The Political Ideology of Wagner

by

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Richard Wagner was born in Leipzig on May 22, 1813. At first he seemed to lean more towards letters, to the point of having sufficient trouble with his music teachers that they would not express any great hopes in relation to so wayward and somewhat reluctant a disciple.
He began to dedicate himself fully to music at the age of 18 at the University of Leipzig, where he studied with Theodor Weiling.
Finishing his studies two years later, he began to produce his first work in the school started in Europe by Monteverdi, Lully and Gluck, proposing to provide unity between music and poetry, so that both forms of art complement and reinforce each other.
Despite its ultimate success, Wagner endured throughout his life a series of setbacks that would several times put him on the brink of ruin. He was conductor at Magdeburg and Konigsburg, in companies that went bankrupt shortly thereafter. He then moved to Riga and later to Paris where it was so hard for him to survive he had to dedicate himself to writing articles, novels, magazines, plays and copying music among many other things.
Disillusioned and poor, he moved to Dresden, where he earned his first success with the premieres of Rienzi, the Flying Dutchman and Tannhauser. Even so the press critics refused to second his public acclaim.

He participated in the German revolutionary struggles of 1848/1849 for which he had to flee and settle in Zurich, where he lived for some years. Finally, the protection of Louis I, King of Bavaria, allowed him to establish himself in Munich to perform his works. From Munich he went to Switzerland and then to Triebchen, where he married the daughter of Franz Liszt, Cosima Liszt, August 25, 1870.
The last of Wagner's works, his masterpiece "Parsifal," was premiered on July 26, 1882, just months before his death on February 13, 1883.
Richard Wagner was and remains a very controversial personality. Endowed with a universally recognized musical and artistic genius, his ideas and political position have made him, and continue to generate, innumerable adversaries and even bitter enemies.
In the pages that follow, Houston Stewart Chamberlain, whose second wife was Eva Wagner, daughter of Wagner and Cosima Liszt, describes for us a generally little known aspect of Richard Wagner: his ideology and political thought.

Richard Wagner in 1849

To understand Wagner we must, of course, know not only his writing but also his life.

I therefore consider it appropriate in this paper on his relationship with politics, first to go back to his much discussed beginnings in the revolutionary years of 1848 and 1849. This commentary will teach us at the same time what we can or can not expect of Wagner in the field of politics. And lead us to investigate his political ideas in the only convenient way.

On his knees, on the banks of the "German river" (the Rhine), the artist who returned in 1842, vowed "eternal fidelity" to his country, and he was faithful to this oath to the end of his life and this led him in May 1849 to facts that he later "confessed sincerely' had been "hasty," and even designated simply as "foolish adventures" (Letter to Fischer of 29/10/1857). But if we consider these "foolish adventures" were motivated by an ardent love for his native Germany, then we have every reason not to consider them unappreciatingly as something superfluous or, especially, as "a momentary setback." Here, better than anywhere else, apply the words of Goethe:

"There is nothing more foolish
than to put up with fools
when they say to the wise:
that in the great days
they displayed modesty."

In reality the behavior of Wagner in those years of 1848 and 1849 show us much about his spiritual direction and character (since his actions of that time are very close to what was happening and were to act decisively on his subsequent total destiny), that this short lapse of time pertains to one of the most important of his life.

What Wagner wanted in the first place, and for which he outlined his life, was a Germany united and strong as opposed to the one then powerless and dismembered (see the letter to Prof. Wiegard of 05/19/1848), although as a Saxon by birth he did not want at the moment (perhaps never) to recognize the hegemony of Prussia as the right solution for this issue, even at first protesting against it, as in his proposal not to allow any individual state of more than 6,000,000 inhabitants, and then, when the Prussians betrayed his Saxon country, when he joined the armed resistence which, if it was not, of course, a political success, was certainly noble. In the pure love of fatherland is a likeness, as of a concentric circle, to another, the center, that is to say the vital point, which is the love of one's family; without that love all alleged patriotism is irrelevant and only preoccupation with social interests.

Because Wagner wanted a Great Germany and at the same time would not see his beloved girl betrayed, he would not analyse an impartial future, but only an admirable one.

This marked, broadly speaking, everything political in his thoughts about the past. Details on his socio-political perspectives follow in the second part of this work as well as in the third.

The fact that Wagner endorsed his beliefs in such an official way demonstrates his moral courage. Those "silly adventures" of May also help us, time and again, to show his intrepid virility and physical courage. As such, we know Wagner did not fight with firearms; it is affirmed, nevertheless, that he guided night reinforcements from the countryside, which was an extremely dangerous mission. And another fact, better

detailed, shows an audacity that can only be understood by the union of wisdom with an extraordinary valour. The editor R. Roempler tells how Wagner, learning of the immanent arrival of Prussian troops at Dresden, had printed in large letters several hundred flyers with the words: "Are you with us against the foreign troops?"

Intrigued by what the then Choir Master wanted to do with them, the editor followed him from the presses. To the surprise of Roempler, Wagner jumped the barricades and distributed flyers among the soldiers who occupied Dresden! Once he had distributed them among the troops stationed in the Scholssplatz (Palace Square) he went up to those camped in the Bruhl'schen Terrasse, disappearing from the eyes of Roempler. "That he was not arrested right at the start, perhaps even executed, is a miracle given that at the time a human life was worth nothing," added the witness to this heroic deed. When one thinks about this simple act and reads the reports on the mood and willingness of officers and soldiers ready to kill with a rifle butt chained prisoners who dared utter a word, then we must conclude that in this case the miraculous intervened and this miracle can only be explained by the almost magical power of a great personality. Be this as it may, this otherwise insignificant deed testifies that the man who was often forced to flee without glory, was a true hero "without fear and without blemish," who without firearms and conscious of serving a good cause, in broad daylight, entered the ranks of his mortal enemies.

Yet another quality, perhaps the best among humans, can be claimed for Wagner in accord with the experiences of those days: his tendency to side with the weak against the strong. "Our sympathy pertains only to the vanquished and not to the vanquishing hero," wrote Wagner thirty years later. Certainly, from a strictly political point of view, this is a questionable attitude that has led many noble men to "foolish adventures," but, even so, it is a tendency that is at heart enough to gain for Wagner the sympathy of everyone.

But the most important thing remains to be mentioned.

In addition to the aforementioned political thought and character, there manifested in Wagner's performance during this time a principal feature of his entire being, namely, confidence in the German spirit. Despite all disappointments, Wagner maintained that trust throughout his seventy years. And through that time we also see him go to his "Majesty the King" on

behalf of this confidence in the German spirit and in the name of his people; equally to Baron von Luttichau to tell him of "the horrific forebodings clinging to his soul" regarding the future of his people, to Culture Minister Martin Oberlander with his project for creating a German National Theatre; to members, unknown to him, of the Patriotic Association to "warn them, appealing to them not to fall into gross excesses"; to the members of the National Assembly of Frankfurt because "a patriotic concern" made him fear "many misfortunes" (letter to Prof. Wigard), and even to the Saxon soldiers, for which he might have been shot… As Wagner communicated after this period to Uhlig: "It seemed to us that to achieve good it was enough to desire it." This attitude can be considered truly "naïve," but within that naiveté is something very great. Also at this point it is impossible to resist the temptation to quote the great and wise Goethe: "It is the active person who corresponds to the right; if that happens it is already right, no need to worry."

In this desire "to do the right thing" there was not only greatness but above all sincerity: That is what needs to be taken into account. Who had the final reason? The "revolutionary" Richard Wagner or his implacable pursuer Count Beust? It is certainly interesting to try to follow this question to the end, so here they are, face to face, the so-called practical politician and the impractical dreamer.

Shortly after the May days of 1849 Wagner complained to Liszt of the calumnies cast whose purpose was to "put myself in this uprising and, in the eyes of viciousness, to make it much more culpable than it was in reality." (letter to Liszt of 19.6/1849)

A trend that has continued until today, almost half a century later. This made his situation very difficult, yet despite that he believes "a public statement would cause me shame and only appear as an apology. Forgiveness, in the only true sense, alone can give me time and my life, not a public declaration that under present threatening circumstances and in my situation in need of help, might seem cowardly and dishonourable. Viril and proud words! "Forgiveness alone can give me time and my life," with that all is said.

The exact meaning of Wagner's participation in the movement of 1848-49 can not be explained today on the basis of bombastic and microscopic investigations, concerning which there are, in a thousand details, the most

contradictory notes. Only time and the life of Wagner can answer them. His life is now concluded and Wagner can say parodying Hans Sachs: "Witnesses have chosen you well, I think!" Constantly turning time has "apologized" in this short time for much of what Wagner did and said and has justified him in many cases, but banal expressions such as "pardonable errors of an artist" should not be used by those who insist on proceeding with caution.

That Wagner did not have a capacity for politics, in a strict sense, is undeniable. Here we come across the original insurmountable antagonism between the artistic and political aptitudes. Wagner himself soon realised this. Immediately after the May days he wrote: "Any reasonable person must understand that to me now, after having participated in that uprising, I find it impossible to put myself again into a political catastrophe." Thereafter he perceived the "field of politics as something futile." "A politician is disgusting," he writes in January 1852 to Liszt, and in the year of the revolution of 1849 says: "I am in everything I do and think only an artist, an artist solely, but… Should I submit myself to our modern public opinion? I can not get close to her as an artist and even less deal with her as a politician, from that save me God!" Not that seeing these words means he lacked a political eye in a broad sense; he had that sense of a man whose heart beats in unison with the people in everything, and also has the high vitality of the creative temperment. To discern this point clearly it suffices to ask ourselves who has "time or his life" pardoned? Beust or the artist Wagner?

Count Beust was a great man of state and, to the various monarchs whom he had the honour to serve, he gave his service with fidelity and the best conscience. That no one can doubt. But I wonder: Who has been justified by time and life? The man who never lost faith in the German spirit? The man who despised "rarest Glorias" because he considered himself as the "most Germanic artist of all the Germanics"? The man who in exile worked for the everlasting glory of Germany, and who, when he involuntarily again entered into contact with politics (in Munich) only had in mind the real greatness of Germany and who would prefer to again stake his whole future rather than betray the sacred cause of his people? To the author of "The German Army in Paris" and "Long Live Emperor William I"? To the man who cheered the "enormous valour" of the great statesman Bismarck? The man who wanted, he alone, to erect a temple to German art, who made poems to the heroism of the German people "in their deeds of war"? Or to

that other man who left many of the best sons of Germany to be consumed in jail for years, which men then, in the good service of the State or elsewhere, have demonstrated their great value? The man who sent the art of Germany into exile and permitted it to be protected by Napoleon III, while he only spent his favors on their engraving? The man who was desperately opposed to the development of Germany as a powerful state of international standing, who walked from one defeat to another, who when the Holy Germanic Empire rose like a Phoenix from the ashes retired bitter and full of hate to that distant part of Germany, dismembered, filled with Slavs and Magyars, and who from that redoubt of renegades, led by his lust for revenge, tried helplessly to blur the memory of the generals (who fought with the confident spirit of the people) by dissemination of uncertain guilt?

