

The Complete Prose Works

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Volume II

TRADITION
2022

Art and Climate

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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* (*verwöhnte*) the Hellenes by her influence, but *weaned* (*entwöhnte*) them from her care; that she *be-schooled* (*erzog*), and not *be-lapped* (*verzog*) 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 thoroughly 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)

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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:—

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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 mansidedness 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 Freeman 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.

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.

Judaism in Music

Edition 1.1

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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 rawness 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-Jewing 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-resentation.: 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 clammers 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 envious 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 representment 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.

A Communication to my Friends

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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?"—

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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 manifestation. 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)

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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 manifestation 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.

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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.—

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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, emprisoned 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 novice 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.—

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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 high-mindedness 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.

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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 enwrap 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.—

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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.

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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

demanded 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 circum stances. 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 enwrap 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.—

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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-unearned 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 faithfulest 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.

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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 highest 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

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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 definement 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 wanted 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 loveworthiness. 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 wreck 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 Umschlossenseins 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. Pröls's "*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—Glaser'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.

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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."

On the Performing of "Tannhäuser."

[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 thatyoti 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.

*

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 qua 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 entrancing 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 hereant 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 veilings 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.

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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 carries 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 horriblest 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 Sündiger 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).

Remarks on performing the opera "The Flying Dutchman."

[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 *Holländer* 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! Könnt' 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.

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

[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 Carlsruhe 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 Carlsruhe 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 Carlsruhe 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 Carlsruhe 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 numerously 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.

Overture to "Tannhäuser."

[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 indicible; 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 whir still pulses in the breeze, a wave of weird voluptuousness, like the sensuous breath of unblest love, still sighs 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 whir and sighing 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.

On State and Religion

Edition 1.1

[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 ministrations.

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 reaped 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 tinctured 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 tendency 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 tinged 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 tribune 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 (*Unterworfenheit*) 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 tendency 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?

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 *Edipus-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.

What is German?

[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

races 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 weilnigh 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, wellnigh 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! 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 *Allgemeine 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 landmen 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!

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 eingeschnei't . . . 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.

Modern

[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

"Selbstredend" for "self-evidently."—Tr.

Note 03 on page 7

"Modern," as a true German verb, means "to rot."—Tr.

Religion and Art

Edition 1.1

[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 deswegen so widrig und abgeschmackt,
weil sie verfehlt Darstellungen dieses höchsten sind.

Schiller, an Goethe

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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."

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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 artifi- ciality 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 duntrod 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!

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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 vilest 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.



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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.

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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-presentation 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 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.



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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 irreligiosity 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.

"What Boots This Knowledge?"

[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—wherefrom, 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 unsurpassable 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.

Know Thyself

Edition 1.1

[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 *races*. 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 waking 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 waking 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.

Hero-dom and Christendom

Edition 1.1

[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 palsyng 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 demnach dem Verfall 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.

On the Womanly in the Human Race

[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.

Beethoven

[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 tendency 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 somnambulistical 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-swarving 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 superficies (*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 Eurhythm; 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 tendence of his life ran parallel with the tendence 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 tendence 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.

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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.

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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 formulæ 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 Caesar*), 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 thoroughly [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 tendency 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 tendency 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 tendency 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 tendency 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 Unschuld-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.

The Destiny of Opera

[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.

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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 banded: 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 vilest 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 deprecation 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 "*accidentiae*" 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.

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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 unflinching 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.

The Public in Time and Space

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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 welnigh 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.

On Poetry and Composition

[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 Wahrfahftige*), 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 "*Techné*" 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 "Wahlverwandschaften" 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 epigrammatist 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 jocosæ*, 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 generalise 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.

On Opera Poetry and Composition in particular

[150]

Translator's Note

Originally published in the *Bayreuther Blätter* for September 1879.

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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

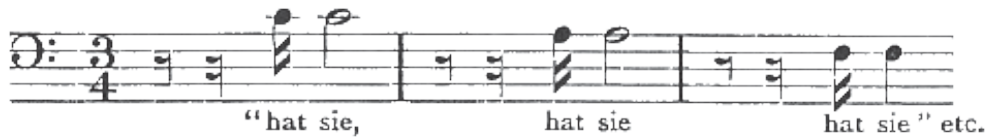
Mein *Leben* hab' ich ihm zu danken—
mein Leben *hab'* ich ihm zu danken;

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 naïvest 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 incongruences, 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 unintelligibility 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 caesura, 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 character istic 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] unpresentable 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 "Brahminness"; 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.

On the Application of Music to the Drama

[174]

Translator's Note

This article originally appeared in the *Bayreuther Blätter* for November 1879.

[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 lessly tack 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.

Introduction to a work of Count Gobineau's

[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.

Some Explanations Concerning "Judaism in Music."

[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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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 triviallest 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 tendency 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 sickliness 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 unspoil 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 un instructive, 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.

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

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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?

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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 Carlsruhe 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.

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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!—

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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.

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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.

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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 won'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 Kapelmeisters; 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 obtuseness 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."—

On the name "Musikdrama"

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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 indubitably 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

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 ersehen mussten, mit diesem in keine ebenbürtige Verbindung zu bringen ist, und uns entweder viel mehr, oder viel weniger als das Drama gelten muss.

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

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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.

Das Liebesverbot

[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 *tendency*, 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.

The Nibelungen-Myth

[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 = Eugel) 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 Gnitahaid (Neid-) Haide [the Grove of Grudge]. Through the Ring the Nibelungen 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 plaints 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 has 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.