solemn chants Brünnhilde mounts the pyre to Siegfried's body. Gudrun, broken down with grief, remains bowed over the corpse of Gunther in the foreground. The flames meet across Brünnhild and Siegfried:—suddenly a dazzling light is seen: above the margin of a leaden cloud the light streams up, shewing Brünnhild, armed as Walküre on horse, leading Siegfried by the hand from hence. At like time the waters of the Rhine invade the entrance to the Hall: on their waves the three Water-maids bear away the Ring and Helmet. Hagen dashes after them, to snatch the treasure, as if demented,—the Daughters seize and drag him with them to

the deep.

[368]

## Summary

(Preliminary draft of *Siegfried's Tod*, which later on, with certain radical changes, became *Götterdämmerung*.—[311](#)).