The formulation is equivalent to answering the question. From this example it is clear enough that although we can not assign to Wagner the adjective "political," we are not obliged to in any way deny him from taking credit for a good political eye.

We can not conceptualize Wagner as political since he did not know how to recognize the means and appropriate ways to reach a short-term political goal, resulting from a special situation, for such is the mission of a politician. Wagner relied too heavily on others to concern himself with politics and was, as he himself confessed, "a big mistake on the world." His power of poetic creation created beings, of whom there are quite few, each suitable to its own way of being, whereas the first and indispensable quality of the politician is, by contrast, the ability to be totally dispassionate about actual conditions, the appreciation of men in relation to their internal content, something most of the time very slight. Thus Schopenhauer is quite right to describe talk of a politician as if he were a genius as ridiculous, even if he should be a "unique historic character."

Schopenhauer even thought a super-intelligence is a disadvantage for a statesman, since for him to do something great only requires a character with outstanding features.

Furthermore, on the contrary, we can not expect a genius to have political skills in the strict sense of the word. What Wagner did possess was what Goethe means, using a word created by him, as a gift: "The intuition of the National Will" ("den Willen der Volkheit zu vernehmen"). Wagner had shown this himself, albeit with a completely different intention, when he

said: "The poet is one who knows the unknown," since all peoples, including their governing bodies, move unknowingly toward their destination. This is why the empirical philosopher Herbert Spencer had to be surprised that at all times state laws achieve mostly the opposite of what they were created to do and always something completely unexpected, which is why to a poet like Wagner statesmen are "powerful but always sterile." In fact it is the legislators who are mistaken, not the laws, whose effects are as necessary as the planting of a field when it comes to wanting the will of the nation to some day flourish. The poet is the only one who knows this ignored desire. If his heart beats in unison with those of his people, as was the case with Wagner, then he sees clearly what others do not discern. He is the "trailblazing prophet."

We see that if the high spirit of a Richard Wagner is to be designated categorically as "not political," such a man almost necessarily commited those "crazy adventures," and in descending from his heights to everyday frivolous life everything he felt and taught was, even so, of great interest to politicians. Such a genius is what translates "the people's will, a will the crowd never expected." (Goethe)

All why, consequently, we have reason to listen respectfully to the judgements of Wagner on the politics and society of his own fatherland.

From the above we can deduce that we can only do justice to the political views of Wagner if we consider them from a more elevated view than those of everyday politics. Already in the year of revolutions the teacher wrote to Liszt: "It really is best to take care of other things than stupid everyday political questions" and in his "On State and Religion" (1864) he says: "…it was certainly characteristic for my research, which never descended to the field of politics itself, i.e., to current politics itself, which despite the virulence of events has not really touched me and for my part did not interest me at all."

It is therefore easily understood that under these conditions, the first political manifestation of Wagner, his speech to the Patriotic Association, was misunderstood by everyone, by the King and the people, democrats and monarchs. They could not follow his subsequent actions. He was not understood nor could he be. Today we are more likely to understand and what follows should serve as a guide in this regard.

What are the guiding political ideas for Wagner? Before answering this question I must direct the reader's attention to an important fact, necessary for understanding what follows.

The directing ideas of Wagner, not only in politics but in all else, include theses that at the start give the impression of headlong controversies. How to clarify this fact that has confused so many? I think as follows. In all of nature logic is only found in the brain of a person. Taken as a whole humanity is not consistent with the laws of logical thinking of individuals. Humanity is a component of nature and its movements, if we follow these in their great trajectories, and therefore develops according to laws of wide magnitude. Thus the human will is full of contradictions that are said to be "incurred," although one could say they are "natural."

The people want at the same time (as Goethe noted) classicism and romanticism, the obligation to unionize and free labor, land both split and undivided, and may I add: order and freedom, leisure and work, etcetera.

Organization, by contrast, can only come from a form, full stop. Statesmen must even have some barriers, targeting only one thing and renouncing, despite their acumen, the temptation to pursue subsequent goals. Wagner clearly foresaw: "To be a politician, in my current experience, is always to have a predisposition for the immediate and possible, as only here is success possible, and without success political activity is a *poro non sens* (nonsense)." (Letter to Roeckel of 02/06/1862)

The genius of poets goes far beyond the "immediate and possible," compromising the "necessary" and discovering that "common misery," from which arise the true "needs of the people that can only find satisfaction in community." ("The Art of the Future")

The genius is he who demonstrates that illogical, contradictory, but all true, basis of all human feelings and procedures. And certainly the reason he does this is that he is completely "apolitical," because he does not feel as an individual, nor as a class or party, but as the people as a whole, because he is in some way a microcosm, or at least a "monad," because he speaks what the people silences and that is why the ideas and actions of genius contain unexpected contradictions. Goethe is perhaps the greatest example of contradiction, although all great artists are similar in this respect, and even

not only great artists but also great men. In no man will more dramatic examples of contradiction be found than in Martin Luther.

Only the practical industrial Cyclops sees the world through one eye. Nevertheless the people and geniuses have two.

We shall then find contradictions throughout Wagner, and mainly in his basic political concepts which we would like to describe as plastic. And only after having recognised that the poet is not a slave to logic, but a priest of truth and as such has the power to express contradictions based on nature and thus enforce their value with their great rightness. Only then can we contemplate his theories with more clarity.

Patriotic German Feelings

The first thing that must be said regarding Wagner is his purely German character.

Of course Wagner was hit, like others, by the wind of the brotherhood of peoples that appeared in the revolutionary era as a fresh breeze of a renovated Christianity, and as something most intense precisely among the greatest enemies of Christianity. It is logical that at the time Wagner did not concern himself with racial questions, more so if we consider that the wisest men of that time, such as Humboldt, declared there were no noble or less noble peoples. But this fact is not more important than the other, which led him, later, through his friend Gobineau and his own studies to recognize racial differences and the superiority of the Indo-European trunk, keeping however his heart open to all humanity and seeking for his own Germany the glory "to ennoble and save the world," rather than to dominate it, from which follows that it is impossible to categorize him within radical cosmopolitan bourgeois thought.

At this point Wagner hosted in his heart two seemingly contradictory feelings. On one side he is German in every sense of the word, and on the other he is a universal man according to the example of Jesus Christ.

Yet we must emphasize the fact that Wagner was never, even in times of revolution, given to "internationalism." In his writing "The Art of the

Future" he differentiates "two principle phenomena in the development of humanity: the national genetic and the non-national universal." In this said work he recognizes the value of "national genetic" "with the most joyous enthusiasm." What Wagner reproaches our modern States for in the same letter is certainly the fact that they are based largely on a national-genetic basis, yet constitute "the most unnatural associations of people," created only by, for example, dynastic family interests. And if for a moment he found himself overshadowed by the doctrines of men who appeared to be decisive in the politics of the time, which led him to admit that national and genetic (ethnic) development had come to an end, we must remember that in 1849 he had not yet delved into the issue and that despite everything, at the decisive point, he always felt, in practice, as a man of his nation and race.

In his famous speech to the Democratic Patriot Association, June 14, 1848, Wagner demanded (the dreamer!) the founding of German colonies and expressed himself in almost chauvinistic terms: "We want to do it better than the Spanish for whom the New World was a clerical slaughterhouse, differently from the English for whom it was a cage for ironmongers. We want to do it in the German way and in German form!" (The colonial idea always preoccupied him as we can see in "Religion and Art," his posthumous work.) In the same speech Wagner combated the "constitutional monarchy" requested by the Liberals in 1848, "on a fully democratic basis" because this said concept "is not German but foreign."

This spirited national-genetic thought of Wagner, even in that time, can not be doubted by anyone. Examples abound.

Lohengrin: "For the German fatherland, the German sword" (written in 1847). Also his patriotic writing "Die Nibelungen" of 1848/1849, and the "Project for a German National Theatre," 1848, revised in 1850. In that same year, in August 1850, that is ten months after completion of the letter which spoke of an evolution of "universal rather than national development," Wagner wrote "Judaism in Music." The racial question already occupied his full attention, no longer instinctively as a German, but by scientific certainty and he began the fight against the non-Germanic in the heart of his own people, in German art. From this moment he represented his Germanism with courage, not only against the attacks of Judaism, but also against foreigners, definitively against everything non-German.

Initially this earned him the hatred of other nations, but now, when the German, represented in his art, has been quietly introduced in all countries, the glory of the precursor and most genuine representative of the most typically German has conquered the world. This is general knowledge so I prefer not to document it but move on to other matters.

The Fundamental Political Conviction of Wagner

To place the thought of this German man in relation to the State and society, I will first quote the two fundamental contradictions that will dominate his political thought from beginning to end. Everything else will then fall into place, while the individual ideas, seemingly contradictory, will not seem disconcerting but natural, not a puzzling inconsistency, but a feeling conditioned by the organic unity of his Weltanschauung. [Conception of the World]

1. -MONARCHY has always been to Wagner the inescapable central point of the entire state organization and, precisely, in the form of a sovereign, as it is considered, although perhaps not quite rightly, "absolute monarchy." Furthermore Wagner never tired of fighting for the most unlimited freedom possible for the individual. The first contradiction reads thus: absolute monarchy/free people. (As will be highlighted later, it is possible to reverse the concept: Free monarchy/absolute people. It is only possible to clarify the expression with this dual concept.)

2. -RELIGION is, according to Wagner, for the inner life what monarchy is for the exterior. Even in those years (1848-1852), in which Wagner was almost directly at odds with historical Christianity, there is not one of his writings in which he does not speak of religion as the foundation of "human dignity itself," as "the source of all art," etc. The churches, on the contrary, and the crystallization of revelation in dogma, although most are treated by Wagner with great respect and give him the opportunity to find them to be full of light, seem personally outside of him, in such a way that one can read all his writings without guessing to which Christian denomination he belongs and, of course, no specific form of Christianity, neither from his doctrines nor from his works of art, has the right to be attributed to him.

The second contradiction consists, therefore, in an antagonism, sometimes expressed categorically, but always there, between Religion and Churches.

In the first contradiction we find the union of two theses, which the understanding, however serene, does not comprehend at first glance, as able to exist together.

In the second contradiction, on the contrary, it is the juxtaposition of the two theses that might normally be considered to enable them to determine each other.

His Relationship With Religion

As this work pertains to politics in the strict sense of the word, there is little that I can say about religion and prefer to conclude quickly so to then devote myself, without paragraphs, to the main theme. We shall then make a deeper clarification in this regard later.

However it is worth emphasizing here Wagner's quite distinct relationship with this question and thereby put it in its proper place. Its manifesting in a time of full revolution is particularly significant.

When Wagner in that speech to the Patriotic Association, the only political one he gave, proposed a reform of our social situation, and especially when he supported the abolition of the nobility which then gave him a reputation as a "red," on what did he base his conviction with which to face the future? On parliaments, or on human rights or something similar? No! In God! "God will enlighten us to find the right law!" Is there not a Lutheran stubbornness in these words? And if he later in this speech designates the goal of "achieving the pure doctrine of Christ" and speaks of the "conscience fulfilled with God" of the King, then it is either incomprehension or bad faith to hold the profoundly religious thought of this man in doubt. In respect to the significance of religion Wagner's convictions never varied. Whether in his writings from Zurich, Munich or Bayreuth we always encounter the same point of view: art and religion in some way condition each other so that neither of them can flourish individually and the development of humanity rests on the development of both towards a better and more beautiful future.

On the contrary, the contradiction highlighted by me previously that we could combine better with the expression "love of religion, aversion against madness," makes it completely understandable that Wagner frequently polemicized against the Church, principally against any form of hypocrisy, and found none more odious than the religious version.

He aptly said: "The German takes religion seriously," ("What is German?") It was recognized early on that he sometimes in his early writings ("Art and Revolution," "The Art of the Future," "Art and Climate", all three from the years 1848-1850), spoke unfairly and unilaterally of the misuse of divine revelation for the mundane purposes of the churches. As with the question of race he entrusted himself, in the early days, to the designs of persons who made him deviate from his own secure path.

Christianity and theocracy seemed synonymous to him at that time. The fact that twenty years later he collected these writings in his "Complete Works" without any change shows that in his opinion he saw no error, just a one-sidedness, a confusion born of a "passionate appreciation," that one must know how to put in its rightful place within his biography. Wagner's work "Art and Revolution" can be designated as a book against hypocrisy. This vice is censured by him in its most diverse manifestations, in the State, in poetry, in drama, in the Church, in patriotism, honour, etc.

In Wagner's heart was then born the indignation designated by Carlyle as necessary "outrage against the domination of lying and the teachers of it." To a number of people who were in personal contact with Wagner at the time he seemed "a Lenten preacher fulminating against the sin of hypocrisy." And, certainly, a man who had not been fully convinced that "only religion leads to true human dignity," would not have allowed himself to label the Church as "hypocrisy and public falsehood." Was he not in conformity with reason when he affirmed: "On behalf of the rich, God has become industry.., our God is money, our religion usury."? Did he not cry in the same writings for a religion other than money, other than the "religious tyranny of selfishness."? Did he not say: "Art is religion displayed in life"? Had he not written in 1848 "Jesus of Nazareth," a glorification of the exalted person of the Savior? And are not the final words of "Art and Revolution" an exclamation that Jesus suffered for humanity and that Apollo raised him to a dignity full of joy, which was a

precursor to Wagner's opinion, thirty years later, expounded in his famous letter "Religion and Art: Jesus and Apollo"?

On the other hand one must not overlook the fact that when Wagner spoke later, with much reason, of the historic emergence of Christianity, in whose true spirit he had been initiated by Schopenhauer, he never tired of "censuring the births of lies" and that, only a few days before his death, he spoke of the church as an "example warning of intimidation."

The meaning of this is clarified in a previous letter (1880): "If we sacrifice without regard to the Church and Curia, this is due to our overwhelming desire to keep Christ in all his purity."

In any event it is indisputable that at all times Wagner taught both faith in God and religion are the indispensable foundation of social life. This was an idea he expressed in times of revolution and which would be almost incomprehensible if he, at least in imagination, had not allowed himself to be carried away by the surging waves of that time of storm and stress. Wagner therefore tended to regard the State as merely a substitute, whose rights lay only within the deficient constitution of our existing religion. His ideal was "a religion and no state." And though he soon abandoned such extreme demands, this formula came to him from the depths of his heart. Wagner must have clearly seen the impossibility of carrying out that idea, but this was perhaps his deepest feeling until the day of his death.

Monarchy

"Absolute King, free people" is how I see Wagner's political idea in its most fitting sense. Before he was 35 our teacher did not address political issues, but as soon as this field caught his attention, he expressed both these requirements. And to the end of his days they were the core of his concept of the State.

Yet nevertheless it seems impossible that this apparent contradiction of Wagner should have caused such innumerable written stupidities. Some describe him as a reactionary, others as a socialist and still others are devoted to skinning him every two years like a snake. Yet the snake always

recovers its own skin while Wagner gets a different one every time! Though this does not worry us as we are focused on Wagner, not on his detractors.

Even so one must call attention to one point. The concept of "Absolute King, Free People" is not, according to the thoughts of Wagner, a contradiction. On the contrary, it is a correlation. The people are only free when one governs, not when many govern. A single ruler can only be the king, provided he does not have to win over rival nobles or parliamentary majorities, but a free people must be against all "absolutely." Whether or not this conviction of Wagner's was right or wrong is not mine to decide.

But I sense one thing clearly, and that is his exposition of "the silent demand of the people," of all Germanic ethnicity. In the ancient law books we read: "The sages had both worlds in their eyes when with their princes they created the great being, thinking that these great men would be law materialized." Free men under the command of their one ruler, such we find the various branches of the Germans in the time of the Great Migrations; what Charlemagne dreamed can be this same law, as adapted to the grand circumstances of that later time, and still today this union of the concepts of loyalty to the king and an indomitable sense of freedom seems to be the most specific characteristic of all true Germans, that from which the specific configuration of their states has resulted.

It is easy to laugh at such concepts, but no one has ever done anything great in history without ideals, and Wagner had a happy inspiration in 1848 when he presented the prosaically directed masses with a poetic picture of how he saw the kingdom.

Wagner, in that speech to the Patriotic Association, warns against a constitutional monarchy, "that foreign concept, not German." Every step forward towards democracy is a further strengthening of the power of the monarch, that is, of the sole ruler. The very principle of democracy constitutes the most complete elevation of monarchy, and can only conceive itself in the real sense as a single government. Every advance of constitutionalism is a degradation of the sovereign, since it is a vote of no confidence against the monarch… What is a lie can not last and monarchy, that is, single government, is a lie when it is the result of constitutionalism.

The purpose of this speech, delivered in a tumultuous time in which the basis of all order seemed to crumble, was proof that "the monarchy could

always remain as the holy point of focus." These were the views of Wagner in a time of revolution. Later in 1864 he gave the most complete expression of his thoughts in his work "On the State and Religion." Especially as he summarized it with the phrase: "In the person of the king the State at the same time reaches its true ideal," a phrase that accentuates Wagner's concept in its proper and necessary form, since the word "monarchy," first introduced into German by Wieland, smells abstract. The central sacred point of the State is not monarchy, but the person of the king. Wagner has idealized this person in Lohengrin and in a historical drama (never used previously) Friedrich der Rotbart, both of the revolutionary era.

"Free People"

There can not be the least doubt about the thought of Wagner in relation to monarchy. It is more difficult to clarify how he thought of a "Free People." Perhaps this might be possible if we take as a starting point his relationship to the arrangement of distinct political parties that make up our actual politics. Concerning himself and those who think like him, Wagner said: "We do not belong to any of those parties." But it is important to understand to what extent he did not belong to any of them, something not motivated by political differences but by his positive beliefs.

For example, we can ask the question: Was Wagner a "conservative"?

Even when writing his allegedly revolutionary "Art and Revolution" he affirmed that art, in the period of its splendour, was and will again be conservative, and although he states further on that one must consider as decisive not what "ought to be" but instead what "will be," to consider Wagner a conservative would be a daring paradox. He never was one in the sense it has today. An aversion against the aristocracy was almost a necessary consequence of his concept "Free King, Free People." The nobles, when they already have no historical mission to fulfill, become something intermediate, caring only for the egotistic interests of their class and undermining the rights of both king and people. Thus in his speech to the Patriotic Association Wagner calls, as a "sine qua non of the emancipation of the monarchy, for the disappearance of the aristocracy, including even the most select among them." Of course he recognizes the services previously rendered by the nobility to the arts, and later even appealed to the German nobility in his work "German Art German Politics of 1865, though he describes their current state as "almost superflous," "even

harmful," and requires so high a renunciation from them if they are to return to being worthy and to again form "Orders of Chivalry" that he himself had to laugh at the premise of such requirements.

It is not to be wondered at that such behavior against the nobility served to put the label of liberal on Wagner. But he has not deserved such a label, as already in 1850 he described "all our liberalism... as a not very illustrious spiritual game," and what he says later in his writings about the dominance of liberalism recalls Goethe: "An idea can not be liberal!"

That Wagner, at least temporarily, had been a genuine democrat seems more like a mirage. When in his speech to the Patriotic Association he speaks of democracy and describes popular power as the goal he at the same time throughout his speech advocates the maintenance of hereditary monarchy and strongly attacks constitutionalism, the concept of "democrat" remains problematic. And it must have then so appeared to the members of said association, since the newspaper "Dresdener Morgenblatt fur Unterhaltung und Belehrung" of June 18, 1848 informs us that this speech "has led to tensions with all opinions and parties." Wagner could never have been a true democrat since, as he himself said, democracy is "totally contrary to the German." "In Germany democracy is something totally transferred. It only exists in the press," are Wagner's words.

Was he perhaps a socialist? It is argued that he was at least during the revolutionary period, albeit temporarily. The story of Wagner the socialist is belied by the very words of the teacher. In the speech cited (1848) he describes communism as " the most absurd and senseless docrine," and to those members of the association more influenced by socialism he said: "Will you not recognize that in this doctrine of the mathematical distribution of goods and profits there is a pointless atttempt to solve a real problem but by impossible means that have to have been born dead?" One can not speak more clearly! In 1849 Wagner says that people "are confused by theories brought by doctrinaire socialists." In "Opera and Drama" he writes: "The socialist is tormented by fruitless systems." One can concretely say with all certainty that the socialist party (as a political party) never deserved sympathy. How could the artist have been thrilled by the Philistine road of the people, according to the ideal of Lassalle and Marx?

On the contrary he did not feel the fear of many good people for whom "tranquillity and order" are necessary at any price, even including the lowest

of crimes against humanity and who quickly take that side when they hear the word "socialism."

Certainly, at the end of his life, Wagner often says socialism. The socialist movement seemed to him "very worthy of being taken into account for strong intimate reasons" and even before then he had spoken of "the deep noble natural desire" on which this movement "is based." His opposition to socialism is characterized, nevertheless, by the following fundamental words: "All political revolution is in itself already impossible. Already in politics we can no longer open the eyes of anyone as everyone is all too aware of the dishonesty of our political states, but beyond them lies the social question which gives everyone the valour cowardly to resist. We have no movement so decisive as the social, but this in a sense very different from that dreamed of by our socialists." Now, after fifty years, mankind begins to agree that a decisive social movement has to come, and indeed it is, but "in a very different sense from how they can be dreamt by our socialists."

Wagner as revolutionary

We are going to attempt to analyse clearly the concepts of Wagner in relation to this "social movement."

"My attitude is make revolution wherever you go!" These words can be considered as Wagner's election slogan for life. And if someone brands him as a revolutionary they can not be contradicted except on one premise, that Wagner did not believe in it himself, that this was a "political revolution," and, after all, he can not considered a "political revolutionary" in any way. Wagner only believed in the possibility of successful fundamental reform for a very short period, perhaps only for a few weeks, during 1848. Already in the summer of 1849 he wrote "Art and Revolution" and in September 1850 he told Uhlig of his "disbelief in any reforms and his belief in revolution alone."

Leaving aside, however, the validity the revolutionary poster as currently designated would have for Wagner, something remains very unclear. The reader must understand that our teacher's participation in the political movements of the 1840s has nothing to do with this. He was then, as he himself admitted, "caught in a mistake and carried along by vehemence."

The events of those times are of great value for understanding his character (his fearlessness, trust in the German spirit, etc.). But not valuable for knowing his social thought. This can only be known with full thoroughness and clarity in his writings from 1849 to 1883 and a review of all these do not necessarily allow us to reject Wagner's designation as revolutionary.

What do we mean by revolution if Wagner wants nothing to do with "political revolution?" This is what he tells us already in his first letter. By this idea he understands the "great revolution of humanity, whose beginnings were destroyed in its day by Greek tragedy" and whose first action "was consumed in the dissolution of the Athenian state!" For more than two thousand years, since the victory "of the man of the revolutionary state," Pericles, Europe has been in a chaotic state of revolution. The true, dreamt for state has been "sinking ever since, or rather, never became reality" and our so-called civilization is "chaos." All our political effectiveness, which has been the same however men behave, whether as revolutionaries, liberals, democrats or socialists, is in fact "revolutionary." Revolution means "rotational movement" and the different parties resemble the spokes in the same wheel that spins while there are slaves to push it and bosses inciting them to it.

Schiller and Wagner

Wagner and Schiller share the same point of view. For the latter our present state is one of "emergency," and for him "the spirit of the age ranges between mistakes and barbarism, between perversity and elemental nature." Schiller also hopes for another order in future, but recognizes that in our current status "nothing can be hoped for, since the State as now constituted has led us into disgrace." Wagner's "human revolution" is thus the same as Schiller's "state of emergency." Both consider humanity as in a chaotic state of transition even from the moment "political" doctrines were born, and the goal he seeks from the start is what Schiller called "the State of freedom, replacing the State of necessity" (or emergency), the end of this permanent revolving. The only difference here between Wagner and Schiller is in the exposition, not in their point of view. Schiller, in his "Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man," bases himself from the outset on Kant. Wagner, by contrast, is based on Greek art. Schiller's prose is ruled by philosophy whereas Wagner's is governed by the arts. With this Schiller's

character is sublime yet without vehemence and Wagner's is instead stamped with a burning passion. Schiller's assertions contain, perhaps, more unassailable truth, even though they are more abstract and incomprehensible. Wagner, on the other hand, is unilateral, without peripheral vision, yet for that reason more penetrating.

An exposition of Wagner on slavery with all its crudeness culminates with the sentence: "As long as everyone is not free and happy humanity will be enslaved and miserable." Wagner, on the one hand, rejects the uniform distribution of goods as stanzas of a poem all of equal meter, while, on the other, in the aforementioned sentence he assures us equality must exist. If we put ourselves into the point of view of "rotating" States of Necessity (Emergency), and consider it to be eternally solid and useful, then Wagner appears to be revolutionary, but if we feel with Schiller that our State "remains forever strange to its citizens, since there is never any feeling for it" and that "a person must not be bound to lose their every purpose" (if they share Chateaubriand's opinion that "wages are the last form of slavery"), then Wagner will appear as a counterrevolutionary. (Here again that plastic contradiction!) He hopes to emerge from darkness into the light, from chaos into order, from the "barbarian constitutions" (as Schiller expresses it), to the "sweet diaphonous waters of nature." ("The Art of the Future")

Some may think this only the dream of a poet. Nevertheless great historians and men of the world have had similar ideas. Carlyle shouts to heroic sages: "Shorten the ancient Empire of anarchy, give your blood to shorten it!" And P.J. Proudhon, one of the most acute men of the Nineteenth Century (though by an incredible paradox he has been saddled with the dread title of "anarchist," simply because in his writings he demonstrates the total anarchy of our order, qualifying our constitutions as "legislative chaos"), understood by revolution not the forced structures of a new order, but "the end of anarchy."

Our "Anarchic Order"

Today it is almost impossible to mention the word anarchist; for us it is synonymous with anarchist bombings, arson and murder, yet if we take the word in its original sense, awarded some fifty years ago, then we may find

several points of agreement between the thoughts of Wagner-Schiller and the anarchism of Proudhon.

Wagner used the word "anarchy" various times, though not with bad taste. Hence in 1852 he said, "How can a person who is within a complete method understand my natural anarchy?" In another place he says: "I would rather snuggle up with chaos than with the way things are" and in his letter of November 1882 on the Premiere of Parsifal, he explains the excellence of the opening as the result of anarchy, where "each does what they wanted, which is to say, what is right." This last observation could be considered almost as a joke, yet at the end of his words Wagner defines our world today with a grim seriousness, almost with the words of Proudhon, saying it is "a world of murder, only organized and legalized by lies, fraud and hypocrisy." Proudhon said: "Negation is the preamble condition of affirmation." This thought is expressed especially in an early passage: "We just want to know what we do not want, then by involuntary necessity we shall certainly reach what we do want and that is now quite as true as when we will have achieved it, and thus the State from which we will have eliminated what we do not want is, in the end, the State we would have wanted to achieve. Thus the people work and work correctly. You conceptualize it as inadequate because they do not know what they want, but…
What do you know? You may imagine or even mention it arbitrarily, but you do not know it. You can only know what the people have achieved, and in this way you can get to know with complete clarity what is not wanted, learn to deny what is useful to deny and destroy what deserves to be destroyed." Wagner had already written: "Nothing has been more harmful to the happiness of people than the stupid urge to order the future by the laws of our current arrangements." In another place he says: "People only need to know what they do not want and this instructs their involutary instinct to live; we need to transform what is not wanted into what does not exist through the force of their presence." The value at the beginning of this denial will be treated later more extensively when we speak of regeneration. Here I just want to mention Schiller also emphasizes this when he cites "cowardice of the heart" as the main reason "we are still barbarians." And one must also determine that this force of denial, this "courage" required by Schiller, was not a fleeting phenomenon in Wagner, but was one of his most notable features until the end of his life. In his first statement on our social condition, to the Patriotic Association, he demands "the elimination of palid metal" and summarizes all the misery of our "anarchic order" as the want of this negative courage in one sentence: "Our God is money and our religion

is usury." This is the God and religion of those who reject Wagner. Thirty years later he further elaborated on this thought, as his artistic instinct had already unconsciously done with "The Ring of the Nebelung," now not only censuring the commercial spirit, but also insensitivity and lack of charity.

Wagner's negative posture with regard to the "pettiness of feeling of the sense of ownership or possession," also corresponds to this same thought which we will later see again in our study of the doctrine of regeneration. Please note however this is not a political objective, but an attitude "by the will of art dear to us," adding that we should not "have any confusion about the intimidatinng setting of our social life, both external and internal." That in Wagner this negative force goes hand in hand with another of affirmation of such rarity that it is almost a part of the first is what makes us see his character with such power. Feuerbach notes thoughtfully: "Only those who have the courage to be absolutely negative have the power to create something new."

The part of this thought that comes near to anarchism is rather clear. That proximity is only observed in the negative. The world today is recognized as evil and this recognition is a fundamental confession. No other relationship exists between Wagner and anarchism, never has nor ever could. The political anarchist is not based in God, does not refer himself to "compliance with the pure Law of Christ," does not see monarchy as "the holy focal point" of the State, does not preach "regeneration" as a precondition for a happy future.

The anarchist mostly breaks the thread of history and is to blame for this fact before the natural order. On the contrary, Wagner, although he at times uses his poetic prerogative that largely outpaces the present and its possibilities, considers the course of history to be the *alma mater* of mankind. This credits his sure instinct, his great sense that gains him the confidence of the intellectuals, even when they disagree with him on everything. "The future is not otherwise conceivable than as conditioned by the past," Wagner wrote in 1851. And to fully appreciate this view compare it with what Auguste Comte stated as his goal in 1848: "Reorganize society without God and King," as opposed to "trust in God and the King" that Wagner intended, in the same year, to inculcate into a democratic association! The one is historical, the other not. The one wisdom, the other nonsense.

Doctrine of Regeneration

"We recognize the beginning of the decadence of mankind and also the necessity for regeneration, we believe in the possibility of this regeneration and we dedicate ourselves to it with all our might."

These words of Wagner (1880) highlight the framework of his practical doctrine of regeneration. One divines some very distinct yet closely linked elements: a negation and an affirmation. The current form of human society (the modern State and its Churches) is recognized as fruits of the decline. On the contrary, the knowledge thus obtained of the causes of this decadence lead to the notion of a possible regeneration.

I:

First of all, before going into details, it is important to note the following: it is that this denial and negation is not metaphysical but empirical and this affirmation is not primarily mystical, but positive and refers to a possible becoming. Our decadence is due to material influences and what is lacking for them are material remedies, or as well the prompt suppression of these harmful influences will be enough to open for us "the paradise now lost and then rediscovered in a conscious way."

We have had to struggle with a real difficulty in our search for the political and philosophical ideas of Wagner, which is that these ideas have not been set forth except as accessory developments in his writings on other topics. It has been necessary for us to look back on those numerous writings, very numerous and, in the letters of Wagner, it has been very difficult just to extract some precise lines that might allow a clear and at the same time comprehensive synthesis, as the teacher has nowhere committed himself to any systematic exposition of his ideas.

So here, in dealing with the doctrine of regeneration, this difficulty no longer exists, because the doctrine in question is the subject of a series of booklets and is formulated with such clarity it seems we have a solid foundation, making it very easy to summarize the thoughts as they follow one another and join together into an indisputable unity. But then there appears a new

obstacle: in this practical doctrine of regeneration philosophy and religion are so important that not to take them into consideration would risk a misrepresentation of Wagner's thoughts. But if alongside the practical doctrine of regeneration we bring other elements into our line of conduct, then we are in the presence of three doctrines, one practical, another philisophical, the third religious. And on the other hand each of these doctrines is dependent on the other two and sometimes in contradiction with them, even it seems in their fundamental premises.

Take for example the philosophical doctrine of regeneration.

Alongside the simple practical doctrine of a regeneration of mankind, we find in the writings of Wagner constant references to the philosophy of Schopenhauer, who, in a sense, should serve as the foundation. We know in this philosophy the metaphysical "new birth" is presented as the complete knowledge, the penetration, we might say, of individuality, and as the reversion of the will which is the consequence. A philosopher would never venture to apply a doctrine for the regeneration of mankind to this or any other part of the system of Schopenhauer, and even less to build the latter on such a basis. Wagner, however, not being a philosopher, but "an artist" and a "psychic," does not stop at those scruples. He does not close his eyes nor his metaphysical cognition of the thinking individual, nor his convictions that prevail upon him in living contemplation of the history of mankind. For example, in the same letter in which we find the positive doctrine of the regeneration of mankind, he cites with praise these words of Schopenhauer: "Peace, rest and happiness only exist where there are neither Where? nor When?" He also speaks of the "soul haunted by the illusion of the real appearance of the world..." There are reasons to wonder. Must we devote ourselves to the fulfillment of a regeneration that nowhere, at no time, will ever be known to reach any valid result? Can we hope to establish the hope of a history yet to come on an equally historic past, if any real appearance of the world is just illusion and lies? In the conception of Wagner such indecisions would only have value from the standpoint of a contradiction of pure logic. They have no value for knowledge that nature teaches us. We have already found this same phenomenon expressly stated concerning politics: the coexistence of apparently contradictory terms that actually complement one another. These are necessary constituent elements of an intelligence sincere even against itself, an intelligence formed organically and in which systematic lies would have no place.

Wagner saw in his mind both metaphysical denial and practical affirmation without the one excluding the other.

Then comes a third element: religion!

If practical regeneration is represented as possible, then it succeeds only if we are "brave and believing." Here is what Wagner says from 1849 and wrote in 1880: "Only on the firm foundation of true religion" can the necessary strength develop to reach the aspiration for regeneration.

It is precisely in their relationship that we reconcile these contradictions of the joy of life and relentless painful knowledge, of optimism and pessimism. But a new difficulty arises; that our religion has also not escaped the universal decadence, so we can not admit "its immediate application to regeneration." On the other hand, nevertheless, "it is not the artist who invents religions, unless he comes from the entrails of the people." Here we are reduced to our point of departure, which, and the master seems to say this, in sum does not exist.

At the end of this work we return to this point, intending to clarify the meaning of this apparent contradiction. For the moment it suffices to point out how a very optimistic exposition of Wagner's doctrine of regeneration is hampered by the fact that, as its profound and continuous basis, it is accompanied and sustained by a pessimistic philosophy, and by this other fact, that the doctrine presupposes a religion not yet born which must arise from within the Christian revelation. My entire effort must be to present this matter in as simple and clear a form as possible. I know not, however, how to hide the truth that this is the best place to apply a saying of Omar Khayyam: "The boundary separating truth from error is no wider than the breadth of a hair."

II:

The exposition of the doctrine of regeneration, as conceived by Wagner, falls into two parts: negation or denial and affirmation. The element of negation is the awareness of decline and this consciousness, once acquired, serves as a basis for faith in a possible regeneration. But it is good to

establish clearly, from the beginning, which of Wagner's writings we ought to mark among the category which effects this doctrine of regeneration.

Strictly speaking these are the writings from the last years of his life: "Religion and Art" (1880) and all those grouped around this masterpiece: "Do We Wait?" (1879), "Open Letter to M. Ernest von Weber On Vivisection" (1879), "What Contributes To This Knowledge?" (1880), "Know Thyself" and "Heroism and Christianity" (1881). In the ultimate words of these ultimate writings he says: "And now, once arriving on solid ground" (he just mentioned in the preceding sentence the "great poets and great artists of the past") "we wish to concentrate to penetrate beyond the object of our study." These words, like similar ones, suggest that after insisting on religion in the series "Religion and Art" he conceived of a second series, a project that was unfortuaately terminated by death. We can imagine that in this second group there would have been something with appropriate titles like "Art and Religion" or "Art and Regeneration," this time emphasizing "Art." For if, in the writings of recent years, art is consistantly mentioned, alongside religion, as the most potent factor of regeneration, we nowhere find an analysis of art in its inner essence or in terms of its external action, as might be expected. Yet that second series exists, since Wagner had written it thirty years earlier! Needless to say our teacher, in his seventieth year, would have formulated the same ideas in other terms than he did at thirty six or thirty seven, yet everything that in the writings from Zurich could cause misunderstandings later becomes clear and harmonized in the light of "Religion and Art." These Zurich writings, "Art and Revolution," "The Art of the Future" (1849), "Art and Climate" (1850), "Opera and Drama," "Letter to My Friends" (1851), all these writings, I insist, form a second series, even though first chronologically, which deal with regeneration, a series that forms the indispensable complement for "Religion and Art" in which the center of gravity is art and works of art.

The fundamental thought of the two series is the same. Art knows not how to reach full bloom in our society, but only in a regenerated society. On the other hand, what is absolutely essential for this regeneration is the cooperation of the arts.

Those who are nourished by the belief that humanity is on the path of indefinite progress, of which we can discern no end, and it is in this that most do place their faith, will not know how to nor be able to admit the need nor the possibility of a regeneration. Indeed, this notion of regeneration

carries with it the admission of two postulates: the "original goodness," at least relative, of man in so far as his life and development are in harmony with the laws of both surrounding nature and his own nature and also the conviction that humanity has historically been wrong and departed ever more from the ways of sound development in accordance with nature. That which is for some "progress" is for others nothing more than "decadence." The contrast of these terms, logically opposite, is easily understood.

One could represent decadence as the work of a fatal power, against which all resistance would be futile, as an inevitable decline, similar to the effects of age on individuals… But it can also be seen as the result of a true deviation and then one must glare directly at it and be certain in order to take a first step, and not the least important one, to regeneration. Undoubtably if we scrutinize and uncover its causes, then regeneration will not only appear desirable to us, but possible as well. That is why Wagner said: "The admission of a deviation of mankind, as opposed as it appears to the idea of progress, could well be the only basis on which to secure and found our hope… For if we can verify this affirmation is, so to speak, due to too powerful external influences, against which prehistoric man, devoid of experience, could not defend himself, then the history of humankind, within the limits accessible to us, appears as the sorrowful period of elaborating his full awareness which will show him the way by which he will be able to use the knowledge thus acquired to protect himself from those nefarious influences."

What is particularly characteristic of Wagner is that, at the moment that his artistic activity put him in touch with public life, he recognizes and stigmatizes the deep vices of our entire social organization. "The chaos of modern civilization" never evinces a single note of admiration from him. He never believed in its pretence of progress. In his speech to the Patriotic Association in 1848 he speaks of a suffering humanity lamentably stripped of its dignity; in "Art and Revolution" he declares the "progress of civilization harmful to humanity." In "The Art of the Future" we see this admission of decadence already clearly formulated in principle. In that writing he expressly insists on negation and denial, and its meaning as a precondition of affirmation: "The people has only to deny what is in fact nothing, useless, superfluous, without value… and then something appears such as the future keeps it in reserve." Just then, in late 1849, he wrote to Uhlig: "It is enough now to destroy, we would not yet know how to build except arbitrarily." He would soon recognize that evil has deep roots, and

thus in 1850 the word "deviation" is at the tip of his pen: "Wherever we look in the civilized world we always find a deviation in men."

Three months later, in his major work "Opera and Drama" he spoke of the "astonishing moral deformation of our actual social condition" and expressed himself, towards the end, in these terms: "Do we want to deal with this world? No, because even in our most humilliating trade with it we would exclude ourselves… We shall not recapture faith and courage until we listen to murmurings in the heart palpitations of history, this eternal source of life, hidden in the rubble of historical civilization, that continues flowing in its original freshness." In his "Letter to My Friends" he declares "to deeply despise this world where hypocrisy simulates concern for art and culture, while in its veins not a single drop of artistic blood will be found and it knows not how to produce a single atom of quality or of truly human beauty."

All these passages are taken from his writings from Zurich. In the texts from the end of his life the master [i.e., educator, translator], already older, does not judge our civilization with any greater leniency. He calls it "wicked and heartless," not "led by anything more than the enhancement of the correct value of calculations of its egotism," profoundly immoral, "world of organized crime and looting certified by falsehood, lies and hypocrisy" that "transforms men into monsters," etc., etc. Everything we have just read can be summarized in the following passage: "Knowing how to recognize, in our civilization, the mendacious and disappointing fruit of lost mankind is the proper task of the spirit of truth" ("Heroism and Christianity").

Here we have the negative attitude of Wagner regarding our civilization. We could extend at will the list of quotations and these would never end if we wanted to include everything Wagner has said against our modern State "which lives onlyon the vices of society" and against "ecclesiastical religion which has become impotent" and "is devoid of the true God." This is more than the consciousness of a deviation shown only in principle, and that consciousness has certainly never failed him.

Nevertheless, from the beginning, we see Wagner engaged in searching for the causes of this decline. We can see that his absolute condemnation of the actual State of humanity is not the product of his bad humour or the result of an invading metaphysical pessimism. His constant efforts to find a sufficient explanation for the deviation he finds in the civilized world in

philosophy, history and natural science are proof of his unwavering faith and of the internal energy of this man with a profound hope, essentially religious, in the future.

Here we can find Wagner the poet: "The affirmation of will, and the belief in the plastic power of personal action are the necessary foundation of every artistic mission. Absolute negation and art are mutually exclusive. Hindus, for example, with their so exceptionally dominant metaphysical disposition, explicitly teach that "salvation would not be at the price of effort" and art is also totally alien to them. Artistic activity in itself presupposes an optimistic temperament, and unquenchable will power, faith and hope. What artists have of the seer is not content to find the world evil; in their very hearts we find a witness to the beauty of this world. The philosopher has no need of other men, in fact they are a nuisance to him and he retreats to the shade of the forests, purified by his own presence. The artist, by contrast, needs them in order to be himself, he can do everything, but nothing without their cooperation. Hence the belief of Wagner that men would not know how to be "saved individually, as if isolated, whence also his efforts from 1848 to his death to examine the causes of human decay.

It is interesting to follow the progress of his investigations.

In his speech to the Patriotic Association, Wagner already said: "We must look well ahead, resolutely, into the question of knowing where is the true cause of all the misery of our current social condition." We have already seen the answer he made to this question with regard to his politics: the cause is money! Wagner's first effort to get to the bottom of our degenerate social state has been, somewhat by everyone, labeled as "extremely candid" and serious men have disdained to detain themselves in this matter. It is possible these men thought otherwise, but in any case Wagner had already gone into this question before. To bring this idea into popular discussion it suffices to evoke the image "of the pallid metal to which we are enslaved by a shameful servitude," but behind this product "the most ridgid and least able to have life in all of nature," he saw the very beginning of property. In his writing "The Wibelungen," from the same 1848, he expresses the opinion that property which has become hereditary is the principle cause of the decadence of humanity. "In the historical organization of the feudal system, in so far as it remained in its primitive purity, we find this principle, at once human and heroic, expressed: the concession of an enjoyment was only given to those who, for some service, could personally claim it. From the

moment the fief became hereditary, the man, his individual activity, his personal merits, lost their value, which were converted into a possession, and had become hereditary. It was that and not personal virtue which created the social importance of inheritance, and thus the gradual and growing depreciation of men, as the value of possessions climbed steadily and came to incorporate themselves into the most inhuman institutions… This made property legitimize the man rather than, as before then, the man being he who legitimized property." The master was true to this conviction all his life. In "Art of the Future" he sees precisely in this "primordial concern of the modern State… to forever fix property which thereby stops the vivifying fertility of the future." In "Opera and Drama" he says: "From possession converted into property, on which alone one wants to make all order rest, have come all the crimes of myth and history." In one of his last writings, "Know Thyself" (1881), he returns again to this theme: "It seems certain," he says, "that from this notion of ownership, that seemed so simple in itself, and with its political sanction, there has entered into the body of mankind such a cruel spear that it makes mankind suffer a painful agony forever."

But it could not escape the notice of this shrewd thinker that some institutions such as money and the hereditary inheritance of property should, at most, be considered as causes of a secondary order, perhaps as symptoms more than as effective factors of decadence. For that he delved more deeply and believed he could assign a physical cause for this decadence and decline and found it in the corruption of blood. He then asked how it was possible that the peoples of Europe were not only victims of a growing deviation, but that they seemed to move farther and farther from their own image, to the point that the various branches of the Germanic trunk became increasingly foreign with respect to one another. And he found this explanation in the moral influence of Judaism.

III:

Therefore for Wagner the main causes for our decadence were corruption of blood and the demoralizing influence of Judaism. The influence of Judaism accelerates and favors the progress of degeneration, pushing modern man into a wild storm that does not leave him time to recognize or raise awareness of this unfortunate decline, nor of the loss of his own identity.

The corruption of blood comes above all from abnormal nutrition, but also from the mixture of more noble races with those that are less so.

We can see how Wagner quickly concerns himself with this issue of nutritional diet in his letter to Uhlig of October 20, 1850, from which we have already quoted some passages: on the one side lack of nutrition and on the other excess of sensual enjoyments above any limit, and a way of life absolutely contrary to nature, here we have what has led us to a state of degeneration that can be stopped only by a complete renewal of our deformed organism. Superfluity and deprivation, here are the two mortal enemies of our present humanity. He also refers to this with a curious allusion in his correspondence with Liszt: "In truth, all our politics, our diplomacy, our thirst for the future, our science and, unfortunately, all our modern art... indeed, all this parasitic vegetation of our present life has no other soil where it can germinate and thrive than... our sick belly! Ah! If each one wanted and could be able to understand me, it would be understood within this awful truth."

Wagner only adresses the inequality of human races in the last letter of the series "Heroism and Christianity" where he finds it to be a second cause of decadence, saying "that if the noble race can quite dominate the inferior race, it can not, by means of mixture, elevate the latter since all it will achieve is the lowering of its own blood to the level of the inferior... It is more than obvious we would not have human history without the movements, successes and creations of the white race and we can find, without a doubt, that universal history is the history of the mixing of this race with the yellow and black, in the sense that these last, less noble, enter into history only to the extent that by mixing they are more or less assimilated to the white race. The deterioration of these, moreover comes, obviously, from their being infinitely less numerous than the representatives of the inferior races, and seeing themselves obligated to mix with them, by which, as I have remarked, the white race loses much more in purity than the others could have gained by ennobling their blood to some extent."

Wagner took this point of view from his friend the Count de Gobineau and his "Essay on the Inequality of Human Races." Despite its vital importance it has only a secondary importance in the doctrine of regeneration, since it does not clarify the future but the past, and can only be projected into the future in the form of a powerful cataclysm. But Wagner diverted his eyes from so horrible a consequence and sees an antidote in true Christianity

"addressed to all mankind for the most noble purificaton of all the vices of their blood."

By contrast, Wagner very quickly became worried about another racial problem, I mean the demoralizing influence of one of those white races over the others, of the Jewish element over the non-Jewish peoples, over the entirety of the "Gentiles."

"Judaism In Music" appeared for the first time in 1850, in the New Musical Review of Brendel; then in a separate brochure with a long prologue in 1869. No other of the teacher's writings has been so universally known, at least in terms of its title; one of the favorite paraphrases to designate Richard Wagner is the "author of Judaism In Music." But it would be a mistake to believe Wagner has not expressed his views other than in this single tract, and this mistake leads to another, imagining that the master had no other goal than to criticize the results obtained by Jewish composers and musicians. Clearly, however, art is what most occupied his heart, yet he noted and deplored the influence of Judaism in the most diverse domains. In "German Art and German Politics" Wagner spoke clearly of this distorting influence on the German national character, but it is in the last series of treatises where one finds the most important declarations in this regard.

"Know Thyself" has an especially great importance. In it, he in twelve pages analyses with great intensity "the irremedial disadvantage in which one finds the German race when faced with the Jew." This particular study booklet is especially recommended for anyone who wants to know Wagner's views on "the active principle in the decadence of humanity."

But if the master, in spite of repeated developments, was complete and luminous, it would be rash to wish to summarise the views of Wagner on Judaism from a few lines. It would be rash today above all, when spirits have been so excited in such a way that an objective discussion on this fascinating subject is practically impossible. That is why I will only indicate some general guidelines on which every impartial mind can form their own opinion.

In turn we very often imagine that "the Jewish question" is a recent phenomena; this is an injustice, for there is no reason why a question that has once been discussed in all honesty should be virtually outlawed today by fault of the exaggerated susceptibility of some minds.

It is not necessary to go back to the "scelaretassima gens" of Seneca, nor to Goethe or Beethoven; it is sufficient to clarify that when Wagner entered public life all non-Jews were anti-Semites. from the Democrats impregnated with socialism to the ultra-conservatives. Herwegh, the socialist, complained of the favor he had shown to the Jews, when they then offended him. Dingelstedt, the champion of German freedom, wrote: "Whenever we extend a hand we close it around some Jew and everywhere they are the chosen people of the Lord; go, go and again lock them up in their old streets, before they enclose you in a Christian ghetto!"

In the Prussian Parliament in 1847, Baron Frederic von Thadden-Trieglaff literally proclaimed "the emancipation of the Christians from the Jewish yoke" and M. von Bismarck-Schoenhausen expressed himself the same way! And the fact is the best endowed geniuses were noticing the intrusion of a foreign element of a very special nature into the public life of the peoples of Europe, carrying with them an element of certain deformation, which did not occur only in Germany. In France, in this same year of 1847, the prophetic work of Toussenel appeared: "The Jews Kings of the Age." It is very characteristic that Feuerbach has been celebrated, in every respect, by the Jews, in spite of numerous passages in his works expressing things about them that today would have brought him a certain literary death: "The principle of the Jewish religion is egotism. The Jew is indifferent to everything that does not bring him a personal benefit. Hebraic egotism is a deep and unfathomable violence. The Jews received from the grace of Jehovah the command to steal," etc. (1841, "The Essence of Christianity"). Since then there has been a great change. The Christians have become more tolerant and the Jews less. In any case it is to ridicule historical accuracy to make a personal opinion into a crime when it was once the opinion of an era.

It follows from what we have just said that if Wagner saw himself obligated to utter a cry of alarm about the growing influence of Jews in German art, this was not the result of a personal idiosyncrasy. The best of his time, no matter to which party they belonged, thought like him. It is very worthy of comment that while the Jews did nothing to the others for their anti-Semitism, they never forgave him his! His "Judaism In Music" would have gone unnoticed if the Jews themselves, with their "infallible sense of smell," had not divined immediately the exceptional importance of this little booklet. From there it went to the entire European press and made a universal clamor, with a display of animosity I have already indicated, and

triggered a fierce struggle that pursued Wagner until his death, to the point that from the publication of his treatise to today there have appeared over 170 refutations of such a work.

Nothing is therefore more opportune than to call attention to his attitude towards Judaism, since this scandal makes one believe he had hit a sensitive point.

But if we pass from the study of these events to considerations presented by Wagner, two things strike us from the start: his complete sincerity and his high human significance.

The skill of the Jew in accumulating money is usually the source of all the criticisms made. Wagner, however, has done more than just defend artistic taste and German moral principles against a race that feels these things opposite from the German race. Yet he has never made allusions to economic interest nor has his discussion ever led to odious or personal conclusions. To defend his thesis in his "Judaism In Music" he quoted Israelite musicians, but has limited himself to quoting the most respected names. We see with what deference he speaks of Meyerbeer, with what justice and esteem he speaks of Mendelssohn. And compare these passages with the waves of mud they provoked against him! This does indeed make us understand the fact Wagner did not lose, because of his writing, not even one of his Israelite friends with whom he had a true affinity and that he even counted on making new friends on the occasion of this work, hence undoubtedly it was not any everyday issue to Wagner but, in simple actuality, was rather "an idea whose scope covered the entire history of human culture."

From the beginning of the small booklet, Wagner marked as his goal "to explain the unconscious feeling of popular aversion for all that is Jewish, to formulate thereby something that exists per se, but not to claim to raise, through imagination, anything that does not already exist." How to dismiss this fact, how can we build a bridge over this chasm opened up between the races? Wagner calls for a possible regeneration of humanity and says to the Jews: "Join unreservedly this work of salvation by which the annihilation of the ego will lead us to a true new life, and we shall all be united, jumbled, without difference to separate us! But remember there is for you there is a more than half to subtract from the curse on you: the salvation of Ahasvero is death." And what he meant by "death" is made clear by a previous

sentence: "But to become fully men like us means, for the Jew, to say it in some way, to cease to be Jewish." We might recall, with a bitter smile, that Misters Joachim, Moscheles, Hauptmann, David, etc., were so offended by this invitation "to become men like us," they asked that the editor of the New Musical Review, Franz Brendel, be dismissed from his professorship at the conservatory in Leipzig! Furthermore, remember the words of Wagner, in a very mitigated form, which Luther also said: The Jews should stop being Jews. "If not, we should not tolerate them in our country."

Later Wagner also expressed himself very clearly: "One thing was clear, from the moment when the Jewish influence over our intellectual life made itself felt strongly in the sense it distorts and alters our most sublime and the culture that is proper to us, and that this in not an accidental phenomenon, owing perhaps to some causes of a physiological order, it must be admitted as an undeniable and decisive fact… If this element must be assimilated, so that it can cooperate with us in improving our most noble human faculties, it is clearly not by hiding these differences but by framing and proclaiming them that we are to see how we can help to achieve this desired goal."

And if Wagner believes to mean the Jews "live off the exploitation of the universal decay, this is not other than what their own prophet Micah had predicted: "And the legacy of Jacob will be among the nations, and among many peoples, like a lion among the beasts of the forest, and as lions among a flock of sheep, which passed between them being torn and destroyed, without anyone being able to do anything to prevent it."

The term "lion" perhaps indicates hyperbole, but there is nothing to make us recapitulate on the "sheep" destined to a shearing… But after Micah a much greater prophet came who called to the daughters of Jerusalem: "Do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and your children." This teaching about the Jews is, indeed, somewhat different from what Wagner repeated: "To be fully human like us, cease to be Jews."

IV:

We have seen that Wagner considered the current state of civilization to be a state of decay; we have also seen he thinks he has discerned the causes of

this state. There remains to say a few words about his Positive thought and the propositions made in view of a possible desirable regeneration to come.

Of the awareness of this decadence Wagner said: "It is not new, as every great spirit has taken it as guide and as the common thread; Ask about it only among the truly great poets of all times and of the founders of the true religions as well." But he rejects the pessimistic implications drawn from the Hindu religion, the Christian religion and metaphysics and thinks that "knowledge of the true cause of our decline leads, with equal force, to believe in the possibility of a rather radical regeneration." Indeed, the argument is so simple and so logical it suffices to admit the premises to be forced to accept the consequences. If meat-eating if the major cause of human decay, the remedy will be, evidently, a strictly vegetarian diet; if miscegenation tends to corrupt the blood, take steps to prevent it at all costs immediately.

One could thereby close or conclude the chapter on regeneration. It is precisely here that the most interesting points of view which could be called the multi-facetted nature of his genius are shown and also the great difficulty of reducing a vision of things aimed at diverse points to simple formulas, an organism whose roots diverge in all directions! Here again we see the enormous gap between the philosopher, who conforms to the constitutive laws of our reason, who seeks and ought to seek to simplify everything to a single principal cause, from the artist who, as seer, proclaims what he sees and concerns himself only with what nature requires in the narrow demands of our thinking machine.

Wagner undoubtedly preached vegetarianism, but he does not stop there. His philosophic instinct was so sure and so profound he had to at all times keep in mind the strict solidarity that exists between man and nature and, therefore, had to recognize the all-powerful force of natural necessity, as well as the pessimistic reflection that could not fail to rebound on any attempt at regeneraton. But, on the other hand, his emotional life, the best of his soul, was directed to that Art he conceived as "absolutely one with true religion" and that material or metaphysical remedies were not enough to reach, by themselves alone, regeneration, so that, quite to the contrary, "every real effort, all truly sufficient force to carry through the great regeneration, will never arise other than from the deep core of a true religion."

It seems there are therefore three juxtaposed worlds: one material and empirical, another transcendental and metaphysical, and a third mystical and religious; Art is the element that collects and unites them, since its form is material, its content transcendental and its meaning mystical, and that is why precisely these three worlds are reflected with such an exceptional clarity in the consciousness of artistic genius. If the artist does not want to limit himself to expound what he sees through the work of art, but rather, as was the case with Wagner in regard to the doctrine of regeneration, he seeks a rationale through a reasoned exposition, then he will be forced to present this exposition in three different theses, without much concern for their consistency, since his personality already reveals this unity to him and also that, in the work of art, he has the power to reveal it to others through a rapid immediate medium. But, as I have already said, and as one understands better after the above, we find great difficulty the moment we attempt to present the system of Wagner in condensed form easily covered with a rapid glance. To conceive it to some extent in its entirety an essential prerequisite is necessary, the determinate impression of these works of art, to serve us as a scientific comparison giving to our whole being an intensified "vibratory faculty" making of us some docile "conductors" of complex combinations of thoughts that, without the work of art, would not have awakened in us any comprehension. Wagner is not alone, rather every artistic genius finds himself in the same situation. Goethe also appeared like a chameleon to us, or bettter perhaps, like a kaleidoscope, when his powerful individuality does not develop within us and when the work of art does not manifest its living harmony. But we must never lose sight of this if we are to achieve a correct overall impression when we successively and separately examine the three points of view: material, metaphysical and religious.

I do not have much more to say from the material, empirical point of view.

The important here, according to Wagner, is food. We must abstain from eating meat and drinking alcohol. The master did not adopt these extreme measures until an advanced stage of his life. Earlier he had already said: "The just measure is to enjoy everything in moderation," and had written that: "simple natural substances are not made for beings like us. We need what is complicated, substances such that we are supplied with as much nutritional benefit as possible with a minimum of digestive power to be expended." But when he was well convinced that an exclusively vegetarian diet is "the central point of the question of regeneration," he did not allow himself to be dissuaded by any consideration. For example, he believed that

perhaps animal nutrition might be necessary in northern climates; in this case we, the noble races, should surrender to a "rational emigration." This suggestion of a mass emigration may possibly seem extravagant to many readers, yet even so a thoroughly scientific man, the celebrated physiologist, psychologist and moralist Alfred Fouille, has proposed, in a book published in July 1859, "The Temperament and Character According to Individuals, Sexes and Races," exactly the same exodus, the only hope of salvation, according to him, for the Indo-Germanic race, and in his view, the practicality of this idea is confirmed by the latest discoveries of medicine.

Towards the South! Yet Wagner said this was a "picture taken from the imagination," like so many other of his proposals in the material and practical terrain. But we do well to remember everything he said, especially those among us for whom the idea of vegetarianism provokes a benevolent smile, since in the presence of the great progress of vegetarianism, especially among eminently practical people, such as the English and Americans, and in consideration of the exceptional physical resources in competitive sports of which vegetarians can boast in recent years, we could recommend a little more objectivity towards the opposite opinion. In any case the scientific evidence has not yet inclined towards the one side nor the other, and more, "this test would have little scope since the question at base is completely moral, and applies especially to human relations with animals."

In the philosophical field the idea of regeneration moves still more freely.

"Nature, and nature alone, can unravel the tangeled skein of human destiny, as the civilization based on Christian faith and on the condemnation of human nature, thus denying mankind, has gained an enemy who must soon destroy it, in the sense that man does not find his place, so that this enemy is precisely eternal living nature" ("Art and Revolution"). The teacher wrote this same thought already, in luminous form, to Heinrich von Stein several days before his death, January 31, 1883: "We would not know yet how to go out to a point too far from our so-called civilization of today, to reach a harmonious conciliation of the purely human element with nature." Obviously considerations of this order are not in any way moving within the empirical domain. What is "purely human," what surges from "eternal nature," are not perhaps pure abstractions, but it at least corresponds that these notions are not taken from observation. Its value for the doctrine of regeneration is precisely that Wagner has been faithful to this idea throughout his life and, as well, that this normal complete humanity, which

is not more than an integral subordinate part of eternal nature, provides an element of optimism in the philosohical belief of a possible regeneration.

From these just given quotations, quotations that would be, moreover, easy to augment, it clearly appears that nature and in particular "the true nature of man" is considered as good. Wagner called our world "the desert of a degenerate paradise." In his early writings he regretted "the disruption of faith in the purity of human nature" and in one of his last he repeated: "Do not look for our salvation other than in man's return to the simple and sacred dignity that is his." Quite the contrary, the true pessimist, Schopenhauer, teaches that "before identifying, in a pantheist manner, nature with God, it would seem more just to identify her with the Devil." And of man he said: "Man, at base, is a wild and terrifying beast. We do not know him except in that state of domesticity called civilization, and that is why the occasional explosions of nature frighten us. But if the bolts and chains of law and order disappear, man in all his reality appears." For Wagner the foundation of his doctrine with regard to regeneration is an unshakable faith in the purity and sanctity of human nature.

Equally, from the beginning, we find in him another notion that borders on pessimism and is a counterweight to the first: the notion of necessity!

In the early writings Wagner insists on "the fatal necessity" (spontaneous, involuntary, "unwillkührlich"), which reminds us of the "Will" of Schopenhauer. The teacher has conceived what he calls on other occasions doom ("Unwillkühr") identical to the "Will" of Schopenhauer, that is, the entire set of phenomena: Nature "engenders and forms by necessity," and in man as well "it is the unique pressure of necessity that determines us to create some acts and gestures worthy of being created." And the logical consequence is clear: "life is what is immediate, what determines itself," and science, "the justification of the unconscious… the resolution of doom or fatality in the will of what is necessary."

A little reflection will prove that a "regeneration" does not find its place in a fatalist conception of nature. This has formed all that it is by necessity, and wisdom consists in "wanting the necessary." In Schopenhauer there is no regeneration, since the word "decadence" has no meaning in his system and he has never pronounced it. To try to prove progress is, doubtless according to him, to entrust oneself to "an artificial and imaginary construction," but he does not admit the idea of decadence; for him the final residue of history is

in the presence of a "being always the same, always equal to itself, immutable, that today does what was done yesterday and forever." Schopenhauer, indeed, affirms the doctrine of the fall, but specifically by way of myth, as existence is sinful in itself. According to his philosophy the sage, like the Wotan of Wagner, can not "want more than one thing: The end! The end!" With great daring, Wagner, who fully shared the metaphysics of Schopenhauer and without reserve included himself among his disciples, wanting to play the same role in relation to Schopenhauer as the latter had in relation to Kant (thereby continuing Schopenhauer!). And expressly states he found "in the arguments that Schopenhauer gives in support of the condemnation of the world, the common thread that gives rise to the idea of a possible salvation of this same world." And in another place: "The only roads clearly set forth by Schopenhauer, through which the misled will could again find its way and incontestably gain access to hope, has been clearly expressed by our philosopher and along lines that are those of the most elevated religions; it is not Schopenhauer's fault if the quite exact representation of the world he found before him occupied him so much that he was forced to leave to us the charge of exploring those roads and getting underway, hence it is only in these steps of Wagner that it is possible to follow him. The master considered the philosophy of Schopenhaeur as the only "that can be recommended to march with independence through the paths of true hope." We have here, certainly, a sharp and unexpected twist, that only surprises men who have called hope "madness of the heart," which, without doubt, proves nothing, as Kant himself was unable to see his own continuer in Schopenhauer. One can say that Schopenhauer, in taking "the critical idealism" of Kant as his trampoline, made a real somersault to come to see in the Will the thing-in-itself of Kant. And Wagner has also made a leap whose audacity should not be envied by the other. With an infallible sagacity he has recognized that the negation of the will to live, whatever the reasons given, "features" as the supreme will power. This determines that whoever takes full account of decadence, and possesses at the same time this highest will power, has in hand everything necessary for regeneration. He knows evil and is the master of salvation. From here arises this "faith in a possible regeneration," and that is how we explain this strange sentence: "The certainty of the victory of the will results from the awareness of decadence."

In all the above it is not necessary to see, of course, more than a few indications. In fact we would not know how to ask more from so summary and general an exposition Noting the organic relation that unites the

pessimism of Schopenhauer with Wagnerian optimism from the point of view of regeneration, I remind the reader of what must be, in my opinion, most interesting and significant in the philosophical thought of Wagner.

No doubt those who want to content themselves with the philosophical point of view will find it difficult to reconcile such priciples so opposed in appearance. But the root which comes to blossom in the conviction of Wagner comes from a deeper foundation. Indeed, this is a religious doctrine.

The beginning of Wagner's Creed is the conviction of a moral meaning, a conviction that admits of no doubt: "The recognition of the moral significance of the world is the coronation of all knowledge." This knowledge is also the basis of hope and, thereby, the origin of faith in regeneration. In 1853 Wagner wrote: "I have faith in the future of mankind," and this first axiom helps to better understand another that Wagner annunciated later: "The only aspiration and strength that enables the fulfillment of the great regeneration must have its origin in the deep core and basis of a religion." According to him without religion we can not acquire the force necessary for regeneration, nor even feel ourselves transported to her. Religion is then, as we see, the condition *sine qua non* on which rests the entire Wagnerian doctrine of regeneration.

It is difficult here not to think of Feuerbach and his firm faith in the future and of his noble ambition to breathe new life into religion, whose realm decreases, using it to impregnate the solid ground of reality. But if I mention Feuerbach it is, above all, to show how "the religious optimism" of Wagner differs from every materialist faith in the future, such as that of Feuerbach. The difference is Wagner believes in the destiny of mankind set "beyond space and time" in a "moral significance of the world." His whole doctrine of regeneration is rooted in this faith. It gains nothing from material progress. To the idea of progress his doctrine opposes harmony with nature; not simply to preach return to nature, but rather he wants the unity of man and nature that unconsciously formed the life of primitive man, although made into an accepted conscious law. Neither the development of machines nor the infinite accumulation of scientific knowledge cause a tear less to fall into the ocean of human misery. Also the meaning of these things is only fleeting and relative, not eternal or absolute. The thought of regeneration, in Wagner, has nothing more in mind than man as a moral being. At bottom it cares little about reaching a temporal goal.

"Religion and Art" does not leave the least doubt about Wagner's idea: "Let the condition produced by a regeneration of the human race be as peaceful as we wish, thanks to the appeasement of conscience, still we see in the nature that surrounds us, as much in the violence of the elements as in the invariable declarations of inferior wills acting in and around us, whether at sea or in deserts and even in insects, in the worms we constantly crush without thinking of them, we see the need to elevate our eyes to the crucified Redeemer, as to the ultimate and supreme refuge."

The doctrine of regeneration of Wagner, starting from three different points of view, one empiric and historic, another abstract and philosophical, and the third religious, is shown to us under three corresponding forms, which I have set forth. It remains for me to say something about the element in which the three worlds become conscious of their unity and which plays such a preponderant role in this general vision of things: Art.

Its action in each of these three domains is decisive.

Already in the first letter from Zurich, "Art and Revolution," Wagner attributes a destiny to art that is among the most elevated: "To make this social necessity (of free human dignity) recognized corresponds precisely to the most noble meaning of art and shows art her true direction." He nevertheless acknowledges that "it is not only by the action of art that we shall develop human society in a beautiful and noble human sense." The future must raise a temple not only to Apollo, the God of art, but "to Jesus who suffered for humanity." While Wagner's thinking about regeneration is not rich in sentences, yet it clearly shows the idea that art, in this desirable transformation of human society, will play an indispensable intermediary role. It must reveal to men the significance of this pressing unconscious need and the right way to those gone astray. She does not exercise an immediate action, such as "to make our customs noble," but has the magic power to make man known to himself, and to chart the path that will lead to regeneration.

Almost at the same time, Wagner recognized in art "the representative of necessity," or as he said, "the necessity of nature." Here the relationship between art and metaphysics is clearly defined. Art can never claim to express a metaphysical abstraction, but there is a superior art that distinguishes itself from ordinary artistic production in that the development

of its activity is intrinsic, involuntary, and what it comes to represent are the manifestations of this primary transcendental essence of the world: necessity, will or whatever other names we wish to give it. Art "loosens the intangible thought of sensation" and that is why Schopenhauer held it in such high esteem and saw, from his exclusively philosophical point of view, "her true goal which opens a path to cosmic ideas, to some ideas about the world." Here again, art plays, in the conviction of Wagner, a key role as intermediary; it is an intermediary in a way that leads to deeper insight into the essence of the world, the way it is, in itself, an indispensable element of the thought of regeneration.

In "The Art of the Future" we find the third key thesis: "The work of art is the religion that has come to be sensible in a living form." So, here again, art is the intermediary, the exponent, we could say, in religious matters, and her office is that of "to highlight the most sublime meaning," and "show the true direction" to follow. "Happy we shall be," Wagner later writes, "if, aware of a superior social life, we render ourselves accessible to this mediator of the sublime and of her sacred ground, and if we allow ourselves to be led docilely, by the artist, by this poet of universal tragedy, towards so peaceful an expression of this human life! Then the poet-preacher, the only one who has never lied, will know how to accompany us on the way of this new life, and introduce us, in the true ideal, the symbol of everything that passes, while for some time the pseudo-reality of history will sleep buried beneath the yellowing papers of civilization."

We have seen above that "the only aspiration and force that makes the fulfillment of the great regeneration possible but takes her origin in the deep core foundation of religion." It is also the relationship of art with religion that is by far the most important, because if art can raise itself from its lesser role of recreation, of innocent distraction, to the height of a "sanctifying and purifying religious deed," as Wagner calls it, then one understands "the significance that art could have, purifying from the immoral demands that today denature her, in the terrain of a new moral order of things, in particular for the people." The invaluable and immense service of art. so understood, in favor of the true religion and the services she is still called to render, is what Wagner shows in a key passage that serves as an introduction to "Religion and Art": "One could say that where religion becomes artificial, it is reserved for art to save the substantial nucleus, penetrating the mythic symbols, that religion claims are believed as true in the literal sense of the

term, according to their symbolic values, in which are recognized, through their ideal representation, the ideal truth that is hidden therein."

Thus, the role of art is to "save the substance of religion," as "expressing what is inexpressible to religious philosophy," as in the decay of dogma, "true idealistic art intervenes as liberator," as she "conserves the most noble heritage of Christian thought in her transformative regenerative purity." Even so, if we must wait for a regeneration, this hope that art can take hold on the "restitution of a true religion," since art by itself knows not how to give us a religion. We may, nevertheless, place ourselves "in the good way," which can "reveal the ineffable beyond all imaginable notions." An intimate kinship links this to that "supreme religion that must yet issue from the Christian revelation."

That in this constant preoccupation with religion Wagner has not taken the existing churches into consideration, hits us between the eyes; the last words quoted demonstrate this. The reader has already realized, by the various fragments cited, in what sense Wagner was Christian. In 1851 he replied to his opponents: "If I were Christian by my desire to escape from the indignities of the modern world, I would be a more honest Christian than all those who, in their impertinent piety, reproach me for having abandoned Christianity," adding later that "we should do no more than apply ourselves, hereafter, to prepare for the religion of compassion a solid ground, on which she can develop in us, in spite of the partisans of the dogma of utility." Wagner explains the "corruption of the Christian religion by the intervention of Judaism in the formation of dogmas." Our civilization, he said, far from being Christian, would be "the triumph of the enemies of the Christian faith," a "mix of barbarism and Judaism." Thusly our religions are unfit to open the route for regeneration.

The religion of which Wagner dreamed is not revealed in his writings, but is revealed in his artworks, from "The Fairies" to "Parsifal." If the cooperation of art is indispensible for the restoration of a true religion, then true art, for her part, must be defined as the emancipation of this religion. "A true art can only grow and prosper on the basis of a true morality." In "What Boots This Knowledge?" we read: "The highest art could not find the energy necessary for similar revelations if she lacked the foundation of religious symbols and perfect morality, for only thus can such art be understood by the people." We see, therefore, in what sense the art of Wagner, like all truly high art, can rightly be considered religious.

The relationship between art and religion is a relation of reciprocity, which conditions both. True art can not be born without religion, as this latter can not be revealed without the help of art. In this sense art and religion are not more than a single organism, and it is only in this live form that a profoundly religious art, revelation of a true religion, can draw out the necessary virtue and force for the fulfillment of the great regeneration, and from this she must issue the "renewed blessed artistic humanity of the future."

But how should art dress to show herself worthy of so high a mission, reaching to show men hungry for liberty and true human dignity "the direction to follow," in order to "free yourselves, make come alive" the imperceptible thought of the metaphysical, to "represent religion in a living form"? The answer to this question will give us the artistic doctrine of Wagner, in particular his doctrine of perfect drama, of this work of art "by which can be broadcast, in its highest elevation and greatest depth all the human mind can conceive, and always in the clearest manner."